

# Component 1

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## Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision

### OVERVIEW AND CURRENT THINKING

Shared beliefs are the foundation for the shared values staff members hold for the school. The vision for the school—how it operates and the purpose for which it exists—is consequently grounded in these values. A collaborative process should be employed by the administrators and teachers to develop and articulate their shared vision.

In schools where administrators and teachers learn and work together as a PLC, the focus is unceasingly on students and their successful learning. The staff members' commitment to their own continuous learning is directed by evidence of students' learning. This efficacious staff believes that each student has the capacity to learn well. The staff creates the vision and, subsequently, the environment wherein all students will reach their potential. The vision is kept visible and is revisited often to ensure its currency and authenticity.

Although each member of the learning community is responsible for his or her own behaviors, the common good is given priority for action. The relationships of the individuals are supported by their caring about each other, trust in each other, open communication with each other, and by their belief that they can consistently increase their competence through their shared learning. The community members all strive toward a vision of enhanced quality teaching so that all students will be successful learners who meet high standards.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITY 1.1

### My Personal Learning Compass

*Learning is the making of meaning.*

—Robert Kegan

#### Outcome

PLC members will identify and understand their unique approach to learning.

#### Assumption

Learning within a group can often create conflicts or confusion because of different approaches to learning. The better we understand our own personal orientation as a learner, the more likely it is that we will be able to accept how others learn in ways different from our own ways.

#### Suggested Time

45–60 minutes

#### Materials

- Colored dots
- “Navigating Learning” (see p. 31; one copy for each participant)
- “Personal Learning Compass” (see p. 33; one copy for each participant)

#### Learning Event

1. **Set the stage** by asking PLC members to describe a time when they found learning fun and interesting, and a time they found learning difficult and boring. Ask them what might have been happening for learning to have been experienced in two different ways. After having PLC members share their stories, invite them to find a partner for the remainder of this activity.
2. **Give** each member a copy of “Navigating Learning” and of the “Personal Learning Compass.” Inform members this activity will help each of them to identify a possible preferred approach in how they like to learn.

3. **Invite** members to read “Navigating Learning” and then turn to their partners to discuss what might be important in thinking about learning across two poles: perceiving and processing. Depending on time, you might gather some of their key insights on flip-chart paper.

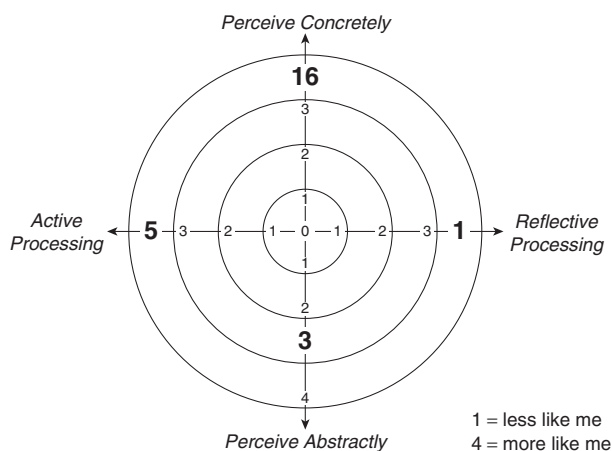
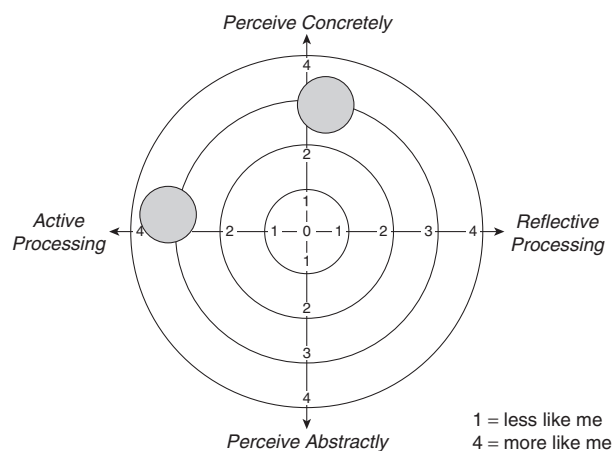
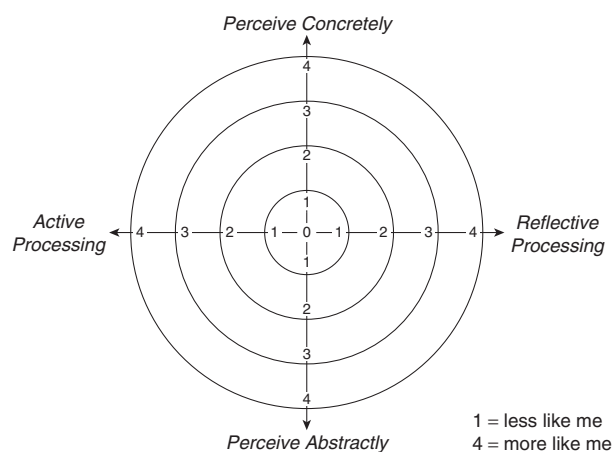
4. **Direct** PLC members to “Personal Learning Compass.” Give each person two sticky dots and ask him or her to locate the large square with a target in the middle.

Ask each person to place one dot on the vertical line (*preferred perceptual learning*) that feels most like him or her, and one dot on the horizontal line (*preferred process for learning*) that feels most like him or her. The vertical and horizontal poles are identified as 1 (less like me) and 4 (most like me).

5. **Develop** a “Personal Learning Compass” for the whole PLC. When everyone has finished, ask any member who had a dot in the *Perceive Concretely* section to raise his or her hand. Count the raised hands and put the number in that section. Do this for the other three orientations: *Perceive Abstractly*, *Reflective Processing*, *Active Processing*.

6. **Ask** members to take about 5 minutes and write a story (on the back of the paper) of a time they experienced learning at its best. When they have completed their stories, ask the members to scan the story they wrote and look for clues about their preferred way of learning. They should then check as many boxes that feel appropriate in the upper left corner of the “Personal Learning Compass,” *I prefer to learn . . .*

7. **Bring closure** by asking members to think about orientations that are opposite from their own and to consider what behaviors they could express that would support a



different type of learner. For example, a person who rates high in preferring to experience learning concretely might accommodate a different learning style by expressing patience when members want to discuss ideas in detail.

8. Finally, **invite** members to write in the box in the lower-left-hand corner what behaviors they could express for each learner who learns differently from the way they learn.

### **Future Application**

Take the “Personal Learning Compass” for the whole group and enlarge it so it can be clearly visible where you meet. You can use it for a checkout at the end of a meeting to make sure all learning orientations are being supported and acknowledged. You might also reference it if conflict arises in the PLC. Often conflict can occur because different learning orientations are not being considered or supported in the PLC.

### **Notes:**

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## NAVIGATING LEARNING

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James L. Roussin

*Each of us has a preferred way of perceiving and processing experiences—of interacting with our world. We call this a learning style. A learning style is a description of consistent preferences each of us has for the way we like to receive, process, and package information.*

—McCarthy & O’Neill-Blackwell (2007)

When navigating across unknown or unfamiliar terrain, it is helpful to have a compass. A compass can give us a sense of comfort and direction, even when our surroundings are not familiar. Sometimes when working with others in the PLC we can feel lost or confused. When that happens, it can be helpful to have a compass to guide us through the different ways each person experiences and expresses his or her own learning.

The “Personal Learning Compass” (see p. 33) identifies and charts the learning preferences of PLC members across two dimensions. The *vertical dimension* engages learning on a *perceptual* level. The *horizontal dimension* engages learning on a *processing* level. These two dimensions operate together to frame a learning preference for a group or an individual. Kurt Lewin (1951) was the first to identify these two dimensions. Lewin was a psychologist who developed the basis for much of today’s basic learning theory.

### The Vertical Dimension

The vertical dimension of learning moves between two *perceptual* poles: the concrete and the abstract. Donald Kolb referenced the *concrete* as our *immediate experience* that is embraced in deep feeling tones (sensate). When a learner is oriented toward the concrete, he or she likes sensory-based learning and personal involvement. The learner enjoys interacting with others through personal discovery. When a learner prefers the *abstract* pole, he or she likes to engage thinking through logic and theory in order to conceptualize for understanding. At this end of the pole the learner prefers to have his or her thinking mediated through new ideas or concepts.

Bernice McCarthy suggested, “The tension between these two ways of perceiving is the central dynamic in learning” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 27). We like to think of the two perceptual poles as polarities. They are like breathing. If you only inhale and never exhale, you will quickly run into problems. The greatest potential for learning occurs when a person or team is flexible enough to engage perceptual learning at each end of the two poles.

### The Horizontal Dimension

The horizontal dimension of learning moves between two *processing* poles: active and reflective. When the learner prefers the *reflective* processing pole, he or she likes to rely on *thoughts and feelings* to create new knowledge. From this position the learner is in an observer role, watching or developing insight about his or her own experiences.

In the *active* processing pole, the learner prefers *active experimentation*, like constructing, building, or writing. The learner also prefers a practical approach on topics that are relevant and immediate. *Active* learners tend to retain and understand information best by doing something active with it.


## **32** GUIDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

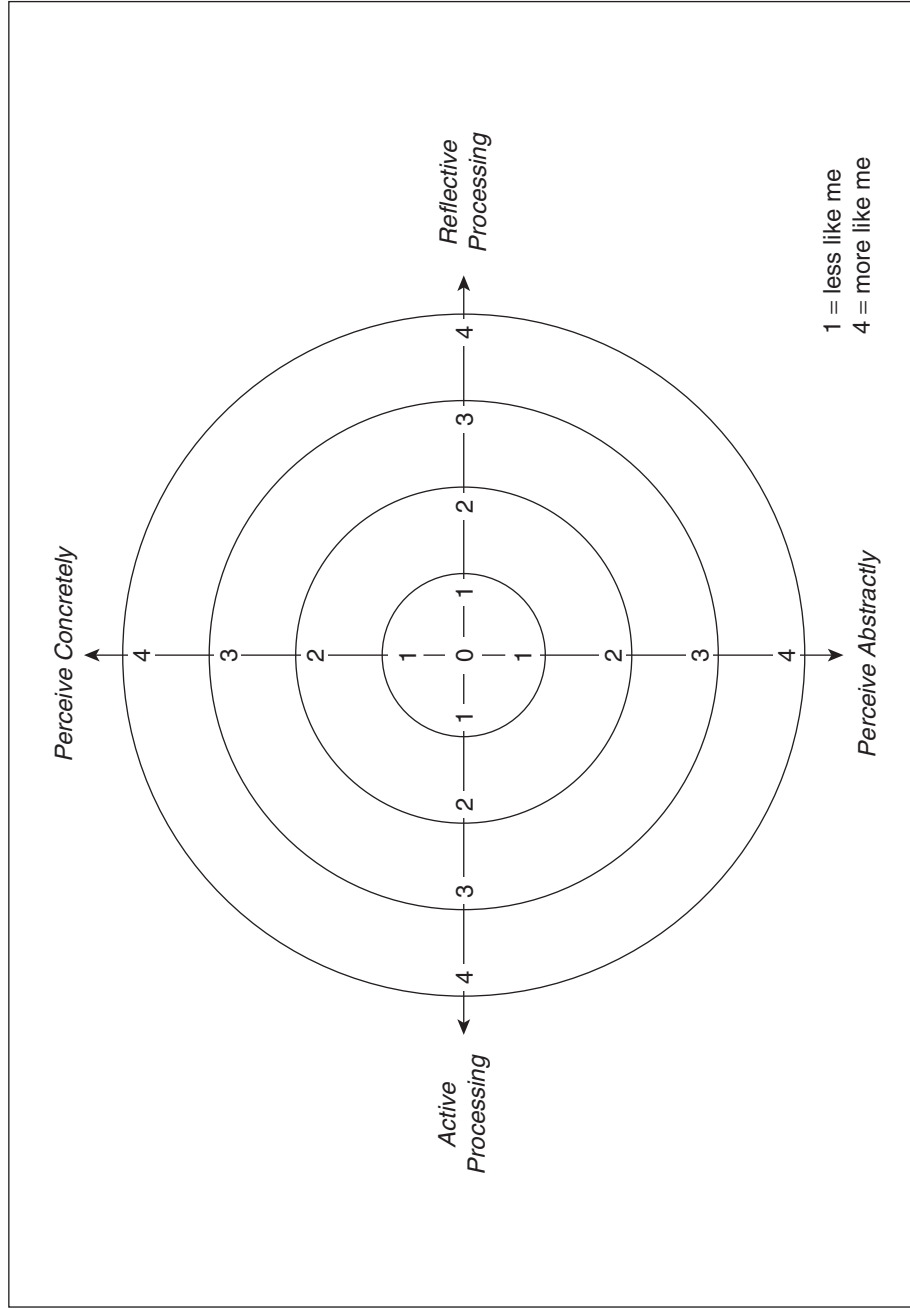
It is helpful to remember that when facilitating the learning in a PLC each person has his or her own preference for learning. That preference is guided by an internal compass. If PLC members are not aware of the different approaches to learning, they may be less patient in dealing with others who have an orientation to learning that is different from their own. The “Personal Learning Compass” on page 33 can help the PLC identify and map out different learning approaches across two critical dimensions, perceiving and processing.

**Notes:**

## PERSONAL LEARNING COMPASS

A learning story: write about a time when you experienced learning at its *best!*

	<p><b>I prefer to learn...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> with others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> alone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> by thinking &amp; reflecting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> by doing</li> </ul>
<p><b>My Learning Stretch:</b>  <i>What I will do differently to stretch myself into a different approach to learning in the PLC?</i></p>	
<p>Perceive Concretely:</p>	
<p>Perceive Abstractly:</p>	
<p>Reflective Processing:</p>	
<p>Active Processing:</p>	



1 = less like me  
4 = more like me

Source: Concept by David A. Kolb. (1984). Adaptation and design by James L. Roussin.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITY 1.2

### Creating a Culture of Academic Optimism

*Mastery or enactive experiences are the most powerful source of efficacy information. The perception that a performance has been successful raises efficacy beliefs, which contributes to the expectation of proficient performance in the future.*

—Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy (2004)

#### Outcome

This learning opportunity identifies critical research around the importance of building collective efficacy and academic optimism within the PLC.

**Academic optimism.** The belief staff members carry about the control they have in making a difference for student learning. When there is high academic optimism, the faculty believes they can make a difference in helping every student learn and be successful.

#### Assumption

When PLC members hold high academic optimism for making a difference in student learning and see the results of their efforts, they nurture collective efficacy. Collective efficacy in return builds hope and courage to take on the most difficult challenges facing schools today.

#### Suggested Time

60–90 minutes

#### Materials

- Flip chart and markers
- Research Briefs 1–4 (see pp. 36, 37, 39, and 41; one set for each participant)
- “Creating a Culture of Academic Optimism” (see p. 43; one copy for each participant)

#### Learning Event

1. **Set the stage** by asking the members in the PLC to identify the critical factors that make the greatest difference in improving schools for student learning. As members are reporting out, chart the ideas on a flip chart. After everyone has reported out, inform the group members they are going to read some of the most pertinent research to date



for improving schools. They should be on the lookout for where their ideas connect to the research, and for where they don't.

2. **Share** the four research briefs. First, have PLC members count off up to the number four. Give each participant the research brief corresponding to his or her number. The group members should take 10–15 minutes to read and highlight key ideas from the briefs. After each person has had enough time to read, he or she should join others who read the same brief and discuss with them important learning that would benefit the whole group. One person should write on a flip chart the concepts the group thinks are important to everyone. This can take from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the group. At the end of the charting, have each small group report to the larger group what they feel is important.
3. After everyone has reported out, **ask** each group to add one more sheet of flip-chart paper next to the key learning. On the flip-chart paper, have them create a T-chart. On the left side, write the heading, What We Are Already Doing! On the right side, write the heading, What Else Might We Do?
4. **Invite** each group to start filling out the chart. Once that is complete, have groups move from chart to chart and identify what is already in place in the school and what might be put in place in the future.
5. **Provide closure** by handing out copies of “Creating a Culture of Academic Optimism” and requesting each group to identify possible next steps to embed more intentionally their research concept in the work of the PLC during the next 2 months. Each small group might also create two or three action steps the PLC can take to implement the research into practice.

### **Future Application**

The PLC should consider creating a yearly action plan based on the research of academic optimism. Once the action plan is developed, determine a way to evaluate progress and determine how this effort is making a difference for students and their learning.

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**RESEARCH BRIEF 1**

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**Academic Emphasis of Schools (Group 1)**

Academic emphasis is the extent to which the school is driven by a *quest* for academic excellence—a press for academic achievement. High but achievable academic goals are set for students, the learning environment is orderly and serious, students are motivated to work hard, and students respect academic achievement (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991).

Hoy and his colleagues (1991) were first to demonstrate that the collective property academic emphasis of the school was positively and directly related to student achievement in high schools while controlling for SES (socioeconomic status). Whether school effectiveness was conceived as the commitment of teachers to the school, the teachers' judgment of the effectiveness of the school, or actual student test scores, academic emphasis remained a potent force. At both middle school and high school, academic emphasis and achievement were positively related, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors (Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy and Sabo, 1998).

The findings are the same for elementary schools. Goddard, Sweetland, and Hoy (2000), controlling for SES, school size, student race, and gender, used hierarchical linear modeling to find academic emphasis an important element in explaining achievement in both math and reading. The authors concluded, "Elementary schools with strong academic emphases positively affect achievement for poor and minority students" (p. 698).

Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005) considered the influence of the instructional leadership of the principal and the academic press of the school. They also found that academic emphasis was significant in explaining student achievement, even controlling for SES. They found that academic emphasis of the school, not instructional leadership, was the critical variable explaining achievement. In fact, instructional leadership worked indirectly, not directly, through academic press to influence student achievement.

The results are consistent, whether the level was elementary, middle, or secondary: academic emphasis is a key variable in explaining student achievement, even controlling for socioeconomic status, previous achievement, and other demographic variables.

***Academic Emphasis***

The one goal that virtually everyone shares for schools is academic achievement of students. The reform and accountability movements have promoted a press toward the academic achievement of all students (No Child Left Behind). The focus of schooling is clear: it is academic. A push for academic achievement, however, in an environment where teachers do not feel efficacious, is a recipe for frustration and stress. The challenge is to create school conditions in which teachers believe they and their students are up to the task. How might this be done? Principals move a school by example. They celebrate the achievements of students and faculty, especially the academic ones. An emphasis on the honor roll, national honor societies, and exemplary student work of all kinds are examples of behaviors that foster academics. To be sure, this is an old list, but in conjunction with building efficacy and trust, these activities take on new strength.

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## RESEARCH BRIEF 2

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### Collective Efficacy (Group 2)

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997) is a general framework for understanding human learning and motivation. Self-efficacy, a critical component of the theory, is an individual's belief in her or his capacity to organize and execute the actions required to produce a given level of attainment (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy beliefs are central mechanisms in human agency, the intentional pursuit of a course of action. Individuals and groups are unlikely to initiate action without a positive sense of efficacy. The strength of efficacy beliefs affects the choices individuals and schools make about their future plans and actions.

Student achievement and sense of efficacy are related. Researchers have found positive associations between student achievement and three kinds of efficacy beliefs: self-efficacy beliefs of students (Pajares, 1994, 1997), self-efficacy beliefs of teachers (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and teachers' collective efficacy beliefs about the school (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). We focus on collective efficacy of schools and student achievement because collective efficacy is a school property amenable to change.

Within schools, perceived collective efficacy represents the judgments of the group about the performance capability of the social system as a whole (Bandura, 1997). Teachers have efficacy beliefs about themselves as well as about the entire faculty. Simply put, perceived collective efficacy is the judgment of the teachers that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute actions required to have a positive effect on students (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

Bandura (1993) was first to show the relationship between sense of collective efficacy and academic school performance, a relationship that existed in spite of low socioeconomic status. Schools in which the faculty had a strong sense of collective efficacy flourished, whereas those in which faculty had serious doubts about their collective efficacy withered—that is, declined or showed little academic progress. Continuing research has provided support for the importance of collective efficacy in explaining student achievement. Goddard, Hoy et al. (2000) supported the role of collective efficacy in promoting school achievement in urban elementary schools. They hypothesized that perceived collective efficacy would enhance student achievement in mathematics and reading. After controlling for SES, they found that collective efficacy was significantly related to student achievement in urban elementary schools.

Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002), continuing this line of inquiry and using collective efficacy as the central variable, predicted school achievement in high schools. They found collective efficacy was the key variable in explaining student achievement. They found, in fact, that it was more important than either socioeconomic status or academic press. Hoy and his colleagues (2002) concluded, "School norms that support academic achievement and collective efficacy are particularly important in motivating teachers and students to achieve . . . however, academic press is most potent when collective efficacy is strong" (p. 89). That is, academic press works through collective efficacy. They further theorized that when collective efficacy was strong, an emphasis on academic pursuits directed teacher behaviors, helped them persist, and reinforced social norms of collective efficacy.

In a similar vein, Goddard, LoGerfo, and Hoy (2004) tested a more comprehensive model of perceived collective efficacy and student achievement. They *learned* that collective efficacy explained student achievement in reading, writing, and social studies, regardless of minority student enrollment, urbanicity, SES, school size, and earlier achievement. Research has

consistently demonstrated the power of positive efficacy judgments in human learning, motivation, and achievement in such diverse areas as dieting, smoking cessation, sports performance, political participation, and academic achievement (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

### *Collective Efficacy*

Collective efficacy is grounded in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory; hence, we turn to his sources of efficacy for ideas about how to build collective efficacy in schools. The sources of self-efficacy are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states, each of which conveys information that influences teacher perceptions about the school (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004; Pajares, 1997). For example, let's consider a school with a poor graduation rate. A neighboring district has implemented a successful program for at-risk students. The principal is in the position to orchestrate the transfer of the neighbor's success to his or her school. In so doing, the school is engaged in a self-regulatory process informed by the vicarious learning of its members and, perhaps, the social persuasion of leaders. Modeling success and persuading teachers to believe in themselves and their capabilities is a reasonable route to improve collective efficacy and enhance academic optimism (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy et al., 2004).

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## RESEARCH BRIEF 3

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### Faculty Trust in Parents and Students (Group 3)

Faculty trust in parents and students is the third school property that is related to student achievement. Faculty trust in parents and students is a collective school property in the same fashion as collective efficacy and academic emphasis. Surprisingly, trust in parents and trust in students is a unitary concept. Although one might think that the two are separate concepts, several factor analyses have demonstrated they are *not* (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Furthermore, Bryk and Schneider (2002) make the theoretical argument that teacher–student trust in elementary schools operates primarily through teacher–parent trust.

Trust is one's vulnerability to another in the belief that the other will act in one's best interests. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), after an extensive review of the literature, concluded that trust is a general concept with at least five facets: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. Although it is theoretically possible that these facets of trust may not vary together, the research on schools shows all five facets of trust in schools do indeed vary together to form an integrated construct of faculty trust in schools, whether the schools are elementary (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) or secondary (Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001). Thus, we defined faculty trust as the group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Cooperation and trust should set the stage for effective student learning, but only a few studies have examined this relationship. Goddard et al. (2001) examined the role of faculty trust in promoting school achievement of urban elementary schools. Using a multilevel model, they demonstrated a significant direct relationship between faculty trust in clients (i.e., students and parents) and higher student achievement, even controlling for socioeconomic status. Like collective efficacy, faculty trust was a key property that enabled schools to overcome some of the disadvantages of low SES.

Hoy (2002) examined the trust-achievement hypothesis in high schools and again found that faculty trust in parents and students was positively related to student achievement while controlling for SES. He theorized that trusting others is a fundamental aspect of human learning because learning is typically a cooperative process, and distrust makes cooperation virtually impossible. When students, teachers, and parents have common learning goals, then trust and cooperation are likely ingredients that improve teaching and learning.

Finally, Bryk and Schneider (2002) performed a three-year longitudinal study in 12 Chicago elementary schools. Using HLM models, survey and achievement data, and in-depth interviews, they concluded relational trust was a prime resource for school improvement. Trust and cooperation among students, teachers, and parents influenced regular student attendance, persistent learning, and faculty experimentation with new practices. In brief, trust among teachers, parents, and students produced schools that showed marked gains in student learning, whereas schools with weak trust relationships saw virtually no improvement. The research of Bryk and Schneider, and that of Hoy and his colleagues (2006a), reinforce each other in the common conclusion that faculty trust of students and parents enhances student achievement.

*Trust in Parents and Students*

There is some research on family and community involvement in schools (cf., Epstein, 1989). There is little systematic research on how to build authentic trust, however. Faculty trust in students and parents can be promoted through useful interchanges, both formal and informal, between parents and teachers. Making the most of vicarious learning, for example, a school can respond to a lack of trust and community participation in school activities by emulating the practices and procedures of magnet schools, which are known for their parental cooperation and involvement. But much more research is needed about what programs and factors support the development of teachers' trust in parents and students.

Such examples demonstrate how changes in social perceptions influence what actions organizations choose to pursue. Collective perceptions about efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust shape the school's normative environment and can be developed through experiences that convey their value.

**Notes:**

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## RESEARCH BRIEF 4

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### Academic Optimism (Group 4)

Three collective properties—academic emphasis, efficacy, and trust—are not only similar in their nature and function, but also in their potent and positive influence on student achievement. The three concepts have much in common. In fact, Hoy and his colleagues (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006) demonstrated that *the three collective properties worked together in a unified fashion to create a positive academic environment called academic optimism*.

Many conceptions treat optimism as a cognitive characteristic: a goal or expectancy (Peterson, 2000; Snyder et al., 2002). Our conception of academic optimism includes both cognitive and affective dimensions, and adds a behavioral element. Collective efficacy is a group belief or expectation: it is cognitive. Faculty trust in parents and teachers is an affective response. Academic emphasis is the press for particular behaviors in the school workplace (Hoy et al., 2006b). Hoy and his colleagues concluded, “Collective efficacy reflects the thoughts and beliefs of the group; faculty trust adds an affective dimension, and academic emphasis captures the behavioral enactment of efficacy and trust” (p. 14). Academic optimism is a rich picture of human agency that explains collective behavior in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

When the faculty believes it has the capability to organize and execute actions for a positive effect on student achievement, it emphasizes academic achievement, and academic emphasis in turn reinforces a strong sense of collective efficacy. In sum, all the elements of academic optimism are in transactional relationships with each other and interact to create a culture of academic optimism in the school.

Hoy & his colleagues (2006b) chose the term *academic optimism* to reflect beliefs about control in schools. They explain as follows:

Optimism is an appropriate overarching construct to unite efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis because each concept contains a sense of the possible. Efficacy is the belief that the faculty can make a positive difference in student learning; teachers believe in themselves. Faculty trust in students and parents is the belief that teachers, parents, and students can cooperate to improve learning, that is, the faculty believes in its students. Academic emphasis is the enacted behavior prompted by these beliefs, that is, the focus is student success. Thus, a school with high academic optimism is a collectivity in which the faculty believes that it can make a difference, that students can learn, and academic performance can be achieved. (Hoy et al., 2005)

#### *Optimism*

The research on individual optimism suggests some ideas about encouraging a culture of optimism in schools. Peterson (2000) found that optimism is thwarted by stress, so decreasing stress should support optimism. Teachers can lower their stress by increasing their agency and control through appropriate participation in decisions that affect their school lives (Hoy & Tarter, 2004).

People learn from models because the observation of successful performance in others promotes an acquisition of their beliefs and the actions. The most effective models are those who seem competent, powerful, prestigious, and similar to the observer (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Vicarious and observational learning are sources of optimism. *Thus teachers can serve as models for each other.* The way school problems are discussed should convey the possibilities for resolution rather defeatism. *Novice teachers, for example, should hear optimistic approaches to teaching rather than a sense of passive helplessness in teachers' lounges and school hallways.*

Our analysis is a promising clarification of the linkages within schools that influence student achievement. Although our data are drawn from high schools, we believe the findings are applicable to elementary and middle schools because the three elements of academic optimism have explained learning in those settings as well. Clearly, more research in a variety of school settings is necessary to build a comprehensive theory of academic optimism of schools.

Academic optimism is especially attractive because it emphasizes the potential of schools to overcome the power of socioeconomic factors to impair student achievement. *There is a real value in focusing on potential with its strength and resilience rather than pathology with its weakness and helplessness. Optimism attempts to explain and nurture what is best in schools to facilitate student learning.* This simple conclusion should encourage teachers and principals to move forward with confidence.

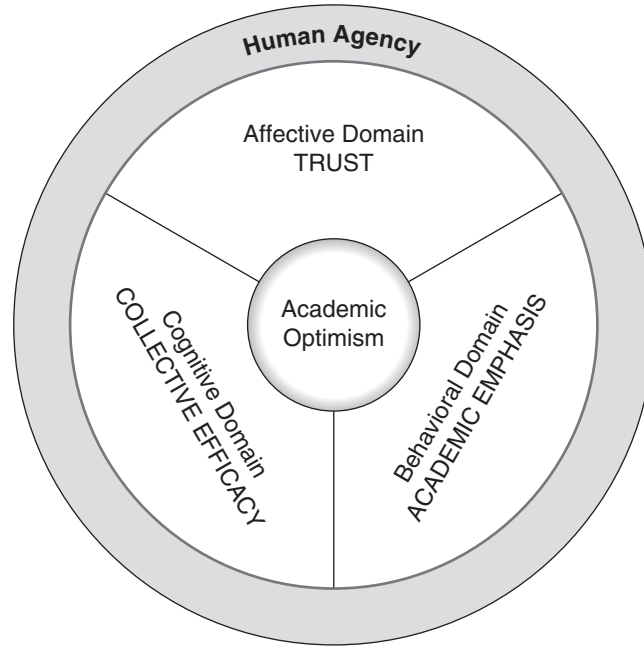
#### Notes:



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**CREATING A CULTURE OF ACADEMIC OPTIMISM**

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Create an action map that identifies next steps for implementing the research on academic optimism.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITY 1.3

### Prioritized Abandonment

*When you have disciplined people, you don't need hierarchy. When you have disciplined thought, you don't need bureaucracy.*

—Collins (2001)

#### Outcome

This learning opportunity will help the PLC identify what might be abandoned so there is a more rigorous focus on a goal that improves student learning.

#### Assumption

We can easily become distracted by attending to too many things in our work, all of which can feel right and important. However, by focusing on so many things, we lose sight of what is important and may minimize our potential to make a difference.

#### Suggested Time

45–90 minutes

#### Materials

- “Prioritized Abandonment Overview” (see p. 46; one copy for each participant)
- “Prioritized Abandonment Chart” (see p. 48), enlarged so the whole group can see it
- Sticky notes (one package per participant)

#### Learning Event

1. **Set the stage** by asking each person in the PLC to brainstorm privately a list of personal or professional activities or actions that he or she chose to abandon at some point in the past, and to recall what occurred afterward. Have each person report out one such situation and what happened as a result.
2. **Assign** learning partners in pairs and have them read the “Prioritized Abandonment Overview.” At the end of reading each paragraph, utilize the strategy of *say something*. In this strategy, there is no cross talk. Each person reads and then shares what thoughts came to mind after reading the paragraph. At the end of the reading, have each pair join another pair for a group of four and openly discuss what stands out as important after reading the text.

3. **Focus** on PLC goals with the following activity. At the end of the discussion, give each person a package of sticky notes. Have each person quietly identify one thing (on each sticky note) that they or others are doing that might be abandoned in order to focus better on the PLC goal(s). Then have the group do a silent sorting of the sticky notes by like activities. Assign a name (heading) for each activity grouping, and add the total number of notes written in each group.
4. **Show** how prioritized abandonment works by guiding the PLC to the enlarged “Prioritized Abandonment Chart.” You will want the PLC to categorize each of the activities they identified on their sticky notes under one of the following headings:
  - Important and Urgent
  - Important and NOT Urgent
  - NOT Important and Urgent
  - NOT Important and NOT Urgent

Write each heading in the appropriate area of the large chart. Check with each group to see if anything else comes to mind. After all ideas are voiced and listed on the chart, have the groups prioritize and write in the parentheses on each line of the chart the correct rank for each heading (what should be considered *first* in being abandoned, then *second* and so on).

5. **Provide closure** by having the PLC reach consensus on one or two activities that could be abandoned without harming student learning or the operation of the school or other district programs. The PLC should also determine who should be notified and included in the decision on choosing to abandon a practice, task, or initiative. Also, the PLC may need to identify what practical steps will have to be taken to actually make the abandonment happen.

### Future Application

Have the PLC monitor in the weeks ahead what happens after making the decision to abandon something. You will want to check in with each other on what you are noticing and what impact, if any, is occurring based on leaving a practice, task, or initiative behind. This reporting will provide confidence for those who are unsure about the decision for choosing to abandon the practice, task, or initiative the PLC agreed on. Each successful abandonment that enhances the potential for reaching your goals prepares the PLC to be more aware of what can be abandoned in the future that is not adding value or contributing toward your most important goals.

### Notes:

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**PRIORITIZED ABANDONMENT OVERVIEW**

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James L. Roussin

*Never mistake motion for action.*

—Ernest Hemingway

In Jim Collins's book *Good to Great*, he researched what it was that made certain organizations more successful than others. As he looked at highly successful businesses and teams, he identified "best practices" that increased the chances for reaching established goals and priorities. Collins's research led him to what he called *the Hedgehog concept*. This concept was loosely based on a Greek poem by Archilochus about a fox and a hedgehog. The poem illustrated that a fox knows many things and is easily distracted and unfocused. A hedgehog knows *one big* thing and can ignore many distractions and stay focused on what is really important. If a PLC is going to have an impact for improving student learning through the work of adult learning, then it will be important to focus collective efforts toward clear goals and not get side-tracked by the many distractions of school life.

Sometimes it is hard to distinguish a distraction from the important work. Stephen Covey in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (first published in 1989), suggested that busyness in our workplaces has become the new corporate disease. Workers can often get a temporary high from solving urgent matters, which can turn into an addiction to urgency. The constant demands placed on our work today can create low levels of stress that engages the neurotransmitter epinephrine, also called adrenaline. This hormone is released when a person is confronted by environmental factors such as excitement and fear. What is important to understand from Covey's perspective is that we might be unconsciously adding unnecessary work in our jobs in order to feed our addiction to urgency. In order to break this pattern, it is important to periodically identify which things you are currently doing that you can abandon, things that are not contributing toward reaching the results of your goals or desired outcomes.

Larry Lezotte first discussed the concept of prioritized abandonment. Lezotte suggested that it was important to look carefully at current practices and stop those that were not effective or contributing toward reaching identified goals. The advantage of thoughtfully abandoning practices, tasks, and initiatives that are not contributing toward our goals is that it frees up our time so we can focus on what is important. This brings us right back to the hedgehog concept. If we want to make a meaningful difference in our PLCs, then it will be important to identify what we can abandon in order to better focus our attention and efforts on our goal(s) or desired outcomes. The prioritized abandonment chart on page 48 can help you with this process.

Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.

It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions.

And the actions which speak louder than words.

It is making the time when there is none.

Coming through time after time, year after year.

Commitment is the stuff character is made of,  
the power to change the face of things.

It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

—Author unknown

**Notes:**

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*Source:* Lezotte & McKee (2002), Collins (2001), Covey (1989).

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**PRIORITIZED ABANDONMENT CHART**

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____	( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____
NOT IMPORTANT	( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____	( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____ ( ) _____

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITY 1.4

### Discovering Our Core Values

*Once people have evidence that leads them to perceive differences in values, distrust is likely to emerge.*

—Sitkin & Roth (1993)

#### Outcome

The PLC will identify its common core values that will guide the work of learning and collaboration during the year.

#### Assumption

Organizations that discover the larger purpose for their work and their commitment to core values go a long way to engage human energy and passion.

#### Suggested Time

45–90 minutes

#### Materials

- 10 sheets of blank 8 1/2 x 11 paper per table
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Dots
- “Quotes” (see p. 51), photocopied and cut out so there are enough quotes to give one to each participant
- “Discovering Our Core Values” (see p. 53; one copy for each participant)

#### Learning Event

1. **Set the stage** by informing the PLC members that they will explore common core values for working together during the year. Give each person a quote (see “Quotes,” p. 51) relating to core values, then have everyone turn to a neighbor and explain why his or her quote is important for the work of a PLC. After this, have the participants report out their understanding of what a core value is and is not. Don’t move on until you are sure everyone understands the idea of a core value, especially as it relates to the workplace.
2. Ask everyone to get into a relaxed position, and, if it is comfortable for them to do so, to close their eyes. **Read** aloud the brief story “Discovering Our Core Values” at the top of

the handout. Be sure to pause frequently and read slowly so participants can visualize the images described in the story. At the end of the story, ask participants to wait quietly without talking while you give each member a copy of “Discovering Our Core Values.”

3. **Facilitate** the development of common core values by asking each person to write the three messages they want to give the child. These will be written inside the boxes on the handout. Allow 5–10 minutes for everyone to write the messages. At the end of the writing, each person in the PLC will share with others in the small group what his or her core values are for the child. Ask the group to look for common themes expressed by the values everyone shares. At the end of the sharing, have someone from each small group capture the common core value themes using the markers and 8 1/2 x 11 paper. There should be one value for each sheet of paper.
4. **Build** a core values wall. Have table groups tape all the common themes on the wall. You will want to group those that are similar and have the PLC give each group a name. Give each participant three dots to identify the three core values that would be most important to guide the work of the PLC in the coming year. Ask everyone to quietly post his or her dots. After everyone has identified their most important core values, discuss where the dots were placed and why the core value with the most dots is important.
5. **Provide closure** by identifying three to four core values that will guide the PLC in the coming year. Be sure you take time and reach a consensus on the core values that have been identified as important.

### **Future Application**

At your next PLC meeting, consider taking each core value and identifying a behavior that could be expressed by the group when doing its work. You might even start a conversation around how the core values engage the work of learning by the adults as it is connected to the learning of the students in the school. A last suggestion is to include the core values on all your PLC agendas as a reminder.

### **Notes:**



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 QUOTES
 

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*Companies that illuminate the larger purpose of their work and their commitment to core values will go a long way to align and motivate all generations in their workplaces.*

From *Strategies for the Intergenerational Workplace*, by K. Kirkpatrick, S. Martin, S. Warneke. Retrieved June 4, 2009, from [http://www.gensler.com/uploads/documents/IntergenerationalWorkplace\\_07\\_17\\_2008.pdf](http://www.gensler.com/uploads/documents/IntergenerationalWorkplace_07_17_2008.pdf)

*Highly proactive people recognize their "responsibility"—the ability to choose their response. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feeling.*

From *Daily Reflections for Highly Effective People: Living the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Every Day* (1989) by Stephen R. Covey. New York: Fireside.

*The extent to which an individual's values coincide with the shared image of her or his community determines the degree of his or her membership in that community. The level of integration that an organization will achieve during times of change will depend on the means by which it dissolves the value-conflict of its members.*

From *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity* (2006), by J. Gharajedaghi. San Diego, CA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

*A leader will find it difficult to articulate a coherent vision unless it expresses his core values, his basic identity . . . one must first embark on the formidable journey of self-discovery in order to create a vision with authentic soul.*

From *Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning* (2004) by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. New York: Penguin.

*If there are no common values, there can be no image of the future.*

From *Images of the Future: The Twenty-First Century and Beyond* (1975) by Robert Bundy.

*The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been kindness, beauty and truth.*

—Albert Einstein

*Values are the criteria we use to evaluate alternatives, and they allow us to set priorities. Without values, decision making would be impossible.*

From *Values-Driven Change: Strategies and Tools for Long-Term Success* (2006) by Kenneth E. Hultman. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

*Leadership is basically a matter of how to be, not how to do it. Leaders need to lead by example, with clear, consistent messages, with values that are “moral compasses,” and a sense of ethics that works full time.*

Frances Hesselbein, quoted in *Beat the Odds: Avoid Corporate Death and Build a Resilient Enterprise* by Robert A. Rudzki (2007). Fort Lauderdale, FL: J. Ross Publishing, Inc.

*All decision-making is a values-clarifying exercise.*

From *Personal Power II: The Driving Force!* (1996) by Anthony Robbins. Audio Renaissance.

*Your values are a critical source of energy, enthusiasm, and direction. Work is meaningful and fun when it's an expression of your true core.*

From "The Case for Optimism" (April 2005) by Shoshana Zuboff, *Fast Company* (93). Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/93/html>

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## DISCOVERING OUR CORE VALUES

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*The extent to which an individual's values coincide with the shared image of her or his community determines the degree of his or her membership in that community. The level of integration that an organization will achieve during times of change will depend on the means by which it dissolves the value conflict of its members.*

—Gharajedaghi (2006)

### Tell the Following Story

Imagine yourself walking down a beautiful, winding country road. It is a glorious day and the beginning of spring. As you continue your walk, you can't help but notice the deep, rich green of the budding leaves from the trees and the rolling hills of pastureland. You notice something far out ahead of you on the road. It looks like a small speck, but is traveling very fast and coming right toward you. You don't worry and continue on your walk, taking in the beauty around you. As you look down the road ahead of you, you suddenly realize that it is another human being coming right toward you and it looks like a young child. This child looks familiar and you soon realize it is *you* when you were a child. You get to give this child three important life messages that will empower the child to live a wonderful and *full* life.

What are the *three messages* you would most want to leave with the child? Write each separate message below in the boxes.

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