The Adaptive School

A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups
Written by Robert J. Garmston & Bruce M. Wellman

Recognizing Social Patterns as People Work Together

Adaptive schools create concurrent focus to increase organizational and professional capacities. This is developed through 6 energy sources: EFFICACY, FLEXIBILITY, INTERDEPENDENCE, CRAFTSMANSHIP and CONSCIOUSNESS. Ideally, the conscious effort of the group will drive member capabilities and shared leadership. Requirements that need to be met to function as an *adaptive school* are the ways of talking, developing success structures and groups, effective collaboration, strategies, and calculated behaviours.

The Results
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

3 Focus Areas

Facilitating Groups

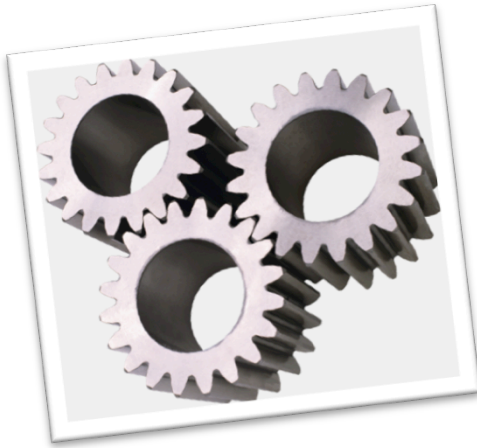Paying attention to task focus, process skills, relationships

Developing Groups

Shared responsibly of the leaders, facilitators, and members

Becoming a Skillful Group Member

Choices of the individual maintain focus, momentum, and achievement

Developing Strong Schools and Collaborative Staffs

'To be adaptive and meet the demands of omnipresent change requires more than linear thought, tired problem-solving formulas, and recycled plans. In the work of school improvement, human energy matters as much as the elements of good management. Maybe more. (p. iii)'

Ideals
- ✓ To change form
- ✓ More data = more predictions? Not always.
- ✓ Everything influences everything else
- ✓ Tiny events produce major disturbances
- ✓ No need to effect everyone to make a difference
- ✓ Things and energy matter

Effective Leaders Reflect
WHO ARE WE?
WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?
WHY ARE WE DOING IT THIS WAY?

Themes
Professional Community
Shared Responsibility
Collaborative Culture
Communal Application
Relational Trust
Individual and Group Learning

LEADERSHIP

All players wear all hats in meetings, activities, in research, in projects. Recognizing and knowing when and how to change them helps creates balance of the group.

1. Facilitating… to make easier.

- ✓ To direct the procedure used in meetings.
- ✓ Choreographs the energy within the group.
- ✓ Maintains the focus of content and one process at a time.
- ✓ Should rarely be the person with the greatest role or knowledge authority

2. Presenting …to teach.

- ✓ To extend and enrich the knowledge, skills or attitudes, and the application of such in the work.
- ✓ May adopt a stance, such as expert, colleague, novice, or friend
- ✓ Chooses strategy of presentation: lecture, cooperative learning, study group, other
- ✓ Guided by clarity of instruction and assessment of goals.

3. Coaching… to help take action.

- ✓ Helps develop expertise in planning, reflecting, problem solving and decision-making.
- ✓ Takes a non-judgmental stance and uses the tools of pausing, paraphrasing, inquiry and probing for purpose.
- ✓ Focuses on perceptions of the group and their thinking.

4. Consulting… to be an information specialist.

- ✓ An information specialist or advocate for content and process
- ✓ Delivers technical knowledge to the group
- ✓ Must have trust, commonly defined goals, and the groups desired outcomes clearly in mind

'Four Hats of Leadership' p. 17

HOLONOMY

From the Greek, *holos*, meaning 'whole' and 'on' meaning 'part'. Realizing that systems have parts, that system creates the bigger system, yet all rely on each other. Seeking resolutions to conflicting tension between part and whole, independence and interdependence (p. 19).

Working in effective groups from an *Adaptive School* model assumes members have certain capabilities. Group members are introduced to the expectations of how to behave in a group and adhere to behaviors that articulate understanding and achieve group purpose.

The idea, '*to know ones' intentions and to choose congruent behaviors*'. Group members are trained to set aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding and inquiring. Examples of are 'autobiographic', 'inquisitive', and 'solution listening'.

Effective group members know when to assert and to integrate in the conversation; and know and support the group's purposes, topics, processes and development (p. 15). An adaptive group member understands their autonomic role builds community.

A school as an ORGANIZATION group focuses on vision, values, goals as their system thinking. Thus, group behavior needs to follow roles of initiating and managing adaptations, interpreting and using data, developing and maintaining collaborative cultures and gathers and focusing resources.

A school as a PROFESSIONAL group focuses on collegial interaction and the cognitive processes of instruction. Thus, group behaviors centers around knowledge of the structure of the discipline, knowledge of self (values, standards, beliefs), repertoire of teaching skills, and knowing about students and how they learn.

5 Energy Sources

for high performing groups
EFFICACY, FLEXIBILITY, CRAFTSMANSHIP, CONSCIOUSNESS, INTERDEPENDENCE.

1. Believing in capacity and staying on course.
2. Multiple perspectives provide intuitive ways of working.
3. Strive for clarity of values, goals and high standards, whilst refining communication process.
4. Monitor impact of actions on one another, group, individuals, and others beyond immediate group.
5. Valuing internal and external relationships, reciprocal influence, and learning.

Ways of Talking- Converge to Converse

Groups Getting Together To Discuss

An '*Adaptive School'* differentiates between DIALOGUE and DISCUSSION.
Both methods of communication are monitored by the 7 Norms of Collaboration.

DIALOGUE

Reflective in nature

'Meaning-making' through words

Members inquire into their own and other's beliefs

Listening is as important as speaking

'Tactic infrastructure of thought' (David Bohm, 1990)

Monitoring the **dialogue** members pay attention to themselves, the process of the dialogue, and **the new whole that is emerging within the group**.

Preparation as a participant is to 'listen to your listening'. The goal is to hear others without judging.

Suspension is the essential internal skill in dialogue, setting aside own perceptions, impulses, feelings. Yet as well, 'suspension' is to expose thoughts on the ceiling for all to examine.

Well-crafted dialogue will lead to understanding with conflict resolution, consensus forming and building professional community.

DISCUSSION

Active in nature

Means to 'shake apart'

Members seek out: a) clarity about the decision making process;

b) knowledge about the boundaries surrounding the authority to make the decision;

c) and standards set during such meetings.

Monitoring the **discussion** member pay attention to themselves, the process of skilled discussion, and the **details of the problem solving, planning, and decision-making process in which they are engaged.**

The purpose of discussion is to eliminate some ideas from a field of possibilities and allow stronger ideas to prevail. (p. 38)

7 Norms of Collaboration

PAUSING *allowing thinking time*

PARAPHRASING *to hear and understand*

PUTTING INQUIRY AT THE CENTRE *explore perceptions, assumptions, interpretations*

PROBING *increase the clarity and precision of thinking*

PLACING IDEAS ON THE TABLE *the heart of meaningful dialogue*

PAYING ATTENTION TO SELF AND OTHERS *being aware of what is being said, how it is said, how others are responding*

PRESUMING POSTIVIE INTENTIONS *promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional putdowns.*

A Structure for Collaborative Decision Making

As a school/staff/classroom leader it is important to set up the environment in which others learn. In effect, one cannot teach people to learn, rather, create atmospheres for learning to occur.

This section is to assist leaders in planning for 'meetings' as a means to increase the learning potential for all participants.

Four meeting success structures include:

1. Decide who decides
2. Define the sandbox
3. Develop standards
4. Design the surround

1. The most critical function related to running a meeting is to provide clarity about how decisions will be made. Determining who is making final decisions helps group members know how to proceed.

2. Groups should be clear about the issue within the sphere of influence it is responsible to. Outside influence and understanding its relationship with the decision will help the group conserve energy by focusing resources where they have direct influence. *Examples of structures that may define the size of the sandbox include:* departments, curriculum, improvement teams, advisory boards, trustees, student councils, faculties, parent-teacher groups, associations, districts.

3. Developing one process, one topic, balancing participation, engaging in conflict issues, and to understand and agree on roles sets the standards of the meeting. Roles are defined as: engaged participant, facilitator, recorder, person with role or knowledge authority.

4. Presence will mediate thinking and behavior. The physical space and room arrangement will structure desired interaction. *Tasks, norms and standards charts* remind participants of norms, meeting standards and group-member capabilities. Incorporate visuals to track information generated, and allow for 'emotional space'- ground members with inclusion activities and support everyone to be fully present both physically and emotionally. Ensure everyone 'checks in'. (p. 77)

As a brief overview, additional suggestions to facilitating successful meetings include providing agendas, preparing goals *before the meeting*, designing an *opening* to the meeting to focus energy and clarify roles, *engagement* opportunities, *transition* periods, and constructing a *closing* to clarify who does what and by when.

Focusing CONSENSUS means that all participants have contributed resources and have taken in to consideration other resources and opinions. Viewing differences as helpful rather than hindrances creates platforms for discussion. An element of consensus would be the idea that all can paraphrase the issue and has had a chance to describe feelings about the issue. Those who disagree are to indicate it publicly they are willing to go along for an experimental try thus everyone shares in the final decision. There is no unanimous vote, not everyone will get their first choice, and not everyone will agree, however, the capacity for the group to move forward will remain intact and there will always be opportunity to revisit decisions if necessary. Additional ways to conduct consensus forums are further discussed throughout the *Adaptive School* program.

Working Effectively with Conflict

'Conflict can be seen as a gift of energy, in which neither side loses and a new dance is created.' Thomas Crum

Cognitive Conflict and Affective Conflict: Differentiating Between the Two

Cognitive Conflict (C-Type) can produce substantial changes and improve team effectiveness. It produces better decisions, increased commitments, increased cohesiveness, increased empathy, and increased understanding. C-Type conflicts are mostly issue related differences of opinion. It is a natural component of being part of a team. Generally, this form of conflict arises as team members examine, compare and reconcile differences. Such an exercise in team effectiveness, focusing attention of the content of conflict, will reveal underlying issues and reduce assumptions to increase group engagement.

Affective Conflict (A-Type) lowers the effectiveness of a group as it fosters hostility, distrust, cynicism, avoidance and apathy among team members. The focus is generally on personalized anger or resentment, usually directed at a person, not an idea. It generally is a result of a lack of skill or norm practice to disagree gracefully. Quality solutions lessen and the commitment to the team declines. Members stray and identify themselves no longer with the team's direction and goals.

Creating a forum and ability to deal with C-Type conflict in constructive ways allows the group to stay on track and focus on the issue, not trivial details. Teams that tackle conflict are generally more creative and diverge beyond normal opinions and circumstance. Open communication is also a benefit when dealing with conflict as it arises. When there is a difference of opinion, an effective team makes the fullest use of every member. Seeking out the thoughts and opinions of those less active helps disseminate and prevent who monopolizes, hijacks or grandstands during the conversation. Overall, when the group has taken the time to build its culture, participation and norms of collaboration, generally, members feel able to speak freely without personal challenge.

As discussed throughout this book, *Adaptive Schools*, there are specific suggestions for managing conflict yourself; as a participant, conflict within the community; and as a leader facilitating the problems. Under all circumstances, the main, recurring theme is to reinforce the values of the community and demonstrate a willingness to 'let go' and 'live with'. Having an openness to foster the ideas and thoughts of others, letting go of your idea being the final authority provides immeasurable understanding as to what it means to function in an effective, cohesive work environment.

Clearing the air and inquiring will also gain deeper understanding of the issue and task at hand. Leaving out the words, 'why' and 'you' when forming questions prevents emotional responses or an imbalance of feelings that have preconceived notions. Examples of furthering questions include:

What specifically does it mean by…?

What might be some of the experiences…?

What are your hunches about the importance?

What path do we take?

As this plays out, where are the directions it may go?

Dialogue Skills

Tips to Refine Dialogue Skills

Effective Dialogue is the means for group advancement. It assists with problem solving, idea generation, and conflict resolution. Ways to impact effective dialogue practice include:

1. State the purpose of your contribution:

-an idea, a wondering, a curiosity, a question to clarify, a thought

2. Inquire about:

- assumptions, implications, connections, generalizations, values, intentions

3. Sentence starters will help speak intentions:

'Here is an idea I'm throwing out on the table'

'Here is an idea I'm holding at the moment'

4. Tips for facilitating dialogue:

-breathe, listen to own listening, speak to the center of the room, set aside assumptions, use listening set asides, monitor your need and purpose to talk, 'why am I saying this?' & 'why am I saying this now?'

5. Monitor meetings for unproductive behaviour:

-side bar conversations, interruptions /interrupting, dominating conversations, lack of organization, lack of purpose or unclear purpose, apathy by participants, hidden agendas, timing, physical arrangement, marking/multitasking, person in charge/takes charge, length, structure, inattentive listening, having materials read to you

6. Lean into the table, the conversation.

-create open, directed, and implicit body language to assure active listening to the sender

MOVING FORWARD

As the understanding of effective group work, and the ways in which people speak with each other, refines itself, what next?

- Adopting the five meeting standards allows opportunity for meaningful engagement.

- Rotating the facilitator and recorder roles allows for balance and the theme that the perception of principal/leader is often more figurehead and traditional.

- Make changes slowly. Choose to work on one or two norms, developing them well.

- Be clear on what is nonnegotiable. Reflect on which norms need be instilled from day one.

- Teach topics groups should know. If staff arrangement is conducive to the physical arrangement of group work, move forward quickly. Do not spend too much time discussing environment arrangement.

- Provide space, tools, and time to engage in discussion. Implement the modeling of effective dialogue from day one set a standard

- **Lighten Up:** Laugh Lots! Listen Well! Locate power inside the group!

Now get Moooving!
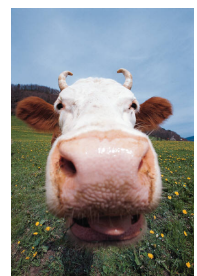
Overall Connections and Reflections

How to be a Better Group Member/Group Facilitator

A brief overview of practical examples, common practices, and highlights how to use parts of the Adaptive School Program in staff and classrooms tomorrow: (in no particular order)

➢ A Technique Approach to acquire 'buy in' from a group: name and describe the strategy, (the 'what' of the issues); offer rationale and related research as to your focus thus far (the 'why'); present the steps visually and make the process available (the 'how').

➢ Say good morning to people and make eye contact. Take time to shake people's hands. Wear nametags in situations where people will be approaching each other and conversing. Use first names in dialogue with others to create communicated connectedness with them.

➢ Risk taking can also be called 'creative-discomfort'.

➢ The purpose of inclusion activities with groups is to set the norms and focus the energy of the room- the beginnings of a learning environment.

➢ We don't learn from experience, we learn from what we 'do' with experience.

➢ It is never wrong to put ideas on the table when there is a mutual understanding that it is an idea, not directly connected to the person formulating the idea.

➢ Create regenerative, not degenerative work environments.

➢ Ask the question, what is going to make people stay? It generally isn't the work; it is where they do it.

➢ Trust is the predetermining factor, the relational trust piece.

➢ The program mimics the program of Cognitive Coaching in the absence of assessment.

➢ The difference between Adapted and **Adaptive**: ways to get ahead rather than change; **changing form while clarifying identity.**

➢ Teachers need to see themselves as more than those who 'move' stuff.

➢ 10 & 2: Ten-Minute Talk & Two Minute Reflections.

➢ Sometimes backing up to see the beauty is what is important.

➢ Always ask, who are we? And why are we doing this?

➢ Conversations are productive when there is a sender, receiver, a message being relayed audibly, it's been paraphrased, clarified, reflected back, and the receiver and sender agree that there was equal opportunity to be heard, shared and understood.

➢ The responses, 'I can live with that' and 'can we meet half way?' help engage in compromise and group balance.

➢ Third point teaching- when delivering content for learning will lessen the distractibility of the learner.

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Executive Book Summary

K Kuehn
EDAM 826 Human Resource Leadership

For Bob Bayles and Keith Walker

University of Saskatoon

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