

WHY TEAMS?

Teams enhance your ability to:

1. Work together to personalize and individualize the learning environment for each student.
2. Build a strong climate of caring and support for students and staff.
3. Share information and resources and provide each other with collegial support.
4. Coordinate instruction and curriculum across subjects.
5. Provide students with a constructive and united front on discipline and attendance.
6. Promote students' social attachment to school by providing them with a team identity and a group of adults who are looking out for them and to whom they can turn for guidance.

Other Team Member Roles and Responsibilities

Teams function best when there is a clear plan for the team that includes each person sharing leadership in the various functions of the team. The team may want to identify specific voluntary roles for each team member. These roles may be adopted for an entire year, or rotated among team members as appropriate. Team leaders must work hard to delegate the team's responsibilities to other teachers on the team and not try to do it all by themselves. Team roles could include:

Assistant Team Leader

- ✓ Works with the team leader to create agendas for team meetings.
- ✓ Chairs team meetings when leader is absent.
- ✓ Produces a team newsletter.
- ✓ Coordinates and leads team/parent conferences.

Communicator

- ✓ Is responsible for all team communications with parents and students.
- ✓ Maintains log of parent contacts in the team notebook.
- ✓ Communicates all schedule changes to parents.

Recorder

- ✓ Maintains team notebook.
- ✓ Maintains and consistently updates team calendar.
- ✓ Arranges for and distributes all necessary forms and copies material the team will need.
- ✓ Provides academy leaders, counselors, and team members with weekly summary notes of team meetings.

Activities Coordinator

- ✓ Is responsible for activities which build the leadership of individual students (and groups of students) within the specific team. This will include both in-school positive reinforcement and communication with parents, staff, and news media.
- ✓ Plans activities for teachers on the team to build collegiality, cohesion, and trust.
- ✓ Hallway decoration and Academy theme.

TEAM TIME

Time to work together is a critical component of a successful interdisciplinary team. In the Success Academy, all teachers on the same team share a common planning period every day. Part of this period is used for team planning and meetings with students and parents. While individual teams determine how this time is used, recommended activities include:

- ☉ Holding formal and informal meetings to discuss individual students and developing action plans to address student problems and needs. Other topics can include school business, schedules, and team goals, policies, and procedures. Administrators, guidance counselors, and other school personnel may be invited to attend as needed; they may also be invited to student/parent conferences.
- ☉ Conferencing with students and parents as a team. It is important to build time into the weekly schedule for dealing with both student and parent problems as they arise. Early intervention can help prevent problems from becoming unmanageable.
- ☉ Planning and coordinating team assemblies, celebrations, and ways to reward students.
- ☉ Reviewing instructional activities every week or every other week to plan ways to reinforce common themes and skills across subjects (see planning form in Appendix B). This activity could provide the basis for future planning of interdisciplinary units.
- ☉ Sharing ideas, strategies, concerns, and resources with each other to improve teaching and learning.
- ☉ Planning professional development mini-workshops led by team members or invited guests.
- ☉ Updating team records and calendar — documentation is important.
- ☉ Enjoying social time with potluck lunch, birthday celebrations, etc. Take time for fun and socializing among yourselves.
- ☉ Evaluating team performance.



50 GREAT THINGS TEAMS DO

1. coordination of homework
2. coordination of tests and quizzes
3. joint parent conferences
4. joint student conferences
5. coordinate with counselor at least once a week
6. use support personnel
7. full student team meetings once a month
8. frequent student awards and rewards/recognize all successes
9. written team policies for students
10. common discipline procedures
11. team bulletin boards
12. monitor academic achievement regularly
13. meet often
14. back to school experiences for parents
15. common rules for homework for absent kids
16. common paper headings
17. team calendar
18. team detention
19. team help sessions
20. have and maintain strong team identity
21. team professional reading sessions
22. team notebook
23. team handbook for teachers
24. team newsletter
25. have and use flexible block scheduling
26. interdisciplinary instruction
27. common grading policies
28. common extra credit policies
29. late assignment policy
30. switch teachers
31. teachers and kids need to have fun
32. team lock-in
33. hire their own colleagues
34. schedule their own kids
35. team list of student supplies to parents in August
36. team birthday cards
37. like each other and respect as professionals
38. coordinate with exploratory
39. guest speakers
40. team field trips
41. plan for special education student needs
42. vocabulary of the week
43. skill of the week
44. create and monitor team goals
45. common hall passes and procedures
46. team banner & motto
47. team brochure
48. team building/bonding the first week of school
49. share successes and failures
50. team anything

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MINUS 1

Responsibilities for Team Members

As in any cooperative learning or collaborative group setting, team members must be assigned legitimate roles and responsibilities if they are to function as a quality and interdependent group of team players. Depending upon the size of the team, individuals may need to assume more than one job. Some possible options are:

1. **TEAM LEADER:** Schedules and facilitates meetings, coordinates items for agendas, manages conflicts, and provides leadership for team activities.
2. **TEAM RECORDER:** Keeps a record of actions and decisions made by the team and serves as historian of the team's operations.
3. **TEAM TIMEKEEPER AND GATEKEEPER:** Nurtures team relationships and keeps team members on task in a timely fashion.
4. **TEAM GOPHER OF RESOURCE PERSON:** Locates and manages the multiple resources needed to plan, implement, and evaluate team activities.
5. **PR OR MARKETING PERSON:** Prepares reports, news releases, and information flyers or memos that keep other faculty members, administrators, and parents aware of the team's accomplishments and actions.
6. **ENCOURAGER:** Provides ongoing support, and praise to team members during team meetings, events, and activities.
7. **SOCIAL CHAIRMAN:** Organizes social and celebrating functions for students and teachers on the team.
8. **LIAISON LINK:** Communicates with other teams, administrators, and support staff to encourage two-way communication between and among various groups and stakeholders of the school.
9. **ACTION RESEARCHER:** Maintains records of student growth and achievement levels for purposes of documenting team's impact on the teaching and learning process.

BONUS IDEA: Prepare a set of role cards for each of the jobs above. Write a description of each role on a single card. Have each person randomly draw a card for a meeting and play that role during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, redistribute the cards so that every member will play another role at the next meeting. Repeat this procedure until everyone has had a chance to play every role as well as a chance to decide who best fits what role. Encourage members to play the "best fit" role on the team for a year.

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Things That Great Teams Do

1. Build a strong team identity, but be certain that the team's identity is compatible with and supportive of the school's overall identity.

2. Conduct regular team meetings with predetermined agendas and follow-up minutes. Appoint a team historian to maintain records of the team's progress throughout the year.

3. Hold regular parent and student conferences. Do not let a week go by without inviting some student(s) or parent(s) to become the focus of a productive discussion or action plan. Try to have conferences that "celebrate" an individual's success as well as those that are scheduled for solving problems.

4. Maintain a team calendar. Distribute this weekly or monthly calendar to both students and parents. Include as many important dates, events, and deadlines as you can to communicate team member schedules.

5. Maintain and use a flexible block schedule. Spend considerable time grouping and regrouping students for instruction and scheduling and rescheduling blocks of time for that instruction. Take full advantage of the opportunity to expand or reduce predetermined blocks of time for the academic subject areas in order to maximize the learning process.

6. Celebrate team successes. Do not let a day go by without taking time to review the high spots of the day or the high points of the week for yourselves, your students, or your parent community. Remember that a string of minor successes can lead to sensational ones!

7. Integrate subject matter. Look for ways to interface the different academic subjects every chance you get. Do not assume that students will automatically see the connections from class to class; you must help them understand the links between one content area and another.

8. Forget mistakes, but learn from them. All team members should feel comfortable in taking risks to tease their minds and stretch their imaginations. Some of your ideas or activities will falter, but develop the attitude that a group learns more from its failures than from its successes.

9. Plan "play" into the work week. It is all right to allow some free time in a weekly schedule for both teachers and students. Use this time for reflection and refocusing so that the week becomes both enjoyable and productive.

10. Hold team "professional reading/learning" sessions. Try to build a professional library of resources for the team so that team members can continue to grow in their careers. Do not limit the materials to educational themes, but include books, pamphlets, tapes, and journals in areas of business, economics, and politics.

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PLUS 20

Tools For Building A Team Identity

- 1.** Team Name/Logo/Mascot/
Colors/Slogan
- 2.** Team Decorations for Door,
Hallways, Rooms
- 3.** Team Newspaper/
Newsletter
- 4.** Team Rules/
Codes of Conduct
- 5.** Team Rewards
- 6.** Team Intramurals
- 7.** Team Birthday Celebrations
- 8.** Team Government
- 9.** Team Recognition Days
- 10.** Team Meals
- 11.** Team Assemblies
- 12.** Team Display of
Student Work
- 13.** Team T-Shirts
- 14.** Team Bulletin Boards
- 15.** Team Handbooks
- 16.** Team Student Conference
- 17.** Team Contests
- 18.** Team Field Trips
- 19.** Team Song
- 20.** Team Parties
- 21.** Team Scrapbook
- 22.** Team Name Tags
for Special Events
- 23.** Team Honor Rolls
- 24.** Team Calendar
- 25.** Team Special Events
and Activities
- 26.** Talent Shows, Spirit Days,
Dress-Up Days
- 27.** Clean-Up Days,
Community Projects
- 28.** Academic Brain Bowls,
Open House, Holiday Parties
- 29.** Team Cheers/Songs/
Choral Readings
- 30.** Team Rituals