



A Toolkit for Teacher Engagement

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Teacher Engagement Toolkit Session

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The learning journey begins in the classroom, where teachers perform their craft, create an environment for learning, and engage and motivate their students to learn, innovate and achieve.

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Introduction

The most important factor for determining the quality of education students receive is the quality of their teachers.¹ Teachers—key stakeholders in the education system—have been largely on the sidelines of the education reform process.² But as attention is increasingly focused on improving teaching effectiveness and accountability, educators can no longer take a back seat to education reform and innovation, or be asked to implement changes they have had no role in creating.

There is a growing number of funders who are seeking to engage educators in the design, planning and implementation of grant-funded initiatives. As education funders seek to engage teachers, they will need to understand how and when to effectively engage teachers, and how to establish patterns of successful engagement.³ Funders will need to establish a framework for engaging teachers, understanding that the purpose of this engagement may vary depending on the goals and outcomes of their funding initiatives: Are teachers being enlisted as stakeholders and advisors on reform strategies? Or are they beneficiaries of the intended outcome?



1. Darling-Hammond, 2000

2. Broemmel, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003; Kirk & Macdonald, 2001; Markow & Pieters, 2010

3. College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2012

Introduction



Funders have much to learn about the environment in which teachers work. This teacher engagement toolkit is designed to help grantmakers understand ways to learn from teachers, build engagement strategies, and design collaborative approaches to help create a framework that more deeply engages teachers in the design, planning and implementation of education reform and innovation. Guided by a committee comprised of funders from large and small foundations, the toolkit includes principles for engaging teachers and a starter set of tools that were developed based on a series of interviews with experts in the field—key thinkers and actors who focus on the teaching profession and the practice of teaching—and several focus group and design sessions with teachers.

The toolkit presents a framework for effective teacher engagement along a continuum—one that looks at engagement from an intensity perspective—and one that takes into account the role teachers play in funder initiatives. Each point along the continuum presents a different set of questions and requires funders to consider a different set of strategies.

“The people who do the job everyday, those are the people who know it best, so why should we pretend those aren’t the people [to whom] we should ask the questions?”

—Expert

The framework does not imply that any one point on the continuum is more valuable than another or that funders must move in any particular direction along the continuum. Rather, it suggests funders consider their aim for teacher engagement, establish their expectations of teacher involvement, and understand the level of intensity required to ensure successful outcomes.

Teacher engagement strategies will be essential to the success of new initiatives that rely on teachers for implementation. Engaging teachers will help ensure funder initiatives are relevant to conditions in the classroom, help improve student outcomes, and promote sustained and continued improvement over time. These engagements will bring with them also a growing expectation among educators for value and recognition for their efforts and commitment.

Introduction

Principles for Effective Teacher Engagement

Through our research process, we sought a balanced approach to perspectives from different stakeholder groups—from funders, experts and teachers. We were particularly attuned to understanding the teachers' perspective. As we engaged with teachers through focus and design groups, we asked them to construct guidelines for effectively engaging teachers. The following principles embody these guidelines, and offer advice to funders as they design effective strategies for teacher engagement.

- Maintain early and frequent communication, particularly in the preliminary stages of an initiative so that teachers are brought in to the process as early as possible.
- Identify clear initiative goals and implementation plans, including project timelines, expectations for participation, and allocated resources to support implementation.
- Set clear targets, with explicit intended outcomes that reach teachers, the communities they work with, and particularly the students they teach.
- Cultivate a culture of professionalism, with transparent communication, respect for teacher time commitments and demands, and openness to authentic collaboration.
- Align initiatives with other priorities, such as existing school goals, district expectations, union realities, as well as other funder initiatives.
- Ensure sustainability, building plans for sustaining initiatives and their impact once funding for an initiative has ended.



Why Is Teacher Engagement Important?

Teachers, funders and experts all agree that teachers have classroom and school site expertise. Yet too often, funders fail to leverage this expertise when designing education reforms and classroom initiatives. As a result, their initiatives may lack both relevance and context—two critical components for teacher engagement and sustainability over time. Without teacher buy-in and connection to the practical realities of teaching, any new practice or approach will not take hold. A teacher's belief in, and adoption of, any new initiative is directly tied to whether or not an idea succeeds, regardless of its merit.

Relevance

Teachers are very honest about the fact that they will “comply” with a new initiative without really applying it, if they don't have faith that it will improve learning or outcomes for students. In order for teachers to truly and deeply engage, they must be confident an initiative is relevant and worth the time and resources they are asked to dedicate.

Engagement helps to modulate the relevance requirement—in addition to giving input or feedback, teachers are also more likely to be included in the thinking behind the project. Gaps in relevance can be caught before launch, and if the project is exploratory, teachers have enough inside information to trust the process. Funders must also be aware of the importance of peer buy-in and the need to “reality test” ideas in school site conditions. When a respected colleague is willing to endorse, try or adopt something it is viewed more favorably among other teachers. Teachers particularly noted that a new idea was much more likely to be well received if someone like a teacher-leader could pilot it and colleagues could see it working in action.

The way an initiative is presented or introduced plays an important role in how or if teachers will engage in a project. Teachers all noted that there are ways in which they would prefer to engage—ways that respect both their expertise and time constraints. Initiatives that seem poorly conceived or poorly explained, and do not provide opportunities for dialogue, explanation and understanding are rarely successful in effectively engaging teachers.

✔ Lessons Learned

One funder shared an example of designing professional development activities without involving teachers, then finding out that the activities were not aligned with teacher needs. The effort was abandoned.

Introduction



“Funders come up with all kinds of things which aren’t do-able or sensible and make assumptions about schools that aren’t accurate, and forget that educators already have 8,000 things on their minds before this particular project comes up.”

—Expert

Lack of Contextual Awareness

Teachers, experts and some funders all noted that funders very often have little understanding of the context in which teachers work, and the constraints under which they operate. One expert noted that teacher engagement is not done very well yet, due to this lack of shared knowledge. To this point, one funder discovered that its program was not scalable because it was not designed with teachers’ lives in mind. Funders must learn and appreciate how teachers’ work days are structured around school day activities and not the business day.

The reverse is also true. On the whole, teachers have very little idea of how foundations work, how decisions are made, and the role of professional staff whose job it is to craft good strategies and make good investments on behalf of foundations.

There is a fairly straightforward opportunity to address this gap through shared knowledge, supported by a process of reinforcement in which such knowledge facilitates good teacher engagement, and good teacher engagement further facilitates such knowledge. This interaction, in itself, is a form of engagement. As one funder noted sharing perspectives enables funders to contribute the value of their outsider perspective tempered by their ability to understand teachers’ perspectives.

✔ Lessons Learned

One funder learned from experience to take account of the constraints of the school day. The foundation accidentally scheduled training and other sessions at inopportune times, such as during state testing, or too early in the school year, with the obvious consequences of low turnout.

✔ Lessons Learned

Teachers and funders have different perspectives about applicability and impact, particularly on the timeframe of where initiatives fall with respect to the school year. One funder noted that foundations need to understand the demands and timing of the school calendar and know what happens in March, in summer, at the beginning of school. This funder had adopted an 18-month planning process so that the foundation could enter at the right time on school, teacher and district conversations.

Lack of Sustainability

Teachers are wary of dedicating time and resources to processes or initiatives they are not convinced funders will invest in over a sustained period of time. Described by one teacher as the “mom’s boyfriend syndrome,” project sustainability is an important factor funders must consider when trying to gain teacher buy-in. Teachers often speak of initiatives coming without consultation, warning, preparation or resources at the beginning of the school year, and disappearing by the end.

Funders must strive to be clear about project timeframes, scope and commitment in order to gain teacher support and engagement. Even when long-term support is not possible, a candid conversation between funders and teachers helps create an atmosphere of trust and respect, and allows teachers to make informed decisions about their level of support and engagement. This is particularly invaluable when funders are initiating exploratory projects. Funder transparency about the nature of the work, its duration, and proposed outcome, will allow teachers to decide how best to engage.

Introduction

Culture Shift

Deeper engagement processes may require some culture shifts, both from funders and from teachers. Some of these shifts concern changes in power and control, and giving up either is often the hardest part of culture change. One expert noted that foundations have typically operated in a very top-down manner, and need to engage in self-assessment as to why this has not worked. Funders will have to give up some control if teachers are more involved, and will have to be willing to hear critiques of their ideas.

It is also critical to be very clear about the nature of failure in learning. While a funder noted the importance of ensuring that there is latitude for mistakes as teachers are implementing—space to fail, and try again—a teacher noted that teachers are less likely to engage if they feel they are not being given the supports to succeed. Space to fail needs to be low-risk, free of judgment, and accompanied by processes for learning forward. An acknowledgement and plan for the culture change can also be part of the process of sharing context and defining needs.

How Can Funders Effectively Engage Teachers?

The ways in which funders engage teachers greatly depends on the outcomes funders seek to attain and the role teachers will play in these initiatives. Funders should consider several factors when engaging teachers, particularly, the barriers that may impede authentic teacher participation and buy in.

Rules of Engagement

The rules of engagement are critical. Teachers repeatedly voiced their need for respect—to be respected for their professional expertise and knowledge, particularly their knowledge of what works for students. They were also very vocal about the need for funders to understand and appreciate the time constraints they face due to their school schedules.

Because teachers spend considerable time in preparing and planning thoughtful learning experiences for their students, they have a very low tolerance for activities that seem like a waste of time, or appear to be going nowhere. Much of the work of a good teacher engagement, then, is about supporting thoughtful and purposeful collegial connections that lead to better solutions that would not be achieved without engagement.

A few recommendations are as follows:

- Funders should inspire, not require
- Funders should pose open-ended questions
- Funders should ensure that everyone has input
- Funders should establish authentic two-way communications

✔ Lessons Learned

One expert told us, “We have a successful network because we work authentically with teachers. This includes valuing teachers’ time, creating experiences that are as structured and consistent as their classrooms, leaving activities open ended enough to adapt to the needs of the group, no matter what the group is, so they truly own it.”



“Teaching is becoming a profession that is increasingly informed by other professional experiences, not through policy, directives, or high-level planning, but through the life experiences of educators.”

Introduction

Administration and Unions as Gatekeepers

The involvement of other stakeholders is also key to effective teacher engagement—unions, principals and district leadership are critical for buy-in and initiative support. Frequently, they may also play a key role in providing access to teachers who can serve as advisors. While working with these groups is not always straightforward or easy, the long-term benefits and advantages often outweigh the efforts.

Principals are often key gatekeepers in the relationship between funders and teachers. While some funder interviewees noted that principals could be barriers to teacher engagement, because they may feel threatened by teacher empowerment, others actively partnered with principals in getting teachers to engage. Without principal buy-in, teachers are unlikely to be encouraged or get release time to attend meetings, for example. On the other hand, when principals buy into an initiative, they can become the greatest leverage point in shifting the culture for reform.

Working with teacher unions is another strong lever. One foundation, for example, invested in teachers' unions to better understand ways through which they could collaborate, and to leverage the progressive voices inside the union to help drive the change within their individual districts. This collaborative approach helped unions leverage their role as change makers, and also helped establish a supportive environment among all stakeholders.



Incentives and Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is important to consider as funders forge ahead with teacher engagement initiatives. Funders, teachers and experts all agreed that teachers are motivated about reform and eager to be a part of the creation process. Teachers are lifelong learners, and the biggest incentive to participate in any initiative is the promise of valuable and relevant learning. While financial incentives for teacher participation are a valid approach, funders must be careful not to rely solely on these to motivate teachers, increase their involvement, or garner their buy-in. More important is to set a tone and approach to the engagement that reinforces their professionalism.

The way by which teachers are selected to participate is also a determinant of success. In some cases, funders struggle to effectively engage teachers when participants are recommended or selected by others, such as a principal. But when funders designed their initiative to allow teachers to self-select, the results were dramatically

different. These self-selected teachers were highly motivated and engaged, and their efforts to change and improve teaching practices were dramatically different from those who were selected by others. By building upon their strengths and relying upon their desire to become excellent in their profession, funders can not only help grow a cadre of very artful teachers, but can also assist in the development of teacher leaders who go on to help others become even stronger professionals.

Direct and Indirect Support

Foundations may choose to fund tertiary organizations to engage teachers or they may work directly with educators. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. More frequently, funders support tertiary organizations to engage teachers. One key factor for this is that teacher engagement initiatives are intensive and time consuming. Those who fund grantees to engage with teachers may have wider reach (although direct investors may build networks over time) and are helping to build a cadre of connected teachers. In the process, they are potentially banking good will and consultative capital.

Foundations that work directly with teachers develop a deep knowledge of the field and a deeper understanding of which reforms are most likely to work and how they should be introduced. As a result, these funders have the ability to incorporate educators' perspectives at the most fundamental levels of their strategies.

One expert argued that any foundation involved in funding education should have a permanent advisory group of teachers to help inform and guide decision making and planning, regardless of whether a foundation is directly or indirectly involved in teacher engagement.

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“We have a successful network because we work authentically with teachers. This includes valuing teachers’ time, creating experiences that are as structured and consistent as their classrooms, leaving activities open ended enough to adapt to the needs of the group, no matter what the group is, so they truly own it.”

—Expert

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to be a resource for funders seeking to engage teachers in more authentic and meaningful ways. Specifically, the toolkit aims to promote planning, implementation, and knowledge sharing around effective teacher engagement strategies.

The toolkit contains a continuum for teacher engagement and is intended to assist organizations in identifying and planning for appropriate teacher engagement approaches to their reform initiatives. Organizational examples—provided for each teacher engagement category—are intended to promote knowledge sharing among funders.

Following the continuum are a set of practical tools divided into three sections:

- **Decision Support Tools**
Tools to support decision-making on the best teacher engagement strategies for your organization and which teachers to work with
- **Communications Tools**
A set of tools to define your strategy, communicate the value to your Board, and protocols for relationship building with teachers
- **Process Support Tools**
Process tools with feedback on how information is used and decisions are made, the timing of initiatives in the school year, interviewing techniques, “High Empathy” Grantmaking support tools, and evaluation protocols to assess the success of the strategy or strategies

The toolkit is a work in progress. Suggestions from the funding community are essential to ensuring the toolkit is a valuable resource.



Continuum of Engagement Strategies

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Continuum of Engagement Strategies



Overview

This continuum organizes different engagement strategies along a spectrum of intensity. That intensity reflects different degrees of relational involvement, from one-to-many broadcast at one end, to reciprocal work around a constellation of issues at the other. It also distinguishes between engagement efforts where teachers are the primary beneficiary—such as capacity building—and those where teachers are advisors on a wider strategy



Continuum of Engagement Strategies



Encapsulated within this relational shift is a change in power differentials. This is not to say that the activities on the left hand necessarily imply that funders have greater power in the interactions, and teachers have less—although this may be the perception on either side—but that as the interactions become more complex towards the right hand side the relationships have to flatten in order to accommodate the work.

The duration of the connection also changes along the continuum. Although the moments of broadcast may be part of an intended long-term connection, there are no agreements on either side to that effect. The connection is in the moment of receiving, or reading. Teachers may find such knowledge products useful and employ them in their practice, for example, but without the kinds of scaffolding that demonstrate practical relevance, and professional learning there is low likelihood of this happening. As we move to the right the intensity of time commitment increases as more complex interactions address greater complexity in the work.

The examples shown below do not neatly belong to just one point on the continuum. They are placed where they are because some aspect is a good example of the strategy in question. The MetLife Survey, for example, has multiple applications depending upon who uses the data, and for what purpose. In that sense, although the direct connection with teachers is responding to fixed

questions, the longitudinal nature of the survey means that it potentially enables advocacy, and informs engagement strategies. The CLASS project, while an example of a complex Teacher Engagement strategy included many of the touch points towards the left hand side of the continuum, employed in explicit service of a larger relationship.

This left to right continuum is not intended to suggest an evaluation that right is preferable to left. The choice of strategy depends entirely on the work that needs to be done, and there are significant resource requirements for employing strategies towards the right. The important consideration is choosing the right strategy to achieve the required outcomes—and in not expecting high intensity outcomes from low intensity strategies.

Measures of Success in the ensuing pages include both measure of success around the content of the work, but also (where available) around the success of the engagement process itself.

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Inform



“The main risk is an overall perception that funders are not interested in teachers’ experience or expertise...”

Inform

This far end of the continuum may be not be considered a teacher engagement strategy at all, except that many foundations put information out for educators. The relationship at this point is low intensity and tends to be focused on empowering teachers through information—disseminating research, sharing theories of change, broad-casting news. Teachers are potential recipients or consumers of the message, but are not engaged in any explicit actions in response.

Teacher Role

Reader

Teachers’ View

Teachers appreciate access to cutting edge information and research. In each of the focus/design groups, teachers reiterated that they were lifelong learners, and that anything that supported their curiosity and desire to develop their practice was of interest. However, several group members also noted that, due to the busyness of their days in the classroom, information without guidance in how to apply it, or without some kind of ongoing community of practice to support application, was unlikely to be implemented.

★ Measures of Success

Hits on a web page, downloads of documents, ideas or reports “going viral”, and in terms of the research community, references and citations.

As technologies advance, and the social practices that accompany them develop further, communications technologies commentary and feedback mechanisms, and ultimately user generated content. The evolution of Edutopia from magazine to blog based content, and then to online community is an example of this shift from Inform to Review, and then to Elevate Voice.

✔ Lessons Learned

Activities at this end of the continuum are relatively low risk because of the lack of engagement. The main risk is an overall perception that funders are not interested in teachers’ experience or expertise or those funders may not know how the information was used or whether it was useful. The lack of connection also means a foundation lacks the information to reach its target market more effectively, and so information may not have the impact that it warrants.

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Elevate Voice



“One of the biggest challenges is that teachers are receptive and open to hearing about things, but so many teachers are so stretched thin in their work...”

Elevate Voice

Teacher voice strategies have an explicit focus on facilitating the contributions of teachers to public debates about education, including changes to the profession and policy changes. Teachers are identified and rewarded, and given access—either directly or indirectly—to public platforms. The focus here tends to be on identifying and advocating for the best of the teaching profession as it currently is, rather than a predetermined reform agenda, although calling for specific reforms may become part of the role.

In the Elevate Voice area there may also be activities that anticipate some of the interaction in Build Capacity, as teachers are primed to be spokespersons for the profession.

Teacher Role

Ambassador / Advocate

Teachers’ View

From a Teacher and Advocate—
 “The work gave us an opportunity to go to Sacramento and talk to some legislators. I think we were influential on two teacher evaluation bills, neither of which passed—that’s a bigger political issue. But I was pleased to find a receptive audience and that people were supportive.”

★ Measures of Success

Rewards or other identification processes are seen as credible by the field. Teachers are keen to be selected and are also viewed as credible ambassadors or advocates by their peers. Teachers engage with policymakers to provide practitioners input on relevant policies.

✔ Lessons Learned

From a teacher and advocate, “One of the biggest challenges is that teachers are receptive and open to hearing about things but so many teachers are so stretched thin in their work that a smaller percentage feel they have the capacity to add something ... Nobody wants to fail either, that’s not just teachers, it’s anyone. So if you sense you’re being set up for something you might not be able to do even if it’s something you’d like to do, (such as engage in policy work) you might not engage. It must be done with support, almost the kind of scaffolding we would do with our students—breaking it down into steps.”



Carlston Family Foundation

The Carlston Family Foundation identifies and honors teachers in California who have been nominated by former students. The foundation interviews the students, observes the teachers in the classroom, and selects a teacher winner. Each year, previously awarded teachers are invited to become advisors to the foundation. These teacher advisors have helped to shape the foundation’s strategy growing from a sole focus on awarding teaching excellence to include supports for shaping teacher leaders.

(See page 51 for more information)

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Build Capacity



“...we can also assist in the development of teacher leaders who go on to help others become even stronger professionals.”

Build Capacity

Funders create learning communities and collaborate with teachers to develop their leadership skills, instructional effectiveness and other capacity areas. These capacity building efforts create networks, which can take on a larger advocacy and reform role.

Teacher Role

Executive Level Learner

Teachers' View

Teachers in all the groups described themselves as lifelong learners, so opportunities to build capacity, and to network with other educators are seen as relevant and valuable. They have, as one of our funder interviewees put it, intrinsic motivation to become excellent, “We have learned that by investing in the growth and development of the very best teachers, building upon their strengths, and relying upon the intrinsic motivation of teachers to become excellent in their profession, we can not only grow a cadre of artful teachers, but we can also assist in the development of teacher leaders who go on to help others become even stronger professionals”.

★ Measures of Success

Discernible increase in capacities that build toward desired outcomes, increased teacher proficiency levels; system level impact (e.g., school or district); directions for investment.

✓ Lessons Learned

Capacity building efforts are time and resource intensive for funders—program design, recruitment, stipends, logistics, and for teachers—time commitments, additional work, travel. Therefore it is very important that the capacities being invested in are seen as relevant to teachers, and that the networks are intended for relevant purposes, directly contributing to instructional practice, or to widely agreed upon field building and not just directly to the foundation's theory of change.



Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching

Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching is an initiative that focuses on promoting professional development for teachers by providing mentoring and support. The goal of the foundation is to share what they discover from the field as a model for great teaching. In addition to allocating time and resources for professional development activities and mentoring support, the Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching also organizes an annual conference for participants, maintains an alumni network and alumni grants, and coordinates a series of ongoing professional learning communities. (See page 53 for more information)

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Review



“Teachers appreciate being asked for their opinions on matters relating to education...”

Review

The first engagement on the stakeholder side of the continuum is Review. At this point on the continuum teachers’ views are explicitly sought. Surveys, questionnaires and interviews are used to gather information directly from teachers. The funders determine the direction and questions, and then analyze the information to create a variety of knowledge products, which may then be available to teachers directly, and to the broader field.

Teacher Role

Respondent

Teachers’ View

Teachers appreciate being asked for their opinions on matters relating to education, particularly on things they know they have expertise in—the implementation and implications of policy, school site and classroom management, instructional practices, and student needs. In the groups a lot of the conversation focused on respect, and the ways in which teacher voice and engagement strategies can—and sometimes do not—develop respectful relationships between teachers and funders. Invitations to respond can be examples of respect, depending upon the perceived authenticity of the request, the purpose of the information gathering and the use to which the information is put. Instances in which teachers are just asked to review something that will significantly impact them, but which they had no role in designing are seen as disrespectful.

★ Measures of Success

Survey completion rates, quality of focus groups and knowledge capture, quality of analysis and dissemination of results.

✔ Lessons Learned

Strategies are relatively low risk in terms of the overhead to the funder. The risks that do exist are the same as with any survey work. It is important to create an engaging survey that is not too long and is relevant to teachers’ work. It is also important to make clear what will happen with the information being given.



MetLife Survey of the American Teacher

MetLife began its annual survey in 1984, one year after the publication of “A Nation at Risk” when teachers were under fire from the public. It broadened the discourse around education by contributing the voice of the teacher. Its aim is to share what teachers are saying in an even-handed manner without taking a position. The foundation’s main focus has centered on “listening” to teachers to inform the dialogue around education and measure teacher satisfaction.

(See page 55 for more information)

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Consult



“The role of consultant indicates to teachers that their expertise is valued...”

Consult

Here teachers are invited to be consultants, thought partners, and/or concept testers. The relationship is much more collegial, and more time-consuming on both sides. The focus is typically a particular project rather than an ongoing process, and teachers are invited to give substantive input. When teachers are engaged as consultants, they are typically brought in during the early stages of a project—typically the needs assessment or design stage, compared with activities at the low intensity end of the continuum.

When funders consult with teachers they are more likely to use teachers’ input to influence the end result, although the determination of this belongs to the funder.

Teacher Role

Consultant

Teachers’ View

The role of consultant indicates to teachers that their expertise is valued. For teachers who are already taking a leadership role of some kind—roles where they are provided explicit time and opportunities to reflect on the larger strategic implications of changes to the profession—this kind of role is very valuable.

★ Measures of Success

Vetted concepts, clear investment directions, usable research findings used in the projects.

✔ Lessons Learned

One of the risks at this stage—because the relationship is more intense—is that authenticity becomes more critical. Teachers are being asked to give up more time, and the implication is that their input is more valued. Any perception that this is simply checking a box is more damaging than at the less intense phases.

From an expert, “If you want to generally encourage teacher engagement it needs to be authentic. Some groups that are being funded are already suspect because it looks as though they are being funded to say a particular thing on behalf of a foundation...In the case where there are suspicions it’s where the foundation has an agenda and it’s clear the group has been funded to endorse the agenda.”



Gates Teacher Effectiveness Study

After a long history of engaging teachers on a project by project basis, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation decided it would be even more valuable to engage a small group of teachers for advice and guidance over a longer period of time across many projects. The foundation recruited a diverse group of 50 teachers to serve on a Teacher Advisory Council to provide input across many parts of the foundation’s strategy over two years. (See page 57 for more information)

Continuum of Engagement Strategies : Co-design



“If the project seems relevant, and teachers know it will advance their learning they are often happy to take on this role.”

Co-design

Teachers serve as co-designers and collaborators with funders to develop a strategy or approach. They are involved for a longer timeframe, and/or on larger scale projects than at the mid-intensity points and their involvement stretches from the initial conceptualization to the design and testing stage, possibly leading into implementation and refinement.

Teacher Role
Co-designer

Teachers’ View

Teachers feel empowered when invited into a real partnership that invites them to explore the problem space, design solutions and design implementation. The higher time investment means that teachers with greater family responsibilities may find it more difficult to take part if the timing of the project is particularly intense.

★ Measures of Success

The key argument is a better outcome will be achieved if teachers are involved. Early results from schools in the Chalkboard project show significant student achievement gains. See case study for more details.

✔ Lessons Learned

If teachers are not clear about the overall shape and parameters of the project they may feel ‘dropped’ if there is not another project to move on to, or if there is no progression of role either with the funder, or within the school site, based on the experience of co-design. Teachers already in teacher-leader roles, or interested in them, can see these experiences as connected to that professional evolution.



Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success (CLASS)

The Chalkboard Project is a non-profit created by a collaboration between six foundations focused on improving public education in Oregon. In 2010, Chalkboard launched the CLASS initiative, which enlisted teachers in selected districts to co-design education performance systems. (See page 59 for more information)

A Toolkit for Teacher Engagement

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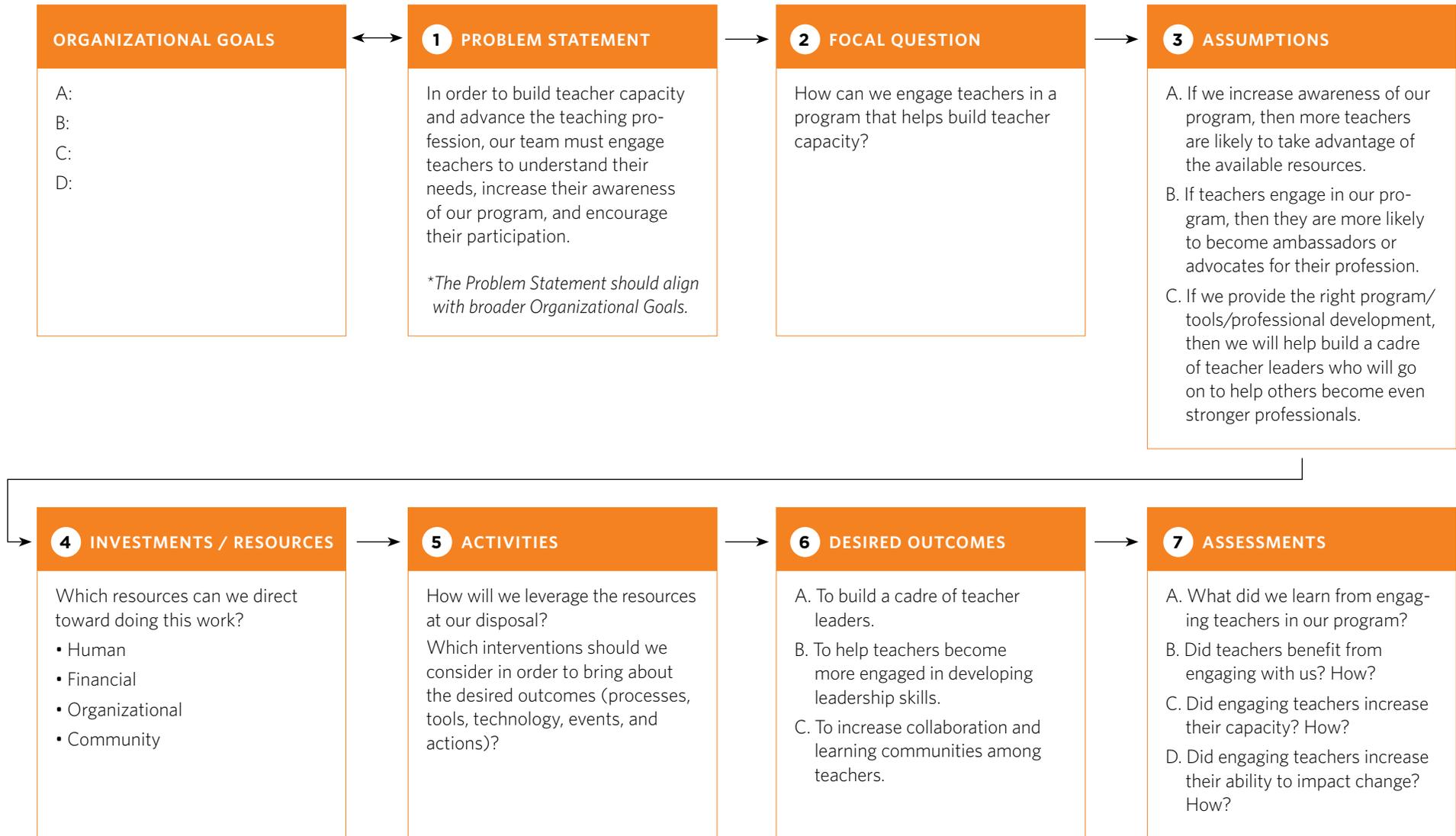
- **How will effective teacher engagement advance our larger institutional goals?**
- **With which teachers, specifically, ought we work, and why?**
- **How and when should our initiatives play out?**

These questions are relevant to funders starting out in this work as well as those reflecting on their current initiatives in assessing strategic direction. What follows is a series of practical tools for the planning and implementation of an effective teacher engagement strategy.

Decision Support Tools

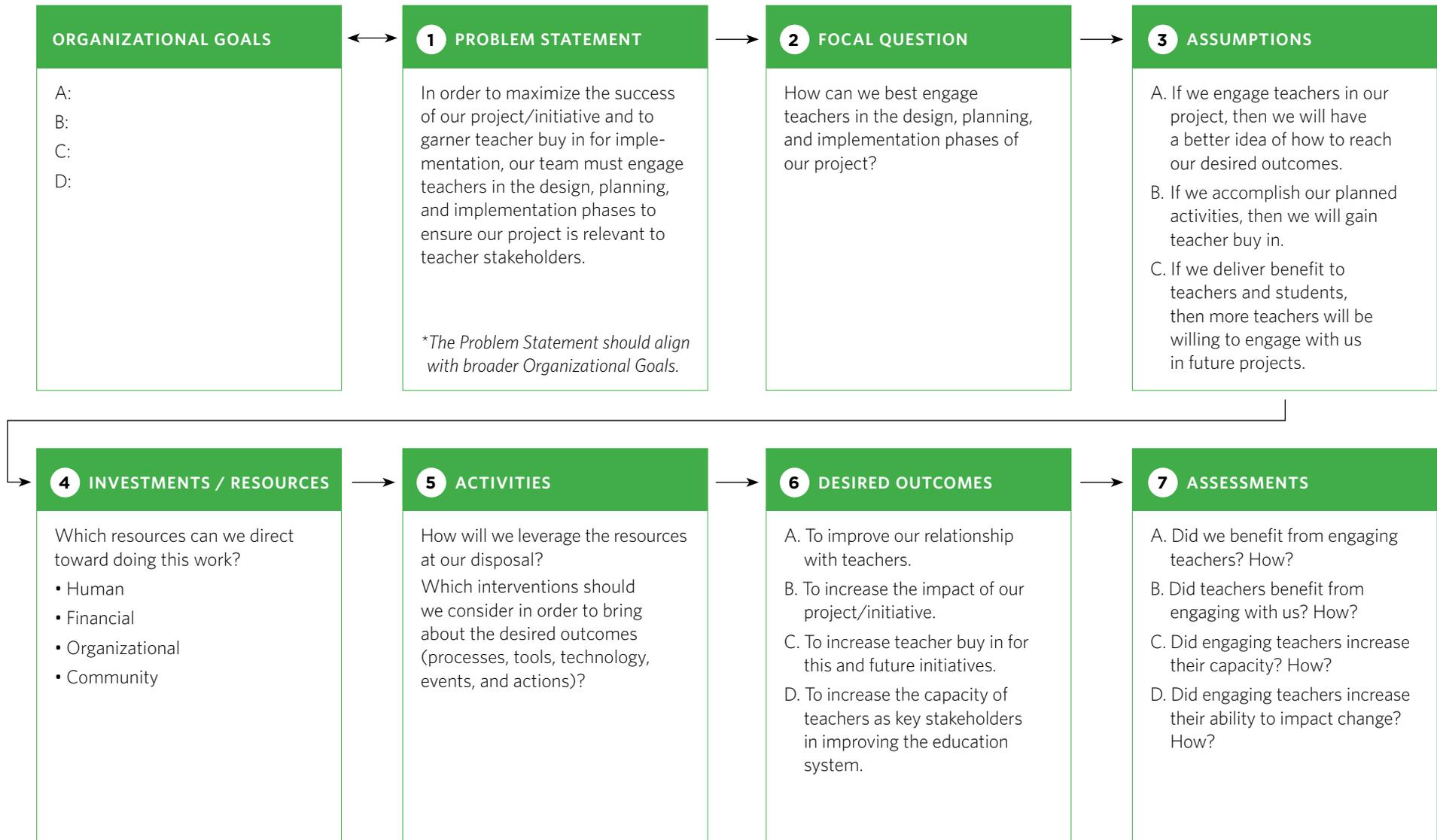
Decision Support Tools : Teacher Engagement Logic Model, Teachers as Beneficiaries or Investees

A logic model is a tool for planning, monitoring and evaluating key initiatives. This is a possible logic model for a foundation seeking to engage teachers as beneficiaries or investees.



Decision Support Tools : Teacher Engagement Logic Model, Teachers as Stakeholders or Advisors

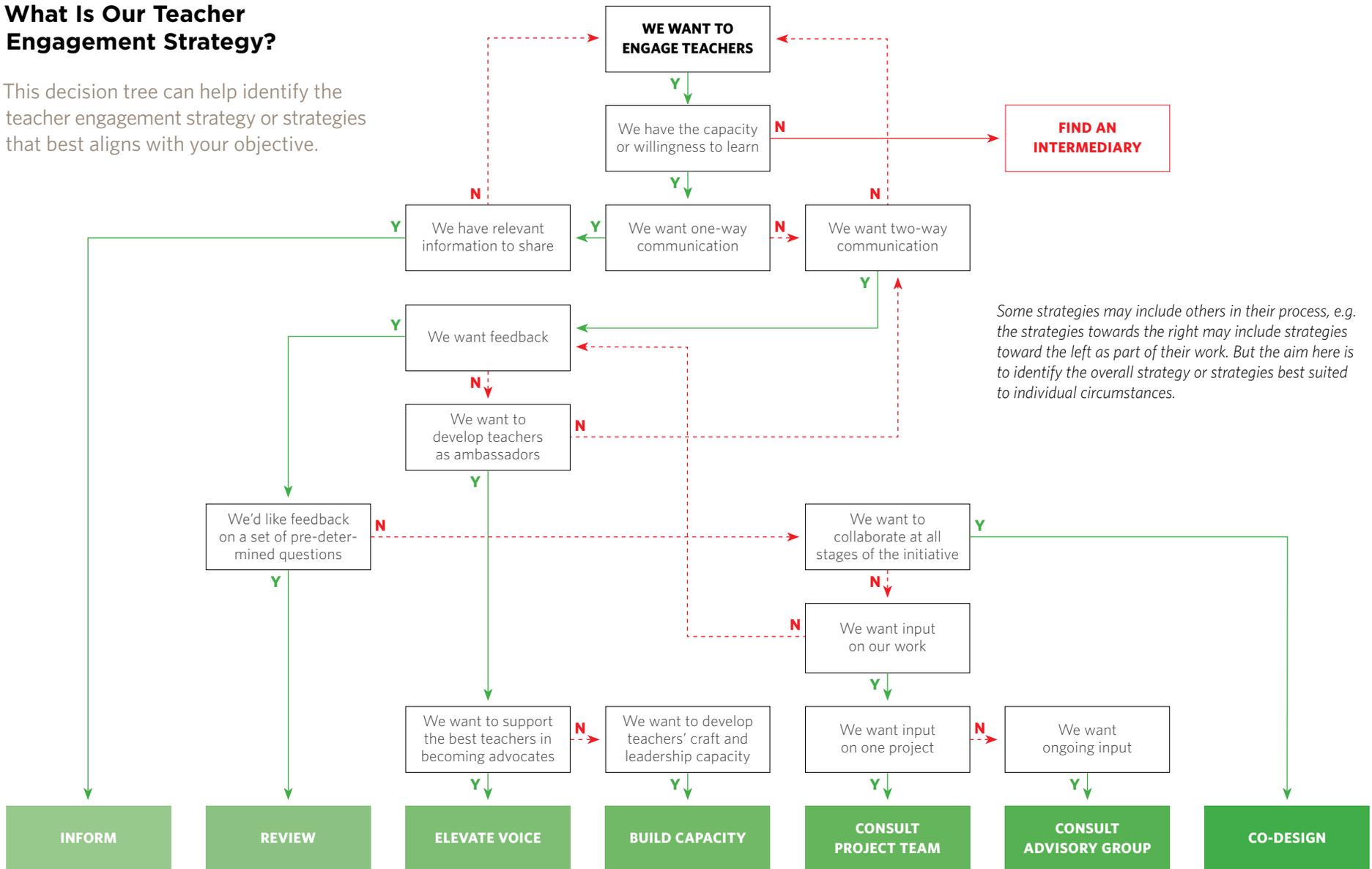
This is a possible logic model for a foundation seeking to engage teachers as stakeholders or advisors.



Decision Support Tools : Decision Tree

What Is Our Teacher Engagement Strategy?

This decision tree can help identify the teacher engagement strategy or strategies that best aligns with your objective.



Decision Support Tools : Teacher Selection Support Tool

What Teachers We Will Target as Partners and Why?

When choosing which teachers to involve in an engagement, or teacher voice project, a variety of factors need to be balanced.

Teachers, like all other groups, include a great variety of people, with a variety of competencies, aptitudes and attitudes. Some interviewees advocated finding 'the best' teachers to work with because they would give 'the best' information. However, 'best' may have a range of meanings, depending upon the actual focus of the engagement strategy.

Highly skilled classroom teachers would be considered the 'best' on a variety of measures, but may not be the best articulators of barriers in the system, for example. Skilled veteran teachers can draw upon deep experience, but may have forgotten what it was like to learn their way into the profession.



Decision Support Tools : Teacher Selection Support Tool



Once the focus is clear, three main decisions need to be made. These decisions apply to all kinds of engagements.

1. Are we going to work with teachers directly, or work via an intermediary?

2. Do we want a focused group, or are we looking for variety?

For some projects we may have a very specific question for which a particular group of teachers is appropriate. For others, where the work is more exploratory in nature, or a broader range of input is needed, a variety of teachers is more appropriate. For either of these approaches we would create a 'screener' or profile using dimensions such as those listed below.

For the focused group we would be looking for teachers who share particular dimensions, and for the varied group we would identify teachers who are as different from one another as possible along key dimensions. There is also a hybrid position here in which we might want a group of teachers who are focused on one dimension (e.g. age) but varied along the others.

Dimensions to Consider for Screening:

- Role/responsibility/function
- Length of service
- Demographic details (age, gender, racial/ethnic origin, class affiliation)
- Location
- Attitude (to area of focus, e.g. kind of reform)
- Particular experience (e.g. training, involvement in similar reform)
- Aspirations (e.g. stay in classroom, become coach/administrator, leave profession)

3. Do we choose, or should teachers self-select?

Funders or intermediaries will often go through a formal channel to identify teachers to work with. Principals, central office administrators, union leaders are all potential advisors who can help to recruit teachers. However, it is also possible to contact teachers directly. Even via advisors teachers can be invited to self-select for a project and there are advantages to doing this in terms of interest and commitment.

If the project is more concerned with participation and advocacy then self-selection may be preferable. If the project is more exploratory and generative in nature having a trusted source make the selections may be a better strategy.

Using the Tool

For each question's decision pair, (e.g. work with teachers directly or via an intermediary) the tool has a set of pros and cons. The relative weighting of these will differ from funder to funder, from project to project, and will change over time. Determining relative weighting will help to support the decision-making.

For example, it will often be easier to work through an intermediary to engage teachers. Intermediaries develop extensive networks, deep ties, and deep field knowledge in engaging teachers regularly. However, if a funder has determined that a strategic goal is to develop greater field knowledge and/or networks amongst internal staff then recruiting and working with teachers directly may be a highly weighted advantage.

Decision Support Tools : Teacher Selection Support Tool

In the pros section, read each statement and assign a rating of 1 through 4 where 1 equals a low priority and 4 equals a high priority. In the cons section, assign ratings of -1 to -4 where -1 is a minor challenge and -4 is a significant challenge.

| | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|---|-------|----------------------|
| 1. Are we going to work with teachers directly, or work via an intermediary? | In-House Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | Builds field knowledge for internal staff | _____ | Requires deep field knowledge, skillful facilitation and communication | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | Staff are closer to the requirements of the ToC or strategic plan and so may identify more suitable teachers | _____ | Time overhead of regularly tending to a network | _____ | |
| | | | | | |
| | Intermediary Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | Outsourced to experts | _____ | The chosen teachers may conform more to the intermediary's agenda than ours | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | Less day-to-day management of the process for internal staff | _____ | If the intermediary is too strongly associated with our agenda they may lose the field credibility we need them to have | _____ | |
| | | | | | |
| 2. Do we want a focused group, or are we looking for variety? | Focused Search Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | Defined characteristics make search process easier | _____ | May miss critical information | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | Defined characteristics make evaluation process easier | _____ | How sure are we that we have identified the right characteristics? | _____ | |
| | | | | | |
| | Variety Seeking Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | Test out ideas against a range of people | _____ | Difficulty of evaluating against multiple factors | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | Closer to real life | _____ | May lose the signal in the noise | _____ | |
| | | | | | |
| 3. Do we choose, or should teachers self-select? | Chosen Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | We can determine a profile of the kinds of teachers we want to work with | _____ | The chosen teachers may conform more to the selector's agenda than ours | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | We work with the formal and informal structures of school systems | _____ | The chosen teachers may not be a diverse enough group | _____ | |
| | | | | | |
| | Self-Selected Pros | | Cons | | Score |
| | We get teachers who are interested in our projects | _____ | The self-selected teachers may not give us the variety we seek or focus we need | _____ | <input type="text"/> |
| | We get teachers who are more like to know they can commit the time | _____ | They may not be able to articulate their experience or do the generative work required (mitigated by screening) | _____ | |
| | | | | | |

Communication Tools

Communications Tools : Defining Your Communications Strategies

If your teacher engagement strategy is focused on informing teachers, this framework will help you refine your plans for how to do so.

Communications Infrastructure

What communications capacity do you have—staff and time? Who will do the work?
What budget do you have to do this work?



Target / Target Audience

Who is your target audience? Are there partners in the community to use as resources to help craft your message? Who do you need on your side to get what you want?



Goals

What specific goals do you have for your communication effort?
What do you hope to accomplish?



Research

What do you need to know about your target audience?
How will you get the information?



Adapted from Rasmuson Foundation

Communications Tools : Defining Your Communications Strategies

Frame the Issue

What is this issue really about? Who is affected? How do we craft messages about how the initiative impacts teachers?

Spokespeople

Who are the best messengers to reach your target audience?

Message

What is the problem from teachers' perspectives? What are the elements of your message? Who else can I talk with to help craft the messaging? Would we consider having teachers review the language of the message? What are the hot button issues you need to anticipate from teachers on the ground?

Problem

Solution

Action

News Hooks

What are news hooks for the issue? What's the message internally vs. externally? How much do we control the message?

Communications Tools : Communicating the Value of Teacher Engagement to Your Board



How Can We Work With Our Board?

Teacher engagement strategies may be relatively time consuming and expensive in terms of staff time. Board buy-in is critical to gain the necessary support. In order to engage a board, the following guidelines may be helpful:

1 Demonstrate a Throughline from Teacher Engagement Strategies to Your Foundation's Strategic Objectives

While many trustees will readily understand the intrinsic value of engaging teachers, it may be less clear to them how such engagement (a) advances your foundation's mission and/or (b) accelerates educational improvement. The case studies in this toolkit demonstrate how other organizations have used teacher engagement as a lever for change.

2 Construct a Logic Model That Demonstrates Impact

The Logic Model and Decision Tree templates on pages 24 - 26 will help you construct a step-by-step rationale for investments in a teacher engagement strategy. Your board will want to know if—and if so, how—strategic investments now will lead to results in the future. Make sure your logic model addresses this question.

3 Provide Evidence That Supports Your Logic Model

This is an opportunity to depict vividly the benefits of the strategy for which you are advocating. Find ways to bring your evidence to life for the board, then construct an interactive process that enables trustees to wrestle with the evidence themselves. Whether they support your conclusions, improve your analysis, or challenge your logic model, they (and you) will gain a more thorough understanding of the strategic investment issues.

4 Include Input from Those Who Stand to Gain or Lose Most from the Board's Decisions.

One critical feature of a vivid depiction is your capacity to bring stakeholders' voices to life in the room. The Teacher Selection Support Tool on pages 27 - 29 of this toolkit, the Defining Your Communications Strategies template on pages 31 - 32, and the Five Steps to High-Empathy Grantmaking tool on page 43 - 45 will all provide guidance about which voices to highlight and how. Do not be afraid to raise the tough issues if your strategy involves difficult tradeoffs; if anyone may perceive your strategy as a threat or a loss, give them a voice (however virtually) and be prepared to present a clear-eyed cost-benefit analysis.

5 Commit to a Board-level Learning Loop

No strategy is fail-safe. Just as your strategies for working with teachers involve authentic engagement and a spirit of mutual discovery and learning, so too can your Board engagement strategy focus on continuous learning. Ask your board what they would like to understand better as your teacher engagement strategies are implemented, and agree on the questions to which you will return over time. In other words: model the engagement and learning you seek, not only with your grantees but with your board members as well. Consider whether there are ways such as videos of focus groups to help bring the direct voices of teachers to inform your board.

Communications Tools : Funder Introduction Protocols

Communicating Key Information to Teachers

This collection of protocols was developed through teacher focus groups and interviews with national experts on teacher engagement. The purpose of this protocol is to guide funders in delineating and communicating key information to teachers about their organization, its strategies, and operating structures when launching a new engagement.

Overview of Organization

- What is the mission of your organization?
- What are the goals of the organization?
- Why has your organization picked education as a focus area?
- Tell us about your portfolio of grantees. Who else have you funded/for what purpose?
- Explain how you do work; recognize that many teachers are not familiar with the role of foundations.

Overview of Staff

- Who are you?
- What is your background?
- What are your qualifications?
- What is your motivation for the work you do?
- What is your commitment to this project?

Overview of Project/Initiative

- What is the goal of the initiative?
- Why was this initiative developed?
- What does the foundation hope to achieve?
- How will the initiative help teachers?
- How this will impact teachers?
- Why do you want teacher input? How will you use it?

Implementation Details

- What are the expectations of teachers?
- What is the timeline and scope and sequence for the initiative?
- What funding, materials, resources will be provided?
- What supports will be provided to implement the project?
- What are the targets for the project?
- How will you hold accountable the teachers and funders involved in the project?
- How will the goals of the project be monitored throughout the initiative?
- How will you communicate with teachers?
- What do you see happening when the funding for the project ends?



Communications Tools : Teacher Introduction Protocols



Getting Information from Teachers

The purpose of this protocol is to assist funders in capturing early knowledge about the teachers they hope to engage. The template reflects the areas that teachers describe as important for funders to learn about in order to authentically familiarize themselves with teachers and begin to build collaborative relationships.

School Profile

- Mission and goals of the school
- Size, demographics, patterns over time
- Neighborhood description
- Needs of the school and its students

Teacher Profile

- Teacher background (education, number of years teaching, specialities, background experience, prior careers)
- Motivation—why I chose to do this work
- “Fun” Facts (e.g., number of hours I teach per day, money I spend per month, money I spend per year, etc.)
- Teacher anecdote about their practice: e.g. challenge in the classroom, steps taken to make learning happen, something that demonstrates to you as a funder the intellectual process teachers go through everyday
- Classroom challenges and needs
- Community challenges and needs

Effective Teacher Engagement

It should be noted that effective teacher engagement also involves communication with other stakeholders. In particular, funders typically work with district and site leaders to initiate their projects and facilitate connections with teachers. In such cases it is equally important to go through similar mutual introductions so that all stake-holders understand the purpose of the work. This will also enable funders to make connections between their projects and the wider mission of the school or district. Principals particularly are often the sole communicators to teachers about a funder's initiative, its purpose, and its objectives. They have responsibility for ensuring that the initiative is aligned to the current mission and goals of the school, and will use this to determine whether to support teachers' active participation, for example through the use of release time.

Communications Tools : Crucial Conversations

What's a Crucial Conversation? And Who Cares?

A crucial conversation is a discussion in which stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong. When we face crucial conversations, we can do one of three things: We can avoid them, we can face them and handle them poorly, or we can face them and handle them well. We often move between silence and violence—we either don't handle the conversation, or don't handle it well. We may not become physically violent, but we do attack others' ideas and feelings.

At times, your efforts to engage teachers will raise challenging issues that can be controversial. These guidelines will help you manage difficult conversations constructively.



The ultimate goal of dialogue is not just to create a healthy climate or even a clear understanding between parties. The real purpose is to get unstuck by taking the appropriate action.

Summarized via WikiSummaries, from "Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High", Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Communications Tools : Crucial Conversations

1 Take Your Time: The Power of Dialogue
Dialogue is the free flow of meaning between two or more people. At the center of dialogue lies a Pool of Shared Meaning. It contains the ideas, theories, feelings, thoughts, and opinions that are openly shared. The more information we have in the pool, the better prepared we are to make decisions and get results. Anything less than total candor shrinks the shared pool, saps motivation, and dumbs down decisions. Taking time to fill the pool leads to faster and more effective results than the game-playing that inevitably follows silence and violence strategies. Dialogue takes time. The alternative takes longer.

2 Start with Heart: How to Stay Focused on What You Really Want
In order to break away from silence and violence, we have to change our behavior. This calls first for a change in heart—realizing that as much fun as it would be to fix other people, we need to work on ourselves first; and focusing on motive. As we find ourselves forgetting our original goal of candidly adding meaning to the pool and instead striving to look good, win, or achieve some other unproductive objective, we need to ask ourselves, “What do I really want?”

While it’s true that sometimes we are caught in a genuine dilemma with only two bad options, most of the time we do have healthy alternatives. When it comes to crucial conversations, “and” thinking makes a great deal of sense. Replacing “either/or” thinking with “and” thinking provides a way to reduce the ill effects of adrenaline. By asking ourselves the “and” question, we force our brains to move to higher-level, more complex thinking.

3 Learn to Look: How to Notice When Safety Is at Risk
When a conversation turns crucial, we either miss or misinterpret the early warning signs. The sooner we notice we’re not in dialogue, the quicker we can get back to dialogue, and the lower the cost. Paying attention to both the content of the discussion and how people are acting and feeling is no easy task. But it’s an essential part of dialogue.

4 Make It Safe: How to Make It Safe to Talk About Almost Anything
When things go wrong in crucial conversations, we assume the content of our message is the problem, so we begin to water it down or avoid it altogether. But, as long as your intent is pure and you learn how to make it safe for others, you can talk to almost anyone about almost anything.

The key is to make the other person feel safe. To do this, there are two things the person needs to know. First, they need to know that you care about their best interests and goals. This is called mutual purpose. Second, they need to know that you care about them. This is called mutual respect. When people believe both of these things, they relax and can absorb what you’re saying; they feel safe. The instant they don’t believe them (and it can happen instantaneously—even with those we have long and loving relationships with), safety breaks down and silence or violence follows. To restore safety in the face of silence or violence, you must restore mutual purpose and respect.

5 Master My Stories: How to Stay in Dialogue When You’re Angry, Scared, or Hurt
When we become upset, our most common reaction is to defend ourselves and place the blame on someone else. As convenient as it is to blame others for pushing our buttons and causing us to become upset, it’s not exactly true. The key to how we feel lies in the stories we tell. These stories consist of our guess as to why people do what they do. To break away from your volatile emotions, you must rethink the conclusions you drew and the judgments you made. That requires you to tell the rest of the story. New (more accurate and complete) stories create new feelings and support new and healthier actions. Better still, new stories often encourage you to return to dialogue.

6 State My Path: How to Speak Persuasively, Not Abrasively
To speak your mind completely in a way that allows room for dialogue, you must express your views in ways that maintain safety, and you have to find a way to be both confident and humble. The five skills that help us share our tough messages can be easily remembered with the acronym STATE. It stands for: Share your facts; Tell your story; Ask for others’ paths; Talk tentatively; Encourage testing.

Communications Tools : Crucial Conversations



7 Explore Others' Paths: How to Listen When Others Blow Up or Clam Up
As we see others moving to silence or violence—sharing mostly stories or very little at all—it helps us stay in dialogue if we can encourage them to share their entire Path to Action, or the explanation of how emotions, thoughts, and experiences lead to our actions. We have to find a way to move others back to their facts. We should ask, “Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person think or feel this way?” (leading to curiosity). It’s hard to feel defensive and curious at the same time. Finally, it takes us to the only place where the feelings can be resolved: The source (the facts and story behind the emotions).

8 Move to Action: How to Turn Crucial Conversations into Action and Results
The ultimate goal of dialogue is not just to create a healthy climate or even a clear understanding between parties. The real purpose is to get unstuck by taking the appropriate action. If you don’t take action, all the healthy talk in the world is for nothing and will eventually lead to disappointment and hard feelings. Always agree on when and how follow-up will occur. Regardless of the method or frequency, follow-up is critical in creating action. There is no accountability if there is not an opportunity to account for action.

Effective teams and healthy relationships are supported by records of the important decisions made after difficult dialogues, and the assignments agreed upon. Good teams revisit these documents to follow up on both the decisions and the commitments. When someone fails to keep a commitment, candidly and directly discuss the issue with him or her—letting everyone know that keeping commitments is an important value.

9 Change Your Life: How to Turn Ideas into Habits
Here are four methods that will help you create productive conversations habits.

Master the content. Learn to recognize what works and why, and how to break away from scripts, or pre-bundled phrases used in common conversations. Instead generate new scripts of your own.

Master the skills. Understanding a concept isn’t enough. While it’s helpful, even necessary to talk the talk, you also have to be able to walk the talk. You have to be able to say the right words with the right tone and nonverbal actions.

Enhance your motive. You must want to change. You have to move from a passive sense that it would be a good idea to change, to an active desire to seek opportunities.

Watch for cues. To overcome surprise emotion, and scripts, you must recognize the call to action. This is usually people’s biggest obstacle to change. If a problem doesn’t cue your new skills, you’ll return to your old habits without even realizing you missed a chance to try something new.

Process Support Tools

Process Support Tools : The Lifecycle of Teacher Engagement

A Six-Step Process



Process Support Tools : Calendar Planning Tool

How Will Our Activities Map Effectively to the School Calendar?

Successful teacher engagement strategies take account of the constraints of the school year.

They start a planning cycle well in advance of launch, at least 18 months out, and keep a very light touch through the most stressful times of the school calendar—the beginning of the school year, and testing windows. They also take account of the fact that teachers are committed to student success and do not like to be away from the classroom. Higher intensity times of engagement—professional development, collaboration and co-design—are preferably scheduled for the summer break.

This annual calendar is intended for overall planning support. In addition teachers emphasized the following guidelines around time and scheduling to ensure successful engagement:

- Funders working in a district should know the district calendar very well
- Funders wishing to work with specific groups of teachers should also know the daily and weekly schedules of schools
- Teachers do not want to be taken out of the classroom (After school times are generally preferred for meetings but funders should always inquire about optimal times)
- Planning time (e.g. Prep Periods) is planning time, not time to be used for something else
- Teachers appreciate at least two weeks notice for any engagement activities

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------|-----------------------------|
| JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE |
| | | | Testing > | | Deeper collaboration work > |
| | | Enroll Education Partners > | | | |
| | | Plan Initiative > | | | |
| JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
| > and professional development opportunities | Start School Year | | | | |
| > Plan Initiative | | | Launch with cycles of implementation, review and sustainability planning as appropriate > | | |
| JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE |
| > Launch with cycles of implementation, review and sustainability planning as appropriate | | | Testing > | | Deeper collaboration work > |
| JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
| > and professional development opportunities | Start School Year | | | | |

■ Best Timeline ■ School Calendar

Process Support Tools : Ten Interviewing Styles to Avoid at All Costs



Getting the Most From of an Interview

Perhaps it is easier to categorically state how you should not behave as an interviewer. In all situations, avoid the temptation to be a...

10 **Big Talker**

You love the sound of your own voice. You know that you have great wisdom to impart and act on this conviction without restraint. You are happy to endlessly relate your own theories, opinions and exploits, while the interview subject provides scant detail, parrots your prejudices and shies away from offering his or her own views.

9 **Agile Anticipator**

You affect an Olympian omniscience. You know the answers before they are given. At the end of the interview, you leave with a mixture of erroneous ideas, foggy recollections and half truths.

8 **Listless Listener**

You are bored. You have heard all these answers many times before. You find yourself thinking about lunch or mulling over what your next question will be before you hear the answer to the present one.

7 **Prosecuting Attorney**

You proceed as if cross-examining a hostile witness. You put the interviewee on guard, grill him or her remorselessly and suppress the open expression of differing ideas.

6 **Goodwill Ambassador**

You have an aversion to asking difficult or sensitive questions. You skirt around the prospect of unpleasantness. You abhor offending people; you want to make friends.

5 **Captious Categorizer**

You are blessed with second sight, able to intuitively judge people's hidden motives. You classify others according to your own biases. You are the proud victim of your own prejudices.

4 **Simultaneous Doer**

During interviews held at your foundation, you perform like a one-person office: answering telephone calls, signing letters, dispatching duties to your staff. You are just too busy to give the interview your full attention.

3 **Faulty Question Framer**

You ask leading questions, telegraphing the answers you desire to hear. You ask general questions that produce general answers. You dabble in vague and incoherent inquiries and then interrupt with new, equally confusing questions before you get your answers.

2 **Triple Header Questioner**

You compose ridiculously complex questions with multiple parts that prove difficult to answer and impossible to track. A typical example: "Tell me all about your programs and how you raise money for them and then conduct their evaluation."

1 **Tactless Tactician**

You hone in on personal questions, such as salary concerns, in front of other staff. You phrase your inquiries in a crude, rude and tasteless manner. It has never occurred to you that people might be offended.

Adapted from work by Stephanie McAuliffe: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation for the July Institute for New Grantmakers, 2002

Process Support Tools : Teacher Engagement and Our Theory of Change

Five Steps to High-Empathy Grantmaking

Teacher engagement strategies fall within a wider body of stakeholder engagement efforts. Stakeholder engagement is designed to promote more empathic grantmaking—grantmaking that is better aligned with the perspectives, needs and realities of key stakeholders and beneficiaries of our work. These principles are helpful guides to this work.



Process Support Tools : Teacher Engagement and Our Theory of Change



Step 1

Make It About Others, Not About You

Many grantmakers believe they do a good job reflecting the interests and priorities of grantees and communities in their work. Ask grantees and community members, however, and you often hear a different story.

🔗 Questions for Your Organization

1. Do your organization's program officers and other staff have regular opportunities to come together and discuss what's happening with your grantees, and how to strengthen your grantmaking to help address urgent needs?
2. To what extent do staff members have the flexibility to make changes in how you support various grantees based on the staff's sense of what types of support will help the most right now?

3. To what extent can your organization provide grantees with various forms of support (e.g., for capacity building, leadership development, cash flow loans) based on staff members' understanding of what grantees need?

4. What is the status of your organization's relationships with grantees and community leaders—and how do you know? What do you do to ensure that you understand how stakeholders view their relationships with your organization?

5. What opportunities are available for community members and nonprofit representatives to connect with people from your foundation? Does the organization actively create opportunities for initiating and strengthening connections between its people and the people it serves?

6. Does your organization have standards or expectations in place to help guide program staff members in their ongoing communications and contact with grantees? Do you provide staff with training in relationship building and related topics?

7. What can your organization do to encourage staff members to bring a higher level of humility to their work with grantees and others?

8. How can you provide staff members with training in practices such as "active listening" so they are not viewed as an intimidating or controlling presence?

Step 2

Get Out of the Office

It's hard to have a deep understanding of what's going on in a community if you're not there. At too many foundations, board members and program staff have a skewed or sanitized view of what grantees and communities need because they lack connections to what's happening on the ground.

🔗 Questions for Your Organization

1. About how much time do staff members spend in the office versus the field?
2. Does your organization have any formal requirements or informal guidelines for how much time a program officer should spend in the community meeting with grantees and community groups and participating in local convenings?
3. To what extent are board members involved in the communities that are the focus of your organization's work—as volunteers and nonprofit board members?
4. What firsthand experience do foundation staff members have with the community and organizations they serve?
5. Does the foundation have any formal or informal programs that allow program staff to work in the community or with nonprofit organizations you serve for periods of time?
6. Where are most of the projects you fund located? How physically far away from your offices are most of your grantees and the beneficiaries of their work?

Process Support Tools : Teacher Engagement and Our Theory of Change

Step 3

Bring the Outside In

Two words: ivory tower. All too often, this is the image people have of foundations. The staff and board are isolated from grantee organizations and local communities. They don't look like the people they serve or live in the places they invest in. They make their decisions about their priorities and their grants without getting much if any input from the outside world.

🔗 Questions for Your Organization

1. What are the backgrounds (socioeconomic, cultural, educational, etc.) of your program staff, leadership and board? To what extent do those backgrounds match or differ from most of your grantees' staff or the communities they serve?
2. What did staff members do before they came to the foundation? Do any of the staff have experience working with grantees and other nonprofit organizations in the communities that are the focus of the foundation's grantmaking?
3. Who are your interns? Does the foundation have any formal or informal programs for community members or nonprofit staffers to come work in your offices?
4. How does the foundation remind itself of the communities and organizations it serves? Does the foundation have specific ways it keeps the stories, images and ideas of its grantees, nonprofits and communities physically and mentally present in the organization?
5. Do stakeholders have any input on foundation processes and policies? To what extent have grantees, community leaders or nonprofit representatives been able to comment on application processes and deadlines, program requirements and other aspects of how the foundation does its work?



Step 4

Invest in What It Takes

In many ways, the shift to high-empathy grantmaking can happen through relatively simple steps that organizations and their people can take to connect in more authentic ways with others. It's not that big a deal to make changes in how staff members plan and structure meetings with grantees, or to encourage and incentivize people to get out of the office more often.

🔗 Questions for Your Organization

1. To what extent are your organization's leaders prepared to invest in becoming a high-empathy foundation? What resources are available for doing this work?

2. What top two investments could your organization make to ensure that staff and board can develop and sustain a strong, firsthand understanding of grantee and community needs?

3. What level of demands are you placing on your program staff? Do staff members have the time they need to develop strong relationships with grantees and others in the communities that are the focus of your work, or are they overstretched?

Step 5

Lead From the Top

Widespread empathy isn't possible without a top-level commitment on the part of an organization's board and senior staff. One of the most essential characteristics of high-empathy organizations is a leadership team that walks the talk and demonstrates high-empathy behaviors in its everyday work.

🔗 Questions for Your Organization

1. To what extent do staff and board leaders follow high-empathy practices in their work? Are they building relationships with grantees and community members and getting out of the office?
2. What can your organization do to make empathy an organization wide priority—for example, by encouraging staff behaviors that promote and sustain empathy?

Process Support Tools : Sample Engagement Evaluation Protocols

Teachers as Beneficiaries / Investees

Project Evaluation

1. What were our teacher engagement goals for the initiative?

A:

B:

C:

D:

2. Did we recruit the right kind of teachers? Check all that apply:

- Were they able to make the time commitments?
- Were they able to make use of the opportunities presented?
- Did they help us add to our understanding of what the field needs?

3. Did we offer them the right kinds of opportunities?

- Yes No

Why / why not?

4. Have we met our impact goals?

A: Yes No C: Yes No

B: Yes No D: Yes No

5. Would we do this the same way again?

Yes No

If no, why not?

Process Support Tools : Sample Engagement Evaluation Protocols

Teachers as Beneficiaries / Investees

Questions for Teachers as Beneficiaries / Investees

1. Have you learned new, relevant skills?

Yes No

Please note the skills you've gained

A:

B:

C:

2. Have you gained new information?

Yes No

Please note the information you've gained

3. Do you feel you now have greater professional opportunities?

Yes No

Please provide some examples

A:

B:

C:

D:

4. Do you now see the profession in a different way?

Yes No

Please provide some details

5. Have you told your colleagues about this work?

Yes No

6. Would you take part in something like this again?

Yes No

Why / why not?

Process Support Tools : Sample Engagement Evaluation Protocols

Teachers as Advisers / Stakeholders

Project Evaluation

1. The impact goals were:

A:

B:

C:

D:

2. Did we get the number of teachers involved that we needed?

Yes No

Why / why not?

3. Did we get the variety of teachers involved that we needed?

Yes No

Why / why not?

4. Did we get new information from the teachers involved?

- No new information
- Some new information
- Significant new information

Please note the information you've gained

5. Did we get relevant information from the teachers involved?

Check all that apply:

- We learned more about the context of our project
- We learned more about the content of our project
- We were able to focus our design to increase impact
- We were able to focus our design to increase buy-in

6. Have teachers become ambassadors for the project?

Yes No

7. Have we met our impact goals?

A: Yes No C: Yes No

B: Yes No D: Yes No

8. Would we do this the same way again?

Yes No

Why / why not?

Process Support Tools : Sample Engagement Evaluation Protocols

Teachers as Advisers / Stakeholders

Questions for Teachers as Stakeholders

1. Were you given the opportunity to give substantive input to this project?

Yes No

2. Have you learned new, relevant skills?

Yes No

Please note the skills you've gained

3. Have you gained new information?

Yes No

Please note the information you've gained

A:

B:

C:

D:

4. Do you feel your input has shaped the final product?

Yes No

5. Have you told your colleagues about this work?

Yes No

6. Would you take part in something like this again?

Yes No

Why / why not?

Case Studies

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Case Study : Carlston Family Foundation

Elevating Voices

The Carlston Family Foundation has been identifying and honoring exceptional high-school teachers in California for over a decade. These teachers must have taught in a low-performing school district, and be nominated by a former student who has graduated from a four-year college. The foundation does further due diligence by contacting other former and current students.

The foundation is in the process of leveraging this network of excellent educators in a variety of ways, aiming to bring their voice into the policy arena, into teacher preparation programs, and, through the vehicle of an advisory panel, into informing the foundation's strategy. This last focus particularly shifts the work of the foundation along the continuum into consultancy, and potentially codesign work. At present its work is more firmly established in elevating voice, and so it is given as an example here.

Award winners from each year form an advisory panel that gives input to the board. The panel is also involved in the development of an educational symposium. The goal is to make this entirely teacher led. In terms of promoting teacher voice, the foundation is developing partnerships with policy-focused groups such as Accomplished California Teachers, and with schools of education.

Teachers have to be prepared to be ambassadors for their profession. They attend regional meetings, and an annual symposium hosted by the foundation. Increasingly teachers are also involved in presentations to partners, such as Accomplished California Teachers (policy) and events such as the UC Davis Literacy Conference. "Once a teacher is nominated, I talk to five to six former students, narrow the field from 100 to 10, and the board narrows that group to five."

Strategies

In 2007, the Carlston Foundation brought back previously awarded teachers to dialogue together and focus on best practices. Each year since, the foundation has continued to invite past winners to attend an educational symposium to address important issues and form an advisory board to their own board members. The advisory board is then tasked with follow-up activities like working with universities such as California State University in their teacher preparation programs and co-sponsoring academic summits at UC Davis. Bringing these teachers together has shifted the aims of the foundation, which originally just awarded exceptional teachers, to guiding these teachers to become leaders.

Teacher Role

The foundation provides an opportunity for teachers to become advisors to the foundation and has three main objectives for teachers in their development:

1. To communicate to teachers, regardless of where they teach, that they can be successful with the right skills and techniques
2. To promote the teacher's voice and help schools and districts work on professional development
3. To leverage the group of teachers (who have won an award from CFF) to get involved with policy and become teacher leaders



"I found that just interviewing teachers is good but I needed to go out and watch them teach... I spend the day in everybody's classroom. I go out and watch how [teachers] interact with kids and I get a feel for the campus..."

*—Tim Allen, Executive Director,
Carlston Family Foundation*

Case Study : Carlston Family Foundation

“...we’re going to be looking at how both of our organizations can combine and improve the voice of the teachers using teachers to guide and really be teacher leaders.”

—*Accomplished California Teachers*

Teacher Resources

There are several resources for teachers including:

- Educational symposiums where they participate in discussions around key issues
- Follow up activities such as the teacher preparation program and/or educational summits
- Involvement with policies

Another resource is the common characteristics of effective teachers which have been put together from thousands of interviews from students. This list is shared at presentations and workshops for professional development.

Funder Resources

A useful strategy for funders is to understand the day-to-day life of a teacher by observing them in the classroom. After interviewing students for the teacher award, Tim Allen, Executive Director of Carlston Family Foundation, observes the teachers in action to get a sense of the teacher in their environment. “I found that just interviewing teachers is good but once I got it down to the finalists, I needed to go out and watch them teach. Once I get it down to the 10 or 12 finalists, I spend the day in everybody’s classroom. I go out and watch how they interact with kids and I get a feel for the campus, what the kids are like. It’s much easier for me when we sit down and the board begins to look at these to really say, ‘yes, this is what he or she said or what the student said and I saw it happen.’”

★ **Measures of Success:** *Involvement with policy issues has resulted in new partnerships with other organizations such as the Accomplished California Teachers, a teacher leadership network concentrated on elevating teacher voice in educational policy with elementary teachers. “We wanted to expand [our collaboration] to be able to do things where we could get K-12 involved. So we’re going to be looking at how both of our organizations can combine and improve the voice of the teachers using teachers to guide and really be teacher leaders. And not in the sense where these teacher leaders are going to be moving into administration but where they can move into really providing and creating an atmosphere where teachers will work together to help improve instruction and also have some effect in the policy realm, whether it be teacher evaluation or whether it be requirements or testing.”*

✔ **Lessons Learned:** *Bringing teachers on as advisors to their board has shifted the foundation’s focus from initially just awarding teachers to helping teachers become leaders and advocates for changes in policy and has affirmed their commitment to teachers as a valuable resource.*

Case Study : Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching

Building Capacity

The Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching provides mentoring and direct support to produce powerful professional growth and development for participating teachers. The initiative has been implemented for over 11 years in California and targets teachers with potential to excel in their teaching practice.

The initiative currently works with 175 teachers across 25 schools. Teacher fellows identify goal areas, videotape and reflect on their practice, and participate in conferences and collegial inquiry groups. Mentors provide ongoing support to teachers in both content and pedagogy.

Cotsen Fellows build capacity by reflecting on their practice, meeting weekly with their mentors, and participating in periodic training and collaborative sessions.

Teacher fellows make a two-year commitment to participating in mentoring sessions, inquiry groups, conferences, and other professional development activities. Mentor teachers are released full time to support fellows, meeting two to three hours weekly with each one to support her/his implementation goals.

In addition to allocating time and resources for professional development activities and mentoring support, the Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching also organizes an annual conference for participants, maintains an alumni network and alumni grants, and coordinates a series of ongoing professional learning communities.

Strategies

Individual teacher targets are monitored throughout the engagement. Teachers define specific goals in terms of practice and student performance and select appropriate metrics, including pre and post measures. Four teaching videos are used as one of the ways to determine growth in the quality of instruction for each teacher over two years.

After each year, Cotsen analyzes the teacher fellow videos from the beginning of the year to the end to observe the quality of growth that had occurred. From these observations, they developed a set of lenses to observe teaching quality including:

- Physical environment
- Social environment
- Instruction
- Content presented
- Assessments by teachers
- Effects on students

Each lens contains a set of questions for mentors to consider when collecting evidence of teacher growth. A six-point rubric was also developed for measuring the quality of the instruction, content and social environment to assess the teacher videos which are then shared with the mentors to prepare them for the recruitment process. “Our goal was to be as open as possible about what we have discovered from the field to be exemplars of great teaching and to demonstrate the variety in which quality is evident.”

“Our goal was to be as open as possible about what we have discovered from the field to be exemplars of great teaching and to demonstrate the variety in which quality is evident.”

Case Study : Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching

Teacher Role

An alumni program and study group of three to five teachers was created to allow teachers to continue their professional development. In addition, Strategic Opportunity Grants are given to schools and/or districts to promote the work of the Art of Teaching and professional growth of teachers.

Teachers who participate in the Art of Teaching are given five substitute days, \$1,000 in professional development grants, and stipends of \$500. Cotsen has found that the incentive to participate from teachers, however, is to perfect their craft and learn from their colleagues. "What they appreciate most about their experience is the collegial relationship with others, being treated as a professional and directing their own professional development. They continue to participate in study groups using our alumni grants or in district professional development initiatives using our strategic opportunity grants. They continue to come to our annual conference."

Teacher Resources

The opportunity to discuss teaching with their colleagues exposes teachers to new approaches and motivates them to perfect their craft. "Seeing more teachers across grades inspires other teachers to try new practices and, because they are using a particular method like Reading or Writing Workshop, observers can imagine learning how to use that same approach. We also discovered that faculty at the demonstration schools continue to sharpen their teaching as a direct result of being on display and talking with others about their craft."



“What they appreciate most about their experience is the collegial relationship with others, being treated as a professional and directing their own professional development.”

Funder Resources

The mission of Cotsen has remained focused on promoting the development of teachers. Strategic Opportunity Grants, alumni programs and study groups have helped to communicate the vision of the Art of Teaching by having participants share their experiences with their colleagues and spread the effect of the initiative.

★ **Measures of Success:** *The number of participants has increased eight-fold since 2001 where the foundation conducted a two-year pilot with 21 fellows and four mentors from three districts at four schools. As of 2011-2012, the Art of Teaching will have been in 20 districts and 95 schools with 180 participants as mentors who will join 490 alumni members.*

✔ **Lessons Learned:** *“Size is an asset. We worried when we doubled the number of schools and teachers in our program and then doubled again two more times for fear that we might lose the sense of connection with the teachers. Instead, what we found was that we had many more exemplary teachers to lead professional development and to observe. The sense of being part of a large and influential professional community appears to strengthen the teachers’ confidence and sense of efficacy.”*

Case Study : Metlife Survey of the American Teacher

Reviewing

The Metlife Survey of the American Teacher has been conducted annually since 1984. The purpose of the survey is to capture the views of teachers on the teaching profession as well as key educational issues, and to share their voices with policy makers as well as the public.

A representative sample of teachers is selected based on geography, demographics, and years of experience. The survey is administered with teachers by phone from Harris Interactive's network of approved suppliers. A computer assisted telephone interview system (CATI) was used to collect the data.

The survey focuses on core educational issues such as teacher satisfaction. Other areas have been included in the survey over the years, including violence, student and parent engagement, college and career readiness, homework, and collaboration within schools.

In 2011, 1,001 K-12 public school teachers completed the survey. The survey consisted of 96 questions. The results of the survey are published approximately three to four months after the data are collected.

Strategies

The early collaboration between an advisory committee of education leaders, Harris Interactive and Sibyl Jacobson (president of the foundation at the time), brought together a number of perspectives that shaped the success of the survey. MetLife began its annual survey in 1984, one year after the publication of "A Nation at Risk" when teachers were under fire from the public. The survey broadened the discourse around education by contributing the voice of the teacher. Its aim is to share what teachers are saying in an evenhanded manner without taking a position.



“That’s our goal: whatever the finding is, for it to be constructive in informing a discussion.”

Case Study : Metlife Survey of the American Teacher

“The survey revealed in 2009 that most teachers wanted to collaborate and receive feedback from other teachers but found that only 20% of teachers have the chance to do so.”

Whether the findings are agreed upon or not, the results shed light on issues that teachers are dealing with and inform important discussions about teacher satisfaction. “The question wasn’t: ‘What’s MetLife’s agenda in this?’ or ‘This is flawed methodology.’ The discussion went immediately, whether people were supportive of teachers or not, to what this means for education. And I think that’s our goal: whatever the finding is, for it to be constructive in informing a discussion.” In its 29 years, the survey has continued to reach out to teachers with new iterations of the survey each year.

Teacher Role

The survey uses qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the satisfaction of teachers and to examine their perspectives and perceptions. While teachers are the focus of the survey, parents, principals and students are also surveyed for further points of view on teaching and the issues that impact community engagement.

Teacher Resources

Teachers are given a chance to reflect on their experiences and opinions and inform the public about their profession. The findings from the annual survey are shared with the public as well as policy makers. The results have been leveraged in multiple ways in the past, informing professional development models and activities, teacher network communities, grantmaking priorities, etc.

Funder Resources

Rick Love, Director of the MetLife Foundation, notes that a strength of the survey is that by also interviewing parents, students and principals, the survey provides a broader perspective and contrast. “It gives some basis of comparison between what teachers think and what others think.” When people disagree, such as teachers and principals, it becomes a point of action to see if it’s something that can be fixed between two disagreeing parties.

★ **Measures of Success:** *The survey revealed in 2009 that most teachers wanted to collaborate and receive feedback from other teachers but found that only 20% of teachers have the chance to do so. They used this point to inform the formation of MetLife’s Lesson Study initiative, a methodology adapted from Japan to enable groups of teachers to improve classroom lessons through observation and analysis. The MetLife Foundation has helped to support this initiative at Denver Public Schools (DPS) and at the Development Studies Center (DSC) in Emeryville, California. (For more information, visit <http://www.devstu.org/lesson-study>).*

✔ **Lessons Learned:** *Each iteration of the survey has been fine-tuned. “I think it’s changed our thinking over time about the status of education and what can improve it because, what we’re careful to say, survey research is not just about asking, it’s about listening. And we really do listen.” While the surveys remain focused on teachers, recent years have seen interviews conducted with principals, students and parents to engage with the broader community and provide new perspectives.*

Case Study : Gates Teacher Advisory Council

Consulting

For several years, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation engaged teachers as advisors on specific projects. With the launch of the Measures of Effective Teaching initiative, the foundation deepened teachers' consultative role by convening an advisory group for the overall initiative. Through these experiences, the foundation came to appreciate the value of having the sustained involvement of a group of teachers over time providing input on a broader set of initiatives. Therefore they decided to build on their work by launching a Teacher Advisory Council.

The foundation recruited a diverse group of 50 teachers to serve on the council, committing to participate for a minimum of two years. They charged the group with supporting the development and review of the foundation's strategies, sharing insight on how to translate vision into implementation in schools and districts, and providing feedback and perspective as they participate and lead this work in the field.

The council consists of teachers representing different lengths of experience, contents, grade levels, geographies and points of view. The foundation sought to attract a diverse range of perspectives—rather than teachers' whose views were closely aligned with the foundation—so the group could serve as critical friends. Teachers were recruited through Gates grantee organizations; leaders of these organizations were asked to nominate teachers who met the following criteria:

- Have demonstrated success in raising student achievement, as measured by the district's evaluation system and value-added measures
- Have experience in a leadership role, whether formal or informal, coaching other teachers, designing policy, or leading special initiatives
- Possess an interest in national discussions on strengthening the teaching profession and raising student achievement, especially among low-income and minority students
- Have capacity to commit two days each summer and winter and to a quarterly call

Strategies

The foundation convenes the council twice per year, flying the teachers to Gates' Seattle headquarters. To date, the council has convened twice for the in-person gatherings. Foundation staff designed these convenings to combine an in-depth review of the foundation's strategy and approach to its work, as well as a set of advisory sessions with program officers. In the advisory sessions, staff presented problems of practice to small groups of teachers for consultation.

In addition, the foundation has created a private Facebook group providing the teachers an opportunity to network with their peers and with foundation staff. The group also allows for quick feedback from the teacher-advisors in between in-person gatherings.

Teacher Role

Teachers are typically asked for their feedback about an idea, what the impact on the classroom might be, what sorts of landmines might emerge, and how the foundation can talk about the issue in a way that inspires and energizes classroom teachers.

Teacher Resources

The foundation pays for travel for all participating teachers, but it decided not to offer stipends for the work. It did so in order to reinforce a culture of professionalism, similar to how other professions expect voluntary commitments on advisory councils for individuals who are seen as leaders in their field.

The foundation also seeks to make the council valuable for teachers in their practice, providing an opportunity for them to extend their leadership in their school and district, to develop a new network of teachers from around the country, to reflect on and strengthen their classroom practice and to influence the future of public education. The teachers have indicated they value this time with peers from around the country, and there is time carved out in the semi-annual convenings for teachers to bring problems of practice to each other.

Case Study : Gates Teacher Advisory Council



Funder Resources

This process requires a substantial investment in planning and recruitment in order to capture the benefits of the work. The teacher recruitment process was extremely intensive. Additionally, the lead staff person works closely with other program officers to organize the convenings thoughtfully and to design consultations that will be successful and engaging.

★ **Measures of Success:** *The foundation has derived several benefits from the council. First, it has deepened their understanding of teachers' perspectives on key topics, which in turn has informed and strengthened the foundation's initiatives. Second, it has helped the foundation understand how best to communicate its work with teachers to promote more widespread buy-in and understanding of its work. Several colleagues have found it so valuable that they are starting to invite some of the teachers to other, topic-specific convenings where they want teacher input.*

✔ **Lessons Learned:** *Be thoughtful about providing enough context, helping teachers understand the nature of your work, why you want their advice, and how you will use it. Be cognizant of the unbalanced power dynamics between funders and teachers, and design processes carefully to build trust and participation. Invest sufficient time in designing the projects presented for consultations to ensure it is an effective use of everyone's time. Recognize that it will take a lot of time and effort to recruit the teachers; it was valuable to do so through grantees, but time-consuming to work with so many different organizations.*

Case Study : Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success (CLASS)

Co-designing

The Chalkboard Project is the result of collaboration between six foundations. The non-profit was set up in 2004 with a focus on improving public education in Oregon. The original six foundations have seats on the board, but 20 additional funders have now joined the effort.

Initially, The Chalkboard Project's work focused on three areas—funding, quality and accountability, and included a broad range of activities informed by public opinion and best practices research. As the result of a working group on educator quality, Chalkboard launched a pilot project focused on strengthening educator effectiveness in 2006. The initial results of the pilot led the Board to focus 80% of Chalkboard's efforts on educator effectiveness. The pilot began as a partnership between Chalkboard and three school districts, and was called the Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success (CLASS) Project. The aims of this project were to:

- Expand career paths
- Develop relevant professional development
- Develop effective performance evaluations
- Develop new compensation models

Chalkboard has now worked with 23 districts through CLASS, reaching about 30% of students in Oregon.

This work was expanded in 2010 by a successful bid for a five-year, \$24.4M Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant from the US Department of Education. TIF is well-aligned to the teacher-led work of the CLASS Project and requires that participating districts redesign evaluation and compensation to recruit, reward, and retain effective teachers.

Strategies

As a comprehensive project that aims to be teacher-led, a variety of strategies were used to bring teachers into the process.

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Advisory Groups
- Coaching
- Action Research

Teacher Role

As a teacher-led project there are many different roles for educators to play. The project is guided by CLASS Coaches, veteran teachers and administrators, who work with Chalkboard staff, consultants and implementation teams in schools to facilitate the design and implementation of the CLASS components. In each participating district, design teams made up of teachers, union leaders and administrators work together to create plans that meet the unique needs of the district.

Teacher Resources

For individual educators and also for districts there has been a significant resource allocation in terms of time to the CLASS project. For districts as a whole this could be argued to be work they would have been doing anyway given the U.S.E.D.'s emphasis on states developing educational evaluation systems. Chalkboard's ED, Sue

Hildick notes that many districts were 'hungry' to begin the kinds of conversations and work facilitated by the CLASS project and TIF grant.

"Individual educators also took risks to take part on the project. Changes to evaluation and compensation policies are 'third rail' issues in many districts, and to be working on such areas is particularly difficult for union representatives. However, unions are also critical partners in such conversations. One participating union representative described how he had a difficult relationship with some of his colleagues in the early stages of the project, but was able to bring them along through transparency and regular conversation."

In one school district, the teachers on the CLASS design team were either paid for their time to meet after school, or the grant paid for subs when they met during the school day. In another district, the teachers on the design team received \$500 stipends for the year.

Occasionally, that design team would vote to give a member of the team additional money for doing extra work. For example, the teacher who took charge of setting up the website was given an additional \$250. The design team participants usually meet once a month during the design year. With the added time in-between meetings, teachers spend six to ten hours per month on CLASS work, although during implementation that may decrease to two to six hours per month.

Case Study : Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success (CLASS)

Funder Resources

“CLASS has become the cornerstone of our strategic plan. After the first couple years of the CLASS work, once we started to see the impact, the board decided to dedicate 80% of our time and efforts to teacher effectiveness work—CLASS being the driver of that work. In some ways, CLASS has limited our ability to engage in the broader range of efforts that we were working on prior to the growth of CLASS (i.e. parent engagement, business practices, early-age initiatives, etc). This isn’t to say we don’t work in those other areas anymore, we certainly do. But, our capacity to go deeply in areas outside of teacher and leader effectiveness is very limited noted Chalkboard staff. Many of the opportunities we have had to impact the state-level agenda and reform efforts at the district-level are the result of CLASS. Piloting promising practices and having educators be the spokespeople for those practices gives us a lot of credibility. The impact CLASS is having on teaching and learning in Oregon is a bright spot in the state and we are seen as leaders for moving forward reforms that have had tangible results.” They added, “TIF gave us the resources to expand the CLASS work in the six districts that are part of that grant. It has also given us a tool to help impact the federal conversation on teacher effectiveness.”

★ Measures of Success

Process of Engagement: Feedback from the teacher focus/design group in Portland indicated that the engagement process has been successful. The authenticity of the connections to and between teachers seem valid and valuable, and early content results indicate that teacher practice is benefiting from the work.

Content of Engagement: From 2011, the CLASS website posted the following results—

Three years after the initial implementation of the CLASS Project, the first three participating districts Sherwood, Tillamook, and Forest Grove’s noteworthy gains include:

- Across the three districts, increases in the share of students meeting or exceeding the state OAKS benchmarks was at least twice the improvement for the comparable districts in math and science. In reading and writing, the CLASS districts’ improvement was about 1.5 times the improvement for comparable districts.
- In math, improvements in each of the three districts also exceeded statewide gains. Two out of three districts demonstrated improvements greater than the state as a whole in the other subjects.
- The increase in meet/exceed rates for Tillamook students was at least three times that for comparable districts for reading, science, and writing. Improvement in math was nearly 2.5 times the comparable districts’ improvement.
- The improvement in science meet/exceed rates for Sherwood students was more than twice the increase for comparable districts, and more than 1.5 times the comparable districts’ improvement in math and writing.
- Improvements among Forest Grove students also exceeded those of the comparable districts, with improvements in math meet/exceed more than double the comparable districts’ improvement.

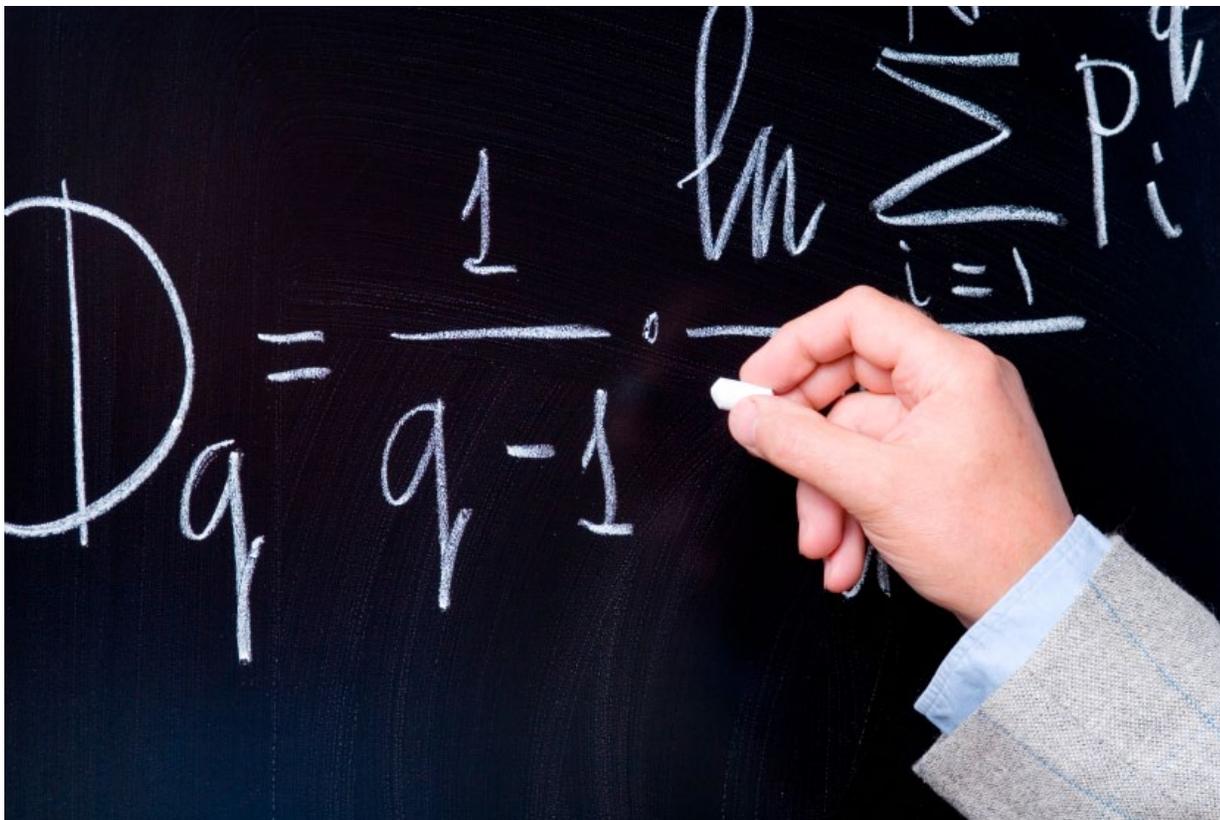
✔ Lessons Learned

A Portland educator and union representative noted that his union colleagues were initially very skeptical of his involvement in the CLASS initiative. However, he felt that the work they were doing was the right work to support classrooms and teachers, and would result in a rewarding and effective program for his school district. Early results are beginning to prove that value and neighboring school districts are beginning to borrow strategies to engage teachers.



“The impact CLASS is having on teaching and learning in Oregon is a bright spot in the state and we are seen as leaders for moving forward reforms that have had tangible results.”

Case Study : Center for Teaching Quality



“We have learned a lot about how to take signals and even direction from teachers about shaping the sorts of learning opportunities that can help to advance work in their classrooms but also beyond their classrooms.”

Building Capacity

Another example of building capacity is the The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ). This supports a high-quality public education system for all students driven by the ideas and expert practices of teachers. CTQ has created a number of initiatives in order for teachers to transform their profession. Since 2009, CTQ has grown its virtual network to include thousands of teacher leaders, including focus areas in California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, and Washington.

The CTQ recognized that there wasn't a lack of supply of good teachers but rather, a lack of demand for them. This was the premise behind CTQ's New Millennium Initiative (NMI), which aims to engage teachers authentically in a robust and vibrant online community in order to promote policy change and pedagogical improvement.

The New Millennium Initiative (soon to be re-branded) is developing the infrastructure, with a powerful new web-based and mobile platform as well as highly facilitated paths of engagement to connect, ready, and mobilize 20,000 teachers throughout the country (and globally) within five years. The effectiveness of NMI's collaboration, toolkits, and networks are evidenced in the policy changes realized at local, state and national levels. Ultimately, the goal of NMI is to ensure that these policy changes will lead to increased student learning.

Case Study : Center for Teaching Quality

Strategies

The NMI engages teachers virtually and in person to advance the following:

- Build on their pedagogical expertise and deepen their knowledge of education policy
- Refine their policy insights and contribute their voices to decisions that affect the students and communities they serve
- Partner with local education funds and other community-based organizations in their areas to expand the constituency for ambitious and much needed teaching policy reforms and
- Develop their skills as policy analysts and advocates

Teacher Role

Participating teachers organize and lead the active networks and become advocates for policy reform in their schools and larger communities. Through this network, the NMI has developed a set of toolkits to assist teachers in contributing ideas, practicing leadership, strengthening their advocacy skills, and becoming voices for policy changes. Teachers help develop and implement policy and advocacy toolkits, inform state and national leaders on a range of reform issues, and lead local reform initiatives around areas such as teacher evaluation, sustainable school improvement, and teacher preparation.

Teacher Resources

The Center For Teaching Quality's focus on providing learning opportunities for teachers and having a resource bank made a difference in thinking about how to support teachers in their professional development. "We have learned a lot about how to take signals and even direction from teachers about shaping the sorts of learning opportunities that can help to advance work in their classrooms but also beyond their classrooms."

Funder Resources

"I think the thing I have most taken from work with teacher leaders in our network, is that I've been struck both by what powerfully smart professionals they are yet how humble they are about what they know and their willingness to ask questions about the things they don't know. And I think that's a really great model for the rest of us who are in the education space. There's a lot that, regardless of our role in the conversation, be it a funder or a teacher or a principal, a district superintendent or a school board member, we each bring something to the conversation. But I think the very most powerful thing that we can do is to ask questions about what we ourselves did not bring and invite knowledge and expertise."

★ **Measures of Success:** *The CTQ Colorado, initially the Denver New Millennium Initiative, is a group of veteran and early-career teachers who share principles and work towards transforming education in Colorado. CTQ Colorado developed guiding values and principles for implementing a teacher evaluation system in a report entitled "Making Teacher Evaluation Work for Students: Voices from the Classroom." As a result of the report, the Colorado Department of Education asked some of the authoring teachers to work directly with them on implementation guidelines, plans, and informing the shape of rule making.*

✔ **Lessons Learned:** *Webinars were initially designed for teachers in a similar fashion to seminars with a group of panelists and an expert that would present and then field questions. The discussions allowed the teachers to inquire about case studies and research from a range of people involved in the education system from Charlotte Danielson, an expert in teacher effectiveness, to officials in the U.S. Department of Education. The format of these discussions has changed over time. While CTQ aims to retain this type of exposure, the dynamic of the conversations has shifted where the topics and agenda are being set with teachers rather than by staff members of CTQ. "We're learning a whole lot more about how to work with the teachers to co-create these kinds of pieces so that we're not just staffing them in the way you might a blue ribbon panel but really entering into full, professional collaboration with them. Even for an organization that has always highly respected and valued teacher leadership, even for an organization that's comprised mostly of teacher leaders, that was a leap that we hadn't made ourselves. Now we're making it."*

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