

### Composition of the Team

We recommend a learning team composed of three to six volunteer members, from the same department or grade level or from a variety of assignments. Learning teams can include administrators and support staff as well as classroom teachers. One of the most important criteria for assembling a team is that all members be free to meet at the same time.

If you find yourself beginning as a learning team of one, you can invite colleagues to join you whom you know to be interested in the ideas. You can arrange for a department or faculty to watch and discuss the DVD, *New Mission, New Beliefs: Assessment FOR Learning*, or read and discuss the Black and Wiliam article, “Inside the Black Box,” after which you can invite to join you in a team anyone interested in learning more about how assessment can be used to influence motivation and achievement.

You can get the DVD, *New Mission, New Beliefs*, free by e-mailing your request to us at [ets-ati@ets.org](mailto:ets-ati@ets.org). You can download the article, “Inside the Black Box,” from the “Resources” tab on our website, <http://www.ets.org/ati>. In addition you may wish to download and read the article by Rick Stiggins and Jan Chappuis, “What a difference a Word Makes: Assessment FOR Learning Rather than Assessment OF Learning Helps Students Succeed,” also found in “Papers” under the “Resources” tab on our website.

### Getting Started

For an optimal learning experience, we recommend that one or two people agree to serve as the “manager” of the experience—to do some things for the good of the team. This need not include leading all meetings, but there are general management duties. Several decisions need to be made in advance of the first meeting, and teams should make several others at their first meeting. A bit of prior planning is needed here—think in advance about the following questions:

- Will the participation be voluntary or mandatory? (Mandatory participation presents difficulties as explained in the text and referred to following.)
- Will team leadership be decided by the team or will it be established before the team meets?
- Will the time frame for completion of study and the meeting schedule be determined by the team or by a predetermined leader?
- Will the reading schedule be set by the team or by a predetermined leader?

- Will the team decide what to do during and between meetings or will it be decided by a predetermined leader?
- What will be the roles of principals, other administrators, and teacher-leaders?

A planning form that can be used to track these decisions is included in the “Forms” section of this document.

## Participation

A note about voluntary versus mandatory participation—we’ve noticed that team management responsibilities can be thought of as a continuum that correlates to the degree to which team members are volunteers. When team members are eager to participate, management consists of helping teams form. These teams tend to run independently and to rotate team leadership responsibilities. This is why we want participants to be volunteers. However, sometimes teams need assistance with understanding or implementing ideas, in which case management consists of obtaining additional resources or expertise. Especially in the case of people who facilitate a number of teams, team management involves presenting periodic workshops to support the learning. Just realize that, when participation is mandatory, learning team management can require that one person external to the team carefully plan and lead every meeting.

### *Team Leadership and Responsibilities*

Teams can be led by one designated leader who performs the additional duties needed for the experience to work. Or, members may choose to take turns running the meetings. However responsibilities are assigned, we strongly recommend that one or more people take on management responsibilities and complete the following oversight actions: post the schedule of team meetings, complete and post a team meeting log, monitor meeting time so all members have an opportunity to share, and bring whatever materials are needed to the meeting.

### *Responsibilities of the Team*

Team members’ responsibilities are to establish and adhere to group operating principles and to monitor their own adherence. In other words, in the team experience, we all take responsibility for ourselves so the facilitator can pay attention to the content of the meeting. In addition (this should go without saying, but we say it anyway) all team members commit to completing homework assignments and to attending all meetings.

## Schedules

The time frame may be established at the district level, as in when a learning team experience is structured to span the school year. Or individual groups may decide how long a period of time to take. They may decide to complete a portion of the program over the course of a year, or they may decide to complete the whole program in less than a year.

Those leading learning team-based professional development at the building, district, or regional level may set up a schedule of meeting times and assignments, or individual teams may make those decisions. We recommend that no more than one text chapter be the focus for a meeting. Many teams have found it necessary to devote more than one meeting to some high-interest chapters. We also recommend that learning team meetings last one to two hours and that they be scheduled between two and three weeks apart, to give people enough time to read and try something out, without having so much time elapse between meetings that members lose track of the thread of their learning.

## The First Team Meeting

If it has not been decided in advance, one of the first things you will do is to decide on how you would like to structure team leadership. Will you have a designated facilitator or will leadership rotate? Then, agree on the facilitator's responsibilities. As noted previously, we recommend that the following actions be assigned to someone:

- Post schedule of meetings
- Complete and post team meeting log
- Monitor meeting time so all members have opportunity to share
- Bring materials needed for the meeting

Following this, agree on the responsibilities of team members. We suggest that those include establishing and adhering to group operating principles and monitoring their own adherence. Consider adopting the following group operating principles:

We agree we will do the following—

- Do the work—the reading and whatever activities we have selected.
- Stick to the topic or task during the meeting.
- Keep the focus on students.

- Involve everyone. Make sure all voices are heard.
- Be an active listener. Seek to understand as well as to be understood.

Determine your meeting schedule, if it has not been determined in advance. Decide when and where to meet and establish a reading and assignment schedule. You may want to use the “Meeting Schedule” chart in the “Forms” section at the end of this document.

Plan for how you will keep track of and evaluate your growth. Use a working folder or notebook to keep track of the work you do. Suggestions for how to turn your working folder into a portfolio can be found on the CD in the file, “Establishing a Portfolio.”

Options for evaluating your growth include the “Confidence Questionnaire” (also found on the CD), evaluations of assessments you complete during the course of study, student surveys, and any other activities you complete that can be used to document your learning. Suggestions for possible portfolio entries can be found at the conclusion of each text chapter.

We encourage you to complete the “Confidence Questionnaire” at your first meeting. At the conclusion of each meeting, review your assignments for the next meeting and choose the facilitator, if that job is to rotate.

Whoever has been leading this first meeting should also complete a record of the meeting, such as the “Learning Team Log” in the “Forms” section at the end of this document. We recommend that a learning team log be completed after each meeting. You can decide where the logs will be kept. If more than one learning team is operating in your building, you can post each team’s logs in a common notebook in the faculty room. In some situations, teams submit a copy of the log to their principal or to a district or regional learning team coordinator.

## Between Meetings

Generally, group members individually read and reflect on a chapter (or a portion of a chapter) from *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning* and view accompanying DVD clips as suggested in the text. They also try out one or more of the ideas, whether activities undertaken with students or actions taken with curriculum or assessments. Groups sometimes agree to try the same thing; other times they try whatever fits their individual contexts at the moment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, interactive program videos are available that correlate with several of the chapters; individuals may decide to work through these videos as suggested in the text as a part of their study of the chapter.

## During Meetings

At the outset of the meeting, each person shares their most important learnings, conclusions, and questions from the study of program materials. Then each member shares the ideas or strategies they tried with curriculum, with assessment, or with students in their classroom. Teams may also decide to do together during the meeting one or more of the activities presented in the chapter. Or, you may decide to devote a meeting to working through the interactive training video for that chapter, if one is available. At the conclusion of the meeting, the team decides on (or reviews) the assignment to complete before the next meeting.

## The Final Meeting

We recommend that you culminate your learning with a final session in which each team member shares their growth portfolios. You can do this one of two (or more) ways: Each person spends an allotted amount of time sharing the contents of their growth portfolio and receiving questions and comments, or you read each person's portfolio silently for about half of the time and then ask questions and offer comments for the rest of the meeting.

## The Showcase Presentation

If you would like to get together with other learning teams for your final meeting, for instance if several teams have been formed in your school or district, you may like the idea of a showcase presentation. A *showcase* is a presentation of projects, artifacts, and ideas representing participants' learning. It provides an opportunity for teams to share their best ideas. Preparing a showcase display consolidates your thinking about the procedure being showcased, provides opportunity to glean nifty ideas from each other, and celebrates the hard work everyone has done. Here is how the showcase presentation works.

## Sharing Your Portfolio

Take your growth portfolio to your final learning team meeting. Spend a few minutes per person explaining your entries. The purpose here is to select best samples from all the entries in everyone's portfolios that your team would be willing to "showcase" at the large group meeting.

### Selecting an Entry

We recommend selecting an entry you all would like others to have the opportunity to see and understand. It can be the work of your whole group, of any combination of your group, or of one member. Planning the showcase presentation, however, will be a team effort, and the focus of your learning team meeting time.

### The Showcase Process

Showcases are not formal presentations in which each team has 15 or so minutes to talk about their work to a seated audience. Rather, this is a walkabout in which one person will stay at the team's table and the rest will circulate to the other tables. It is self-pacing. Sometimes your team's representative might be chatting with a single person. Sometimes that person may be giving a short explanation to a small group. In any case, since multiple presentations occur simultaneously in the same room, the setup is not conducive to large-screen presentations or typical workshop-type activities. (Note: The same person does not have to remain at your team's table the whole time; we encourage you trade off so that everyone gets a chance to see other offerings.)

### What to Prepare

You can make your team's presentation as simple or as complex as you want. Teams sometimes prepare a backboard (4' x 4' or so) that contains a self-explanatory visual display of their work—a title, displays, and a brief explanation of what participants are looking at and why it is important. Teams can post such things as post rubrics, samples of student work, examples of assessments used, a list of strategies for involving students, letters to parents, and learning targets converted to student-friendly language.

Supplemental pieces (handouts, a computer, a notebook, etc. as appropriate) can be placed on a table for browsing if participants want more information.

## Role of Administrators in Supporting Learning Teams

First, building and district instructional leaders should develop an understanding of what the teams are learning. The central ideas are described in Chapter 1 of the book and are represented visually in Figure 1.2 there.

The following ideas for building-level administrative support are adapted from the Educational Testing Service's *Assessment FOR Learning: An Action Guide for School Leaders*, pp. 238–240.

- The most effective step a principal can take to support learning teams in your school is to join a learning team yourself. More than any other thing you can do, this act telegraphs that you believe assessment literacy to be a high priority, a skill set worthy of your own time.
- As a building principal, hold team meeting time sacred for members. Avoid asking individuals to do something else during their meeting time.
- Members of the learning teams have committed a great deal of their own time, as well as team time, to become assessment literate. They may also be willing to assist you on other committees/teams, but consider not asking them for additional time commitments while this learning team is underway.
- Learning team members are acting on intrinsic motivation. The greatest reward for them will be seeing the changes in their students. Help them track those changes by asking about them. Encourage members to document students' changes for their own personal growth portfolios. If this seems overwhelming, ask them to select three students—one strong learner, a midrange learner, and a struggling learner—and look for changes in them.
- If you are a member of a team, consciously adopt a “learner stance.” In team or committee settings, some people watch the principal's response and then pattern their actions after the principal's. You want your team members to feel safe enough to admit that something doesn't work well and to try new ideas. Model this: “I always did \_\_\_\_\_ when I was teaching, and now I see why it wasn't the best choice. If I had it to do over again, I think I'd try \_\_\_\_\_.” In a learning team setting, it can work to your advantage to be a learner along with your staff, and it can work against you if they see you as the “expert,” because you have not joined a learning team to teach the class, you are there to learn along with them.
- If you are not able to join a team, get a schedule of your teams' meeting dates and assigned readings. Strive at least to be connected to what they are learning. Ask questions about the specific chapters they are reading and what they are doing with those ideas.
- Identify a “concept of the week” (or month). Highlight it at a staff meeting—through examples, an activity, testimonials, student work, and so on. Consider coplanning the meetings with your facilitator or whole team.

- Be quick to notice success. If someone tells you, “I tried this out, and it really worked!,” do something with that information. E-mail a response. Recognize small successes; make those small but important changes visible in some way. Get them into faculty meetings—plan a short (5 minute), regular “Successful Assessment Ideas Sharing Time” to help people realize that huge successes build on small ones, and that we/they are learning one step at a time. Celebrate the steps!
- Ask members of the team to invite you in to the classroom the next time they try a new idea. Get in there to watch student involvement in action. “I’m intrigued by \_\_\_\_\_ and wondered if you would let me know the next time you \_\_\_\_\_.” Write a short note commenting on one positive aspect of what you saw.
- Release teachers to watch each other. Substitute for them if need be.
- Schedule joint planning time for team members to create and/or critique an assessment together.

## Forms

### Planning for Assessment Literacy Learning Teams

What decisions will you make? What decisions will the learning team make?

#### Participation

\_\_\_\_\_ Voluntary OR \_\_\_\_\_ Mandatory

#### Team Leadership

\_\_\_\_\_ Rotating leadership OR \_\_\_\_\_ Designated facilitator OR \_\_\_\_\_ Both

#### Responsibilities of Facilitator/Leader

- Post schedule of meetings
- Complete and post team meeting log
- Monitor meeting time so all members have opportunity to share
- Bring materials needed for the meeting
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Responsibilities of Team

- Establish and adhere to group operating principles
- Monitor own adherence
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Meeting Time Frame and Schedule

\_\_\_\_\_ Established by team OR \_\_\_\_\_ Leader determined

OR \_\_\_\_\_ District determined

Length of each meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Number of meetings \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame for completing the text \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Team determines reading schedule OR \_\_\_\_\_ Predetermined

**The Work: Read, Practice, Discuss, and Share**

\_\_\_\_\_ Team determines what to do during meetings OR \_\_\_\_\_ Predetermined

When? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Team determines what to do between meetings OR \_\_\_\_\_ Predetermined

When? \_\_\_\_\_

**Tracking and Evaluating Growth**

Growth portfolio \_\_\_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_\_\_ Required

Confidence Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_\_\_ Required

Evaluating assessments for quality \_\_\_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_\_\_ Required

Student surveys \_\_\_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_\_\_ Required

Other \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_\_\_ Required

**Role of Principals, Other Administrators, and Teacher-Leaders**

\_\_\_\_\_ Participate in Leadership Team

\_\_\_\_\_ Participate in district planning with Leaders' Action Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ Assessment literacy team with *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning*

\_\_\_\_\_ Participate with staff in assessment literacy learning team with *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning*

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide support in the following ways:

### Meeting Schedule

Meeting	Date	Time	Location	Facilitator	Assignment Before Meeting
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					

## Learning Team Log

Log No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members Present:

Group Member(s) Absent:

Summary of Discussion and Activities:

Classroom applications since last meeting—what we've tried:

For the next meeting we need to do the following:

**Next scheduled meeting:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_