

BUILD – Basic Steps in Building Leadership Capacity

As noted in my Week Four Leadership Update, there are a number of ways that the resources in this website can be used to facilitate building the leadership capacity of an organization. You might find the following discussion of the acronym BUILD to be of some use in the planning and facilitation of the leadership capacity building process. Clearly, the capacity building process is a complex and challenging one; however, considering the following basic process may be of some use to you. As more resources are included on the website, I will provide several further suggestions on ways to facilitate this important process.

BUILD

Building Educational Leadership Capacity

- B**ring people together
- U**nderstand the leadership situation
- I**dentify relevant learning objectives and materials
- L**ead the learning activities
- D**ebrief the lessons learned

Let us take a look at each of the steps that can help facilitate the building of leadership skills within educational settings:

Bring people together

A variety of people can benefit from activities designed to build leadership capacity. For example, individual teachers, especially those who are teacher-leaders may wish to use some of the resources in this website to enhance their own leadership capacity. As noted earlier, working with a partner can be especially beneficial in building leadership capacity. In addition, teachers working within a cycle or grade may get together to improve their teamwork skills. Or, teachers working on a specific project may wish to enhance their group decision-making skills. Members of the School or Centre Administrative Team or the Staff Council Executive might benefit from considering ways to plan and chair meetings more effectively. Other groups that might benefit from using some of the capacity building materials in this handbook could include members of the Governing Board or the leaders of the PPO Committee.

The key point is to determine if these individuals or groups are willing to allocate some time to the capacity building process. Experience has shown that the readiness and willingness of people to participate in such activities is a basic factor in the degree to which they will be successful.

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Understand the leadership situation

Before attempting to design activities to enhance leadership capacity within a specific group, it is important to take the time to listen carefully to the interests and needs of its members. Interviews with individuals or meeting with a small focus group can lead to an initial understanding of the types of activities that might be of benefit to the group. Encouraging people to share and then prioritize their interests and needs can be especially helpful in identifying relevant learning objectives and materials. Be open to adding new topics as the group works towards building its leadership capacity.

Identifying relevant topics

In collaboration with several members of the target group, discuss the topics that might be relevant to the group. Depending on the specific learning objectives, consider where and when the group might meet, paying special attention to the need to establish at least several sessions to facilitate ongoing learning and practice of the skills that will be addressed. In designing a series of professional learning sessions, consider using a mixture of personal, partner and group activities. In doing so, identify appropriate learning materials that could be used to facilitate the learning process. The resources on this website can be an initial source of such materials.

Lead the Learning Activities

Experience has shown that identifying potential leaders within each group can have a very positive effect on the capacity building process. Over time, the group should be encouraged to share leadership and learn to collaboratively facilitate the ongoing learning sessions. Most importantly, members should be given an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and encouraged to share feedback on ways the process may be improved.

Debrief the Lessons Learned

As the learning process continues members should take the time to identify the lessons learned, especially those that could be called "gold nuggets", that is, ideas and skills that should be shared with professional colleagues. Facilitating discussions about how to improve the professional learning process has proven to be very beneficial as each group has specific characteristics and ways of working. Hence, debriefing sessions should include a dual focus, a focus on the products of the sessions as well as the processes used in them.