

Team Building and the Professional Learning Environment

On the Team Building Process and the Professional Learning Environment

During the past few weeks, ideas, skills and strategies related to facilitating the development of BASIC, SMART and GREAT teams have been shared. As noted in the document entitled, On the Team Building Process, there are five key aspects that are especially important in that process, namely, time, engagement, action, maintenance and support. Yes, it is based on the acronym- TEAMS!

In this note, I want to stress the importance of providing a professional learning environment where people can actually learn to work together as a team. In order to develop teamwork skills, one needs to set up the geography of the space in such a way that small groups can interact in a productive and meaningful way. For example, asking questions such as: Are there tables and chairs that can accommodate groups from three to six or seven people? Are there flip charts and markers available and wall space to post the ideas that are generated. Clearly, these are key support questions that need to be answered.

The following checklist on the quality of the professional learning environment has proven to be helpful in ensuring that some of these key factors are addressed.

Professional Learning Environment Checklist

Please indicate whether each of the following aspects of an optimal professional learning environment are readily available in your organization:

1. ___ The physical environment for professional learning is a welcoming one
2. ___ Temperature and humidity can be appropriately controlled
3. ___ Lighting can be controlled to support the activity
4. ___ Electricity sources are available to power personal computers
5. ___ Reliable Internet access is available
6. ___ Tables and chairs can be easily arranged for small group discussions
7. ___ An LCD projector or Smart Board is readily available
8. ___ Paper flip-charts are always available
9. ___ Appropriate markers, flip-chart paper, post-its, and masking tape, etc., are available
10. ___ Refreshments can be readily served