

**Getting better at
"Influence" through
leader learning inquiries**

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**THE
INTELLIGENT,
RESPONSIVE
LEADER**

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**Intelligent Leadership
Practices**

- The OLF as the curriculum of leadership.
- Setting Direction
- Building Relationship and Developing People
- Developing the Organization
- Improving the Instructional Program
- Securing Accountability

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Task: Exploring the OLF

- Examine what each of the 5 categories is comprised of.
- Highlight the competencies that you feel skilled in implementing/executing in your work.
- Highlight the competencies that you feel are challenging to implement/execute in your work.

Who and What are you needing to influence?

- Leadership is the exercise of influence on organizational members... toward the identification and achievement of the organization's visions and goals
- Who is your "class"? What are their learning needs?
- Your inquiry question grows out of where you are stuck in relation to implementing/executing the "intelligent" leadership practices

Inquiry Learning Template for School Leaders

What are your school improvement priorities?

- Student learning foci:
 - Evidence (that this needs to be an area of focus for students):
- Teacher learning foci:
 - Evidence (that this needs to be an area of focus for teachers):

Where are you stuck as a leader in this school improvement process? On what, and with which teachers?

What leader learning opportunity does this define for you? (Your adaptive challenge defines your leadership inquiry question)

- Inquiry question: How do I learn how to...?

What's the transfer potential from your learning, as defined by the Ontario Leadership Framework?

Inquiry Learning Template for System Leaders

- Who is in your “class”?
- What are the learning needs of your “class”?
- What’s the evidence?/How do you know?
- Define your learning case(s). What’s the best contained learning space for you within your “class”? Why?
- What leader learning opportunity does this define for you? (Your adaptive challenge defines your leadership inquiry question)
- Inquiry question: How do I learn how to...?
- What’s the transfer potential from your learning, in terms of intelligent leadership practices (on the OLF)?



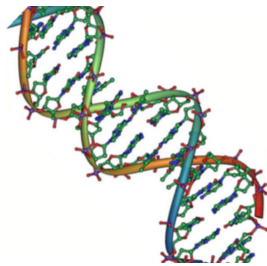
Task: Mapping YOUR Learning Need

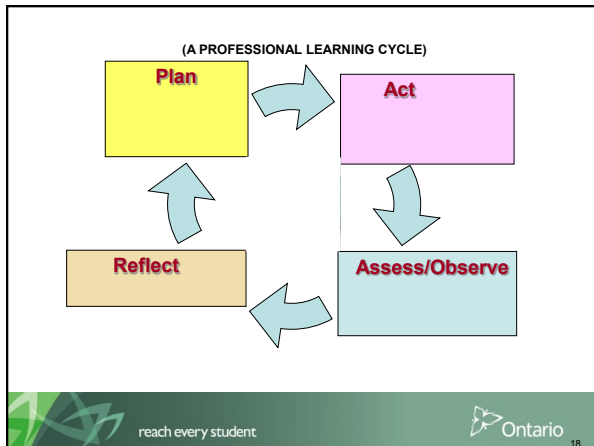
- On your own, complete the inquiry learning template for system leaders.
- Complete the top half, and then try to plan (first 3 columns) a next best learning move.



Dealing with adaptive challenges of “Influence”

- Adaptive challenges are “heuristic” in that we have to experiment with possibilities and devise a novel solution because no algorithm exists
- More simply: You do the work by learning the work! (note the sequence; the learning is the intent, not the by-product)
- Deep understanding is the DNA of getting better!





A global hypothesis

- “If I understand why people don’t feel connected to the PLC and what they think would be more useful, then I will be able to involve the teachers as meaningful partners to re-think the work of PLC while at the same time influencing people to engage with the work that I think is important.”
- How are you ever going to monitor this? (Answer: there’s no way!!!)

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Making SMALL moves and monitoring them

- Start small! Example- What does “if I understand why people don’t feel connected to the PLC” really mean and how do I want to start?
- Positive association between size and monitoring, size and efficacy, and efficacy and monitoring.
- A large body of research has shown that small wins have enormous power, and an influence disproportionate to the accomplishments of the victories themselves.

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Small wins

Small wins are a steady application of a small advantage. Once a small win has been accomplished, forces are set in motion that favour another small win. Small wins fuel transformative changes by leveraging tiny advantages into patterns that convince people that bigger achievements are within reach.

(cited in Duhigg, 2012)

Next best learning moves

PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	ASSESS	REFLECT
What am I hoping to learn next?	My Next Best Learning Move: What SPECIFICALLY will I do to try to learn this?	How will I know if I have learned what I am hoping to learn? What Conversation, Observation, and/or Product will I look at to know?	What happened? What did I find out when I considered those evidence sources?	What did I learn FROM this move? What did I learn ABOUT this move as a transferable leadership practice (in OLF terms, if possible)?

Why sticking with the template matters

- The LLT meetings are a check-in, but the real work of a leadership inquiry happens individually
- The template is a tool to support you in your learning- It is not the actual work!
- The purposes of the tool are:
 - 1) to ensure that the leadership inquiry question being worked on is the "right one" (just-in-time, job-embedded, and needs-based)
 - 2) to ensure that each next best learning move is fully processed as it follows through the cycle of plan, act, assess, reflect

Why sticking with the template matters

- When leaders use the template regularly – to plan, act, assess, and reflect on a “row” once or twice a week – the result is much richer than when they only work on the template once a month
- Human memory for the details is just not that good, but the details are key here
- The discipline required in documentation is effortful so we tend not to like it, but that’s why it works
- To get the right words on the page requires the right thinking in our heads
- And as a bonus, we are 42% more likely to do something we write down!



Part 2- The collaborative aspect of the LLT

- **Ensuring that together is better: The Learning Conversations Protocol as an Intentional Interruption Strategy for Enhanced Collaborative Learning**



PIXAR: 14 Movies and 14 No. 1 Box-Office Hits



The PIXAR Braintrust

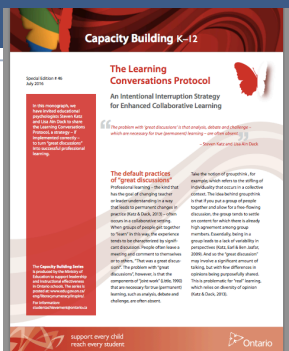
Our decision making is better when we draw on the collective knowledge and unvarnished opinions of the group. Candor is the key to collaborating effectively. Lack of candor leads to dysfunctional environments. So how can a manager ensure that his or her working group, department, or company embraces candor? By putting mechanisms in place that explicitly say it is valuable. (Fastcompany.com, April 2014)



The Learning Conversations Protocol

- What we use to ensure “candor” and the value of the collaborative group





From “great discussions” to focused learning conversations through “intentional interruption”

- Together is better... sometimes!
- From “great discussions” to focused learning conversations
- Towards joint work
- The Learning Conversation Protocol as an “intentional interruption” of the default practices of collaboration

Setting the stage

- *Protocol roles*
- *Facilitator to review the norms as well as “the why” behind them:*
 - *follow the steps*
 - *no placing blame*
 - *tolerating discomfort in the process*
 - *Leader Presenter to take his/her own notes*
 - *everyone else to keep a parking lot for personal connections (aka be selfish!)*
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Changing the protocol to make it more comfortable
 - Diffusion of responsibility in the learning

Step #1: Introduction (5-8 min)

- *The facilitator reviews “the why” behind this step*
- *Leader presenter to briefly explain where s/he is in the process of his/her leadership inquiry, what learning moves have been undertaken, and what specifically has been learned*
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Failing to be concise
 - Getting stuck in PLAN-ACT, PLAN-ACT, PLAN-ACT...

Step #2: Describing the leader's work (5-8 min)

- The facilitator reviews "the why" behind this step
- The group asks clarifying questions to fill in any gaps
- No judgments or interpretations about what the Leader was doing, and no suggestions
- Leader presenter to answer specific questions in a crisp and precise manner
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Pontification and making it about yourself

Step #3: Interpreting the Leader's Work (8-10 min)

- The facilitator reviews "the why" behind this step
- The group tries to understand the leadership inquiry and/or latest learning move(s) at a deeper level
- Each individual puts forward how they are conceptualizing or representing what they've heard
- Avoid any push to consensus; table as many different ways of thinking about the inquiry as possible
- No suggestions
- Possible prompts:
 - "I think I heard/or didn't hear [leader X] say that..."
 - "This makes me think about..."
 - "I wonder if this issue is really about..."
 - "I am curious why [leader X] would think that..."
 - "I wonder what assumptions [Leader X] is making in order to draw those conclusions..."

Step #3: Interpreting the Leader's Work (8-10 min)

- **Leader Presenter:**
 - Doesn't speak, listens to how he/she has been understood by the group
 - Asks him/herself, "Why would they think that?"
 - Works on active listening – agree before you disagree
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Jumping to suggestions without taking the time for deep understanding
 - Groupthink
 - Defensiveness as per the confirmation bias
 - Early comments dictating the flow of the discussion

Step #4: Quick Clarification (2 min)

- The facilitator reviews “the why” behind this step
- The group asks any additional questions of clarification that have come up
- Leader Presenter can clear-up any inaccuracies or missing information (but not more than that)
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Defensiveness as per the confirmation bias

Step #5: Implications for Practice (8-10 min)

- The facilitator reviews “the why” behind this step
- The group discusses the implications for the Leader Presenter’s learning or where the leader presenter should go next based on what they’ve heard and discussed
- Possible prompts:
 - “I think [Leader X] really might want to think about...”
 - “I think a possible next step in [Leader X’s] learning might be...”
 - “Is there other evidence that can be gathered around...?”
 - “What do you think about [Leader X] trying...?”
- Leader Presenter doesn’t speak, works on active listening
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Focus on activity, rather than learning

Step #6: Consolidate thinking and plan next steps (5-8 min)

- The facilitator reviews “the why” behind this step
- Leader Presenter refers to his/her notes and summarizes what s/he is thinking (with input from the group). What resonates?
- If possible, s/he talks about the Next Best Learning Move
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Jumping to action without giving ourselves the important time to think

Step #7: Reflections on the process (5-8 min)

- The facilitator reviews "the why" behind this step
- Leader Presenter reflects on his/her learning from the collaborative analysis (How did we push your thinking and add value because we were together?)
- Each member of the group shares one thing that they've put in their "parking lot" of personal connections
- The whole group reflects on the process of using the protocol (what did/didn't work well in terms of the intended "learning conversation" objective)
- An **Intentional Interruption** of:
 - Neglecting the importance of reflection
 - Deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility

The mechanics of the LLT

- Each leader is working on his/her own leadership inquiry on an ongoing basis
- Every 4-6 weeks, the group (usually 5-6 people) comes together (for 2-3 hours) where the inquiry of 2 or 3 individuals will be shared and feedback will be provided using the Learning Conversations Protocol
- Need to create norms for working together

The ongoing spirit of Critical Friendship

- LLT members are critical friends to one another at all times, not just during the formal meetings
- "Just-in-time" critical friendship
- But this between-meeting support must supplement, not replace, the full LLT meetings
 - When things happen between meetings, the rest of the group misses out on the learning
 - Without the "intentional interruption" strategies that the Learning Conversations Protocol provides, the "learning" is at risk!
