Developing Effective Leadership Teams —
Implementing the High Schools That Work School Improvement Design
Checklist for Laying the Groundwork for Effective Teams

- Create teams with broad representation and encourage members to share equally what they know.

- Invite people from inside and outside of school with expertise to share with the team.

- Arrange time for teams to meet on a regular basis.

- Be sure everyone in the school knows who is on each team and the staff is notified when changes occur.

- Specify which team is doing what and how these actions affect others.

- Coordinate activities and deadlines so the overall work of the team is not delayed due to missing pieces.

- Be sure teams are empowered. Don’t tell teams they have decision-making power when their plans may be overruled.

- Talk about how to do things. Establish guidelines for how to make decisions, how to ensure completion of work, how much time is expected from members, how to respond to conflict and how to ensure the agenda is followed.

- Communicate to all members their equal value and power when functioning on the team. If a department head is on the team, he or she leaves that title at the door and picks it up only when the meeting is over.

- Establish team building as a priority with recognition for team accomplishments. Devote some time for sharing successes, problems and special social events. Provide tangible results. People need to know how a learning activity relates to real situations. Make the results of School Improvement Leadership Team actions a visible part of each meeting. Have teachers and students tell success stories.
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Using Teams to Implement School Improvement

*High Schools That Work (HSTW)* is based on the simple belief that most students get smarter through effort and hard work. Thus HSTW\(^1\) is an effort-based school improvement initiative founded on the belief that most high school and middle grades students can master rigorous academic and career/technical studies if schools create an environment that motivates students to make the effort to succeed. HSTW believes that students are motivated to achieve at high levels when:

- they have the opportunity to learn a *rigorous academic core* combined with either a career/technical or an academic concentration and their teachers use engaging research-based instructional strategies that make them see the usefulness of what they have been asked to learn.

- a supportive relationship exists between them and caring adults. This relationship involves teachers, parents and students working together to ensure that students set goals and take the right courses that prepare them for the next step. In high school, teacher advisers guide students in taking courses that prepare them for postsecondary studies and careers; and in the middle grades, teacher advisers see that students are prepared for rigorous high school studies. These relationships also involve providing students with the extra help and support to meet challenging course standards and with needed assistance to help students make a successful transition from middle grades to high school and from high school to postsecondary studies and careers.

- school leadership focuses on supporting teachers and enhancing what and how they teach by providing common planning time, student-parent-teacher advisement, extra help for students and professional development aligned with school improvement plans.

HSTW believes that these conditions create a student environment where more students recognize that high school matters to their future and where more students become independent learners able to make decisions about what courses to take for their future education and career goals.

School leaders that have used the HSTW design to improve student achievement credit the use of leadership teams that involve teachers and school and district leaders in working together to ensure that the *HSTW Key Conditions and Key Practices* form the foundation for school improvement. HSTW defines a leadership team as a group of individuals with different responsibilities and interests who share a common purpose — to make school count for all students. Each team focuses on a particular aspect of school improvement and leads actions to address needs. HSTW has found that there are at least eight essential conditions for effective teams:

1. **Shared Goals** — Team members share a common goal and know what it is — improved student achievement. The goal is clearly stated and regularly addressed. The team develops an action plan to meet the goal; leaders implement the plan and measure success based on progress.

2. **Interdependence** — What each team member does affects the others, and what the team does affects each member. Team members rely on the knowledge, expertise, actions and resources of each other. A sense of trust is present.

3. **Norms for Interactions and Processes** — Norms govern communication, conflict resolution, punctuality, seating arrangements, leadership styles and accountability. Generally, norms develop over time as members establish their positions in the group and as trust develops. Leaders suggest that norms be intentionally set so the team is clear about expectations and work. For example, operating rules may include statements of how decisions are made or how task completion is monitored.

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\(^1\) SREB's school improvement initiative, *High Schools That Work (HSTW)*, has been broadened in scope to address needed changes in the middle grades. When publications refer only to the middle grades, SREB uses *Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW)*; however, in this publication the term HSTW refers to grades six through 12. For an individual middle grades school, please simply substitute MMGW for HSTW in the text.
Encouraging Acceptance, Ownership and Achievement

Team Work Generates Acceptance

When people are involved from the beginning in the change process, they have a deeper understanding of what needs to change and why, and how change can best be accomplished. Team members examine data, identify challenges, come to consensus on the need to change and recommend actions. By participating in decision making, they come to an acceptance of change firsthand rather than having it imposed on them.

- A team structure builds consensus for change.
- People feel empowered to act.
- Members understand and can communicate the reason for change.
- A team structure provides the focus on what is best for students.

Team Work Creates Ownership

Ownership follows acceptance. Within a team structure, more people have a voice in plans for improvement and a stake in the outcome. When teams are empowered, members feel more in control; they own the improvement effort. From ownership comes commitment and meaningful personal involvement.

- A team structure provides a way to involve more people.
- People buy in when they are involved.
- People are committed to make the changes work.

Between 2001 and 2003, Paint Valley Middle and High Schools in Bainbridge, Ohio, set up leadership teams that reviewed the Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) report and discussed the challenges and suggested actions. The teams prioritized the actions needed to raise student achievement, thus making school improvement teacher-directed and teacher-focused. Teachers took ownership of the need to change and responsibility for changing what and how they taught. In two years, student achievement increased significantly — 15 percentage points in reading and in science and six percentage points in mathematics on the HSTW NAEP-referenced exam.
Team Work Improves Achievement

Teams focus on what is, what ought to be and how to get there. Team members focus more on student achievement when they work together to align expectations for student work, develop common exam and scoring guides, and evaluate their own assignments and assessments to be sure they are at the proficient level.

Teams have two roles. One role is to use the diversity in team membership to look beyond traditional practices as members use data to make decisions. Teams generate better ideas and produce better plans than individuals because there is a larger pool of expertise. The second role is to act as a sounding board or “vision check” to ensure that all actions are consistent with the HSTW Goals and Key Practices. Teams benchmark their decisions against answers to these questions:

- Does this decision improve the achievement of students in mathematics, science, language arts and problem solving?
- Will this decision accelerate student achievement?
- Does it represent the type of school expectations and experiences I would want for my own children?

While teams are the most effective way to generate ideas, solve problems and make decisions, effective teams don't just happen. This publication suggests ways to organize new teams and rejuvenate existing teams based on the experiences of educators in successful schools. It is for the use of school and teacher leaders who are putting a leadership team structure in place to address the HSTW Goals and Key Practices.

The HSTW Team Structure

Implementation of the HSTW Key Practices requires thoughtful decisions and coherent, coordinated planning. This is a big job that calls for the creative energies and commitments of all involved. Like spokes of a wheel, several leadership teams can divide the tasks and focus on different aspects of implementation. The connecting rim of the wheel is the shared sense of purpose.

An overall leadership team coordinates the site action plan and the activities of the individual leadership teams: curriculum, professional development, guidance and public information, transition, and evaluation. All of the functions can be absorbed into existing teams at the site. If new teams are needed (either because the school does not have leadership teams or the current teams are not addressing the goals) to carry out the school improvement plan, the five-team model can be adopted. The functions of the teams are far more important than the names of the teams. For the purpose of this guide, the team that oversees the work is called the School Improvement Leadership Team.

There are two models — one for a single-school organization and another for a multi-school organization. The first model described is for a single-school organization.

Single-school Organization

The HSTW model for a single-school site organization can be represented by one of the following:

- a single high school or a single middle grades school,
- a single high school working with its feeder middle grades, or
- a single high school working with a nearby community/technical college or vocational/technical center.

A model representation for a single-school leadership team structure follows.
Model Representation 1
Single-school Leadership Team Structure

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Curriculum Leadership Team
- Parents and Students
- School System Administrators
- Postsecondary Representatives
- Business and Industry Representatives
- Academic and Career/Technical Teachers and Administrators

Professional Development Leadership Team
- Parents and Students
- School System Administrators
- Postsecondary Representatives
- Business and Industry Representatives
- Academic and Career/Technical Teachers and Administrators

Guidance and Public Information Leadership Team
- Parents and Students
- School System Administrators
- Postsecondary Representatives
- Business and Industry Representatives
- Academic and Career/Technical Teachers and Administrators

Transitions Leadership Team
- Parents and Students
- School System Administrators
- Postsecondary Representatives
- Business and Industry Representatives
- Academic and Career/Technical Teachers and Administrators

Evaluation Leadership Team
- Parents and Students
- School System Administrators
- Postsecondary Representatives
- Business and Industry Representatives
- Academic and Career/Technical Teachers and Administrators
Creating Effective Leadership Teams

An effective team is one that attains its goals and produces high-quality products (e.g., action plan, policy statements, program of study catalog). When school and teacher leaders are asked what makes a team effective, the most common responses include the following:

- **A Thorough Orientation** to the HSTW Key Conditions and Key Practices is essential. Orientation includes meeting procedures, gaining consensus and following timelines. Mentoring of new team members is done on an ongoing basis.

- **Clear Goals** are critical and must be in writing. All members understand the specific goals and duties of the team. They mark progress toward the goals and revise actions when necessary to meet them.

- **Clear Roles** for team members are necessary. Members of effective teams know their roles and the roles of other team members. Roles may shift as teams engage in different activities and as teams mature.

- **Team Culture** is understood. Members see themselves as a team. One site coordinator said, “Our team members leave their differences at the door.” But what does “team culture” mean?
  1. Members feel a sense of trust and security. They admit freely to needing more information or to making a mistake.
  2. Members respect each other’s opinions.
  3. Team members boost each other’s morale.

- **Team Accountability** means that the teams show proof of actions.
  1. Members document efforts and submit documentation to the team leader or an administrator.
  2. Members check in with a partner between meetings to track progress toward the completion of tasks.
  3. Members report on their actions to the rest of the team via e-mail a given number of days before the next meeting.

- **Diverse Membership** results in a range of talent and experiences and provides the potential for creativity and quality. Members spend time explaining, questioning, and learning to understand unfamiliar approaches and ideas. There is a balance of the following:
  1. Positives and negatives — One site coordinator suggested, “...have two positive team members for every negative one. That way you involve those who may not support a new program with those who are most enthusiastic.”
  2. Academic and career/technical teachers — Put both on every team. Avoid the “we and they” trap.
  3. School and business community — Leaders from several sites were adamant that business, industry and community leaders be involved in meaningful ways from the very beginning.

- **Practicing Clear Communication** among team members and between the team and other constituents is perhaps the easiest thing **not** to do well. Simply put, effective teams engage in the right kind of communication at the right time.
  1. Memos or e-mails remind people of meeting times; team members acknowledge receipt of memos and e-mails.
  2. Face-to-face interactions without distractions or conflicting messages promote clear communication.
  3. Communication is both formal and informal, depending on the situation.
  4. Members listen to each other and ask for clarification when needed.
  5. Members think about their patterns of communication and change patterns that inhibit clear communication. Asking these questions can help:
What “noise” do we have in our meetings? How can we reduce or eliminate it?

What non-verbal cues do we send when others are speaking? Do we provide appropriate feedback to the speaker?

Are we sending conflicting messages at the same time?

When we use memos or e-mail, do we later find our messages were not received?

In a group, do all members feel comfortable expressing the need for clarification?

Active Administrative Support means advocacy for school improvement. Administrators reward the team approach, act as cheerleaders for team actions and recognize accomplishments of teams. Administrators form teams in a variety of ways by asking these questions:

1. Will teachers choose the team on which they serve?
2. Will individuals be assigned to teams based on their known talents?
3. How can regular times be set up throughout the year for teams to meet?

Administrators provide time for teams to meet. If teams are not set up based on common planning periods, administrators allow release time, provide substitutes, allocate teacher workdays for team meetings and/or adjust the school calendar to create non-classroom time for teachers. Administrators hold teams accountable for meeting regularly and reporting their progress to the School Improvement Leadership Team and to district leaders. The principal serves on the School Improvement Leadership Team, but he or she does not need to serve on each of the school’s leadership teams.

A Commitment and Permission to Act lets teams meet and move forward with their actions.

1. During meetings, team members spend time brainstorming, discussing issues, problem solving and making decisions.
2. Between meetings, individuals complete tasks and share information, electronically if possible, so that valuable meeting time is not spent listening to reports.
3. Action plans, timelines and deadlines for interim steps are ways to track team actions and evaluate progress.

Good Team Leadership incorporates strong skills for:

1. summarizing opinions or ideas expressed at meetings;
2. facilitating equal participation in discussions;
3. acknowledging the value of members’ contributions; and
4. sharing leadership when appropriate.

Time for Reflection, Improvement and Attention to Group Processes helps the team consciously decide if it needs to change any aspects of its working relationships. The team pays attention to:

1. membership (e.g., orientation, change, participation);
2. decision making;
3. brainstorming/contributing ideas;
4. communication methods and styles;
5. meeting logistics (e.g., time, place, duration);
6. shared leadership;
7. performance and progress evaluation;
8. creating and implementing action plans; and
9. accountability measures.
Team Membership, Mission and Charges

Each leadership team must have a representative membership, a clear mission and a set of charges to direct it in its implementation of the HSTW Key Practices. The first team described is the School Improvement Leadership Team for a single school or a single school paired with either a middle grades school, its feeder middle grades, postsecondary institution or career/technical center. The five school leadership teams are described following the School Improvement Leadership Team.

School Improvement Leadership Team

Membership

The School Improvement Leadership Team has representatives from various groups: the district office (superintendent); the high school (administrators, career/technical and academic teachers); the middle grades;\(^2\) business and community representatives; postsecondary institutions (academic dean of the institution); students; and the chair of each of the five leadership teams.

For a single middle grades school, the composition of the School Improvement Leadership Team is similar: representatives from the district office, elementary and high schools; academic and exploratory middle grades teachers; business and community representatives; students; and the chair of each of the five leadership teams.

Mission

The overriding mission is to develop a site action plan that enables a school to implement the HSTW Key Practices and raise student achievement. The team oversees the action plan; monitors the work of the school leadership teams; and aligns actions, policies and resources with the HSTW Key Practices and Key Conditions.

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Schools can be creative in developing their school improvement leadership teams. Since 1994, Menchville High School (MHS), Newport News, Virginia, has cultivated an active interdisciplinary HSTW School Improvement Leadership Team. MHS placed key decision makers from the school, business, industry, education, government and the community on the team.

The relationship is a two-way street. MHS provides opportunities for businesses to network with each other, makes school facilities available without charge, and has students and staff available for community committees, presentations or activities.

At the first meeting, annual priorities are established. Agendas and minutes are sent to team members with reminders of the next meeting date and time.

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\(^2\) If the structure is the high school only, the middle grades representative can be the chair of the middle grades to high school transition team, the middle grades principal or a lead teacher. If the structure is a high school with its feeder middle grades there should be a larger representation from the middle grades, including academic and exploratory teachers.
Charges

1. Using state and HSTW Assessment data, set achievement and proficiency-level goals for students for the next four years. Present goals to the faculty. Get input and revise goals annually.

2. Set annual goals for implementation of the HSTW Key Practices and review annually the progress made. Use the findings from the Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) report; and local, state and HSTW data to assist in this goal setting and review process.

3. Be strong, consistent advocates for the practices that raise student achievement. Develop and support proposals aimed at raising expectations on a more rigorous curriculum, making learning relevant, assessing and getting feedback frequently on student progress, and providing extra help to students.

4. Advocate the development of an effort-based school culture — one that focuses on quality teaching, engaging assignments, meeting standards and having students redo work until it meets standards.

5. Make suggestions for membership on the five leadership teams and appoint ad hoc committees as needed.

6. With input from the five leadership teams, develop a School Improvement Plan.

7. Prioritize activities recommended by the five leadership teams to address each school year.

8. Develop a timeline, assign responsibilities, identify resources and arrange for professional development activities as recommended by the five leadership teams.

9. Search for alternatives to obstacles hindering implementation of the HSTW Goals and Key Practices.

10. Establish ongoing communication between the five leadership teams and the entire faculty, school administrators, the school district and the community.

11. Resolve problems that hamper communication, cooperative action and accomplishment of the action plan. Develop and promote systems solutions.

12. Review leadership team activities to ensure that actions are consistent with the HSTW Goals and Key Practices. At every meeting have reports from the chair of each leadership team to monitor team member assignments and determine progress. Share minutes and reports with the faculty and the community.

13. Advocate the HSTW Goals and Key Practices in the media, business and community forums, and in legislative bodies. The goals and key practices include

- **high expectations** for teachers and students;
- a required system of **extra help and support**;
- **effort and hard work as the basis for improved achievement**;
- a **rigorous academic core** in high school and in the middle grades;
- **teachers working in teams** (vertical and horizontal) to determine basic, proficient and advanced levels of work so that students can perform at higher levels;
- guidance and advisement with parental and community involvement to **help students set goals**;
- high-level technical courses imbedded with academic skills and knowledge; and
- relevant assignments and engaging research-based instructional strategies.

The composition of each team will vary to some degree; in many cases, it will depend on whether the structure is of a single school, a high school and its feeder middle grades, or a high school and a nearby postsecondary institution or career/technical center.
Prince George High School, 50 miles south of Richmond, Virginia, uses the HSTW school teams to implement and sustain change. In the early 1990s, the School Improvement Leadership Team was established, and its membership included teachers, school leaders, parents, and representatives from two local colleges and from community youth services.

Based on identified needs, six leadership teams were created: curriculum, guidance, professional development, evaluation, student issues and instructional delivery. Each member of the School Improvement Team served on a leadership team along with parents of students in each grade level. The goal was to raise expectations and create better communication between and among teachers and students about the level of work expected from students. The plan was to create a schedule that would help implement the HSTW school improvement design and to renovate and expand the building to meet the academic needs of the student body.

The team process led to a renovated facility and the adoption of a block schedule that meets student needs and provides time for extra help daily for all students. The initiative gave birth to a shared decision-making process that has become the norm at the school.

1. Curriculum Leadership Team

Membership

Academic, career/technical or exploratory (if appropriate) teachers;³ curriculum specialist(s) from the district office (middle grades and secondary) and postsecondary institutions or career/technical center; parents; and representatives from business and the community.

Mission

The Curriculum Leadership Team has a specific mission with defined tasks:

- Work toward having all students complete a rigorous core curriculum in the middle grades and in high school.
- Develop academic and career concentrations (with assistance from the faculty) and work toward having all students complete one of the concentrations.
- Move standards into the curriculum.
- Get agreement among teachers on what constitutes basic, proficient and advanced levels of assignments for student work, scoring guides and teacher-made exams, and work to get all teachers to teach at the proficient level or higher.

Charges

1. Assess needs and identify how curriculum and instruction must change to achieve performance goals and to fully implement the HSTW initiatives.

2. Using state and HSTW Assessment data, perform a course review to see which courses raise student achievement and which do not. Recommend the deletion or revision of courses that do not and abolish low-level courses.

³ If the structure is the high school only, the middle grades representative can be the chair of the middle grades to high school transition team, the middle grades principal or a lead teacher. If the structure is a high school with its feeder middle grades there should be a larger representation from the middle grades, including academic and exploratory teachers.
3. Recommend common assessments — end-of-grading-period and end-of-course tests — for sections of the same course and coherent course sequences for each academic or career/technical concentration.

4. Use HSTW’s middle grades Getting Students Ready for High School publications to establish a base-line curriculum in the middle grades and ninth-grade catch-up courses in English and mathematics.

5. Use HSTW’s literacy guide, Literacy Across the Curriculum: Setting and Implementing Goals for Grades Six through 12, to establish a literacy-across-the-curriculum program.

6. Use the Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) report and other school data for making decisions about the curriculum.

7. Focus on a plan that helps teachers use numeracy across the curriculum to ensure that mathematics is used to advance learning in all classes — the intent is not to make every teacher a teacher of mathematics but to help students see how mathematics is a tool for intellectually challenging work in all subject areas.

8. Ensure that all students have access to courses originally designed to prepare only the best students with the knowledge and skills needed beyond high school.

9. Recommend to the school board that graduation requirements be increased to at least 28 Carnegie Units and include the upgraded academic core and a concentration, and for grade eight — Algebra I and higher.

10. Create or adapt common syllabi and end-of-course exams.

11. Study various models for integrating academic and career/technical studies, and adopt or adapt a model appropriate for the school.

12. Have academic teachers work together in vertical subject-area teams to map and align the curriculum so that it is coherent and increasingly more rigorous in skills and knowledge requirements over the years.

13. Devise a plan for career/technical teachers to periodically review their courses to ensure that students are using high-level academic content to solve problems and perform tasks in their fields of study.

14. Build a system whereby teachers can review their courses and pedagogy to be sure that the content, assignments and assessments are above the basic level of understanding.

2. Professional Development Leadership Team

Membership

Academic, career/technical or exploratory (if appropriate) teachers; professional development specialist(s) from the district office (middle grades and secondary) and postsecondary institutions; human resources development representatives from business and the community; and parents.

Mission

The mission of the Professional Development Leadership Team is to take a new look at professional development to be sure that planning, delivery and follow-up of professional development activities are in place and that all activities are linked to the findings in the data, the TAV report and the site action plan. All professional development activities should be linked to and support the HSTW Goals and Key Practices.

Charges

1. Work with the Evaluation Leadership Team to establish an ongoing system for identifying staff development needs of teachers and school leaders by:
A Successful Team Leader

The team leader plans, informs, directs, supports and evaluates the team’s progress toward its goal(s). To be effective, a leader must first know what the goal is and be able to communicate it to others. Effective leaders are stewards, motivators and recruiters.

A Job Description for an Effective Team Leader

In Effective Teambuilding, John Adair presents five categories of action in which effective leaders engage.

1. Plan — Seek all available information. Define the group task, purpose or goal. Make sure the group develops a workable plan.

2. Inform — Clarify the task and plan. Give new information to the group. Keep members in the picture. Facilitate communication with other groups.

3. Direct — Maintain group standards and influence tempo. Ensure that actions support goals. Keep discussion relevant. Prod the group to action.


5. Evaluate — Check the feasibility of an idea. Test the consequences of a proposed solution. Help the group evaluate its own performance.

The Team Leader:

- starts and ends the meeting on time;
- keeps discussions focused by intervening if discussion digresses. All members can support the leader in keeping discussions focused and moving forward by reflecting on their own contributions to the conversation, lending support to others’ statements and encouraging others to contribute; and
- keeps individual members from dominating the discussions and encourages participation from passive members.

Questions a team leader can ask are as follows:

- To open discussion:
  1. Could we clarify this topic?
  2. What do you think the general idea or problem is?
  3. Would anyone care to offer suggestions on facts we need to better understand the problem or topic?

- To broaden participation:
  1. Now that we have heard from a number of our members, would others who have not spoken like to add their ideas?
  2. How do the ideas presented so far sound to those of you who have been thinking about them?

- To limit participation:
  1. We appreciate your contributions. Would some of you who have not spoken care to add your ideas?
  2. You have made several good statements, and I am wondering if someone else might like to make some remarks.

- To focus discussion:
  1. Where are we now in relation to our goal?
  2. Let me review our discussion to this point.
  3. Your comment is interesting. However, I wonder if it is on target for this problem.

A Successful Recorder

The recorder writes minutes of each meeting with enough detail so those not present can follow what took place regarding the work. Minutes state decisions reached, tasks assigned, deadlines for task completion and names of individuals assigned tasks. The recorder distributes minutes to all team members and anyone else tracking the progress being made (e.g. the School Improvement Leadership Team).
Effective Team Members

Team members may play various roles contributing to the effectiveness of the team.

Roles Team “Players” Play*

| **CHALLENGER** | 1. Candidly shares his or her views about the work of the team even when views are contrary to the majority.  
2. Pushes the team to set high ethical standards for work.  
3. Asks “why?” and “how?”  
4. Challenges the team to take well-conceived risks. |
| **COMMUNICATOR** | 1. Steps in to reduce tension and resolve conflict.  
2. Listens to all viewpoints.  
3. Introduces humor.  
4. Helps members get to know each other.  
5. Recognizes and praises others.  
6. Summarizes discussions or proposes a possible consensus.  
7. Realizes that progress depends on differences of opinion and tries to have all sides heard. |
| **COLLABORATOR** | 1. Helps the team establish long-term goals, clarify interim objectives and establish milestones.  
2. Ties the team’s work into the overall work of the school.  
3. Offers assistance to others.  
4. Discourages negative remarks about others. |
| **CONTRIBUTOR** | 1. Freely shares relevant information and opinions with others.  
2. Makes clear, concise and useful presentations.  
3. Completes all tasks assigned.  
4. Serves as a mentor for new members.  
5. Pushes the team to set high standards and achieve top-level results. |
| **FACT SEEKER** | 1. Wants the facts and keeps in touch with reality.  
2. Separates fact from opinion. |

* Adapted from *Team Players and Team Work: The New Competitive Business Strategy.*
• studying the results of the HSTW Assessment, Teacher and Student Surveys;
• studying evaluation reports received by the school; and
• getting other teams to identify staff development needed to carry out their planned actions.

2. Establish annually training objectives and a coherent set of formal and informal training opportunities linked to the objectives, identify resource people, schedule workshops, and evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops.

3. Require that all staff development activities provide opportunities for teachers to adapt generic strategies to their disciplines and classrooms.

4. Make opportunities for teachers to practice new skills in their classrooms and to reflect on their experiences with other teachers.

5. Designate and prepare certain teachers as literacy and numeracy coaches, as mentors to new teachers, and as developmental teachers in special classrooms where other teachers can observe and seek assistance on research-based teaching strategies.


3. Guidance and Public Information Leadership Team

Membership

Middle grades and high school guidance counselors and teachers (academic, career/technical or exploratory if appropriate); other representatives from the feeder middle grades or receiving high schools; school system public information director; and representatives from the community, the media, parent-teacher-student associations, postsecondary institutions and businesses.

Mission

The mission of the Guidance and Public Information Leadership Team is to make parents aware of the rigorous courses that high school and middle grades students need to take if they are to be successful at the next level of education or work. The team must address the roles that teachers, parents and students play in getting ready for high school, postsecondary studies and the workplace.

Charges

1. Develop information and promotional materials to educate students, parents and the community about the need for students to complete a rigorous core of studies in the middle grades, an upgraded academic core in high school, and an academic or career/technical concentration in high school.

2. Create a teacher adviser program that provides an adult mentor for each student. Support teachers in forming nurturing personal relationships with students aimed at improving individual students’ work and achievement, and setting and pursuing career and educational goals.

3. Focus on the parent’s role, part of which is to help the student plan for his or her future; encourage the student to take high-level courses, support the student in getting extra help, and meet with the teacher adviser several times a year.

4. Begin early in the middle grades to guide students and parents to focus on the future — not on the present. Have students and parents develop plans of action, even if sketchy at first, beginning no later than grade eight. The plans should address educational and career needs. Regardless of how many times goals and plans change, the most important issue is to have a goal and a plan for the future.
5. Develop or adapt a guidance curriculum for grades six through 12 that is on a year-to-year continuum. The curriculum always focuses on the future. Examples follow.

- A fifth-or sixth-grade program smooths the transition to the middle grades with an orientation on expectations and increased challenges. Parents and teachers work together to develop strategies for academic success.

- An eighth-grade gearing-up program (an extra year of mathematics and reading) can help students who need extra assistance to get ready for college-preparatory work in high school. Individual meetings with teachers, students and parents provide time for academic and career discussions, extra help, and discussions on the need for student effort. Eighth-grade guidance smooths the transition to high school.

- Ninth-grade guidance focuses on catch-up courses or double-dosing in mathematics and English for students not prepared for college-preparatory work.

- In the middle grades and early high school, the guidance curriculum must help many students develop the habits that make successful and independent learners — study skills, goal setting, relationship skills, team management, etc.

- Tenth-grade guidance reviews selected career or academic concentrations and ensures that students are taking the appropriate courses.

- Eleventh-grade guidance is an important checkpoint. It focuses on what students need to do now to be successful in taking credit-bearing courses in college or in entering the workforce. Students take college placement and/or employment exams to see if they are ready for life after high school.

- Twelfth-grade guidance monitors coursework, builds skills and knowledge, and plans for extra help or extra coursework. The 12th-grade program smooths the transition from high school to postsecondary studies or work. Special senior courses in mathematics and English reinforce needed skills and knowledge.

4. Transition Leadership Teams

Because of the importance of schools working across grade levels to provide the best education possible, there should always be a transition team, even when only one school is creating teams for planning and implementing changes. For the high school and its feeder middle grades and for the high school and its nearby career/technical center or community college working together, the Transition Leadership Team is essential. The Transition Leadership Team is the vertical spine of school improvement. This team will need to cooperate with the Curriculum and Guidance Leadership Teams because so much of effective transition concerns these two topics. Schools may find it useful to have two transition teams — one for middle grades to high school and one for high school to college and careers.
4a. Middle Grades to High School Transition Team

Membership

The superintendent or designee; the principal of each school involved; the chairs of interdisciplinary teams in the middle grades and of subject areas in the high school (at a minimum, English/language arts, mathematics and science must be represented from both levels); career/technical teachers; and guidance counselor(s).

Mission

The primary mission of the Middle Grades to High School Transition Team is to reduce the percentages of students who start grade nine unprepared to succeed in a college-preparatory curriculum. This team must develop special 18-week catch-up courses that prepare ninth-graders to succeed in college-preparatory courses, reduce their failure rates and increase their chances of completing a high school curriculum that matters.

Charges

1. Promote the vision of education on a continuum that becomes increasingly more complex as it moves from grade six to grade 12. This means developing an action plan that addresses each transition point with specific objectives and actions.

2. Promote a leadership culture in which principals do not see their schools as buildings, but as different points on the learning continuum. The superintendent and principals work together to create a smooth pathway.

3. Cooperate with the Curriculum Leadership Team to create vertical teams of teachers of the same subjects to review their curriculums and assessments so they know what is taught at each grade level. This will help teachers understand what is expected at the next grade level.

4. Design ninth-grade catch-up courses that get students to the skill and knowledge levels needed to be successful in rigorous high school studies.

5. Research the dropout and failure rates, particularly in grades nine through 12; determine if there is a “ninth-grade bulge” (consisting of retained students) or a serious dropout or retention problem. Build a system to address these issues.

6. Cooperate with the Guidance and Public Information Leadership Team to build a vertical continuum of guidance activities.

7. Act as the overall communications team that knows what is going on in each school and in professional development so that there is no redundancy of activities or requirements.

4b. High School to College Transition Team

Membership

The superintendent or designee; the principal of each school involved; the academic dean of the college(s) or designees; chairs of subject areas in high school and at the college(s) [at a minimum, English/language arts, mathematics and science from both levels must be represented]; career/technical teachers from high school and technical institutions; guidance counselor(s); and representatives from the business community.
Mission

The mission of the High School to College Transition Team is to make effective use of the senior year by allowing those students who are already prepared for postsecondary credit to use the senior year to earn at least 15 semester hours of college credit. For those who are not prepared for postsecondary study and plan to pursue it, use the senior year to devise special English and mathematics courses so students can take credit-bearing courses immediately upon entering postsecondary studies. Finally, for those students who are not prepared and who are not planning to enroll in postsecondary studies, use the senior year to allow them to earn employer-recognized credentials. The final mission of this transition team is to make every effort to ensure that seniors do in fact graduate either in the spring or summer of that year.

Charges

1. Create the vision of how the high school and the postsecondary institution will work together to strengthen the senior year and to increase articulation and dual-credit opportunities. This vision includes developing senior year courses (developed and approved by the Curriculum Leadership Team) to get graduates ready for postsecondary education or work. Use the senior year to accelerate instruction and get students ready for the next step.

2. Provide career programs that prepare students for high-quality, high-demand jobs. Ensure that courses have sufficient depth of academic and technical content and are taught to standards that enable students to earn postsecondary credit that give them an edge in getting good jobs.

3. Build vertical teams of high school and postsecondary teachers who meet periodically to align curriculums and discuss and act on issues such as dual credit and articulation. Identify students who are ready to earn college-level credit in the senior year and provide them with these opportunities.

4. Design and offer structured work-based learning programs for high school and college students such as job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships and cooperative work-site learning.

5. Provide college and career counseling and advisement. Work with postsecondary institutions to identify 11th-graders not ready for postsecondary study and to develop special senior year courses to get students prepared for postsecondary study.

6. Work with the Curriculum Leadership Team to develop a consensus on the definition of good instruction, particularly for students who may have reached the senior year with no expectation of graduating.

7. Involve business and community leaders in shaping high school and postsecondary studies.

5. Evaluation Leadership Team

Membership

Academic, career/technical or exploratory teachers (middle grades and high school, if appropriate); central office evaluation personnel; and representatives from postsecondary institutions, business and the community.

Mission

Assess the degree to which the HSTW design has been implemented, student achievement has been improved and goals met, and provide to the leadership teams appropriate data to develop action plans and to modify and adjust activities as needed for the School Improvement Leadership Team.
Charges

1. Annually develop a profile of student achievement levels.

2. Use *Establishing Benchmarks for New and Maturing HSTW Sites* or *Establishing Benchmarks of Progress for Middle Grades Sites* to demonstrate progress toward fully implementing the HSTW improvement designs and in achieving reading, mathematics and science goals.

3. Work with the other teams to help them use research-based indicators to monitor their progress.

4. Assist in the administration of the *HSTW* Assessments, Student and Teacher Surveys.

5. Develop and use for continuous improvement a method for sharing data with teams and with faculties.

6. Disaggregate data annually by subgroups to identify gaps in achievement and opportunities to learn by using assessment information including the state assessment, SAT, ACT, *HSTW* or Middle Grades Assessment results, transcript analyses, student and teacher surveys, student follow-up surveys, TAV reports, and site annual reports.

7. Advise the School Improvement Leadership Team and the other school leadership teams when actions are needed to give all subgroups opportunities to learn and meet desired standards.

8. Complete the *HSTW* or *MMGW* Annual Progress Reports showing how the school is doing.

Multi-school Organization

There will be times when a multi-school site leadership team needs to be established. This is the second model described. A multi-school site includes one or more high schools joined in a coordinated initiative with an area career/technical center. In this model, the School Improvement Leadership Team is composed of top-level representatives from the participating secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, business and industry. This team develops and coordinates a unified action plan for achieving the *HSTW* Goals among all of the schools. While the membership and mission are slightly different from those of the single-school model, the charges and tasks are quite similar. Each school within the multi-school site organization will operate its team model exactly as the single-school site organization does.

Multi-school Improvement Leadership Team

Membership

District leadership and principal of each school, the chair of each school’s School Improvement Leadership Team, *HSTW* and *MMGW* site coordinators, middle grades and high school academic and career/technical or exploratory teachers, parents and students, and top-level representatives from business and the community and postsecondary education. (See Model Representation 2 on page 15.)

Mission

Develop and coordinate a systemwide action plan to implement the *HSTW* Key Conditions and Key Practices, set goals to raise student achievement, and increase graduation rates. Build a school and community partnership to advocate the vision.
Charges

1. Using state and HSTW Assessment data, set achievement and proficiency-level goals for district students for the next four years. Present goals to the faculty in each school; obtain input, and revise goals annually.

2. Set annual goals for implementation of the HSTW Key Practices and review annually the progress made. Use the findings from the TAV reports; and local, district, state and HSTW data to assist in this goal setting and review process.

3. Be strong, consistent advocates for the practices that raise student achievement. Develop and support proposals aimed at raising expectations on a more rigorous curriculum, making learning relevant, assessing and getting feedback frequently on student progress, and providing extra help to students.

4. Advocate the development at each school of an effort-based school culture — one that focuses on quality teaching, engaging assignments, meeting standards and having students redo work until it meets standards.

5. Help participating schools work as a coherent and integrated whole. Develop and support proposals aimed at raising expectations and accelerating the academic, problem-solving and technical competencies of all students.

6. Develop a unified, three-year action plan for achieving the goals. Revise the plan annually and define specific annual goals for implementing the HSTW Key Practices.

7. Based on the unique needs and resources at each school, prioritize activities that are recommended by the School Improvement Leadership Teams.

8. Develop a timeline, assign responsibilities and identify resources. Require all School Improvement Leadership Teams to use appropriate data to justify decisions in setting performance goals and in developing action plans.

9. Develop a timeline, assign responsibilities, identify resources and arrange for professional development activities as recommended by the School Improvement Leadership Team from each school.

10. Establish ongoing communication between the district team and the School Improvement Leadership Team at each school.

11. Resolve problems that hamper communication, cooperative action and accomplishment of the action plan. Develop and promote systems solutions.

12. Review each school's School Improvement Leadership Team activities to ensure that actions are consistent with the HSTW Goals and Key Practices. Have reports from the chair of each School Improvement Leadership Team at every meeting to monitor assignments and determine progress. Share minutes and reports with the faculty and the community.

13. Advocate the HSTW Goals and Key Practices in the media, business/community forums and in legislative bodies. They include
   - high expectations for teachers and students;
   - a required system of extra help and support;
   - effort and hard work as the basis for improved achievement;
   - a rigorous academic core in high school and the middle grades;
   - teachers working in teams (vertical and horizontal) to determine basic, proficient and advanced levels of work so that students can perform at higher levels;
   - guidance and advisement with parental and community involvement to help students set goals;
   - high-level technical courses imbedded with academic skills and knowledge; and
   - relevant assignments and engaging research-based instructional strategies.
Each school improvement leadership team consists of school administrators, parents and students, business and industry representatives, and postsecondary representatives.
## Addressing the Challenges of Teamwork

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
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| “We have no time to meet.” | - Examine content of faculty meetings. If much of it is informational, communicate it in a weekly memo or e-mail. Save meeting time for teamwork.  
- Have mini-faculty meetings during planning periods and leave time for focus team meetings during the regularly scheduled faculty meeting time.  
- Eliminate duplication of effort. Only one group or person should be responsible for a task.  
- Make use of volunteers. Parents are more likely to help if opportunities are clearly specified, if tasks have a beginning and end, if they can do the work from home or in the evenings, if they feel confident they can do the work well, and if they are trained to do the work.  
- Get administrative support in arranging planning periods, workdays, retreats, substitutes and/or release time. Administrators should sanction the time found for team meetings and protect the time from interference. |
| “We seem to disagree on how to do things so nothing ever gets done.” | - **Realize that conflict** can be a source of creativity; allow and acknowledge it.  
- **Cognitive conflict** often promotes debate on the merits of alternatives and leads to better decisions.  
- **Accommodation** may be appropriate if it is important to show goodwill and if the issue is much more important to the other party.  
- **Controlling** to resolve conflict may be useful when issues of basic rights or safety are at hand but it is usually detrimental to the future functioning of the team.  
- **Avoiding** conflict is appropriate if the issue is trivial and will distract attention from more important issues, if confronting the issue has high potential for damage, or if it is necessary to temporarily evade the problem while parties resume composure or gather more information.  
- **Compromise** can be useful for managing conflict when the goals of both parties are not critically important or when confrontation would result in mutually-destructive arguments. Compromise can be used effectively for temporary agreements or when agreement is driven by time constraints.  
- **Collaboration** to resolve conflict is used when both parties’ concerns are too important to be compromised. It allows the parties to merge perspectives, to work through negative emotions and to come to an understanding of the other’s views. |
| “Our team makes plans that are shot down by the administration.” | - Have an administrator explain school policies or law that may prohibit the proposed actions. |
| “We don’t know where to go for information about HSTW.” | - The site coordinator should be a liaison between the school leadership teams and the School Improvement Leadership Team. The site coordinator should provide needed HSTW and MMGW publications, data and other resources to the teams. This alleviates confusion and helps with deadlines, arranging professional development, etc.  
- Distribute a flowchart showing chain of command and direction of communication. |
| “We talk a lot but don’t get anything done.” | - Establish firm deadlines for completion of actions plans.  
- Provide examples of quality action plans so the team knows what they are to do. |
| “Everyone is on so many teams.” | - Before creating any new teams, look at what is already in place. Use the same committees you have to assume the charges of the school leadership teams or eliminate some committees. |
Some roles diminish the effectiveness of the team. Leaders or other members of effective teams do not tolerate the actions associated with these roles and create a culture that discourages them. The following chart describes these roles and interventions.

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<tr>
<th>INEFFECTIVE ROLE</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comic</strong> — lacks interest, makes wise cracks and prevents work from being accomplished.</td>
<td>Find this person’s area of interest and call on him for his experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aggressor</strong> — ridicules, questions and attacks the status of other team members.</td>
<td>Ignore; recognize legitimate objections.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-conversationalist</strong> — does not talk, disrupt or disturb; usually has good thoughts but only voices them after the meeting.</td>
<td>Ask this person a direct question that you are sure he or she can answer; ask for agreement on the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Side conversationalist</strong> — whispers with immediate neighbors, creates confusion and discomfort, rarely contributes to group.</td>
<td>Invite this person to share his thoughts with the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognition seeker</strong> — knows it all, expects and demands special attention, usually unwilling to accept responsibility.</td>
<td>Thank this person for his or her help and suggest that other opinions be heard; have the recognition seeker summarize all points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blocker</strong> — against things generally, exhibits negative attitude without legitimate reason, does not really understand the issue.</td>
<td>Use others to help this person understand the issue; ask him or her to write down the reasons for objection for discussion after the meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rambler</strong> — digresses from topic, makes irrelevant comments.</td>
<td>Recognize this person’s contribution but state that since his or her topic is not directly related to the issue at hand, it will be tabled until later so the team can accomplish its immediate goal.</td>
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Working With Ineffective Team Members
The first meeting sets the stage for the involvement of members, particularly business and community members. How can you make the first meeting successful? Simple things count!

Checklist for the First Meeting

☐ Prepare and keep an agenda. Postpone unplanned topics until another time. Make certain the meeting begins and ends on time.

☐ Focus on the vision of the HSTW Key Conditions and Key Practices. Review the goals, practices and conditions by presenting them as clearly as possible. Personalize the impact with descriptions of benefits to your school and the community. Begin each meeting with a review of the HSTW Key Practices and the goal(s) of the team.

☐ Conclude with actions to be taken before the next meeting. Everyone should know that actions are underway.

☐ Prepare an agenda for the next meeting prior to adjourning the current meeting.

☐ Make sure everyone has a written agenda, copies of goals and other materials, and a list of team members. Provide name tags, paper, pens and refreshments. Select a convenient site and be sure everyone knows how to get there. Write and distribute minutes in a timely manner. Minutes have
  - a uniform style,
  - date and time of meeting,
  - place of meeting,
  - members present (and any guests),
  - statement of decisions made,
  - tasks assigned,
  - deadlines for tasks,
  - names of individuals responsible for tasks, and
  - date, time and place of next meeting.
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