

Part Six

Questions to Guide the Work of Your Professional Learning Community

To Assess the Climate for Creating Consensus and Responding to Resistance in Your School or District, Ask:

1. What evidence do we have that district goals are directly impacting the work of schools and collaborative teams within the school?
2. Do we have an operational definition of consensus in our school? Do we know at what point in the decision-making process we will move forward with an initiative?
3. Do we have a sense of what decisions require consensus? When do we want to involve all staff in the decision-making process? Who decides who decides?
4. Should individual members of our staff be permitted to disregard agreements we have made as a staff? What is the appropriate response if they do?
5. Identify a conflict that has emerged in our school in the past. How was that conflict addressed?
6. Are we building shared knowledge and conducting action research in an effort to address conflict productively? Can we cite an example in which we resolved a difference of opinion through examining the research or conducting our own action research?

7. Describe the process we currently use to resolve conflict. What skills could we identify and practice to become more effective in this important area?
8. Do we view conflict as something to be avoided?
9. Do we expect administrators to resolve conflict or do we work together to address it in ways that improve our effectiveness?
10. Are we developing our skills to hold crucial conversations? (For free assessment tools, register at www.vitalsmarts.com.)
11. Do we have a common understanding of our purpose—learning for all—and of our priorities, our goals, and our expectations of one another that are aligned with that purpose? Does this shared understanding allow us to be open with each other? Do we operate with an assumption of the good intentions of our members?