

Selecting Collective Commitments

The following eight steps serve as a template for a meeting for an organization to create their collective commitments.

1. Review the mission and vision as a team.
2. Remind the staff that the collective commitments define how they will accomplish the mission and vision.
3. Organize the staff into vertical teams. The teams should identify no more than three key skills and learning targets students need to have in place by the time they leave the school. If it is a district leadership team creating collective commitments, they should discuss what the students need to have in place when they leave the district. High school teams should discuss what all students need to have in place when they walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. Middle school and elementary schools should discuss what learning is and what skills all students need to have in place as they matriculate to the next level to ensure success.

It needs to be made very clear to all those helping to create collective commitments that identified learning and skills will be deemed essential for *all* students. It does not matter if special designations (for example, individual education plan, English learner, 504 plan) are attached to the student's name; all means *all*. If a skill, for example, is vital to success for general education students, then it is equally important that all students acquire this skill as well.

4. Have teams write each skill or learning target on a notecard once the teams come to agreement on the three skills or learning the students will need. No more than one skill or learning per card. Each team then posts the cards on an easily observable flat surface; a white board or wall would do nicely.
5. Combine similar cards. For example, if two groups' notecards say "fundamental math facts" they can easily be combined with another card that says "basic math."
6. Use a consensus protocol such as the value voting protocol from the forty-five-minute mission and vision meeting (see chapter 1, page 26) to identify the skills or learning that the staff can most get behind. If the facilitator wants to use a different protocol, he or she can place the combined cards around the room on a desk or table. Then ask the staff to stand behind the desk or table that represents the skill or learning that the staff member feels provides the most leverage academically for students. Some staff members will point out that if they stand behind a desk or table, they can only vote for one thing. In this case, the facilitator should remind them to use their one vote for something very important.

Regardless of which protocol they use, the will of the group should emerge in a clear, observable manner. If more than three or four skills or learning targets tie, then they should remove

cards not involved in the tie. The groups supporting cards still in the running are given two minutes to come up with a thirty-second argument for why everyone should agree with them.

Teams are then allowed to make their arguments and hold a revote. This process can be repeated until the staff narrow down the skills and learning to a maximum of four things the whole staff can live with.

7. Once the collective commitments for student learning are established, repeat the exercise for the adult behaviors that the staff will engage in to ensure all students master the agreed-on guaranteed skills or learning.
8. When both exercises reach their conclusion, share what the staff has come to agreement on. Ask the staff one last time to confirm that they all commit to the set of student skills and adult behaviors they have selected.