



**Tips, Tools, and Techniques to
Advance Professional Learning...Support Collaboration
In YOUR Educational Setting**



TOOLKIT #1 - Strategies to Impact the Dynamics of Group Interactions

“People tend to get easily frustrated by group meetings. And how can we blame them? The vast majority of meetings we’ve attended throughout our lives have been less than uplifting...” (Davis, 2012)

STRATEGIES to use in YOUR EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Please note: The strategies are differentiated based on where you think your team is in the process. STRATEGY ONE is the most risk free. STRATEGY THREE is for teams that have a well-established sense of trust among members.

GETTING READY TO LEARN

Before you choose the strategy that will give your team the most benefit, you might want to consider these questions:

- How comfortable are we with sharing our practice?
- How comfortable are we at taking risks?
- How comfortable are we with sharing our challenges?
- How will this work ultimately benefit our students?

STRATEGY #1 – POINTS OF VIEW using the 3A Discussion Protocol

After reading the article, have each person talk about what they agree with, what they would argue against and what they are adamant about implementing in the context of their work right now. Each person in the group should have the opportunity to reflect on what stood out to them.

Remember: We get smarter by listening to varying points of view!

STRATEGY #2 – BRINGING IT CLOSER TO HOME using a Note Catcher

While reading the article, have team members record their thoughts on the following note catcher:

Here is what I found most important (Highlight where it appears in the text.)	Here is why I think this is important for our work	Here are some suggestions for how we can avoid “collective incompetence”

Once convened as a group, discuss each other's responses.

Note: STRATEGY TWO brings this article “closer to home” as it is asking people to take a risk by getting more specific about their group dynamics as well as their own opinions. You may need to preface this strategy by acknowledging group members and setting some norms around conversations so that people feel free to discuss in this manner.

STRATEGY #3 – PRIORITIES—REMEDIES—IMPLEMENTATION

While reading the article independently, have participants focus on the sources of “collective incompetence” and highlight or circle words or thoughts that are not clear.

As a team, review the sources of “collective Incompetence: and clarify any questions so that each person has a sound understanding of the descriptions. (This is an important step so that everyone can do the next part.)

Then consider the following: In the context of your school or team, prioritize the sources of “collective incompetence” and put those that are the most relevant right now at the beginning of the list. While prioritizing, avoid subjective comments but if there is authentic evidence that can be used to strengthen a particular ranking, that should be discussed. Once you have a priority list, review with your team the remedies for avoiding “collective incompetence.” As a team, discuss what it would take to put these remedies in place? Does the team have further suggestions? Develop a plan of action for moving forward with collective agreements on implementation and behaviors.

Note: Prioritizing is important! A team cannot focus on all of these at once; choose your top two or three that are impacting you the most. This strategy involves discussion as the method of discourse. When using discussion, make sure each person has an opportunity to participate and that no one dominates the conversation. People will shut down if they feel their opinions are not valued. This strategy is recommended for teams that have established a high degree of trust.

REFLECTING ON YOUR LEARNING

After the team has used one of the previous strategies, consider using the questions as a way to reflect:

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

- How comfortable were we with sharing our practice?
- How comfortable were we at taking risks?
- How comfortable were we with sharing our challenges?
- How will this work ultimately benefit our students?
- What follow up will we need as a result of this activity?