

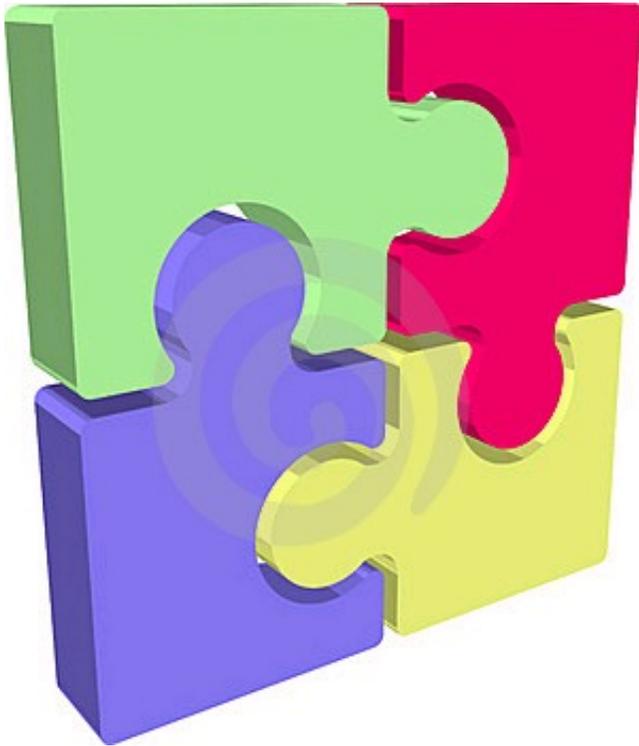


Strategic Planning Implementation: Collaborative Work Environment

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Cindy Lee and Greg Allison (co-chairs) reported on the implementation committee's work at a DAC meeting on Friday. The primary goal of this committee is to improve communication and collaboration across the work of the School. Remember that this strategic priority emerged as a response to Guiding Question #3: How can we become more of a high-performing organization?

Definitions. The first stage of the committee's work was the development of preliminary definitions for "collaboration" and "communication." "*Collaboration*" includes "2 or more people working and learning together with a shared purpose to achieve enhanced outcomes." It includes "[j]ointly developing and agreeing to common goals and directions," "[u]sing and valuing the expertise and perspective of each person," and "[s]haring responsibility for obtaining these goals." These are more than buzz words. I especially like the focus on respecting and valuing everyone involved in a collaboration—without regard to their particular role in the School. "*Communication*" includes



“sharing thoughts, opinions or information.” The committee describes effective communication as giving others “the opportunity to use or respond” to information and “[t]ransferring all relevant information.” Because these are working definitions, I would add the importance of actively checking out assumptions as an important component of effective communication.

Objectives. The second stage of the committee’s work was the development of objectives that would guide the committee’s work in improving our communication and collaboration. Improving “communication and interpersonal working relationships” is the committee’s first objective because they believe it is a necessary precondition for effective collaboration. How do we promote effective communication? How do we promote an inclusive work environment where everyone is valued as a colleague? Improving internal collaboration is the committee’s second objective, which includes deciding “when collaboration is appropriate” and [h]ow we can collaborate better.” The committee recognizes that collaboration is not always necessary or a good idea. The committee members have committed themselves to begin implementation by focusing on improving our communication.

Organizational Development Survey Results. The third stage of the committee’s work is to review the results of last year’s [organizational development survey](#) (May 2009) in light of their objectives. It contains rich information about how we communicate with each other, our working relationships, and how we might promote a more respectful and inclusive work environment. Greg, Cindy, and their colleagues believe that reviewing the survey results through the fresh lens of their objectives will provide important guidance as they move forward with implementation.

July 1 School-wide Event. The DAC had talked earlier about having a School-wide event this summer related to the implementation of strategic planning, but we had not discussed the details. I went to Cindy and Greg a few weeks ago to see if using the event to begin working on effective communication was consistent with the work of the Collaborative Work Environment Committee. I didn’t want to do something that duplicated or interfered with their work. They agreed that the focus and the timing of an event could fit nicely with the work of their committee, and subsequently the full committee also agreed. I will blog in the next day or so about the July 1 event and why I suggested using it to advance the committee’s work on effective communication.

I want to say again how impressed I am with the work of this strategic planning implementation committee, and with the commitment by all of the committees. A major concern for any strategic planning effort is that the recommendations end up going nowhere because there is no follow through. We are making good progress on implementing our priorities thanks to the hard work of everyone serving on the implementation committees.