

## **Empowering Educational Excellence: *The Transformative Impact of a Results-Driven Team***

**We all understand the benefits of being on a productive team. A team that is supportive, effective, and brings about results. These teams can be found in offices, board rooms, sports fields, etc. But what about schools? Do effective teams occur in school systems? And how can effective teams support student growth?**

School leadership teams that are effective and empowered play a pivotal role in enhancing student outcomes. According to Elena Aguilar, effective teams in a school system have five characteristics.

1. A good team knows why it exists.
2. A good team creates space for learning.
3. In a good team, there is healthy conflict.
4. Members of a good team trust one another.
5. A good team has a facilitator, leader, or shared leaders.

In a 2021 article from *The Education Hub*, similar characteristics are noted. Those characteristics include a shared vision and a culture based on trust, collaboration, collective responsibility, and an inquiry mindset.

Furthermore, an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) should ensure that teachers learn from one another with an overarching goal of improved student outcomes. And critical to empowerment is to not confuse activity with results.

Courageous leaders will challenge the status quo of activity vs. results. Deciding to move teams toward a results-oriented shift is pivotal to addressing the need for more progress in student growth.

***How can schools establish effective team characteristics AND a mindset shift toward looking at results?***



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### Empowerment through Collaboration, Learning, and Results

Empowered teams can elevate PLCs to a higher level, transforming from the fundamentals of collaborative programming and shifting the mindset to a focus on learning and results. Teachers can gain proficiency in highly impactful and effective instructional practices by adopting a results-focused approach (using data to inform and plan for targeted instruction). Integrating continuous learning cycles into PLCs ensures that practice and processes are systematized for long-term success.



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### Why it Matters

A highly effective team serves as a catalyst for creating an environment where students and adults can thrive. It deeply shapes the intangible elements of the educational experience. The emotional and social aspects of learning, the relationships, and the overall atmosphere within the educational system all play pivotal roles in determining the ultimate success of students.

Catalyst for Educational Change (CEC) knows that the predictors with the highest likelihood of success in schools are 1) the effectiveness of the adults working together, 2) the quality of the school culture, and 3) teacher teams spend time on high-leverage collaboration. When school staff employ a learner-centered mindset across key areas of practice, good things happen! High-leverage teams collaborate and make shared decisions to increase student growth. CEC's Empowered Teams program is designed to provide tools, protocols, and processes for the adults in a school system to identify collective solutions around the whole child.

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### About the Authors

**Margo Sickele, Ed.D.** has served in a number of roles throughout her public school tenure, including teaching middle school language arts, leading an alternative high school program, serving as a Title I teacher, and teaching second grade. Her leadership roles include serving as a technology integration specialist, a district literacy coordinator, a Director of Accountability and School Improvement, and as an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, in seven different districts.

Margo earned her BA in Elementary Education and Master's in Literacy Education from Northern Illinois University. She earned her Master's in Educational Leadership, and completed her doctorate at National-Louis University, where she also serves as an adjunct professor in the Educational Leadership Department.

**Dee Molinare, Ed.D.** came to CEC with more than 20 years of governance work with school boards, both as a trainer to district board leadership teams and in service as a board of education member. Dee not only brings governance training capacity to CEC but also training in equity and trust/relationship/team building. Dee's passion for education is rooted in her love of learning, admiration of the teaching profession, and its impact on the future.

Dee has taught as an adjunct professor and an early childhood teacher, ultimately becoming an early childhood administrator. Dee has a marketing degree from the University of Illinois-Urbana, a Master's of Education from St. Xavier, and a doctorate from the University of St. Francis in Educational Leadership.

### About CEC

Chicago, Ill.-based **Catalyst for Educational Change (CEC)** is a national, not-for-profit, consulting agency working with educational systems throughout the country. Since its founding in 1987, the mission is to be the catalyst for collective solutions and innovation in more educational environments. CEC (formerly Consortium for Educational Change) works with networks, partners, and education leaders to build internal capacity, create better outcomes, communicate with leadership, and re-think our children's futures. For more information, visit [cecweb.org](http://cecweb.org).

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#### EMPOWER YOUR TEAMS

The Empowered Teams program from CEC is a comprehensive professional learning experience aimed at creating sustainable systems and leadership for highly effective teacher teams. With a strong emphasis on collaboration, learning, and results, this service equips educators with the tools and knowledge they need to impact student outcomes positively. Learn more at [cecweb.org/empoweredteams](http://cecweb.org/empoweredteams).