

## Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

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**3. Lever Addressed:** School Structure

**4. Title of Promising Practice:** Leadership Professional Learning Teams

**5. District(s) Where Implemented:** Westford Public Schools

**6. Applicable Grade Levels:** All PreK-12

**7. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:**

The recently created Leadership Professional Learning Teams reflect the overall mission of the district to provide students with a "challenging learning environment to prepare them for the political, economic, social, and technological challenges of a rapidly changing world". The formation of these leadership teams also embodies one of Westford's core values, "Pursuing Excellence in a Learning Community", as applied to all the administrative leaders in the district.

**8. Goals of This Practice:**

- Create a mechanism to address the multiple needs and goals of a district.
- Create a structure for shared leadership, involvement, and decision-making among all members of the District Leadership Team.
- Provide opportunities for all members of the district team to assume system-wide leadership responsibilities.

**9. Description of This Practice and How it Addresses Criteria for This Lever:**

Westford's district-wide Leadership Team is comprised of forty members, including Central Office administrators, principals, assistant principals, curriculum coordinators, and special education team chairs, who collectively represent all grade-levels and all administrative leadership roles in the district.

Two years ago, the system-wide leadership team began by prioritizing

the areas that were most important for the district to concentrate on, which resulted in identifying six areas of focus. During the 2011–2012 school year, the topics identified were: Common Core State Standards, Response to Intervention, Technology Integration, Safety, Accelerated Learning, and Educator Evaluation. While the important work of the District Leadership Team naturally carried over into the 2012–2013 school year, some focus areas were adjusted to include: RTI/Data, Technology Integration, Safety, Differentiated Instruction, Educator Evaluation, and Full–Day Kindergarten.

To effectively delve into each of these areas the team divided into representative groups, forming six Leadership Professional Learning Teams or LPLT's. Important to note that members also had the opportunity to choose which of these topics they most wanted to immerse themselves in for the year. Each group then developed an area of focus within that topic, became the in–district “experts”, kept the rest of the District Leadership Team informed, made recommendations, and addressed the topic in ways that best served the district.

Specifically, the LPLT process is as follows:

- At the beginning of the year, each group develops a “Professional Learning Team Charter” (attached as an implementation tool). This charter includes:
  - 1.) An essential question –changed to a SMART goal this year
  - 2.) Action steps
  - 3.) Resources needed
  - 4.) A description of the anticipated end product
  
- Each LPLT has a facilitator, who is responsible for setting the agenda for each meeting, overseeing the meetings and communicating the progress of the group. All of the facilitators meet periodically with the Assistant Superintendent to discuss the role of the facilitator, address logistics and examine progress.
  
- Each LPLT periodically presents to the overall District Leadership Team, so that the entire district wide team is involved in the research and learning of each focus area. Also when requested, LPLT's have presented to the School Committee.

As specified below, this promising practice exemplifies a number of the criteria necessary for effective **school structures** as they relate to the levers for positive change.

The superintendent at the district level and the principal at the school level ensure that organizational structures are in place to support teaching and learning elements such as common formative assessment practices; well-articulated and aligned curricula; standards; adequate resources; adequate time to meet, collaborate and communicate; learner-centered schedules and communication protocols.

- District uses data in meaningful ways to help educators improve instruction.
- Educators have access to clear, consistent, standards-based curriculum, pacing guides, assessments, and materials.

This practice also addresses the **Professional Development and School Culture** levers in that:

- The district provides data-driven, sustained learning opportunities aligned with the common core of professional knowledge and skills for educators at all stages in their careers
  - Professional development provides substantive learning of content and pedagogy through sustained, ongoing experiences.
  - District and schools are characterized by a climate of shared responsibility for continuous improvement. Data are continuously examined and analyzed to guide instructional decision-making.

#### **10. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others:**

While leadership teams are not new to the district, the following components have contributed to the success of this particular leadership practice:

1. Identification and prioritization of essential topics
2. Shared leadership opportunities
3. Interest-based choices given to members of the district leadership team

4. Representation from various grade-levels and roles within each group
5. Accountability and structure the Professional Learning Team Charter provides
6. Periodic meetings of the facilitators with the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction.

**11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:**

The creation of Leadership Professional Learning Teams has increased the district's capacity to keep up-to-date with the needs of the district and with state requirements. Given the plethora of topics to address, it's difficult for any district to research and implement all critical areas in a comprehensive way. Dividing the topics among members of the District Leadership Team and providing opportunities for the teams to probe deeper into each topic has increased the knowledge base of its members; increased leadership capacity of its members; and has provided an effective model for individual school based teams to emulate.

**12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:**

Time during District Leadership Team meetings has been provided for the LPLT groups to meet and conduct presentations; however, each team meets additional times in between these larger meetings according to the schedules of the members. District and grant monies have been used to purchase materials, such as RTI resources, and funding and support is also given to send team members to conferences, etc.

**13. Tools You Used To Implement Or Advance This Practice (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback Forms etc.)**

**See Separate Attachment:**

Professional Learning Team Charter template