Assemble a Literacy Planning Team

The size of a district literacy action planning team will vary in relation to the size of the district and the number and different roles of stakeholders necessary for the development and implementation of a successful plan. When you assemble a cross-functional district literacy team to develop and oversee implementation of the District Literacy Action Plan, make sure that you do not make the following common mistakes.

COMMON MISTAKE #1. Overloading the team with special education teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches and/or elementary teachers.

> **WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM?** You need wider representation and buy-in. While it is tempting to load your team with "experts," literacy is a K–12 issue that involves a wider range of teachers and administrators than represented in this list and a plan developed by a team mostly of people in these roles will not have the credibility needed, and may miss critical issues that need to be addressed.
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> **WHAT TO DO INSTEAD.** Establish a team with district and K–12 school-based administrators, lead teachers representing grades K–5 and the core content areas in grades 6–12, literacy coaches and/or reading specialists, and representatives from the following: ESL teachers, special education, library/media specialists, guidance, the union, and parents. You may also choose to have some student representatives on the team. It is often helpful to have student voice but recognize that the views of a few students may not be typical or adequate to get a comprehensive "student" viewpoint.

COMMON MISTAKE #2. Failure to establish team norms, develop a schedule of meetings, communicate clear expectations of team members, and have meeting agendas.

> **WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM?** Busy people are willing to serve when meetings are well organized, expectations are clear and business gets done during the meetings. But when meetings are disorganized and there is fogginess about the purpose of the group or how decisions will be made or what is expected, frustration can sap the energy of team members who will either stop participating or will be unable to move things forward.
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> **WHAT TO DO INSTEAD.** Appoint a team leader to serve as the point person for the team. For each meeting, identify a note-taker and a meeting facilitator. Have these three work together to develop the agenda for the next meeting. Use some time at the first meeting to establish some team norms. These might include an expectation that meetings will begin and end on time, that agendas will be emailed two days before the next meeting, that refreshments will be provided by the district, that meeting notes will be sent out by email within a week of the meeting, that cell phones are expected to be off during the meeting, and that people will have the opportunity to comment on an issue before anyone gets to comment a second time. Set a meeting schedule in advance so team members can plan accordingly.

(Adapted from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Guidelines for Developing an Effective District Literacy Action Plan*, Meltzer, J. & Jackson, D. 2010, p. 17)

Possible Members of the Literacy Planning Team

Name	Represents what group(s)?	Literacy knowledge?	Additional Comments