

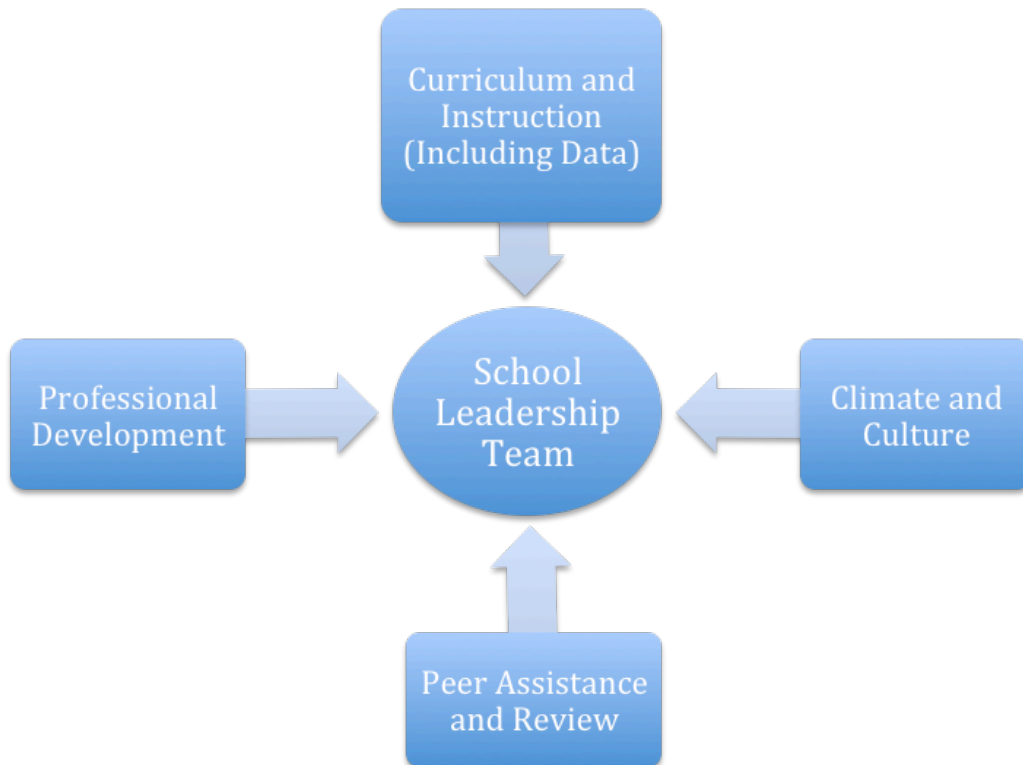


Strengths-Based Leadership Team: Everyone a Leader

Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy (MSLA)

MSLA is a teacher led school where the tagline is, “Where everyone is a learner, teacher and leader”. While the intent is easily understood, execution of this idea can be challenging. Traditional concepts of leadership rely on the notion that one person is “in charge” and everyone else follows. More and more evidence is emerging that indicates a significantly different type of leadership is needed and more effective, especially in schools. This new form of leadership aligns with this notion of everyone a leader and focuses on capitalizing on the unique strengths and assets that each individual brings to a task or organization. MSLA is structured to do exactly that.

Below is a diagram of the four different decision-making teams that all play a part in the successful functioning of the school.

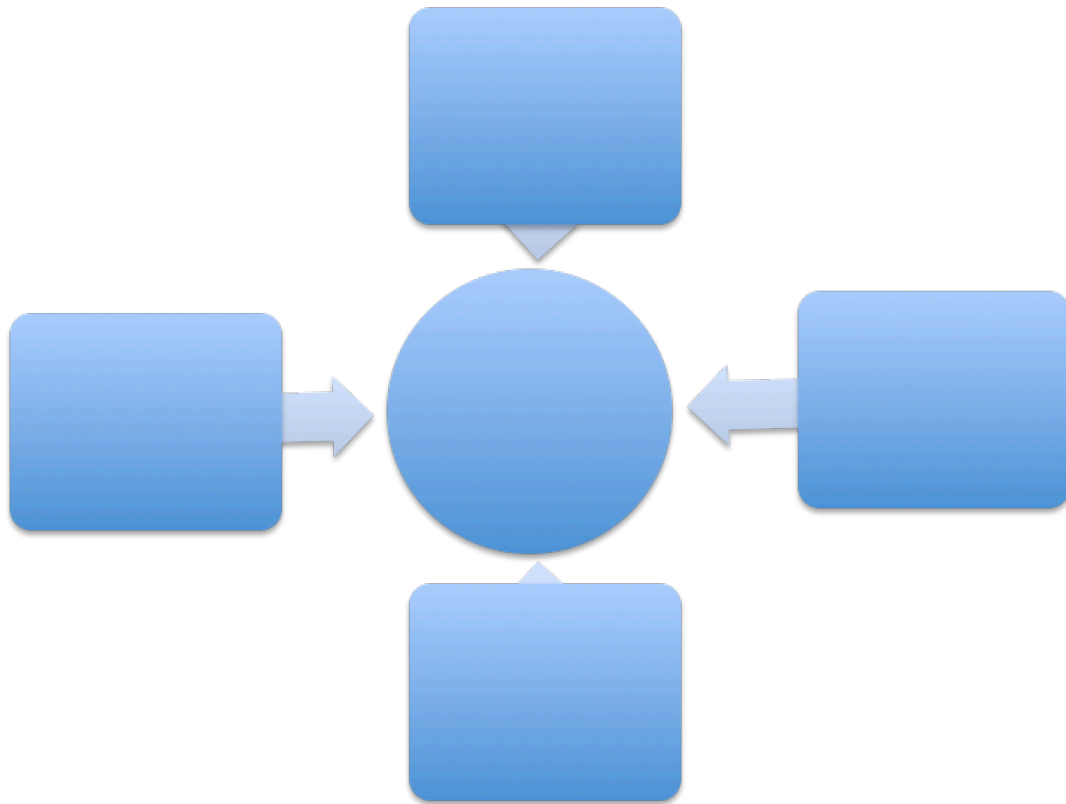


These teams were selected by the school staff as being the area in which teachers had the most interest in having decision-making authority. Every 2 - 3 years the staff reviews the number and content of the teams and makes adjustments based on student needs and teacher expertise. Teachers can change teams each year, however, at least one member remains from the previous year in order to ensure continuity and to carry the institutional memory for the team. These teams are still responsible for complying with district policy but have the leeway to make decisions as long as they do not go counter to district policy.

One representative from each team is a member of the School Leadership Team which serves in a role similar to a Board of Directors. Members of the School Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring that the work of the teams is in alignment with the mission, vision and values of the school. This team also has the authority to approve or send plans back to a team for revision, but not the authority to change a plan or decision.

Each team has a clearly stated charge that defines the scope of their work and the ways in which decisions are to be made. There is a flow chart that defines when a decision is an individual, team or whole group decision. Team composition is a combination of self-selection and Lead Teacher input. Each staff member takes the Strengths-Finder Assessment which is a tool to identify an individual's top 5 strengths. These strengths are then compared against the Strengths-Based Leadership framework to identify each person's leadership strengths. This information is then used to select team members.

What teams might you create at your school?



Strengths-Based Leadership Framework

Each staff member takes the [Strengths-Finder Assessment](#) which is a tool to identify an individual's top 5 strengths. These strengths are then compared against the [Strengths-Based Leadership](#) framework (seen below) to identify each person's leadership strengths. This information is then used to select team members.

For example, Sarah has strengths in all four areas including 2 in relationship building. She might be a strong member of the Peer Observation and Evaluation team. Henry, on the other hand has all of his strengths in Influencing and strategic thinking so he might be a good Curriculum, Instruction and Data team member. Whereas, Martha has strengths in relationship building and executing so she might be a good Climate and Culture team member.

	Relationship Building	Executing	Influencing	Strategic Thinking
Sarah	Adaptability Connectedness	Arranger	Maximizer	Input
Henry			Activator Communication	Analytical Strategic Input
Martha	Empathy Relator	Restorative Responsibility	Woo	

Tom Rath, Barry Conchie, [Strengths-Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams and Why People Follow](#), Gallup Press, 2008.

It is worth noting that there are several different working styles and personality assessments that could be used for this type of exercise. Another example is the North, South, East West Compass Points that can be accessed [here](#). And there is an online quiz that relates to this [here](#). If you choose to use the compass points approach you could use this chart to map people's strengths in order to begin thinking about how to most effectively position them for success, as well as, how to build your own teams.

Name	North	South	East	West

Designing Your Leadership Model and Structures

Questions for Consideration:

1. How will you get input on these questions from a broader range of people than are here at this meeting?
2. There are numerous assessments and inventories that can be used to identify working styles and strengths. Which ones have you used? How might the information gathered from those assessments be structured to help inform decisions about teacher leadership in your school or district?
3. What are the key areas in your school or district that teachers could be positioned to make authentic decisions based on their classroom-level expertise?
4. What team or committee structures can be put in place in order for teachers to be able to make those decisions? How might you structure the team selection process to ensure the most effective and efficient functioning on each team?
5. What structures would need to be put in place to ensure that teams are making decisions that are in alignment to mission, vision and values?