

To: All LEA Members and Administrators  
From: Phyllis Neufeld and Dr. Paul Ash  
Re: Update: Building Professional Relationships  
Date: May 8, 2013

We are writing to you in order to update you on our collective efforts to build positive professional relationships this past year. This is an important topic to all of us and remains of paramount importance to our success as a district. We have highlighted below the major elements of our work this past year and have expanded on each topic in the remainder of this letter.

- Two days of leadership training to build professional relationships with consultant Cathy Lassiter - Central administration and building principals on August 7 and 8
- Two days of leadership training to build professional relationships with consultant Cathy Lassiter - LEA Executive Board and Representative Council training on Oct. 22 and 23
- Two days of combined leadership training with consultant Cathy Lassiter - Central office administration and building principals, and the LEA Executive Board and Representative Council on February 11 and March 18
- The establishment of written goals by principals and central office administrators targeted at building professional relationships
- The establishment of written LEA goals to build professional relationships
- Work by the Ad Hoc Committee to Build Professional Relationships

## **1. Two-day summer training with Cathy Lassiter: Central administration and building principals & two-day October training with Cathy Lassiter: LEA Executive Board and Representative Council**

Last summer, the central administrative team along with all nine principals participated in a two-day training with the consultant Cathy Lassiter that focused on leadership skills ("The Reflective and Collaborative Leader"). The LEA leadership team, executive board and all representative council members participated in the same training with Cathy on October 22 and 23. During these trainings, the following topics were discussed:

- Building a foundation for collaboration and identifying groundwork needed in order to make that happen
- Examining and overcoming barriers to effective collaboration
- Linking mission and core values to building that collaborative culture.

Also discussed were matters related to the following:

- Personal accountability for each member of the team
- The "10 Dimensions of Effective Leadership" and a multidimensional leadership assessment
- Examination and review of the characteristic attributes of the reflective leader as we work together in the future

## **2. Combined Training**

Carol Pilarski and Phyllis Neufeld jointly developed the agendas with Cathy Lassiter for the two days of combined training.

During the first day of this training we discussed the top three factors of trust for the Lexington Public Schools (as determined by the group):

1. Openly sharing information
2. Aligning thoughts, words and actions and
3. Avoiding blame.

We discussed the twelve factors of trust: the six to avoid and the six to promote, which are listed at the end of this letter. We also discussed some of the attributes of high performing teams: having trust, embracing appropriate conflict, being 'all-in', having strong internal accountability, and focusing on collective results.

On the second day of training, LEA members and administrators met in small groups to begin using the skills of high performing teams to work on a collective problem ñ implementing the new DESE supervision and evaluation system. Group members were asked to further define the DESE evaluation rubric. It was a very fruitful, exhausting day, but everyone left with a sense that we had accomplished much... both on the relationship side, as well as beginning a process that will need to be continued and expanded on the new supervision and evaluation system. The LEA ratification of the new DESE evaluation process is scheduled before the end of May.

### **3. Principal Goals**

After the initial training with Cathy Lassiter, Dr. Ash asked each principal to create goals for their schools to build positive professional relationships with their faculty and staff. Action steps were identified for each goal. The plans were then discussed either in each school's leadership team or at a faculty meeting for input. These plans were presented to the School Committee.

### **4. LEA Goals**

The LEA Executive Board also created a set of goals, asking for input from Representative Council. The final goals were shared with Representative Council, shared in each school, and shared with School Committee. The LEA will post the school goals and the LEA goals in the First Class folders.

## **5. Work of the Ad Hoc Committee to Build Professional Relationships**

The Committee has met several times this year to monitor which goals have been accomplished in each school. On May 8, we agreed on the specifics of a climate survey and when the final survey will be distributed to staff/faculty. In order to gauge the current climate in the Lexington Public Schools, we will be administering an anonymous survey between May 20 and May 28 for all employees in the school district.

## **6. Next steps**

- ✓ Climate Survey
  - Editing final version
  - Participation in survey
  - Analyzing the survey
  - Determination of next steps as result of survey
- ✓ Evaluation of School Goals
- ✓ Evaluation of LEA Goals
- ✓ Continuing the learning/relationships from the trainings with Cathy Lassiter
- ✓ Training of department heads, coordinators, assistant principals, deans, assistant coordinators by Cathy Lassiter on October 7 & 8, 2013
- ✓ Looking at possibility of “Difficult Conversations” training in more schools
- ✓ Continuing the relationship work between the Central administration/principals and the LEA leadership
- ✓ Continuing the work of the Committee to Build Professional Relationships in overseeing our progress
- ✓ Continuing the work of the Ad Hoc Supervision and Evaluation Committee

This past year, the LEA and school administration engaged in numerous activities to build our collective capacity to work together and increase mutual trust. While the work of improving relationships starts with learning skills, the goal is to create a professional culture that ensures respect for everyone, every day.

We invite your comments. The 12 factors of trust are below.

## Building Trust on Teams

### 12 Factors of Trust

#### Avoid:

- Hidden agendas
- Internal competition
- Blame
- Selfishness
- Lip Service
- Defensiveness

#### Promote:

Sharing information  
Supporting teammates  
Being predictable,  
dependable, accountable  
Aligning thoughts, words  
& actions  
Being inclusive  
Sharing credit