

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part I

## Quality Leadership

*For Teaching, Counseling/Social Work, and Administrative Staff*

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I am:

\_\_\_\_\_ Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Counselor/Social Worker

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

### About Quality Leadership

Schools face challenging educational, economic, and social issues. The more effectively school staff members are able to work together as a cohesive team, the more successful they will be in addressing these issues with creativity and resourcefulness—and in providing an optimal learning environment for their students.

Peter Senge (author of The Fifth Discipline and Schools that Learn) conducted extensive research to identify the key characteristics of high functioning organizations. He discovered that the most successful and resilient organizations were those where staff members were able to work together as *learning teams*. These powerful teams had the capacity to overcome obstacles and thrive, even in times of challenging conditions and economic crisis.

*And it is more than simply a kind of group togetherness, like a committee. It is a togetherness that is synergistic, honoring the differences we bring to the table—and the chaos as well—one that enhances us both as individuals and as a co-creative team or group.*

*David Spangler*

Senge discovered that learning teams are characterized by five social technologies that he calls "disciplines." Each of the disciplines is described below, followed by questions that can help you assess how well your staff functions as a team.

### Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for "Not Typical." If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for "Very Typical."

Not Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
1	2	3	4	5

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**Team Learning:** *Staff members have the capacity to learn with and from each other. They actively debate and share their ideas, and "listen deeply" to each others' opinions. Team learning is characterized by collegial relationships and shared leadership.*

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	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
1. The following is true of our interactions as a staff:					
a. Respectful relationships are a priority.	1	2	3	4	5
b. People really listen to each other's ideas in discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Irrespective of roles, we work together as a team.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Staff members feel their opinions and ideas are valued—even if they're "out of the box"!	1	2	3	4	5
e. Staff use effective conflict resolution skills when they have a disagreement with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Staff members have fun together.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers and administrators share leadership roles and responsibilities in their efforts to make our school the best it can be.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There is a clear process in place for decision-making that includes opportunities for participation and input (where appropriate) by key stakeholders:					
a. Staff	1	2	3	4	5
b. Students	1	2	3	4	5
c. Parents	1	2	3	4	5
d. Community	1	2	3	4	5
4. Staff are given adequate time to work together on school initiatives and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When staff members attend a training or conference, they share what they learned with the rest of the staff.	1	2	3	4	5

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**Systems Thinking:** *Staff members engage in the practice of stepping back and looking at the "big picture" of a situation, i.e., its complexities and inter-related dynamics. They try to foresee the long-term impact and the potential for "unintended consequences" that might result from a course of action.*

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6. Our staff utilize "systems thinking" (as described above) when planning new initiatives or addressing problems.	1	2	3	4	5
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	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
7. Our staff are willing to invest in effective long-term solutions rather than quick "fixes" to problems.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Our staff try to foresee long-term and unintended consequences when planning or solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5

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**Mental Models:** *Staff members have the ability to recognize and work with people's "mental models" i.e., their underlying paradigms or assumptions about "the way things are or should be." They are willing to suspend their own beliefs and listen to the perspectives of others with an open mind.*

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	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
9. Staff actively seek to understand each other's point of view.	1	2	3	4	5
10. People feel safe to talk about things, including their feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Differences of opinion among our staff generally result in productive problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5

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**Shared Vision:** *All staff members have a "shared vision" i.e., they share some core beliefs and underlying assumptions regarding teaching and learning that guide their behavior and decision-making. The beliefs are positive and personally meaningful to each staff member.*

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	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
12. How typical of your staff are the following underlying beliefs? ( <i>Note:</i> Before responding to these questions, think about how passionately people hold these beliefs and how they are manifested in your school. Use the space at the end of the survey to add comments.)					
a. All students are capable of learning.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Respect and caring for students are exhibited in all interactions—including disciplinary interventions.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Safety and trust among students and teachers are essential to the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
d. It's important that discipline strategies include a "teaching" component to help students learn pro-social behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5
e. We need to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students' different learning styles.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Learning can be joyful, interesting, and meaningful!	1	2	3	4	5

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
13. Our school has written policy and procedures that accurately reflect the strategies, services, and programming that are utilized.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Staff feel a strong <i>moral purpose</i> in their roles as educators and youth advocates—they have a personal commitment and passion for teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Staff uphold a common set of behavioral expectations for students by consistently intervening when there are infractions.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Conversations in the staff lounge are respectful (e.g., no sarcasm, put downs, hurtful gossip, or breaking confidentiality).	1	2	3	4	5

**Personal Mastery:** *All staff members are personally committed to a life-style of inquiry and learning, both personally and professionally.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
17. Ongoing staff development/learning is supported.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Staff members are enthusiastic about teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Staff members actively seek opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Staff contributions and successes are acknowledged and celebrated.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Please indicate how many hours of professional development you participated in last year:					
_____ 0 days					_____ 3 - 4 days
_____ Less than 1 day					_____ 5 - 6 days
_____ 1 - 2 days					_____ More than 6 days (How many?)

In summary, think about how you would describe the overall manner in which your staff members and administration relate and work together as a team.

*The most powerful indicator of student achievement is the quality of relationships among the staff.*  
*Harvard Principal's Center*

22. Circle the letter of the metaphor that most closely describes the way in which your school staff most often tends to work together on projects and school initiatives:
- a. Carousel: *We go round and round with things.*
  - b. Shooting Gallery: *People, rather than problems, get targeted.*
  - c. Swamp Thing: *We get pretty bogged down.*
  - d. Turtle: *Things move along, but progress is pretty slow.*
  - e. Bumper Cars: *Everybody's going, but not in the same direction.*
  - f. Starship: *We set high goals and really take off with our plans. We are capable of finding our way through uncharted territory, solving problems we encounter along the way and bringing back new knowledge.*

Is there anything important that you would like to share about leadership in your school? If yes, please describe briefly: