

WOW, What a Team!

Essential Components for Successful Teaming



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1. Roles and Responsibilities of Team Members

- *Who's on first? Get your programs here! The object of this chapter is to explore the various possible roles you may have as a team member and the expectations that may accompany each role.*

Chapter 2. Time Management for Teams

- *Never enough time? This chapter will look at how to get the most out of your team time. Learn how to work smarter, not harder.*

Chapter 3. Policies and Procedures

- ▲ *Traditionally, teachers have had to do their own thing. In this lesson you will learn how to get all of the team members on the same page by developing common team policies and procedures.*

Chapter 4. Student Recognition

- *Don't I know you from somewhere? In this chapter you will learn several ways to meet a basic need of your students for positive recognition.*

Chapter 5. Coordinating with Administrators and Counsellors

- *This chapter will demonstrate how teams can discuss every student on the team and work with administrators and counsellors to provide any needed interventions in a timely way. You will be doing a 'Thumbs Up' after this chapter.*

Chapter 6. Team Conferences with Students and Parents

- ▲ *This chapter will demonstrate how teams can get the most out of student and parent conferences with the least emotional distress.*

Chapter 7. Informative Newsletters

- *Somewhere between the comics and the Wall Street Journal lies team newsletters. This chapter will teach you how to produce newsletters that will get maximum impact with minimum effort.*

Chapter 8. Flexible Scheduling

- *Do you flex your scheduling muscle? Or, does the bell often kick the sands of time in your face? This chapter will demonstrate ways for teams to really flex their schedules to maximise their instructional time.*

Chapter 9. Curriculum Development

- ▲ *Did the COW really jump over the moon? In this chapter we share a practical and easy way for teams to move from a departmental to an interdisciplinary style of instruction.*

Chapter 10. Professional Development

- *Kaison is the Japanese term for continuous improvement and the daily pursuit of perfection. In this chapter you learn about professional development for teams that want to practise Kaison.*

Chapter 11. Assessing Team Success

- *This chapter has a great activity that helps you define team success and helps you create a tool to measure how your team is doing.*

Chapter 12. Team Goals

- ▲ *Never have a map when you need one? In this chapter you will learn about setting team priorities and establishing team goals to give your team a road map to success.*

WOW, What a Team!



INTRODUCTION

Teaching middle school is like trying to work with jelly. Every time you think you have it going in the direction that you want, it starts to wiggle and move in all directions. If you try to get a hold of the jelly, it squirts right through your fingers. Think about this job description: wanted, someone to work with about 125 students, who are all going through puberty at the same time. Only committed (or soon to be) teachers should apply.

Middle school students have been referred to as many things, including transescent, pubescent and even the herd of the absurd. One analogy: give or take about ten kilograms, middle school students are akin to fifty-kilogram mosquitoes! Think about it. They fly around everywhere with no apparent destination! Just imagine trying to get a mosquito to sit still for a maths lesson. A team effort is required to harness all of that early adolescent energy.

We appreciate teaming because we remember being outlaw mosquitoes in a very traditional school setting. Working independently, the teachers could never quite harness and focus our energy. We were always working the teachers against each other with teacher's notes, homework, lateness and so on, because we knew that with the randomness of the schedule there was no way for one teacher to know what another was doing. We knew we were really in trouble when we saw two teachers talking to each other.

Early adolescence, or the middle school years, is a time of dramatic change for our youth. At no other time in their lives will they grow more socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually than during the middle years. That is why this is such a confusing time of contradictions, challenges and great rewards for everyone involved.

An Interdisciplinary Teaching Team (Teaming) is a way of grouping students and teachers together to eliminate the impersonal random scheduling of the middle school. The idea is to create small communities of learning within the school. Simply defined, a middle school team is a common group of students assigned to a common group of teachers for a common part of the day.

Great middle schools have great teams. These are the teams that collaborate so well that the teachers and students create learning environments that promote high performance. When you watch these kinds of teams in action, all you can say is WOW! These teams do not work well together by accident. Teaming requires a lot of training, planning, collaboration and follow-through.

WOW teams are productive because they make the most of their team time. The goal of this book is to look at twelve of the components of productive teams. Each chapter is designed to demonstrate a strategy that can create high impact team performance. Each chapter also includes an activity that you and your teammates may work through. The activities will help guide you and your teammates as you implement each strategy.

It is our hope that this book will provide teams with a practical guide for teaming. The stories and ideas shared here represent our personal experiences in teaching and administration in addition to a collection of the WOW strategies we have encountered in our work with teachers and students across the United States and in several other countries.

This book is designed to help experienced teams as well those just beginning to explore teaming. For novice teams, *WOW, What a Team!* will demonstrate the promise and possibilities of teaming and provide practical ideas for success as they begin the process of becoming a team. Experienced teams will find ideas and strategies to renew their purpose and take their teaming to the next level.

Middle school is sometimes referred to as 'hormone heaven' and middle school teachers are definitely angels in training. Regardless of your previous experience with teaming, it is our hope that this book is helpful as you earn your wings! Enjoy!

Randy Thompson and Dorothy VanderJagt

Chapter 1

Who's on first? How do you tell the players without a program? It is important that each team member knows and understands the roles and responsibilities that make for successful teaming. Each member should be willing to take on one or more of the roles and share in the responsibility for the team's success.

The roles needed for each team should be assigned after much team discussion about the various roles and the needs of the team. Some roles, such as team leader and team recorder, are absolutely critical. Others, like team caller, are up to the particular management style the team develops.

As possible team roles and the corresponding responsibilities that accompany each role are reviewed, it becomes apparent that many of the roles can be combined. A team may also take on tasks that will generate the need for new roles unique to that team's goals. It is important that each team member take on a role to help ensure team success, however, not every team will have every role described here.

Roles should be decided on by team consensus. This is sometimes easier said than done. Roles may be assigned for various times of duration. Many teams rotate roles so that each team member has the opportunity to gain the experience of each role. For example, a four-member team may rotate roles quarterly. It is said that if you are never the lead dog, your view will always be the same. So, we want all team members to understand all of the roles and responsibilities for a team.