MICIP
MICHIGAN INTEGRATED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

NOTE: This toolkit must be downloaded and opened with Acrobat in order to access the embedded resources. Links to resources will not work if this document is opened in a browser.

Forming a Team

A Toolkit to Support Continuous Improvement Leaders, Facilitators, and Team Members

August 2021

MICHIGAN Department of Education

Contents

Introduction 1
Learner Outcomes: 1
Purpose and Composition of the MICIP Team 2
Establishing the Group's Identity and Purpose 2
Identifying Continuous Improvement Team Members 2
Becoming a High-Quality Team 3
Characteristics of a High-Quality Team 3
How a Group Develops into a Team 3
Establishing How the Team Will Function 3
Ensuring Knowledge of MICIP 4
Using a Facilitator for the MICIP Process 4
Digging Deeper into the Team Development Process 5
Why is the development of a team important? 5
Additional Resources 8
Acknowledgements 8

Introduction

"The power of a team lies in its capacity to perform at levels and deliver results greater than the sum of its parts." (The Leaders Institute)

The purpose of the MICIP toolkits is to help a district dig more deeply into topics that are critical to the continuous improvement mindset and process. This toolkit considers how to form a continuous improvement team, including who should be part of it, the characteristics of a high-quality team, and how to support districts with creating high functioning teams for the purpose of continuous improvement. The kit has been scaffolded into introductory and digging deeper information. The introductory information is appropriate for the entire continuous improvement team while the "Digging Deeper" information is primarily designed for those leading continuous improvement efforts.

Learner Outcomes:

- Understand the purpose of a MICIP team and selection of team members.
- Understand the characteristics of a high-quality team.
- Understand the team development process and function.
- Understand the benefits of having a facilitator for the MICIP process.

Purpose and Composition of the MICIP Team

Establishing the Group's Identity and Purpose

Team-based leadership is critical to a high-quality continuous improvement process. The primary role of the continuous improvement team is to construct, communicate, monitor, adjust and eventually evaluate the Continuous Improvement Plan. The team is a decision-making body and will be anchored in a culture of collective responsibility that is collegial, collaborative, and professional. Previously, especially in larger districts, the continuous improvement process was likely handled in one of two ways: typically either the district leadership wrote the district plan and then asked school improvement teams to mimic the plan in their plans or schools wrote their plans and the district plan was a compilation of the school plans. MICIP is trying to change the paradigm where the continuous improvement plan is developed by a team composed of district, school and community representatives that considers both district-wide as well as individual school needs and assets. School leaders and personnel should be members of the district's continuous improvement team, and the needs and assets of the schools inform the district's continuous improvement plan. While MICIP is coordinated at the district level by the district continuous improvement team, it is also appropriate and encouraged for schools to have teams to monitor the plan's implementation and impact.

Identifying Continuous Improvement Team Members

As districts engage in continuous improvement, it is important to have essential perspectives represented within the improvement team. People coming together from diverse perspectives bring deeper insight to collaboratively plan for solutions. It is critical that members of the team have the necessary knowledge and skills as well as a commitment to continuous improvement. Building an effective team that works at different levels and achieves results takes time and planning.

The district might reflect on the following questions regarding the continuous improvement team: To what extent does continuous improvement leadership and processes include and support the voices of all stakeholders? Does the team represent key stakeholders' perspectives, including the following?

- at least one key leader with the ability and authority to make executive-level decisions
- central office personnel
- building leadership
- instructional staff, including those from various grade levels/content areas and both general and special education
- non-instructional staff
- various student subgroup populations
- various systems (curriculum/instruction/assessment, data, technology, finance, student support, human resources, transportation, facilities management, food service, etc.)
- educational and health components of the Whole Child (physical, social, and emotional health, nutrition, etc.)
- board member(s)
- parent, community, and, where appropriate, student leader representatives

It is important to note that having various perspectives represented does not necessarily mean having a different individual for each perspective. Particularly in smaller districts, individuals can represent more than one perspective. It may also not be practical to have all perspectives represented at every meeting; in that case, it is important to bring in the various perspectives at particularly relevant times.

Activity 1

This activity will take approximately 20 -30 minutes.

1. Using the MICIP Team Roster Template, divide up into an appropriate number and size of groups as defined by your setting; have each person in the group take one or more roles from the list and share why that perspective should be represented on the continuous improvement team.
2. You may also find the MICIP Learning Bite: Building Your Team helpful.

Becoming a High-Quality Team

Characteristics of a High-Quality Team

A team is a group of individuals who have built trust as they work to set and achieve goals, moving toward a common purpose. What characterizes a high-quality team? How will you know if your team is operating effectively?

Activity 2

This activity will take approximately 60 minutes.

1. Put participants into groups. Have them identify a time when they were part of a work team that was very successful. Make a list of the characteristics that made it successful. Then have each participant identify a time when they were part of a group that was not successful. Make a list of the characteristics that made it not be successful. Compare the two lists. What are some key differences?
2. Distribute the Characteristics of High Performing Groups as identified by Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman in their book ***Got Data? Now What?*** Which ones align with your own experience? What might you add? How do these characteristics align with the scenarios you previously talked about?

How a Group Develops into a Team

As a group moves from simply being a collection of individuals to becoming a team, it frequently moves through a series of stages. Bruce Tuckman's Model for Nurturing a Team to High Performance identifies these stages as follows: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Teams may move in and out of these stages throughout their work together. What are these stages and what characterizes each stage?

Activity 3

This activity will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes

1. Divide the team into groups of five. Distribute the handout Five Stages of Team or Group Development. Jigsaw the article, with each person in the group reading about one stage. Have each individual share with the rest of the group the characteristics of that stage.

2. Have each person briefly describe the examples shared in the first part of Activity 2 and analyze them according to the Tuckman stages. How might the stages have impacted the success or lack of success in the examples? How might understanding the stages have helped change the unsuccessful experience to one that was successful?

Establishing How the Team Will Function

Part of being a successful team includes establishing how it will function.

Activity 4

The time of this activity will be determined by the team and how much of this is already in place or how much of it must be newly developed. As part of setting the stage for its work, the team should consider the following:

1. District Vision, Mission and Beliefs - The group's identity and purpose should be aligned with the district vision, mission and beliefs. How will the group anchor its work to their higher purpose? What do individual team members understand as the meaning of the district vision, mission and beliefs? What is the common understanding across the entire team? How do the vision, mission and beliefs impact the work of continuous improvement?
2. Establishing Team Working Agreements - The team will want to establish working agreements regarding how the team will operate, including around ideas such as attending and actively participating in meetings, providing input based on their perspective(s), following through on assigned tasks, communicating information as requested, and other things that will make meetings more productive. The Adaptive

Schools organization has many tools and resources to support work such as this, including Norms of Collaboration.

3. Roles and Responsibilities - Once the ground rules are agreed upon the team should begin to define roles and responsibilities. How will the team work together? How are different personality types accommodated?
4. Decision Making - Decision making is an important element of teamwork. How are decisions made? Who makes the final decision? What can be done without prior approval? How is conflict resolved? How are those decisions communicated?

Activity 5

This activity will take approximately 45 minutes.

If the team does not already have a thinking/decision-making process, it might consider exploring the Six Hats strategy.

1. Six Hats Video
2. Sample Worksheet
3. Team Logistics Worksheet - The team might also consider using this resource to decide on meeting logistics.

Ensuring Knowledge of MICIP

Finally, it is critical that team members have the necessary knowledge and skills, including an understanding of the MICIP mindset, process, and platform as well as of the change process and how it impacts the continuous improvement process. The level of professional learning necessary will depend on the knowledge level of the team.

Activity 6

This time for this activity will be determined by the team and will depend on what knowledge is already in place and what must be newly learned.

1. Once the team is established, use the Team Readiness Inventory to assess team knowledge. Based on the results of the Inventory, identify professional learning needed. There are many resources on the MICIP Professional Learning page that can support various learning needs.
2. The team should also experience the Managing Change toolkit.

Using a Facilitator for the MICIP Process

To facilitate means to "make easier." A facilitator is one who conducts a meeting in which the purpose may be dialogue, shared decision-making, planning, or problem-solving. The facilitator directs the procedures to be used in the meeting, choreographs the energy within the group, and maintains a focus on meeting standards. The facilitator should rarely be the person in the group with the greatest role or knowledge authority. (Lipton and Wellman, 2019)

While using a facilitator for the continuous improvement process is not required, there may be times when doing so is advantageous. There may be individuals on staff who could fill this role; there may also be value in bringing in someone from outside the district. A skilled facilitator brings:

- An ability to engage all participants in the discussion and surface a wide variety of thinking, insights, and perspectives that might otherwise not be shared.
- Knowledge of a wide variety of facilitation processes and tools.
- Skill at asking difficult questions and challenging assumptions to surface the issues and help get to the root cause of challenges that need to be addressed.
- A neutral mindset with no preconceived notions as to the "right" or "wrong" answers or direction.
- An ability to gather the most salient points and produce meaningful summaries to create an action plan for moving forward.

- The opportunity for all team members to participate equally.

You may be able to obtain such support from your regional intermediate school district (ISD) or educational service agency (ESA), or you could contract with a professional facilitator. If an outside facilitator is not used, it may be beneficial for an internal facilitator to have experienced professional learning in facilitation techniques such as that offered through Adaptive Schools or similar training.

Other resources to support a facilitator of the MICIP process.

- Training in Adaptive Schools (Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman)
- Adaptive Schools LiveBinder
- Training in Cognitive Coaching (Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston)
- Knowledge of Bruce Tuckman's work on the stages of team development (See above)

Digging Deeper into the Team Development Process

Why is the development of a team important?

A strong continuous improvement team is essential to helping a district achieve its goals. A significant investment in the development of an effective team will help teams thrive as they lead and guide the continuous improvement process in the district. Although some organizational teams may not be failing, teams may not be functioning at a level that is achieving desired results; their performance may be less than desirable, plateauing, or starting to spiral toward decline. As a result, facilitators may often need to intervene by leveraging tools and resources that can help them take action to enhance team effectiveness.

As individuals come together from different perspectives to complete the necessary work, the development of a strong team includes assessing the level at which the team is functioning by using tools such as a team assessment. Once that is done, the chart below will support facilitators (internal or external) as they work with teams to maintain or surpass current team performance levels in an ever-changing district dynamic.

Activity 7

1. Each team member will complete the MICIP Team Assessment Survey. The survey is designed to help assess in what stage the team normally operates. This survey is in the format of a Google form. To use it you will be asked to make a copy and then save it in your own files for distribution using your own link. The lowest score possible for any individual in any stage is 8 (Almost Never) while the highest score possible for a stage is 40 (Almost Always). The highest of the four scores indicates which stage you perceive the team to normally operate in.

    - If the highest score is 32 or more, it is a strong indicator that is the stage the team is in.
    - The lowest of the scores is an indicator of the stage the team is least like. If the lowest score is 16 or less, it is a strong indicator that the team does not operate this way.
    - If two of the scores are close to the same, the team is probably going through a transition phase, except:
        - If the score is high in both the Forming and Storming phases, the team is in the Storming phase.
        - If the score is high in both the Norming and Performing phases, the team is in the Performing phase.
    - If there is only a small difference between three or four scores, this indicates there is no clear perception of the way the team operates, the team's performance is highly variable, or the team is in the storming phase, a phase that can be extremely volatile, with high and low points.

    Depending on the level of your team, you may want to adjust how you move forward with team development using the information in the following chart.

Based on Team Based Intervention (TBI), it is recommended to consider three different levels of proficiencies.	**Improve and Support (low)**	**Maintain and Sustain (average)**	**Grow and Maximize (high)**
Forming	• Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the district and the community. • Develop common and clear expectations that define effective practices so that feedback is focused, relevant, valid, and consistent over time. • Seek to make school more effective for each student, teachers and staff, families, and the community. • Prepare the school and the community for improvement, promoting readiness, an imperative for improvement, instilling mutual commitment and accountability, and developing the knowledge, skills, and motivation to succeed in improvement.	• Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values, vision, and mission that define the district's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement	• Strategically implement actions to achieve the core values, vision, and mission that define the district's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.
Storming	• Place children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being. • Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership. • Model the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.	• Strategically implement actions to achieve the core values, vision, and mission that define the district's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.	• N/A

Based on Team Based Intervention (TBI), it is recommended to consider three different levels of proficiencies.	**Improve and Support (low)**	**Maintain and Sustain (average)**	**Grow and Maximize (high)**
Norming	• Foster the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.	• Model the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement. • Model the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.	• Embed professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement into the culture of the district. • Incorporate the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.
Performing	• Assess and develop the capacity of staff to assess the value and applicability of emerging educational trends and the findings of research for the school and its improvement.	• Develop leadership among teachers and staff for inquiry, experimentation and innovation, and initiating and implementing improvement.	• Analyze level-appropriate (system, district, school) investments in professional learning and track impact on teacher and leader growth, retention, and student achievement. • Evaluate outcomes and assess progress and impact of professional learning against short- and long-term student, educator, classroom, school, and system goals and strategic priorities. • Strategically evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the district.

Additional Resources

People are an essential part of system improvement, yet many of the improvements that schools/districts leverage are product-based solutions. Team Development Interventions (TDIs) have consistently been proven as an effective way for schools/districts to achieve their targets. The following three articles discuss the roles that team maturation, team dynamics, and methodological tools influence enhanced teamwork outputs.

- Developing, Sustaining, and Maximizing Team Effectiveness: An Integrative, Dynamic Perspective of Team Development Interventions
- Advancing Teams Research: What, When, and How to Measure Team Dynamics Over Time
- The Evolution and Maturation of Teams in Organizations: Theories, Methodologies, Discoveries, & Interventions, 2nd Edition

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was designed by the Michigan Continuous Systems Improvement (MI-CSI) Team, with layout done by Christi Lopez, MDE. Questions about the toolkit can be directed to mde-micip@michigan.gov.