

Part Six

Questions to Guide the Work of Your Professional Learning Community

To Promote a Collaborative Culture in Your School or District, Ask:

1. Have we organized our staff into collaborative teams?

2. Have teams been organized on the basis of common courses and common grade levels whenever possible?

3. If we have used the interdisciplinary team structure, have members of the team identified specific, overarching student-achievement goals, and do they use those goals to guide their work?

4. Have specialist teachers and singleton teachers found meaningful collaborative teams?

5. Have we avoided assigning people to teams whose disparate assignments make it difficult if not impossible to focus on the critical questions of learning?

6. Have we provided time for teachers to meet in their collaborative teams on a regular basis?

7. Do teams focus on the critical questions of learning identified in this book?



8. Are teams asked to submit specific products according to a designated timeline? Do these products reflect their focus on the critical questions?

9. What systems are in place to monitor the work and the effectiveness of the teams on a timely basis?

10. Has every team developed explicit norms that clarify the commitments members have made to one another regarding how they will work together as a team?

11. Do teams honor the norms they have established? What happens when faculty members do not honor their commitments?

12. Have we given teams the knowledge base, time, and support essential for their effectiveness?

Final Thoughts

A collaborative culture does not simply emerge in a school or district: Leaders cultivate collaborative cultures when they develop the capacity of their staffs to work as members of high-performing teams. People throughout the organization, however, must always remember that collaboration is a means to an end—to higher levels of learning—rather than the end itself. Chapter 6 addresses the challenge of creating a results orientation that impacts the work of teams, the school, and the district.

