

A year ago, schools across the province welcomed back students in September under the cloud of a global pandemic. K-12 education had spent the preceding months in a tenuous position, consumed with uncertainty about the 2020-2021 school year. Reliable, time-tested processes needed to be reconsidered and continually tailored to meet the everchanging health and safety protocols and 'unprecedented' became the most overused word of 2020.



by
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School leaders were challenged to maintain authentic connections with their staff members to develop and reinforce a shared understanding of the purpose of their common work. School leadership teams did benefit from a flexible start to the school year with only staff returning for those first few days. However, that time was used to ensure that the health and safety protocols were clearly understood and that the building – and staff members – were adequately prepared to welcome students back to school.

With the potential for a more normal return to school this year, there may be more time to work with staff members on developing a collective vision that ensures the highest levels of learning for students. With that, I am sharing with you an activity that I have used with staff members in the past, and that has helped me take the first steps on establishing our collective vision.

Collective efficacy, a potential outcome of that vision, hinges on the staff members' belief that in accessing the communal wisdom of the school, they have the collective capability to make meaningful change in the lives of their students. According to [Michael Fullan](#), certain conditions are essential to create collective efficacy, but I believe that you must first start with a shared understanding of what positive learning conditions and impactful teaching looks like.

So: I refer to this as the **Hall of Fame** activity, and it is based on the following process. As experienced educators we have wonderful stories to share about great moments in our own teaching or leadership. Perhaps your Hall of Fame moment is about making a meaningful connection with a struggling student, igniting a passion for a class, or winning over a challenging parent. These stories of significant successes in education are inspiring and motivating. If there was such a thing as a Teacher Hall of Fame, these stories would likely be at the centre of a staff member's induction into that hall. Now, I often introduce this activity by sharing with the staff that as a twelve-year old baseball player I got into a post-game scuffle with a boy who would turn out to be a future NHL hall-of-famer, and that is as close as I was ever going to get to a sports Hall of Fame. That story is for another time.

Here is how I engaged staff in this activity.

Before beginning, we have spent some time together building consensus about what a Hall of Fame is, and why people are inducted into a Hall of Fame.

Step One:

I ask them to answer the following questions on paper:

What is your Hall of Fame moment in teaching/working with students and their families?

What do you view as a significant success or accomplishment in the work that you do with students, families or staff members?

What beliefs or values are you able to connect to that moment?

Step Two:

I ask them to share their Hall of Fame stories with several partners:

I ask them to choose a partner and share their Hall of Fame story. While listening to their story I ask the partner to come up with what they think are the beliefs/values central to that story and to record them. The process is then repeated with two or more colleagues.

Step Three:

We engage in the Obligatory Sticky Note Process:

Every staff activity needs a sticky note moment. To conclude the activity, staff members transfer the list of beliefs and values at the centre of their shared Hall of Fame stories onto individual sticky notes. Those one- or two-word value statements are then stuck to a piece of chart paper to be reviewed by the staff.

While this is the final activity for the staff, the process has not concluded. It is now the leadership team's responsibility to go through those notes to review, collate, and organize the beliefs/values statements into coherent themes that represent the collective voice of the staff.

The late Rick DuFour, the founder of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach, talked about building consensus. For DuFour, consensus did not mean that there was unanimous support for the initiative or decision, but that the will of the group was evident. Understanding the will of the group is time-consuming and usually involves the leadership team revisiting results with the staff a number of times to ensure clear consensus. I refer to this as the 'shampoo model' of understanding the voice of the staff – lather, rinse and repeat until you have distilled those beliefs and values down to their most essential elements.

When the process was complete, many of the themes below tended to emerge:

Impactful learning requires an environment where appropriate risk-taking is encouraged.

Learning successes should be celebrated.

Trust is at the core of Hall of Fame teaching and positive relationships.

Meaningful assessment of and for learning drives instruction.

Positive learning conditions are founded on a strong sense of community, integrity, and respect.

Learners must be met where they are.

A growth mindset, coupled with opportunities for empowerment, are integral to impactful learning and teaching.

Fun and laughter should be practised daily.

When the process was concluded, each teacher could connect their Hall of Fame teaching story to many – if not all – of these belief statements. While this activity does not necessarily provide the structure for a compelling vision for the school, it is the beginning of that process.

As the leadership team, we would revisit these beliefs during staff meetings throughout the year. They served as a compelling reminder of our shared belief about powerful teaching and learning opportunities. The list alone is insignificant and could be nothing more than another unnoticed poster that hangs on the wall of any classroom in any school in BC. The power comes in the process of developing a shared understanding. Inherent in that understanding is an implied commitment that we should always be striving to manifest these beliefs in our daily teaching.

This is just one way to begin to develop a process with your staff that puts them on the collective efficacy pathway. If you use this activity, let me know how you tweaked it and made the process even more meaningful for your staff.



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crafted a
school vision
with your staff?*

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