

Empowering Teams Transcript

1. Hi, my name is Karen Gaines. I am the Project Director of the Teaching for PROWESS project. This video is intended to provide insights into the team work that is necessary for your department or group as you travel through the transformation process. I would like to acknowledge that these materials are a modification of the work of the PULSE project.
2. This is a roadmap that shows the steps that will guide your team through the transformation process. You have completed the tennis ball juggling activity that was intended to provide an experiential look at transformation. You should have also completed the Pre-Survey on Beliefs as the first part of step 2. These next two steps will be brief videos that will lead into the active work of reflection, visioning, and creating an action plan.
3. This presentation focuses on the 6 key elements for transformation that will lead to an empowered team. As a result you should – understand the value of creative tension and staying engaged while experiencing discomfort – appreciate the importance of inclusive teamwork, and create opportunities for effective communication.
4. We all understand the importance of teamwork when we talk about sports, but what about departmental transformation? If you were in a workshop, we would take

a moment for individuals to ponder this question and then do a sharing session. You might pause the video and take a moment to ponder for yourself. Some thoughts that may have crossed your mind may be:

- All must share in development of the guiding vision
- Teamwork requires communication that includes:
 - Listening with empathy to what others say, even if one does not agree
 - Having constructive dialogue to explore all the opportunities, not to “win” agreement to a certain perspective
 - Discovering how collaboration and synergy can evolve from the team’s willingness to explore and learn together.

5. As promised we are going to explore the 6 essential elements of transformation. Notice that the first three – communicate, develop, cultivate are related to developing a team mentality for transformation while the second three are about developing the necessary skills.

6. I believe we all can think of the benefits of effective communication, but think about What SKILLS are needed for effective communication. What are some skills that come to mind?

7. Here are a few communication skills that have been identified from literature and through experience in workshops such as the work by PULSE>

One of the skills is using established ground rules. If your team does not have a set that has been used in the past, it is highly suggested that your team creates a list so that everyone understands the expectations.

The next is listening with empathy. This skill can be developed through role-playing exercises if necessary. It is important to make sure the dialogue includes all members and is an environment that encourages everyone to contribute especially when there are disagreements.

Synergy is defined as the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. There is power in numbers!

As mentioned, the environment should encourage everyone to participate and this can only be done with trust in each other.

You may have other skills you feel are important. Your team may wish to talk about other skills they feel are essential for teams.

8. The 2nd Key element for transformation is developing a shared vision. One of the upcoming activities your team will engage in (step 5 in the Roadmap shown at the beginning of this presentation) is developing a shared vision. You will be working in a reverse state where you will begin with where you want your team to be in the future and then consider the barriers or roadblocks which may hinder your process. You will identify who owns

them and then decide as the figure shows – will you need to go over, under, or through the barrier to reach your goal or vision and then work together to achieve that. Finally you will create an action plan (Step 6 in our roadmap)

9. The 3rd key element for transformation is cultivating shared leadership. We all know about leadership from a managerial standpoint – we have department chairs, provosts, deans, etc.

Shared leadership is not as the cartoon shows – finding someone to share the blame... Rather shared leadership is coming together and saying, ‘we’re going to share the responsibility of achieving this vision. You have full time faculty which may be of varying ranks, adjuncts or part time faculty, support personnel etc. It is important that everyone shares in the responsibility and is welcomed to do so. Embrace your diversities and include everyone in this process. Think about if you are engaging everyone in the process.

10. There are many benefits of shared leadership – you can see the list here of a few of those benefits.

- *Shared leadership has to do with taking responsibility to create a culture of shared learning and decision-making.*
- *Different team members may “step up” to be leaders at different times, depending on their ability to deal effectively with the topic at hand.*
- *Think about the Group Juggle activity your team did. Was there shared leadership in that activity?*

11. The fourth key element of transformation is understanding diversity of views.

A team consists of individuals who each think differently. What do you do when your views are different than your colleagues? It is important to be interested, inquisitive, and tolerant with each other. The first step in developing common vision is to get the diverse views on the table using tools for effective communication, which starts with listening.

Understand diversity of views" means more than giving everyone a chance to speak; it means getting empathic and trying to understand the context for their remarks, which will be very different for people with differing backgrounds and experiences.

When I mentioned synergy, it demonstrates the power of numbers. There is also power in diversity. You may want to check out the work of Scott Page – in particular *The Differences and the Diversity Bonus* where he talks about the power of diversity in achieving a common goal.

One specific example of making sure that specifically junior members in a group are heard is a common practice in ROTC - *When gathering to discuss a topic as a group, the question is posed and then the most junior people in the group answer and comment first. This works (not without some initial stress on the part of the junior faculty), because the new solutions were on the table first, and*

more senior people didn't take over the conversation before the newer faculty could weigh in.

12. The 5th key element for transformation is stretching to embrace tension.

Considering a diversity of views is very likely to lead to tension but this tension can be creative if it is managed properly. Creative tension is caused by the gap between the shared vision and the current reality. It is important to consider how your team can *recognize when they are on the verge of a breakthrough and that they don't just stop because it is too difficult*

A team should and can be:

- excited about sharing their ideas and seeing where the sharing leads.
- Learn to live with uncertainty which is hard for those who prefer to come to closure quickly.
- Feel the need to create synergy.

13. Tension is not something that is always negative, it can be a powerful source of creative energy. This requires that the department is firmly invested in the ground rules and is communicating effectively.

Be mindful of the possible sources of tension (e.g., differences in viewpoint or experience of participants).

There may be some that the department has little control over and that is okay; the emphasis needs to be placed on the sources of tension that can be controlled and used as a catalytic force for progress.

If your team seems to have a lot of creative tension, it is recommended that you take some time to brainstorm ideas regarding the ways in which to use differences (which are the source of tension) in productive ways. Creative tension can also be internal. Think about teaching...how lecture has been the way of doing things forever...and now people are talking about and embracing active learning. Do you know what they really is? Do you feel that you should? What do you need to do to move forward?

14. The sixth key element for transformation is endurance. Transformation is not something that will be accomplished overnight. It is important to remember that TIME is a component of the answer to each of the questions on this slide. It is essential to recognize this because perceptions on whether there is plenty of time, or not enough time can be a source of tension. Changing mathematics education will take a long time. And it is easy to burn out or get sidetracked with the day to day realities of our jobs. It is worth noting that the research from Organizational Psychology suggests that >80% of transformation efforts fail and most of those failures can be linked to not planning for the long haul and not having a process to usher along the transformation. Suggest that it is important to demonstrate tangible progress along the way. Failure to do this can derail your transformation efforts. Look for the quick wins, and

celebrate each success. Doing this will provide the rewards and encouragement that is needed for the group to hang together and succeed.

15. Here is a review of the six essential elements of transformation. Hopefully you have a better understanding of what is necessary for transformation to take place and have had time to reflect on your team will embrace these.
16. I have presented the 6 keys elements for transformation. Let's conclude by thinking about the skills that are required (list) and what sort of outcomes should result (list) for transformation to occur.
17. After watching the video on Facilitating Leadership, your team will be working with the Vision and Transformation Tool. It is your opportunity to put the 6 essential keys to transformation in action, exercise the necessary skills that keep you on the roadway to transformation.