Establishing communication and working styles norms

Discuss standards for communication and working styles with your educator team.

Time required: 1 hour for a team of four educators; add about 5 minutes for each additional educator

Space and material requirements:
- A quiet space
- A timer
- Computer or pencil and paper

This activity offers team members an opportunity to talk about standards for communication and working styles as a team. Educators will respond independently to a series of prompts, share a subset of responses with team members and work together to establish norms.

▶ Getting organized (5 minutes)

1. Identify a facilitator who will move the team through the activity and a recorder who will take notes on standards.
2. Preview the activity as a team.

▶ Reflecting independently (15 minutes)

3. Reflect on communication styles and preferences by responding independently to the prompts below. If you prefer to type responses to the questions, **click here** to create your own digital copy.

General

1. I am most confident in these work-related skills…	
2. I am least confident and need to be mindful of these work-related skills…	
3. To feel balanced in my work, it is important for me to…	

4. I can most commonly be misperceived as...	
5. I appreciate it when colleagues...	
6. I dislike when colleagues...	

Communication preferences

7. With respect to communication, I appreciate it when colleagues…	
8. My communication pet peeve is…	
9. I best receive feedback (both positive and constructive) in these ways…	
10. I best process a lot of information by…	
11. If there is an urgent matter (e.g., action needed within a few hours), I prefer to be contacted in this way…	
12. My preferred mode of communication for quick questions or requests is…	

13. I would describe my meeting participation style as…	

Team support preferences

14. When I am stressed at work, I look/sound like…	
15. When I am stressed at work, my team members can support me by…	
16. What I need most from my team is…	

My schedule

17. I would describe my regular work schedule (e.g., days/hours you typically work, location where you typically work) as follows…	
18. My typical off-line hours are…	
19. If team members need to reach me during offline hours, my preferred mode of communication is…	

Other

20. I would also like team members to know the following about my communication and work styles and preferences…	

▶ Sharing (20 minutes)

4. Share round-robin style, giving each team member the opportunity to share responses to whichever prompts they choose. Each member has about 5 minutes to share.

▶ Agreeing on norms for communication and working styles (15 minutes)

5. As a team:
- Discuss collective preferences around communication and working styles with special attention to achieving consensus around areas of difference.
- Agree on norms related to communication and working styles to which all team members can agree. The recorder should note these in a document to be shared with the team.

Example A
- We will honor our shared meeting time by arriving to meetings on time and prepared.
- We will be open to all ideas and proposals.
- We will respect each other's boundaries by communicating about work during our agreed-upon hours (except in emergencies).

Example B
- We will put time and effort into knowing each other as individuals.
- We will populate meeting agendas 24 hours in advance in order to respect those who need processing time.
- We will do our best to communicate about work on weekdays only, before 7 p.m.

▶ Discussing next steps (5 minutes)

6. Discuss and determine:
- How will we keep these norms "alive" in our work together? How will we hold each other accountable?
- Are there key points in the year when we should revisit and refresh them?