

River of Life

Gain a deeper understanding of your educator team members' life journeys.

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

Space and materials requirements:

- A quiet space
- A timer
- Computers or pencil and paper

This activity is an opportunity for team members to gain a deeper understanding of one another, their backgrounds and their context for teamwork. The River of Life framework was originally created by [Professor Joyce Mercer at the Yale Divinity School](#). Below is an adapted version for thinking about your life's journey and its connection to your work as an educator. You will answer a series of questions on different aspects of your journey and share your story with your team.

▶ Getting organized (5 minutes)

1. Identify a facilitator who will move the team through the activity.
2. Preview the activity as a team.

▶ Creating your river (25 minutes)

3. Draw a visual River of Life to share with the team. Get creative! (Stick figures are welcome. Slides are also an option.) Include illustrations of landmarks on your life's journey so far. Include at least the following:
 - **Your river's origin:** Where your life started and up to two things from the beginning that continue to be driving forces in the flow of your river (e.g., family, where you grew up, an early life experience).
 - **Three affirming life events or stories:** These are moments of success, clarity, values alignment, etc.
 - **Three challenging life events or stories:** These are moments of uncertainty, hardship, surprise turns, etc.
 - **One prediction:** How do you think your work on this team may alter your river's flow?

▶ Sharing (20 minutes)

4. Share projects, round-robin. Each member has 5 minutes to share.

▶ Reflecting (10 minutes)

5. Discuss:
 - What experiences do we have in common? What experiences are different?
 - What might be some shared motivations that drive us in our work?
 - What other themes emerged?
 - How might we draw on our team members' experiences, expertise and passions throughout the year?