
Working toward inclusive education at the school level requires coordination and planning among all who will be involved and affected, as with any systemic change. Further, in order for changes to last, that is, to be sustainable, efforts are required at all levels of a system (Fullan, 1991). Becoming an inclusive school requires the creation of a vision for the future, to guide change efforts proactively, but also, directly addressing some of the existing policies and practices that are inconsistent with inclusivity, such as self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities, or pull-out models for teaching English.

Types of Teacher Teams

Educators' planning and learning together is an essential part of effective implementation of inclusive education. Teachers and other school staff must work together to create plans that address role expectations, communication, accommodations, monitoring, and problem solving, all of which impact the success of becoming an inclusive school. The creation of teams is instrumental in the collaborative work of inclusive schools, in which people share mutual ownership for their efforts and progress for all students. Parity, shared responsibility, commitment, trust, respect, and willingness to work toward consensus are among the basic tenets of effective teams. There are four types of teacher teaming approaches that, when established at the school level, provide opportunities for addressing all of these factors: building leadership teams, professional learning teams, grade-level teams, and vertical teams.

Building Leadership Teams

A building leadership team (BLT--not the sandwich) is a school-based group of individuals who work to provide a strong organizational process for school renewal and improvement. BLTs orchestrate the work of school professionals, administrators, families, and students through the school improvement process. The BLT meets regularly throughout the school year to ensure planning for improvement and that the implementation of those plans is on track. In a school's process of becoming inclusive, the BLT develops or changes building policies, procedures, and activities to support educators building student knowledge in inclusive settings. BLTs collect data to identify topics for professional learning and work with the building principal to assure that administrative structures support an inclusive instructional program. Meetings are about an hour and a half for BLTs, which may be fulfilled weekly (which is important for newly forming teams), bi-monthly, or monthly (as teams become better established). Members of BLTs also commit to completing work between meetings. A retreat at the beginning of each school year to establish a work plan is beneficial for BLTs, with another at the year's end to assess and complete an annual review of progress. BLTs at the elementary level should include representatives from each grade level, while at the secondary level, decisions about whether representatives should be at the grade and/or content area level have to be made. At all levels, BLTs should include language acquisition specialists, as well as other specialists involved in supporting students' social and physical health (e.g. counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, etc.) The BLT members should reflect the diverse student, family, and staff population of the school. Also necessary is either direct student and family involvement, or a process through which students' and families' voices are heard by the BLT. All BLT meetings should have a set agenda including time for goal setting, dialogue, and decision making.

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Professional Learning Teams

A professional learning team is a small group of individuals who join together to increase their own capacity through learning for the benefit of students. In inclusive schools, learning centers around topics and strategies that support educating all students in the general education setting, with sufficient resources and supports from building administrators and those at district levels. Learning teams have unlimited potential for impacting inclusive change including supporting the implementation of curricular and instructional innovations, integrating and giving coherence to a school's instructional practice and programs, studying research on being an inclusive teacher and how inclusive education impacts all learners and then

sharing this information with the whole staff, and monitoring students' progress over time by anchoring professional learning topics in the examination of student work. Professional learning teams may be classified in two categories: stand-alone teams, made up of individuals with interest in a particular set of topics or in strengthening her or his practice, or, whole-school teams, comprised of all educators, and including paraprofessionals. Since you are here today, it may be as a result of your own, and/or your schools', districts', or states' efforts to be part of or create professional learning teams.

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Vertical Teams

Vertical teams help create inclusive schools by fostering a culture of coherence within the school. Vertical teams are comprised of a small number of people from different levels within the building organization who are committed to a common purpose and to creating and reaching performance goals (Texas Leadership Center, 1998) that are associated with becoming an inclusive school. These teams may involve teachers across grade levels and schools, such as 5th grade teachers working with middle and high school educators, thus providing strong, easily navigated transitions through which students can move. Successful vertical teams have the following key features in common: they have a definite structure, roles and tasks are clearly

delineated, and members know the team's purpose and the outcomes they are working to produce. Also, they have ready access to school-level information and have time provided to them for the communication that they need. Vertical teams can be very useful for researching sound instructional strategies, studying assessment data, developing professional learning syllabi and establishing connections within student curricula to align content across grades. Vertical teams increase student achievement as a result of discussions relating to how the different levels of educators can relate to one another in a meaningful way and thus build relationships which look to continually improve the education of all students across schools.

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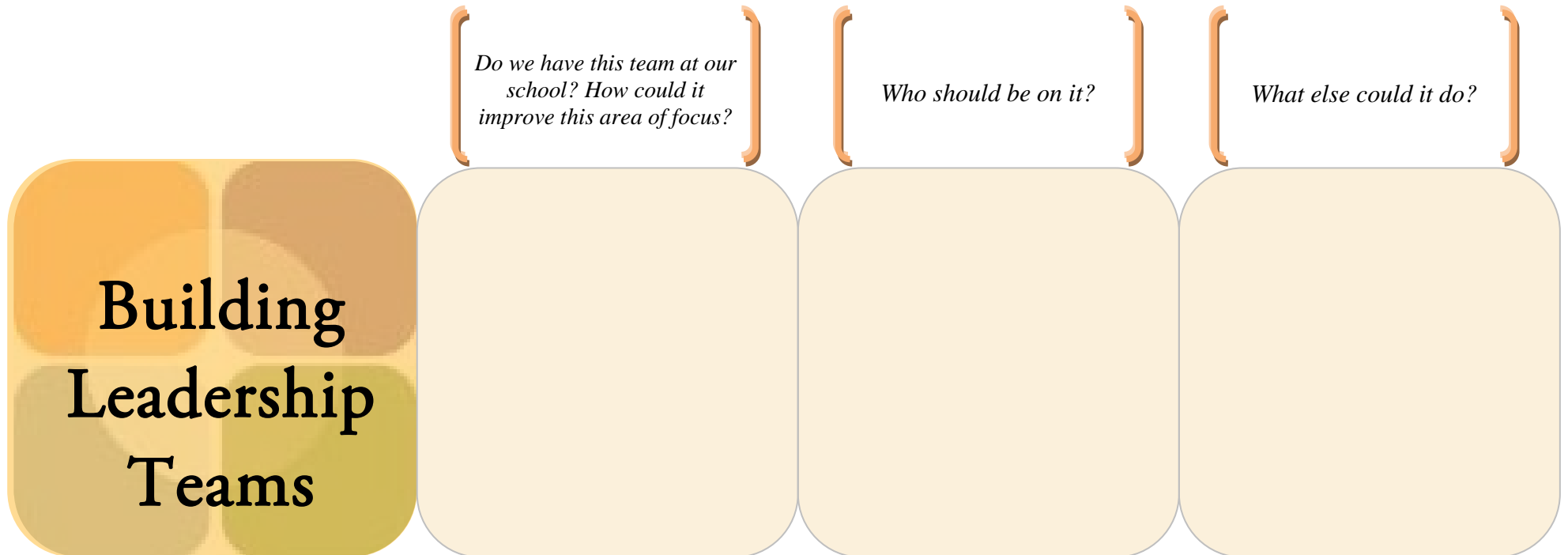
Grade-Level Teams

Grade-level teams drive the facilitation of student learning and continuous progress. Because it is the team, not the individual teacher, who is responsible for student progress at a particular grade level, grade-level teams help schools in the *individual to group practice shift in thinking* that we talked about earlier in this academy. Grade-level teams have a well-organized and respected team leader, chosen by the principal as a result of getting input from each member of the team, and considering who is interested in fulfilling that role. Most often grade-level team leaders are selected by the principal, because s/he must be empowered by the principal, and able to build consensus before whole-staff meetings so that staff

meetings are used to build solutions rather than address problems. Additionally, the grade-level team leader should assist in communicating the needs of the team to the building administrators regarding professional learning needed resources. Grade-level teams typically meet once a week and focus on agendas, meetings, planning, collaborating, and discussing the desired outcomes for a successful inclusive school environment.

Directions:

- In same school pairs, identify how your school might capitalize on the type of team you read about, in order to improve one of the areas of focus out of the six you just reflected on during the lecturette.



**Building
Leadership
Teams**

Do we have this team at our school? How could it improve this area of focus?

Who should be on it?

What else could it do?

Directions:

- In same school pairs, identify how your school might capitalize on the type of team you read about, in order to improve one of the areas of focus out of the six you just reflected on during the lecturette.

Do we have this team at our school? How could it work toward goal?

Who should be on it?

What else could it do?

**Professional
Learning
Teams**



Teaming Toward Goal

Directions:

- In same school pairs, identify how your school might capitalize on the type of team you read about, in order to improve one of the areas of focus out of the six you just reflected on during the lecturette.

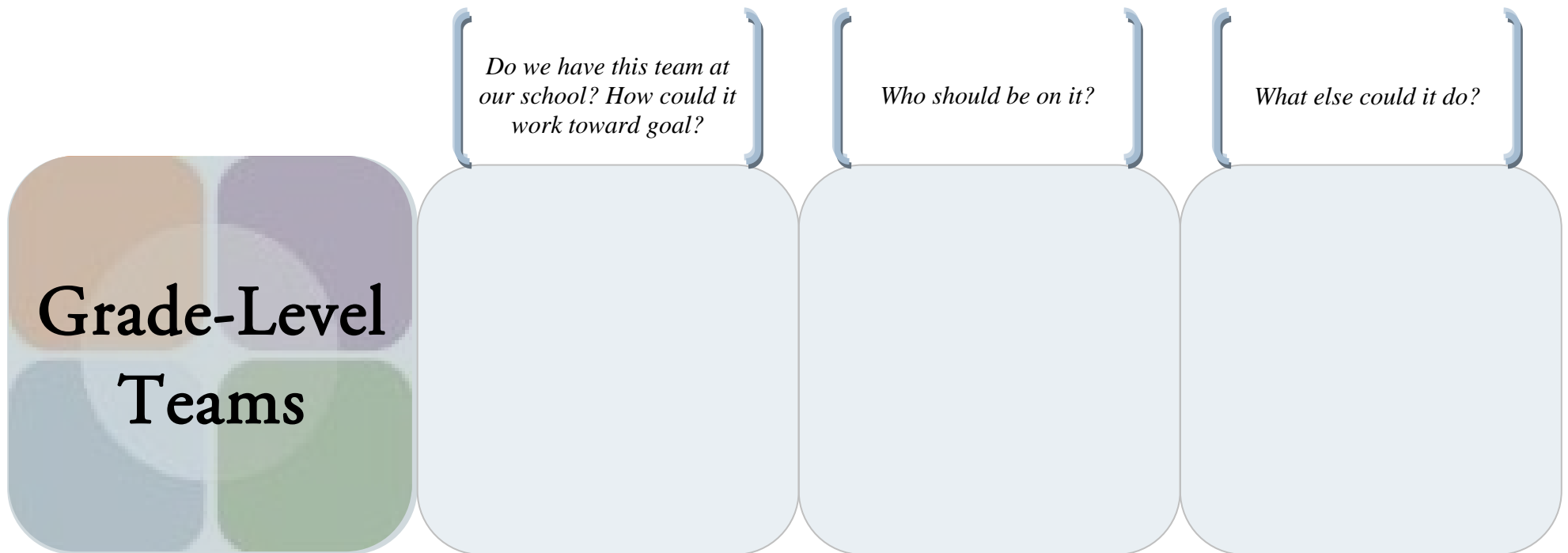
A graphic with the text 'Vertical Teams' in a bold, black serif font. The background consists of four overlapping circles in shades of green and yellow, arranged in a 2x2 grid. <p>Vertical Teams</p>	<p><i>Do we have this team at our school? How could it work toward goal?</i></p>	<p><i>Who should be on it?</i></p>	<p><i>What else could it do?</i></p>
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Organizing Space, Time and Personnel in Inclusive Schools

Inclusive schools require thoughtful design. When the *design* of schools makes sense, it enables teachers to work in ways that support inclusive teaching and learning. The use of time, space, and personnel is a critical piece of *Organizing* for Inclusive Education.

Directions: In pairs, complete the **Organizing Space, Time, and Personnel for Inclusive Schools** table on the next page. You'll notice that in each area, color-coded examples already are provided. Grounded in research on inclusive education and effective outcomes for all students, green examples are considered exemplary practices (even if you may not agree with these ideas, we ask that you consider these options and suspend your own beliefs for now), while yellow examples are often what one might find in schools at beginning stages of redesigning for inclusive education, but still require improvement. Red "examples" are *what not to do*.

In columns where there are any red or yellow examples, use the empty green square to improve one of these towards more inclusive school practice in the organization of space, time, and personnel. In columns where there are only green examples, come up with a third green example of your own.

Use the following **guiding considerations** to help you design your new and improved examples:

Consider features of the entire school including the school entryway, office, cafeteria, library, classrooms, gym, hallways, and playground.

Consider all members of your school community including students, families, community members, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel

Consider how planning time for teachers is grouped across grade level, teams, shared in public spaces.

Consider the schedule for where and when students learn.

How are various and diverse cultures represented?

Scheduling for Learning

Students with disabilities are scheduled first in order to make block scheduling and other features of school structures support inclusive education

Days are scheduled into 4 x 4 blocks; 4 classes meet every day for 90 minutes for 90 days, then 4 new classes for 90 minutes/90 days. Teachers instruct for 3 of 4 classes, and have a period each day for planning.

Teaching Assignments

Special Area (e.g. art, music, PE) teachers maintain their traditional roles as providers of a particular service, with little integration into classroom instruction.

Special education teachers and language acquisition specialists align with classroom teachers at different grade levels so that each class that includes students with IEPs and ILPs receives a block of these teachers' time.

Time for Collaborative Planning and Communication

Teams plan together to ensure that students who are predicted to require additional assistance are distributed appropriately across classrooms so that students with higher academic needs are not all grouped together.

Grade level planning time is incorporated into the school day and processes for effective use of this time are developed.

Written School Policy

Safety policies are discussed only after a crisis or event occurs.

The building leadership team studies existing policies related to structure and use of time to assess how they might better facilitate improved student learning.

School Decor

List of rules created by school personnel are posted in each hallway.

A variety of student and family photographs and stories, reflecting the rich tapestry of the school community, are prominently displayed in cabinets in the school office.

School Buildings and Grounds

School pride is evident among staff, students, and community, who work together to maintain the schools' physical cleanliness.

Outdoor recreation areas used during recess are located on sand and uneven ground.

School Layout

Special educators have offices, instead of classrooms, which are located in a wing of the main school building next to the counselors' and the school psychologist's offices.

Distribution of Students in Classrooms

Students are distributed across across classrooms so about 80% will be successful with whole-class strategies, 15% will benefit from additional group supports, and about 5% may need more intensive supports.

Students who are learning English are placed in separate classes for several hours a day, regardless of age, by level of English Proficiency, as measured by an assessment administered at the start of each school year.

Alternatives to “Yellows”

Grade level planning time is incorporated into the school day and processes for effective use of this time are developed.

Better: Organization of the school day provides time for collaboration within and across grade levels.

Best: The school is effectively organized to maximize teacher collaboration across grade levels and feeder schools. Planning and reflection time are incorporated into the workday and focus on the improvement of student and adult learning.

Leadership team studies existing policies related to structure and use of time to assess how they might better facilitate improved student learning.

Better: Leadership team develops policies that support flexible use of schedules and assignments.

Best: Policies document the school’s belief that schedules and assignments must be flexible to ensure effective use of school personnel and time in order to maximize student learning.

Special educators have offices, instead of classrooms, which are located in a wing of the main school building next to the counselors’ and the school psychologist’s offices.

Better: Special educators and general educators share classroom space.

Best: Special educators and general educators share classroom space, and other student support personnel offices are integrated throughout the school buildings, rather than clustered together.

Outdoor recreation areas used during recess are located in sand and uneven ground.

Better: Outdoor recreation areas are varied in surface, with some sandy areas, and some more solid areas to allow for physical access for students and teachers with mobility challenges.

Best: Outdoor recreation areas are universally designed so every area is accessible to all students and teachers. Also at each area are activity and equipment for students with varying physical characteristics, and that reinforce academic and experiential learning (e.g. volume, weights, and measures).

Alternatives to “Reds”

Special Area (e.g. art, PE) teachers maintain traditional roles as providers of a particular service, with little integration into classroom instruction.

Better: Leadership team develops a plan for integrating support services into classroom instruction time; study groups meet outside the workday to assess current use of support services.

Best: Special Area teachers *and* student support staff (i.e., paraprofessionals) are an integral part of teams’ and planning processes, and their expertise is valued.

Safety policies are discussed only after a crisis or event occurs.

Better: Safety policies are discussed and reviewed annually to meet the changing needs of the school community.

Best: This safe atmosphere is protected and evaluated continuously as a necessary component of improving the school.

The list of school rules created by school personnel is posted in each hallway.

Better: A list of school rules created by a teacher/student council that meets and reviews rules annually is posted in each hallway.

Best: A poster is created by a student-selected teacher/student/family council that meets at the start of each school year to generate expectations for treating everyone in the school community with dignity and respect. The council reviews and revises these expectations again mid-year. The poster clearly states expectations in the positive, in the many languages of the school community, and displays photos of students in action with others demonstrating each expectation.

Students who are learning English are placed in separate classes for several hours a day, regardless of age, by level of English Proficiency, as measured by an assessment administered at the start of each school year.

Better: Students new to learning English learn core subjects in their 1st language while developing English-language proficiency in ESL classes. More advanced students study some core subjects in English with assistance of ESL teachers in “sheltered” classes. Eventually, English Learners join general education classes: first, math and science and, later, social studies and language arts.

Best: Bilingual education, defined as the teaching of, and in two languages, is presented as a valuable part of the formal education offered to all students.



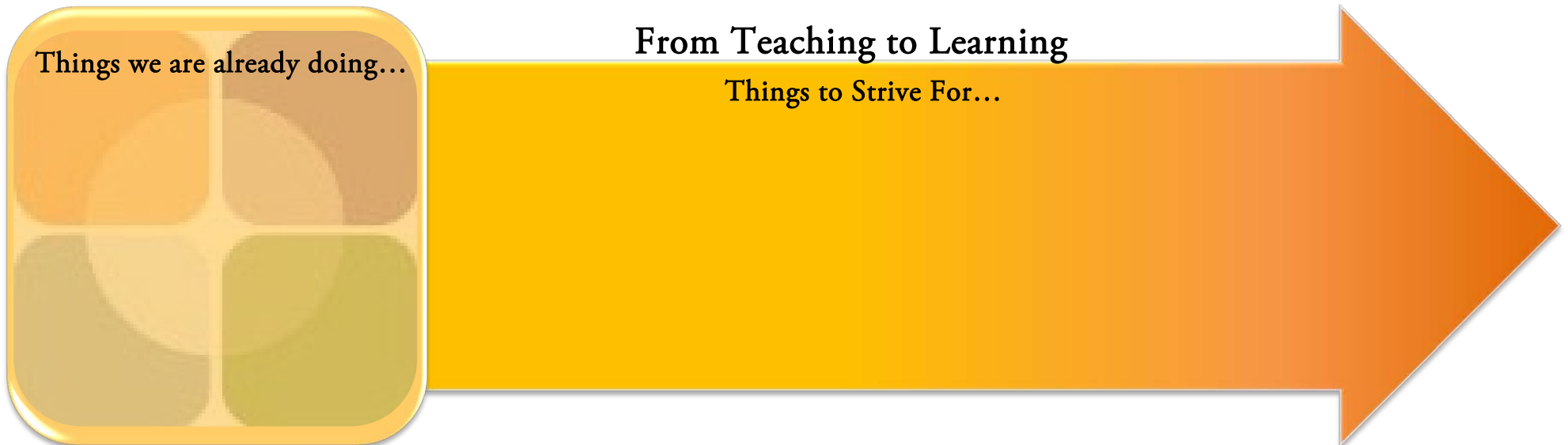
Planting the Seeds of Inclusive Change in Your School

Directions:

In same-school pairs, identify shifts in school level thinking that support the development of inclusive schools. Start by identifying evidence that the seed of the shift has been planted and how it is currently nurtured, then plan for how to improve upon what is already happening.

Then, in the whole group, your facilitator will lead you in sharing some of the “things to strive for” that you generated.

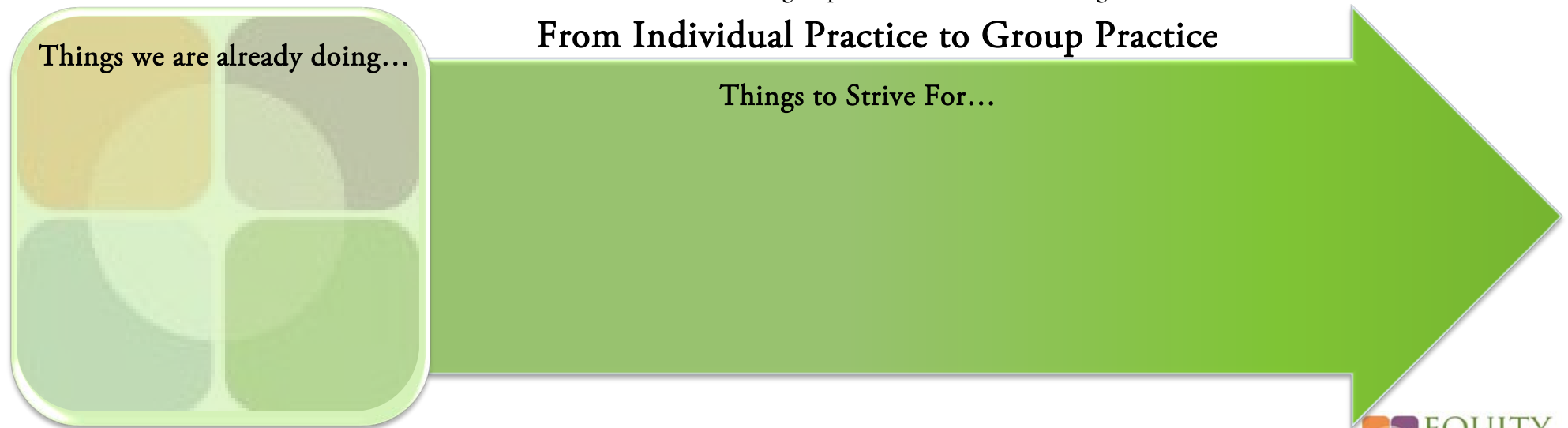
Shift *from Teaching to Learning*: How does teaching in your school make student learning a priority? To what extent do teachers teach the ways that are most comfortable for them, as opposed to ways students prefer and show most positive outcomes in connection with?



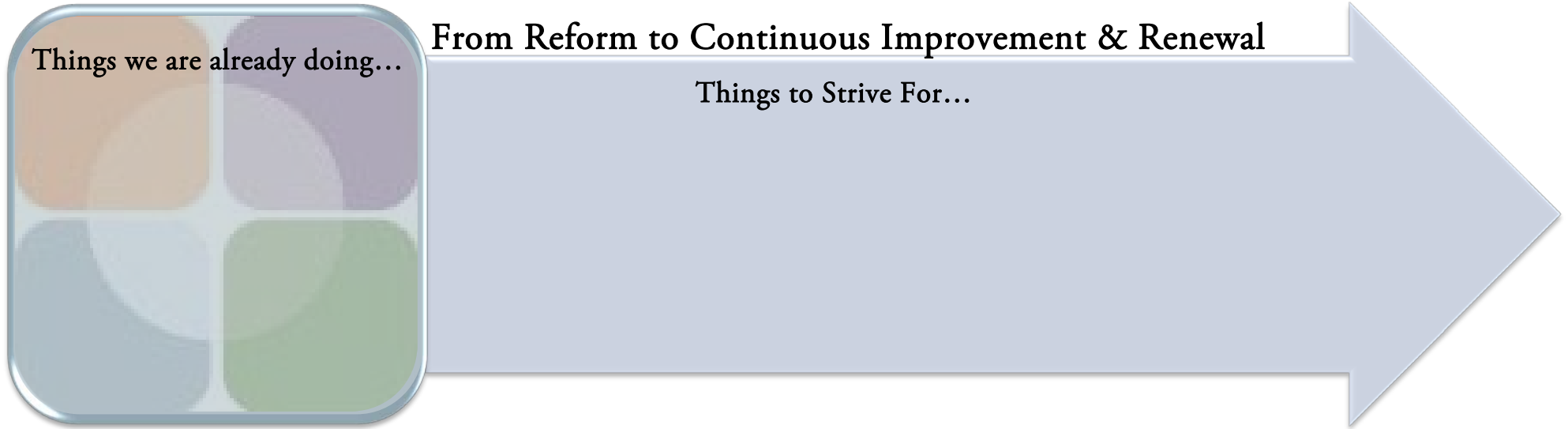
Shift *from Service to Support*: What evidence is there that administrators and educators take time and energy to find out about individual students, instead of assuming what students need, especially connected to labels put on them (e.g. English Language Learner). How do educators and administrators utilize student strengths as opportunities to facilitate knowledge building in inclusive learning environments?



Shift *from Individual to Group Practice*: What is it about how teachers practice together that demonstrates the sharing of responsibility for the learning and outcomes of **all students**? Consider how teachers are grouped into teams and work together in these teams.



Shift from Reform to Continuous Improvement & Renewal: What kinds of data do we use to understand how all parts of the system change and effect each other? Does school culture support teachers asking themselves how to make things better? How could this culture be developed?



Shift from Parent Involvement to Family/Community Connections & Partnerships How do school personnel gather information about the needs of families and the community, and use resources to address these needs. In what ways do schools engage parents and community members in contributing to the schools' ongoing mission and operations, even if it doesn't always involve their own children?

