

HOPE 2.0

October 27, 2017

Are We There Yet?

How many of you remember those family vacations during which you and your siblings sat in the backseat like little biscuits compressed into a very humid Pillsbury can. Do you remember your only sources of entertainment being either listening to the radio that sporadically drifted from country to easy listening to Motown to classic rock, or counting the little green mile markers, or playing a spirited game of “dodge the drool” with one of your siblings who thought it a great idea to fall asleep on your shoulder? Looking back, I remember being excited about the idea of starting the trip. I was simply elated when the trip was finally over. However, I would have given my little brother away if I could have skipped that dreadful car ride in between. And yet, I couldn’t wait to do it all over again the following summer. I looked forward to it, in fact!

What does this have to do with our Journey of HOPE? Over the past year and half, we have been laying the groundwork for our journey by establishing a sense of urgency and communicating why we needed to focus our efforts on performance improvement across all areas of the district. We created HOPE Teams, solidified the work of our Leadership Team, established teacher, parent and business advisories, and embarked upon a rigorous strategic planning process (highlighted in a recent HOPE note). Consider these steps the district’s efforts to **plan** our trip. We were deciding where to vacation (for me it was always my grandmother’s house in Michigan because that’s what the budget allowed), we gathered clothing and other items to pack, and we determined how much it would cost to get there (tolls, food, etc.). Finally, the day arrived and we loaded the car!

This year we are officially on the road. It may seem like those mile markers are taunting us, the song on the radio changes every time we think we’ve learned the lyrics, and the people we used to love have started to get on our nerves. Alas, it is par for the course. Psychologist Bruce Tuckman developed the phases of team formation in the 1950’s and while various iterations have emerged since then, the basic premise remains the same: change is difficult and change does not happen overnight.

The original stages are Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. Adjourning has since been added. Let’s take a closer look:

Forming: In this stage, most team members are positive and polite. Some members are anxious, because they haven’t fully understood the work that the team will do. Others are simply excited about the task ahead. This stage can last for some time, as we start to work together, and as we get to know each other and our new direction.

Storming: In this stage teams start to push against the boundaries established in the forming stage. This is the stage where many teams fail. Storming often starts where there is a conflict between team members’ natural working styles. We may work in different ways for all sorts of reasons but, if differing working styles cause unforeseen problems, we may become frustrated. We may feel overwhelmed by our workload. Some may question the worth of the team’s goal, and may resist taking on tasks. Sound familiar?

Norming: Gradually, the team moves into the norming stage. This is when people start to resolve their differences and appreciate colleagues’ strengths. Now that our team members know one another better, we are able to ask one another for help and provide constructive feedback. We develop a stronger

commitment to the team goal, and we start to see good progress towards it. There is often a prolonged overlap between storming and norming, because, as new tasks come up, the team may lapse back into behavior from the storming stage.

Performing: The team reaches the performing stage, when hard work leads, without friction, to the achievement of the team's goal. The structures and processes that we have set up support this well. It feels easy to be part of the team at this stage, and people who join or leave won't disrupt performance.

So, are we there yet? Not quite. But, we are well on our way! We are **storming** with our sights set on **norming**!

We have a sense of urgency (the success of every learner), we have a direction (our Journey of HOPE), we have our goals (our strategic plan), and most importantly we have the team to accomplish those goals (each of you). At some point in this journey you will want to yell, "Are we there yet???", and that is quite alright. I've yelled it a few times myself.

However, I know that nothing worth having comes easy. Our students deserve the very best that we can offer and you, our team members, deserve the very best that we as leaders can offer. Let's encourage each other, support each other, and hold each other accountable.

Onward and upward!

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Source: <https://www.mindtools.com/>. Retrieved October 2017.

Piece of the Puzzle



Congratulations to Rebecca Slavinsky and Carrie Martin for presenting at the Family Involvement Conference this year in Harrisburg. Their presentation was so well received that they were invited to present in an upcoming conference at the state level. Well done ladies!

Also, Kathy McCool was nominated by an employee to be a Piece of the Puzzle for all that she does to ensure that our workplace is safe and welcoming for all employees. However, she asked that I not include her because she believes that she is just doing her job. Therefore, I will not include her this week.