Tips for Building Relationships with Your STEM Colleagues

Directions: Implementing STEM requires change and can create turmoil. To ensure good relationships with colleagues during stressful times, consider these ideas. These ideas are particularly useful for a teacher leader charged with helping to implement STEM.

Show a personal interest in colleagues. Some ideas . . .

- Learn something about their interests, hobbies, and aspirations.
- Take time to mention things they told you in previous conversations.
- Be an attentive listener.
- Send birthday cards and recognize big events in their lives.

Be a considerate conversationalist. Some ideas . . .

- Avoid falling into the trap of thinking what to say next rather than fully listening to what your colleague is saying.
- Do not interrupt. A quick way to damage trust and rapport is to interrupt while a person is speaking.

Be mindful of your body language and keep it positive. Some ideas . . .

- Unfold your arms and remember to smile.
- Watch your voice tone, facial expression, repetitive movements, and muscle tension.
- Remember to make eye contact and show genuine interest.

Keep colleagues informed. Some ideas . . .

- From time to time, send colleagues articles and information about STEM.
- Connect them to good STEM education web sites and involve them in exploring the world of resources that exists beyond the school site.

Exhibit the same qualities you value in others. Some ideas . . .

- Be dependable.
- Be respectful.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Be honest.
- Follow through with commitments.

Do not take colleagues’ reactions personally. Some ideas . . .

- Accept that teaching STEM requires change and causes some degree of turmoil.
- Practice keeping an objective mental stance about negative comments and responses.
- When you feel yourself personalizing comments, try this: Deliberately “look down” on the situation from an imaginary balcony. Avoid labeling the situation as “good” or “bad,” and say to yourself: This is interesting. I wonder what this is all about. This will help you regain an analytical viewpoint that will prove more effective.

Relax and give it time. Some ideas . . .

- Understand that building relationships takes time, persistence, and energy.
- Accept that you will not know all answers.
- Apologize if you make a mistake, and remain grounded in the basic principles of good STEM work.

Adapted from Team to Teach: A Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams