



Developing a Compelling Why:

Communicating Your Rationale for Community Collaboration



Why Do We Need A Compelling Why

- Collaboration takes time, energy and resources
- We need to create an emotional connection to the work to energize those engaged in it
- Working with other entities often means compromising and adapting mindsets
- Over time, your Compelling Why can serve as the purpose statement to refer back on to guide and ground your work

What Makes your Message Compelling?

- It is personal to your organization and community
- It is stated in language that is relatable / accessible to its audience
- It is concise
- It builds an “emotional connection” and spurs people to action

Personalizing Your Message

- Your Compelling Why should speak directly to your school and community
- By personalizing your message, you create a stronger emotional connection to the work
- Creating a sense of community can enhance the strength of the partnerships you are looking to establish

Activity 1

On your own:

- List words, short phrases that describe your community / school district.
 - What is important for others to know about where your students live and go to school
- When prompted, find a partner to share the words / phrases you wrote down

Why is Collaboration Necessary

- Collaboration for the sake of collaboration is not enough to begin and sustain this work
- Identifying and defining the unmet needs of students can provide important justification
- Understanding what needs can be met by the school alone and which require outside support further strengthens the rationale for collaboration

Activity 2

On your own,

- Quickly make a list of the challenges / needs of students / children in your district / school / community are currently facing
- With a seat partner, share your list. Feel free to add to your list if you hear challenges that also exist in your district / school / community.

Activity 3

On your own or with a partner,

- Take the list from Activity 2 and place your responses under one of two columns:
 - Challenge the school can address internally
 - Challenge the school needs external support to address
- With a seat partner, share why you placed the responses you did in the “needs external support column.”

Benefits of Collaboration

- We should expect, through collaboration, that all parties stand to benefit.
- In creating our Compelling Why, we must be able to state what the value added is for:
 - Districts / Schools
 - Students and their families
 - Community partners

Activity 4

On your own or with a partner,

- What do you perceive to be the benefits of a collaboration between school and community partners? Consider the value added for the following three groups:
 - For the school?
 - For the students / families?
 - For community partners?
- With a seat partner, share the benefits to collaboration you drafted.

Activity 5

On your own,

- Take a moment to review the notes you have drafted so far. So far, we have highlighted:
 - Who your school / community is
 - What needs you are unable to meet without support of the community
 - What the benefits to collaboration amongst stakeholders might be
- Underline or star those you think are the most compelling or important to share

Activity 6

On your own or with a partner from your school / community:

- Draft a "Compelling Why" argument as to why it is necessary to collaborate across organizations to support student success and well-being in your school.
- Your goal is to (1) make it personal, (2) communicate in a relatable and accessible way to your audience, (3) write concisely and (4) establish an emotional connection.

Activity 7

- Find someone outside of your organization and present your Compelling Why
- For the listener, take a moment to provide brief feedback as to strengths and an area for improvement.
- Once one of you has presented and received feedback, switch. Again, take time to provide brief feedback.

Next Steps

- Take your Compelling Why draft back to your team and continue to refine your message
- Share your Compelling Why with key stakeholders
 - Staff / Students / Families
 - School / District Boards
 - Community Partners
- Share your Compelling Why in resources
 - Intro Letter
 - Letter of Agreement
 - Website