



CLS Insights

Collective Efficacy: Turning Meetings Into Momentum for Student Learning

The answers to improving student learning are often already inside your building. Every school has teachers who get outstanding results year after year. The opportunity is to learn from those successes and scale them across the school.

That potential already exists within a resource available in every school. It is also one of the most dreaded resources: **meetings**.

If schools commit to one powerful focus for the year, it should be capitalizing on the power of collective efficacy through how teams meet and collaborate.

At the end of every meeting, there is one simple measure of effectiveness:

We should leave better than we began.

If that is not happening, meetings are not contributing to improved student learning.

Why Meetings Matter More Than We Think

Ask any educator if they've ever sat through a meeting that felt like a waste of time. The answer is almost always yes. And that's a problem, because meetings are one of the most expensive and influential tools we have.

The true cost of meetings includes:

- **Financial cost:** Add up the hourly rates of everyone in the room.
- **Time cost:** Time is fixed. We cannot create more of it.
- **Cognitive cost:** Every meeting uses valuable thinking energy.



What Collective Efficacy Actually Looks Like

Researcher John Hattie identifies collective teacher efficacy as one of the highest impact influences on student achievement. Collective efficacy is not just a belief. It is a set of actions.

At its core, collective efficacy happens when teams consistently do three things:

- Examine evidence of student learning
- Challenge their own thinking
- Make instructional decisions that improve results



When all three are present, teams move from conversation to impact.



Three Shifts to Strengthen Collective Efficacy

If you want to turn meetings into meaningful drivers of student success, start here:

1

Make the work visible.

Keep the three components of collective efficacy front and center in every meeting. Use them as a simple reflection tool:

- Did we examine evidence of progress?
- Did we challenge our thinking?
- Did we make decisions that will improve results?

This clarity keeps teams focused and accountable.

2

Establish norms that build trust and interdependence.

Strong teams are built intentionally.

Consider norms such as:

- Assume positive intent while engaging in honest dialogue
- Focus on student evidence, not personal preference
- Ensure all voices are heard and valued
- Commit to leaving with clear next steps

These norms create the conditions for real collaboration, not just compliance.

3

Invest in relationships to create psychological safety.

Collective efficacy depends on people feeling safe enough to think, question, and grow together.

Two simple ways to start the year:

- Build in structured opportunities for staff to share experiences and strengths
- Use quick connection activities to humanize the work and build trust

When people feel safe, they are more willing to challenge ideas and try new approaches.



CLS Insights

Conclusion: From Meetings to Momentum

There is no profession where collective efficacy matters more than in education. We are aiming for excellence in every classroom, every year, for every student. That level of consistency requires teams working together with clarity and purpose.

The next step is simple. Align every meeting to the work that improves student learning. When teams consistently examine evidence, challenge thinking, and take action, meetings become a powerful driver of results rather than a drain on time.



Written by Allyson Apsey
Director of Client Relations
Creative Leadership Solutions
[Contact Allyson](#)

Allyson Apsey has been an award-winning educator for over 28 years, leading all levels from elementary to high school after teaching elementary and middle school students. She is the author of several books—including best-sellers [What Makes a Great Principal](#), [Lead with Collaboration](#), [Leading the Whole Teacher](#), and [The Path to Serendipity](#). She is passionate about working with dedicated groups of educators to support them in taking care of the whole child and the whole educator by implementing research-proven practices.

If this work is a priority in your school or district, this is exactly where we support teams at Creative Leadership Solutions. We partner alongside educators to turn collaborative time into meaningful action that strengthens instruction and improves results for students.



**CREATIVE
LEADERSHIP
SOLUTIONS**