



*"The only thing we have is one another. The only competitive advantage we have is the culture and values of the company. Anyone can open up a coffee store. We have no technology, we have no patent. All we have is the relationship around the values of the company and what we bring to the customer every day. And we all have to own it."* — **Howard Schultz, CEO, Starbucks**



Supporting each other as colleagues is a parallel process to supporting our students. Both processes occur within trusted relationships where expectations and boundaries are both clear and flexible.

In this section we will expand on the work we did to identify the Compassionate Boundaries that help us to act with Helpful Adult Behaviors. We will focus on collegial behaviors and attitudes that generate the culture we choose to work within. We will also consider practices to increase our knowledge and understanding of each other to foster a culture of appreciation and collaboration.

**To prepare for our work together, consider these questions individually and then bring your ideas to your small team discussion.**

1. Describe your vision of the most positive work environment for you to be able to be your best self in your job.
2. What staff behaviors and attitudes would lead to such an environment?
3. Which of these are your top 5-8 priorities for the culture you desire?
4. What are your strengths in regards to these behaviors?
5. Where would you like to see growth in your ability to think and act in these ways?
6. What might help you with that?
7. How has what has happened to you in your life impacted your ability to contribute to a positive work culture?
8. What practices/activities work best for you to enhance connections with your colleagues within these behavior boundaries?

Part of our being able to be an effective colleague is our ability to discern what our role is within the larger system in our school and the larger system of supports for children and families in our communities. The reality is that, while we might be able to work with a child to address a learning challenge, we may not be able to address a family's need for housing. Yet, the family's need for housing may be what keeps us up at night.

Each of us do best when we realize the limitations of our role and what our colleagues in our school and our colleagues in the community offer to our students and their families. This awareness allows us to function within our role without the burden of the needs that we simply cannot meet. It also fosters respect and gratitude for the various roles of our colleagues and community partners.

Developed in partnership with:



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### Questions for individual staff and school teams to consider include:

1. What are my limitations to meet the needs of my students?
2. What services do my colleagues and community organizations offer that I cannot?
3. What is my belief in the capacity of others on “my team?”
4. What do I need to do to increase my knowledge of and belief in the capacity of others?

These questions can be helpful for teams to address together or individuals to use to discern their level of connection to colleagues and other community services.



### Strategy for Self-care – STRENGTH – Stress Resilience

In order to offer a non-anxious presence with our colleagues, students, and their families, we need to be able to recognize the times when we cannot! In other words, we need to be able to recognize when we need either a new perspective or a break. Often our bodies let us know. The first question we might ask ourselves is, what am I telling myself about this situation and what is another possible story? [Here's a fascinating TED Talk](#) on making stress our friend.

And, sometimes we really just need a break! It is helpful to have a plan for what we can do and who can assist us in finding a way to take a break. Of course, all of this is successful only if we allow ourselves the vulnerability of needing a break and, if appropriate, asking for help. These activities can help in our relationships with students and in our relationships with colleagues.

#### A. Energizer breaks strategy

1. Energizer Brain Breaks provide some release from stress for the students and teachers at the same time. David Sladkey is the author of books with many ideas.
2. This is a [free resource](#) with some good ideas too.

#### B. Tapping in and out strategy

1. Staff work together to develop an understanding about how they might share the responsibility for all students. Specific strategies are defined and practiced.
2. For example: if a staff member can no longer maintain a calm, non-anxious presence with a student who is having behavioral challenges, it is acceptable to ask someone else to take over for a short time. The student may connect with the other staff person in their classroom if they are not teaching or simply sit in the back of the other teacher's classroom while the student and their teacher return to a calm demeanor.
3. Staff develop a system of communicating when they need to step away from a student.
4. The individual who is tapped in will more likely be successful if they have a relationship with the student. All staff including administrators are considered for the task of tapping in.



The next four sections are **Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind, Spirit, Strength, and Heart**. We will explore specific strategies that work and how to implement them in our lives.