



Discussion Guide #1: Periodic Individual Check-Ins

Purpose

Principals should periodically conduct one-on-one meetings with school staff members—outside the confines of the formal evaluation process—to ascertain their overall wellness, identify staff needs, learn more about staff member’s successes and professional aspirations, and solicit feedback regarding what aspects of school programming work well and what can be improved upon. Essentially, the periodic one-to-one check-in serves as a formal, non-evaluative mechanism for you to gauge individual staff members’ satisfaction with their work, give staff a voice in school operations and their own professional development, and create a space for staff to seek supports for specific professional or personal challenges they may be facing.

Frequency

You can establish your own cadence for conducting individual check-ins (e.g., monthly, once per marking period). However, **once that cadence is established and communicated to staff, you should make every effort to honor it.**

Directions

1. You should send reminders to individual staff members **at least two workdays** prior to the check-in. These reminders should recap the purpose of the check-in and review the questions you will be asking. Sending reminders will ensure that staff have adequate time to prepare their thoughts and consider what they can share with you.
2. During the check-in, ask the questions presented below. Some questions include parenthetical guidance to highlight important considerations when asking the question.
3. While maintaining eye-contact and a conversational tone are important to these check-ins, at some point, perhaps immediately after the meeting, you should record a summary of the staff member’s responses in the space provided. This will help inform follow-up conversations and actions—if necessary.

Questions

1. How are things going for you personally? Are you and your family well? Is there anything you would like me to know about your personal life? *(Some staff members may be unwilling to share details of their personal lives. In such cases, do not press them to share details. Instead, reassure staff that you are available to suggest resources and supports).*

2. How are things going for you at school? Are there any aspects of your job or school programs that you are particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with? *(Some staff members may be uncomfortable expressing dissatisfaction. You must reassure staff that you are open to criticism and that you cannot act to alleviate concerns without knowledge of those concerns.)*

3. What challenges are you currently facing in your work that you could use additional support with? How might I, your colleagues, or the district provide those supports?

4. Can you share a professional success you have had recently? Why was this experience a positive occurrence for you or others (e.g., students)?

5. Are there any professional interests or areas of development you would like to pursue? How can I, your colleagues, or the school support these efforts?



Discussion Guide #2: Follow-Up Individual Check-Ins

Purpose

Depending on how periodic check-in discussions go between principals and individual staff members, principals may need to have a focused follow-up conversation with certain staff members. Such conversations should occur when a staff member raises a major concern with their professional duties (e.g., difficulty meeting school objectives) or personal life (e.g., mental or physical illness). Furthermore, principals should have follow-up discussions with staff to further explore ideas and innovations that they share during regular check-ins or to monitor next steps the staff member or principal agreed to in prior meetings.

Frequency

There is no standard frequency for conducting follow-up one-to-one check-ins. However, you should schedule such meetings when an idea, innovation, or issue raised by a staff member cannot be resolved or explored in full during regularly occurring check-ins.

Directions

1. You and the staff member should agree on a time for a follow-up check-in during regular check-ins. This will ensure follow-up meetings are not forgotten or deprioritized. Depending on the urgency of items requiring additional exploration, follow-up meetings may occur a few days after the preceding meeting (i.e., high-urgency) or even a few weeks later (i.e., low-urgency).
2. You should send reminders to individual staff members **at least two workdays** prior to the check-in. These reminders should recap the purpose of the check-in and review the questions that you will be asking. Sending reminders will ensure staff have adequate time to prepare thoughts and to consider what they can share with you.
3. During the check-in, ask the questions presented below. Some questions include parenthetical guidance to highlight important considerations when asking the question.
4. While maintaining eye-contact and a conversational tone are important to these check-ins, at some point, perhaps immediately after the meeting, you should record a summary of the staff member's responses in the space provided. This will help inform additional follow-up conversations and actions—if necessary.

Questions

1. How have things changed for you and/or your family since we last spoke, particularly regarding the status of ____? (This question should be asked if this conversation is a follow-up to a **personal** concern. This concern would replace the empty placeholder.)

2. How have things changed for you at school since we last spoke, particularly regarding the status of ____? *(This question should be asked if this conversation is a follow-up to a **professional concern or interest**. This item would replace the empty placeholder.)*

3. How have you navigated the challenges you are facing/have faced regarding ____ since we last spoke? Have you used the supports or taken the actions we discussed? *(The **target personal or professional concern or interest** would replace the empty placeholder.)*

4. How have you pursued the professional interests or areas of development or built on the professional success that we discussed in our last meeting? Have you used the supports or taken the actions we discussed?

5. What more can I, your colleagues, or the school do to provide you with additional resources and support? What additional actions can you take independently to explore this interest or address this challenge?



Discussion Guide #3: Periodic Group Check-Ins

Purpose

Principals should periodically conduct meetings with their entire staff and with individual staff groups (e.g., departments, grade-level teams) to identify any challenges they face, solicit ideas they might have, or request feedback to guide improvement in school programming and operations. Please note that these check-ins should be distinct from informational meeting structures in which principals are asked to share information or during which staff must complete mandated work. Furthermore, **these meetings should focus on staff's professional experiences**, as inquiring about their personal lives is more appropriate in one-to-one sessions.

Frequency

You can establish your own cadence for conducting Periodic Group Check-Ins (e.g., monthly, once per marking period). However, **once that cadence is established and communicated to staff, you should make every effort to honor it.**

Directions

1. You should send reminders to individual staff members who will participate in the check-in **at least two workdays** prior to the check-in. These reminders should recap the purpose of the check-in and review the questions you will be asking. Sending reminders will ensure that staff have adequate time to prepare their thoughts and consider what they can share with you. It will also give group members time to discuss their main points with one another.
2. During the check-in, ask the questions presented below. Some questions include parenthetical guidance to highlight important considerations when asking the question.
3. While maintaining eye-contact and a conversational tone are important to these check-ins, at some point, perhaps immediately after the meeting, you should record a summary of the group's responses in the space provided. This will help inform follow-up conversations and actions—if necessary.

Questions

1. How is your work going as a team/department? Are there any concerns or issues you would like to raise to me as a group? *(Any issues raised may not be experienced by all group members, potentially indicating a need for individual follow-up.)*

2. What steps have you taken—individually or collaboratively—to address this concern or issue? What can I do to support the work you have already done? *(It is important to determine what steps a group has taken to avoid duplication of efforts and to target support appropriately.)*

3. Can you share a group success you have had recently? Why was this experience a positive occurrence for your team/department or others (e.g., students)?

4. Are there any professional interests or areas of development your team/department would like to pursue? How can I, your colleagues, or the school support these efforts?

5. Does your team/department have any feedback to improve school programming or operations? What can the school do to make these improvements, and how can you support these efforts?



Discussion Guide #4: Follow-Up Group Check-Ins

Purpose

Depending on how periodic check-in discussions go between principals and groups of staff members, principals may need to have focused follow-up conversations with certain staff members or the entire group. Such conversations should occur when the group raises a major concern (e.g., collective difficulty executing a new initiative). Furthermore, principals should have follow-up discussions with staff to further explore ideas and innovations that they share during regular check-ins or to monitor next steps that the group or principal agreed to in prior meetings.

Frequency

There is no standard frequency for conducting Follow-Up Group Check-Ins. However, you should schedule such meetings when an idea, innovation, or issue raised by a group cannot be resolved or explored in full during regularly occurring check-ins.

Directions

1. You and the group should agree on a time for a follow-up check-in during regular check-ins. This will ensure follow-up meetings are not forgotten or deprioritized. Depending on the urgency of items requiring additional exploration, follow-up meetings may occur a few days after the preceding meeting (i.e., high-urgency) or even a few weeks later (i.e., low-urgency).
2. You should send reminders to individual staff members **at least two workdays** prior to the check-in. These reminders should recap the purpose of the check-in and review the questions you will be asking. Sending reminders ensures staff have adequate time to prepare thoughts and consider what they can share with you. It will also give group members time to discuss their main points with one another.
3. During the check-in, ask the questions below. Some questions include parenthetical guidance to highlight important considerations when asking the question.
4. While maintaining eye-contact and a conversational tone are important to these check-ins, at some point, perhaps immediately after the meeting, you should record a summary of the group's responses in the space provided. This will help inform follow-up conversations and actions—if necessary.

Questions

1. How have things changed for your team/department we last spoke, particularly regarding the status of ____? (*The concern or topic of interest would replace the empty placeholder.*)

2. How have you navigated the opportunities and/or challenges you faced regarding ____ since we last spoke? Have you used the supports or taken the actions we discussed? (*The concern or interest would replace the empty placeholder.*)

3. How has your team/department pursued the professional interests or areas of development or built on the professional success that we discussed in our last meeting? Have you used the supports or taken the actions we discussed?

4. What more can I, your colleagues, or the school do to provide you with additional resources and support? What additional actions can you take together to explore this interest or address this challenge?

5. Based on your prior feedback about school programming or operations, do you have additional thoughts on how to make these improvements and how can you support these efforts?

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