

## Sample Process for Equitable Teacher Placement in Communities of Practice

**Objective:** This process outlines factors to consider when determining staff assignments in pathway communities of practice.

**Introduction:** As college and career pathways expand and play a more central role in high schools, it is important to consider equitable placement of teachers, counselors, assistant principals, and support staff in communities of practice. A central goal<sup>1</sup> of college & career pathways is to provide all students with equitable access to high-quality instructors and learning opportunities; therefore, a strategic process for soliciting teacher input, determining needs, and organizing learning communities is crucial. Transparency empowers teachers as leaders of this equity-based reform.

Historically, comprehensive high schools have been organized by departmental communities of practice. As pathways expand, teachers, counselors and other support staff need to participate in pathway communities of practice as well. Placement in those pathway communities of practice should be negotiated in the context of a commitment to equity. As pathways grow, teachers and other staff will increasingly be in both pathway and departmental communities of practice. Adequate collaboration time must be available for all communities of practice to work effectively.



### Step 1:

**Communicate the Pathway Vision: the school leadership team hosts a staff meeting wherein:**

- The vision and process for pathway expansion and staff participation in communities of practice, is articulated by the administrative team.
- Pathway teacher-leaders conduct presentations wherein they inform the entire staff about their respective pathway theme, signature instructional practices, etc.
- Pathway teacher-leaders should be provided with criteria for their presentations. Content should include: pathway team vision, course sequences, common instructional practices, key industry partnerships, and student support systems.

### Goals:

- Educate all teachers about college and career pathways, and ensure that all pathways provide equitable access to learning opportunities.
- Create opportunities for teachers to engage in dialog, or ask questions about the pathways as well as about the school's vision for pathway development.
- Clarify the process for and factors considered in pathway placement (see step four below).

<sup>1</sup> SRI's Fifth-Year Evaluation Report on California's Linked Learning District Initiative, "Taking Stock of the California District Linked Learning Initiative."

2. **Give teachers at least two weeks to discuss and explore pathway options, and complete their [community of practice interest form](#).**
  - a. All teachers and other school staff (Special Education, support providers, counselors, assistant principals, etc) should have the opportunity to rank their preference for which community of practice they might participate in.
  - b. Pathway leads and other communities of practice should host information sessions, luncheons, or open collaboration periods for interested teachers to get a better sense of their team's practice.
  - c. During this time, lead teachers should communicate with their current team about all teachers' plans to stay at the school site, their interest in looping with students, and their needs and desires regarding the schedule. This will inform the lead teacher's conversations with administrators and other teacher leaders about [staffing needs](#) for next school year.
  - d. Lead teachers from different communities of practice should communicate to coordinate their programs. For example, the science chair should be consulted about the staffing ramifications when a pathway wants to change the science course sequence or add a specific offering in science.
  
3. **Lead teachers submit their staffing needs for the next school year to the administrative team.**
  - a. Leads meet with their administrator to discuss proposed course assignments for current teachers as well as anticipated vacancies.
  - b. After step 2, above, lead teachers' can submit preferences for staff they would like to join their community of practice.
  - c. Where pathways have openings, pathway teachers should be involved in the interview process for new hires.
  
4. **The administrative team considers multiple factors when placing teachers and staff in communities of practice, including:**
  - a. How can all teachers and school staff have the opportunity to participate in at least one community of practice structured around a shared relationship to students?
    - It is not recommended for teachers to participate in more than one **pathway** community of practice. When this is unavoidable, a "primary pathway" community of practice should be identified.
    - It is important to assign the majority of a pathway teacher's schedule in a pathway in order to enable full participation in the pathway team.
  - b. Does the teacher/staff member have a distinct interest or experience in a particular pathway industry sector (i.e. Arts Media and Entertainment or Computer Science)?
  - c. Which teachers have the necessary credentials to meet the needs of the teaching teams?
    - For pathways, teachers who can instruct both core and CTE classes are especially valuable. Districts and sites that prioritize pathway development are advised to provide teachers with incentives and supports to pursue [CTE credentials](#) whenever possible.
  - d. How can we most equitably distribute our strongest teachers across all communities of practice?

- It is essential that strong teachers be fairly distributed amongst the communities of practice. The same is true for teachers with little experience, who should be paired with strong teachers in a strategic, equitable fashion. Experienced teachers who lack the skills or disposition to collaborate in improving instructional practice can be damaging to a community of practice. Where that is the case, the [Peer Assistance and Review process](#) should be utilized.
- e. How can we foster stability and consistency amongst the communities of practice?
  - Teachers already embedded in an existing community of practice should not be transferred to another community of practice unless there is a compelling reason to do so. It is important to prioritize stability and consistency amongst existing teams.

**5. Administrators confer with the pathway leads and other teacher leaders when finalizing decisions about teacher placement in communities of practices.**

- a. Ideally, this should be done in short, separate sessions with teacher leaders from each community of practice. For example, administrators can schedule a two-hour block wherein all teacher leaders can discuss the needs of their team and teacher preferences with the admin team for approximately 20 minutes each.
- b. Prior to informing the whole staff of final decisions, share teacher placement decisions with the teacher leadership team and receive feedback from teacher leaders. This provides an opportunity to discuss concerns in a transparent, collegial fashion, may prompt administrators to make needed adjustments, and honors the critical role of teacher leaders in a collective decision making process.

**6. Once the administrative team has finalized staffing decisions, a school-wide memo should be sent. This memo should include:**

- a. A thank you to pathway leads and other teacher leaders who helped inform the process (by presenting on their program, hosting informational sessions, soliciting information from team members, and conferring with the administrative team).
- b. The factors that were considered when placing teachers (see step four).
- c. A brief summary of the expectations for participation in a community of practice (e.g. required meetings or shared collaboration time, etc).
- d. A clear message that if a teacher is placed in more than one pathway community of practice, there should be an explicit expectation that the teacher have a primary allegiance to only one pathway community of practice. This is essential for pathway teachers being able to participate in designing & delivering integrated projects, provide individualized students support, etc. This cannot be done by one teacher who is split amongst more than one pathway community of practice.
- e. The policy for teachers appealing their assigned community of practice. The administrative team may choose to indicate that these placements are final and that no changes will be made until the next school year. Many teacher openings do not occur until after hiring decisions have been announced. As these placement decisions establish the basis for team building, collaborative work, and integrated curriculum development, maintaining the promised team relationships allows teams to effectively prepare to better serve all students.