Building a Better Future:

One Collaboration at a Time

Presented by: Mrs. Cindy Sullivant, CPA
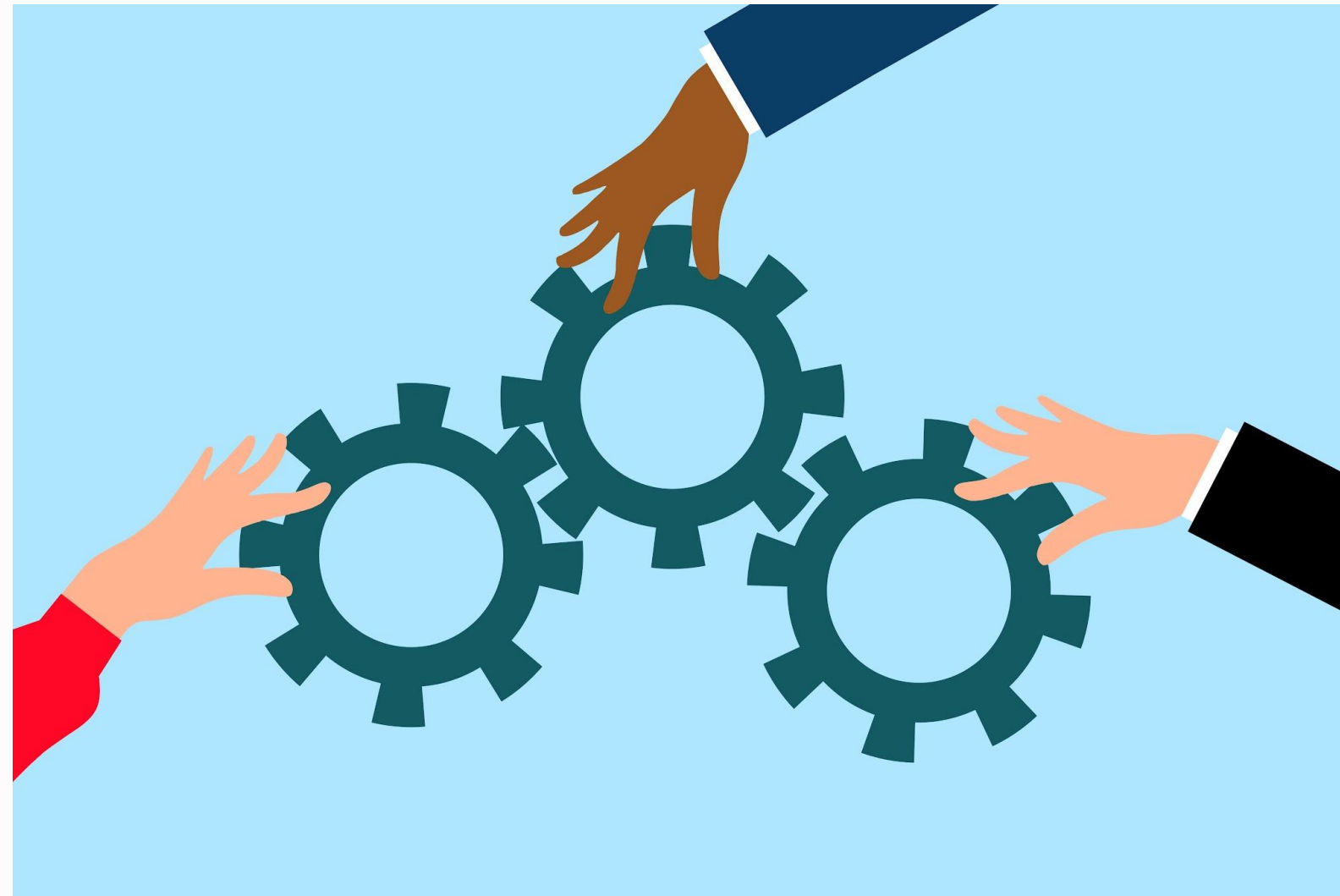
Dr. Sarah Marriott

Liberty Public Schools

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"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."--Proverb

What is Collaboration?

Two or more people working together in pursuit of a shared, collective, bounded goal.
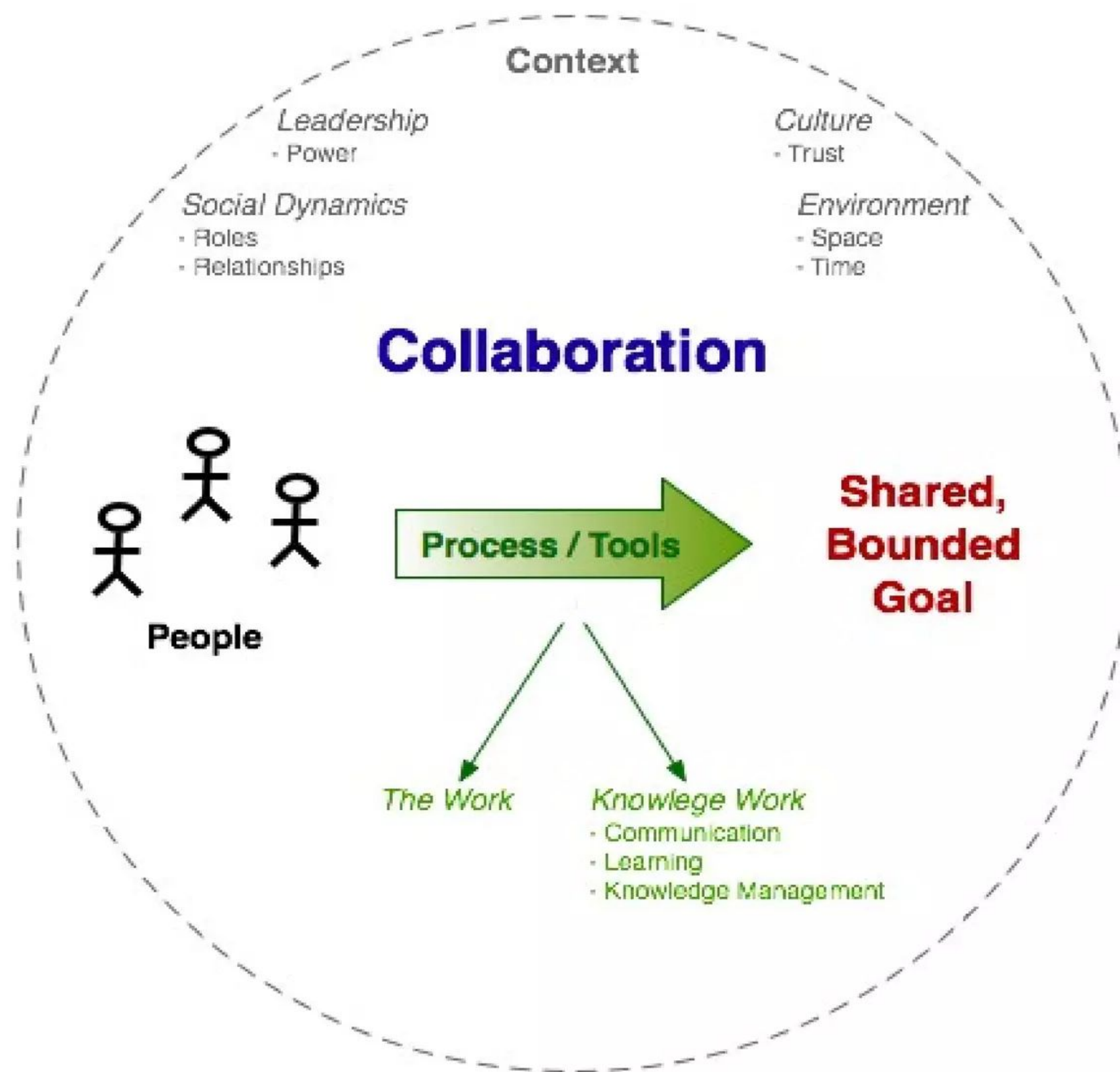
Stop and Jot:

How does your Board of Education team and/or administrative team engage in intentional collaboration?

Why Collaborate?
- Sharing of ideas;
- Understand how other team members think;
- Opens communication;
- Encourages problem solving to eliminate roadblocks;
- Cover more ground with more talent.

Challenges facing schools/BOE with collaboration:
- Lack of adequate time to collaborate with others;
- Professional isolation;
- Lack of structure or understanding of collaboration;
- Lack of trust = miscommunication/misunderstanding;
- Unawareness of team members' strengths and talents;
- Lack of shared understanding or common goal(s);
- Schools perpetuate conditions which encourage departments to operate in silos.

How can school teams/BOE encourage collaboration?

1. Be intentional about determining who will collaborate together;
2. Size the group for effective collaboration;
3. Focus/teach effective listening skills;
4. Set "rules" or expectations for conflict/disagreement;
5. Establish common goals and outcomes.

Start here:
Finance/Business & Human Resources

- Benefits
- Recruiting and hiring
- Retention
- Staffing needs
- Absenteeism
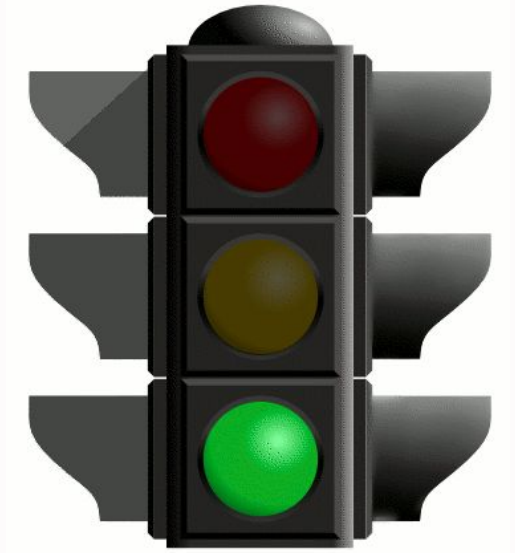
Why start with CFO and HR?

● Organizations reported 43% increase in workforce productivity when the CFO and HR leader collaborated (Forbes, 2016);

● Organizations indicated a 44% increase in employee engagement when the CFO and HR leaders collaborated (Forbes, 2016).

● Minimizes departments operating in silos, making unilateral decisions;

● Increase productivity and creates a proactive rather than reactive approach;

● Aligns the organization's strategic priorities (Harvard Business Review).

Stop and Jot:

What is an area your financial and human resources/talent recruitment can collaborate in a proactive rather than reactive manner?

Name a potential outcome from this collaboration.

What are other administrative areas that could engage in intentional collaboration?

How can we do this?
Our school's story and journey...
Team Liberty

What is "Team Liberty?"

➔ It's a formal collaboration between a strategically aligned group of stakeholders who have a clearly defined mission, common goals, and outcomes.

➔ Purpose:

◆ Compensation;

◆ Benefits;

◆ Quality of Work Life.

Collective Bargaining → Team Liberty → Meet and Confer

Team Liberty Development

➔ Advisory Committee;

➔ Formalized "membership" with non-voting "observers";

➔ Developed Advisory Committee Guidelines;

➔ Established Behavioral Norms and Operational Meeting Norms;

➔ Facilitated;

➔ Agenda Driven;

➔ Outcomes = Recommendations

Examples of Operational Norms:

❏ Meeting frequency and meeting times;

❏ Agenda;

❏ Notes and Notes distribution;

❏ Communication to staff;

❏ Decision making:

❏ Team conflict;

❏ Meeting evaluation;

❏ Communication spreadsheet.

Team Liberty Committee

➔ 8 Teachers;

➔ Six Classified Staff Members;

➔ One Professional employee.

LPS Leadership Team Participation (non-voting members):

● Two Cabinet-level administrators (HR and CFO);

● Four building and central office administrators.

Observers (non-voting members):

● 1-2 Board of Education members;

● MNEA UniServe Director;

● MSTA Field Representative;

● Director of Communications.

How are members selected?

➜ MNEA and MSTA each provide names of four individuals to Assistant Superintendent of HR and confirmed by Team Liberty membership.

➜ Support group staff members are elected through nomination and/or interest among departments;

➜ Administrators are appointed by the Assistant Superintendent of HR and approved by the Superintendent;

➜ Members may serve up to two consecutive three year terms with one year off before serving another term.

How are Team Liberty meetings structured?
➔ External 3rd Party facilitator;
➔ implementation of consensus strategies;
➔ Balanced participation from all Team Liberty advisory committee members;
➔ Scaffold tasks, establish benchmarks, and set realistic timelines;
➔ Notetaker present at each meeting for preservation of conversations;
➔ Meeting notes and documents are maintained by Team Liberty;
➔ Once consensus on recommendations is achieved, the Assistant Superintendent of HR will present the recommendations to the Superintendent for consideration.

What is specifically addressed in Team Liberty Meetings?

❖ Annual salary review and recommendations;

❖ Benefits renewal and/or changes;

❖ District calendar;

❖ Department reports;

❖ Issues identified in Communications Spreadsheet:

➢ Professional development days;

➢ Extra-duty salary schedule;

➢ Substitute rates;

➢ Staff surveys;

➢ Paid holidays;

➢ Other.

Operational Components:

❖ Meet approximately one time per month during the school calendar year;

❖ Meetings dates are established and shared prior to the beginning of each school year;

❖ Meeting times are either full day meetings (8am-3pm) or half day (8am-12pm) and predetermined according to meeting content;

❖ 3rd party facilitator guides the meeting with input from CFO and HR leaders.

Communication Protocols

- Creates opportunities for staff members to communicate concerns to the Team Liberty advisory committee
- Builds commitment to the team process through uniform communication;
- Provides accurate information about district issues, policies, and procedures back to stakeholders;
- de-escalates situations;
- limits rumors and speculation by surfacing concerns;
- corrects misconceptions.

Communications Spreadsheet

Timestamp	Email Address	Name of Team Liberty Member entering the comment	Building assignment of the person making the comment: Select as many as apply or add "other" location manually	Department for which the person making the comment works:	Question/Recommendation to be posed to Team Liberty (Do not enter verbatim. Conserve space and, if necessary, report full content verbally at Team Liberty meeting): Translate concern into a question and/or recommendation for action	What is the category for the question/recommendation?	Is there a cost associated with the question/recommendation?	Assign this question/recommendation: If assignment doesn't apply to any in the list select "Assign this later"	Administration has permission to address the issue directly with the employee? (Y/N)	Team Liberty Response

Challenges encountered:

- ❖ Team Liberty participants who do not encompass a growth mindset;
- ❖ Discussions become problem-based rather than solution centered;
- ❖ Losing sight of the district's vision, mission, and strategic plan in Team Liberty discussions;
- ❖ Communication of outcomes in an effective manner;
- ❖ One or two Team Liberty members' voices are louder than the rest of the team, dominating the discussion;
- ❖ Impractical solutions that are not feasible to implement.
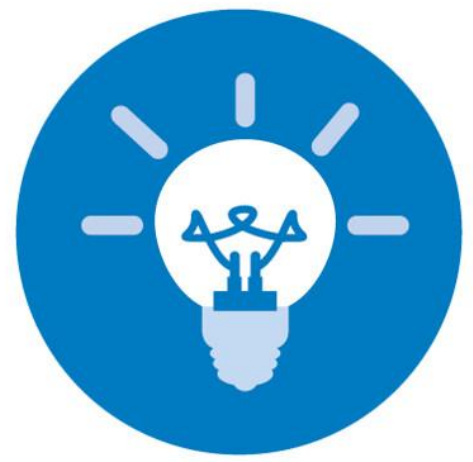
Outcomes:

❖ Formulated recommendations shared with the Superintendent for consideration and with the goal of recommendation to Board of Education for approval;

❖ Alignment of outcomes to the district's vision, mission, and strategic plan;

❖ Consensus not majority;

❖ Collaboration and cooperation between all departments, professional organizations (I.e., MNEA, MSTA), and district members;

❖ Develop recommendations which best support all LPS team members and positively contribute to a high quality worklife.

Success Measures:

❖ The Team Liberty model/process has been utilized in the LPS District for greater than 10 years;

❖ Feedback from staff indicate team members feel valued, heard, and feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to the organization as a whole;

❖ Issues and challenges are resolved by peers through a collaborative process;

❖ Demonstrates respect for all perspectives;

❖ Results in greater efficiency and effectiveness for Board of Education and Superintendent decision making.

PERCEPTION → PASSION → OBSESSION → SUCCESS
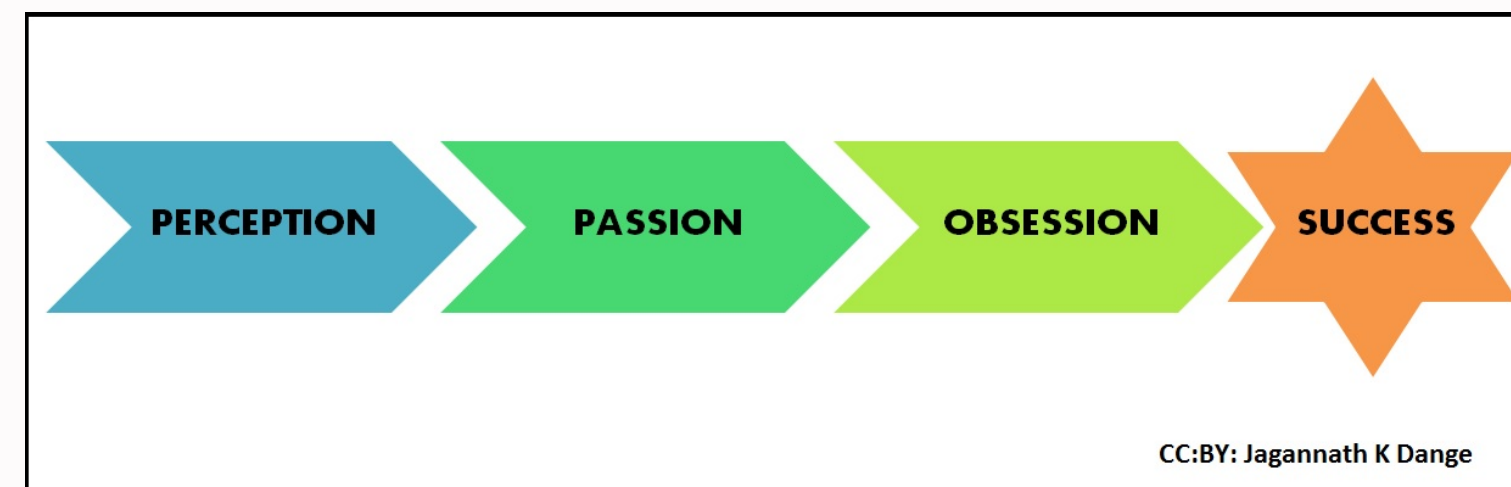
Now it's your turn…

❖ How can you implement similar structures and processes in your school district with the intention to:

➢ Build collaborative structures;

➢ Implement structured frameworks;

➢ Create opportunities for representation and communication;

➢ Establish clearly defined processes?

➢ How does the size of your district impact implementation?

■ Can the model be modified to fit your district's needs/size/etc.?

Questions or Comments?
Feel free to contact us at:

Cindy Sullivant
cindy.sullivant@lps53.org

Sarah Marriott
sarah.marriott@lps53.org