

TABLE 7.1

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS: MOVING TOWARD QUADRANT I

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Quadrant III: Low Functioning and Low Impact

This type of PLC+ can often be described as floundering—not functioning well and not having an impact.

This is most challenging task for any *activator* to undertake independently. These PLC teams are easily spotted during any type of observation and can be described as anything from floundering to toxic. *Activators* trying to work with these teams may need to seek support from school leadership. At the same time, it is very important for the *activator* to seek small wins with the team. *Often teams in this quadrant need some very tight structures to be put in place, so members can be guided through the PLC+ process with strong intentionality. Developing and adhering tightly to norms and protocols are critically important.*

Quadrant II: High Functioning and Low Impact

These are PLC+ teams that falsely appear to have high impact because they are compared to teams that do are not high functioning. In other words, they look good on the surface!

Obviously, high functioning is important, and quite often this functioning is easy to see and can mask many shortcomings in terms of the team’s impact. Many PLC teams that are efficient but don’t have a great deal of impact on student learning come together just to complete a series of tasks, follow data protocols, and complete forms. These can be described as compliance-based PLC+ teams. These teams can fly under the radar, as an observer could easily feel there is impact happening. They get along and seem to make instructional decisions that are good for students, but they don’t collectively challenge each other to make ones that truly impact students at the highest levels. They, like teams in Quadrant IV, resemble a track-and-field team: team members simply throw in their points or scores (data), but there is little if any positive interdependence. *One of the most important actions for an activator is to make sure there is constant revisiting of question 4, “What did we learn today?” The more the team can focus its efforts on truly looking at what was learned, in an honest and reflective manner, the more the team will be able to examine how it is truly impacting student learning.*

Quadrant IV: Low Functioning But High Impact

These are PLC+ that are impacting student learning but are either working excessively hard to do so, or doing so as teachers who work in relative isolation, even on their team. This team could have a much greater impact if they leveraged their individual efficacy into a collective efficacy.

This type of team almost seems like an impossibility. How can a team that is functioning poorly have high impact on student learning? However, this can be the case when team members work in relative isolation.

A team whose collaboration falls here [in Quadrant IV] is peculiar in that its members function poorly as a group and yet still manage to achieve team goals and advance student learning. They meet together, but they struggle with interdependence. . . . Any attempt to foster interdependence where team members learn from and rely on one another in a low-functioning, high-impact team often results in conflict, gossip, or withdrawal. Members in low-functioning, high-impact teams who single-handedly take on the goals of the team can feel resentful or can burn out quickly, while others who depend on them can feel helpless. (MacDonald, 2013, p. 31)

While teams in this quadrant may have an overall impact, true collaboration is often nonexistent. What can lead to this? And what can *activators* do to help move such a team toward Quadrant I?

- Poor relational trust and lack of strong professional relationships
- Lack of common standards or curriculum (singletons or heterogeneous groupings)
- Extreme need for member independence; members fear giving up full control of their decision-making process for their classrooms

While activating norms and protocols is important here, nothing can benefit these teams in Quadrant IV as much as focusing on developing common challenges.

