Facilitator's Guide: Activity 2

Taking Action:
Challenges and Opportunities

Usage

The challenges and opportunities described in the Online Learning Experience are divided into three categories: 1) feedback and building trust; 2) engaging families and 3) teachers. This exercise builds on and expands these categories, exploring their relevance in your community.

Materials

Board or flip chart
Markers
Reflections handout prepared by the Coordinator

Grouping of Participants

The Introduction is done with the Task Force in one large group. After the introduction, divide into as many groups as you have categories of challenges from the Task Force's reflections.

Time Required

40 minutes total:
15 minutes for the introduction
15 minutes for small group discussion
10 minutes for wrap-up

Facilitation

1. Review with the Task Force the categories of challenges and opportunities that were described in the Online Learning Experience and list them in front of the group: 1) feedback and building trust; 2) engaging families and 3) teachers. Note that the same three categories were addressed in Case Study 1 and Case Study 2.

2. Ask the Task Force to recall a few examples in each category of *challenges* the congregations in the cases studies anticipated. (For example, in the category of feedback and building trust, the congregations were concerned about how the participants would react, whether they should respond to *all* criticisms and suggestions, and how they could respond so people felt they had been "heard"). Do not attempt to list every challenge. This is just a way to refresh people's memories.

3. Now your discussion will focus on the reality of your own congregation. Review the reflections handout from the Online Learning by having each Task Force member read a reflection. As they are being read, group the challenges, as much as possible, into categories. Your categories might be based on constituencies (e.g, parents or teachers), they may be more general (e.g., resistance to scheduling changes, new fees), or they may be a combination. Now that you know your first bold step, you should add challenges that you can expect that are unique to it.

4. Divide the Task Force into as many groups as you now have categories.

5. Each group should discuss the following questions and be prepared to report back the highlights of their discussion to the rest of the Task Force:

- Which of these challenges do you think are most prevalent and you are most likely to face as you implement your first bold step? What evidence do you have to support your expectations?

- How serious will these challenges be? Is any challenge so great that it can't be overcome?

- What are some strategies—either from what you learned online or of your own creation—you think could address these challenges in advance? What kinds of responses will address them? Brainstorm a list on a flipchart.

- Imagine that your strategies in anticipation of or in response to these kinds of challenges are marvelously successful. What unintended consequences, or new opportunities, might present themselves as a result?

- Based on this discussion, what are 1-2 challenges you think you should expect, how they creatively could be addressed and what new opportunities might come out of the resolution?

6. Bring the large group back together and have each sub-group present its response to the last question. Be sure they share the new opportunities that could grow out of appropriate responses to their challenge.

7. Wrap up by reminding the Task Force that what is most important is being open to acknowledging and addressing challenges, remembering that exciting new opportunities may emerge in the process.

Record Keeping

The list of challenges, notes from wrap-up and the individual groups' lists of potential new opportunities should be kept for the First Bold Step Implementation Team to use when working on the design of the first bold step.

Discussion Guide: Activity 2
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Your group has been assigned to discuss challenges you may face when you implement the first bold step of your alternative model.   Although you are not quite there yet, you do know your congregational community—what their experience is with change, how they typically respond to change, what they seem to want, and what they say they need.

With this knowledge of your community in mind, discuss the following questions and be prepared to share the highlights of your discussion with the rest of the Task Force.

- Which of these challenges do you think you are most likely to face as you implement your first bold step? What evidence do you have to support your expectation?

- How serious will these challenges be? Can you imagine a challenge so great that it can't be overcome?

- What are some strategies—either from what you learned online or of your own creation—you think could address these challenges in advance? What kinds of responses could address them after they appear? Brainstorm a list that everyone in the group can see.

- Imagine that your strategies in anticipation of or in response to these kinds of challenges are marvelously successful. What unintended consequences, or new opportunities, might present themselves as a result?

- Based on this discussion, what are 1-2 challenges you think you should expect, how they creatively could be addressed and what new opportunities might come out of the resolution?