CONDITIONS
FOR
COLLABORATION

WE : SCHOOL

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY

-WHAT IS POWERFUL LEARNING?

WE : TEAM

SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING DESIGN

TEAM FUNCTIONING

JOINT WORK

-AGREED PROTOCOLS

-CLARITY OF PURPOSE

ME

-WHAT IS POWERFUL TO LEARN?

-SYSTEMS

SELF AWARENESS

-SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

-TIME

LEARNER and LEARNING CENTRED

SHARED VISION

SHARED BELIEFS and VALUES

-USE OF SPACE

-TEACHING AS INQUIRY

LIFE LONG LEARNER

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

-COLLABORATIVE NORMS

-PLG'S

-CONTENT

-USE OF SMART TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES

-CO-TEACHING

-RELATIONAL TRUST

-PROCESSES

-INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

-COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

-SPIRALS OF INQUIRY

SHARED LEARNING

TEAM CLIMATE

-PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

SCHOOL WIDE ORGANISATION FOR LEARNING

WESTMERE SCHOOL | TE REHU

Very early on in my travels I was challenged in my thinking by a Principal who very generously shared her struggles of trying to embed a collaborative culture within her school. Our discussion highlighted the barriers facing teachers and schools re why collaboration was not always as effective as one might hope. Building on a diagram of Team effectiveness shared by Sarah Martin (Stonefields School) I developed the model above to help me identify some of the key conditions necessary to foster collaboration.

The diagram *CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATION* is best explained starting at the inner circle and moving out:

LEARNING AND A LEARNER CENTRED CURRICULUM sits at the centre and provides a strong WHY or purpose for our core role as educators, working together to provide the most effective education for our learners.
The OECD report 'The Nature of Learning' talks about "CSSC learning" as learning that is

- *constructive* - learners actively construct their knowledge and skills
- *self-regulating* - actively using strategies to learn
- *situated* - best understood in context rather than abstracted from the environment ● *collaborative* - not a solo activity

To be responsive to the complexities of the modern world, a focus on learning rather than teaching must sit at the core of our decision making.

Any major transformative change starts with **each individual**. Deep and profound learning requires each teacher to be an active meaning maker who uses the learning context to enhance their personal and professional growth and development.

From ME: (a focus on SELF)
Self-awareness — EQ: how well do I know myself? Can I examine my impact on others? Can I self-regulate under pressure and make compromises and be flexible in my thinking? Do I check out my wonderings rather than jump to the top of the 'ladder ' and assume?

CQ: Cultural Intelligence —Do I have the capacity to function in multicultural contexts?

Lifelong learning — Do I actively pursue and self-direct my own learning? Am I reflective? Do I display a growth mindset? Do I share my wonderings, perceptions and vulnerabilities to help make meaning of what I am learning? Do I display an optimism and an ability to learn from my mistakes or errors in judgement?

Relationship management — the capacity to proactively address and resolve conflict through dialogue with others; respectfully listens, displays an openness to change and compromise; prioritises time to talk through and understand a diversity of viewpoints; when dissonance is experienced can display a growth mindset and de-personalise the issue

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To WE: (a focus on TEAM)
Attitudes and mindsets — I am committed; 'I'll do what it takes"; I am open, learning focused; I display a growth mindset; I see teaching as a collaborative act; they are 'our learners'

Joint work — I display a clarity of purpose and am prepared to do what it takes to make it happen. I am a key driver of change.
Our joint work is characterised by shared responsibility, synergy and interdependence;we hold joint accountability for the programme and learning outcomes for all our learners; we

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undertake daily problem solving; there is clarity about how the work of our team will impact on learning & learners; We utilise co teaching techniques; we are continually reflecting on our practice, trialling new strategies, and undertaking shared spirals of inquiry to accelerate learning.

Team climate — We establish and utilise a set of collaborative norms; there is a commitment by all our team to the time it takes to inquire into issues, to understand the different viewpoints & make necessary changes; there is a willingness *"to slay the elephant"* in the room and talk about the difficult topics; we understand that high levels of relational trust and mutual respect develops through honest, respectful dialogue; relationships deepen as a result of HOW conversations are carried out —use of dialogue, open to learning conversations; open minded perspective *"ideas are held lightly";* we value our collective intelligence - "together we achieve more"

Team functioning — We utilise effective systems & structures; we have established agreed protocols which are continually revisited and accepted norms of behavior: *"the way we do things here";* We use our time effectively; we have effective delegated team roles and responsibilities. Evaluation and team reflection time is built into team processes; there is highly effective use of smart tools for data collection, information sharing and communication; we spend our time focused on doing the *'right work'*

Shared learning — We undertake professional learning conversations, teaching as inquiry investigations and other transformational practices. Learning is embedded in our work through undertaking collective inquiries as a key way of working to meet diversity of learners' needs; our team displays evidence of strong professional learning community practices; we have a shared language of collaboration; shared responsibility for student outcomes; systematic responses to student underachievement. We leverage off the diversity of our team by cultivating opportunities to utilise people's diverse strengths. High levels of joint teacher efficacy are evident in our team; Our shared expectation is that our learning is self-directed and ongoing; we display sustained commitment to continuous improvement as part of our daily work.

Supported by WE: (School Leadership)
Effective pedagogy — There is a shared understanding of 'What is powerful learning'? And 'What is powerful to learn'? There is a shared understanding about effective Learning Design and how to gauge one's impact on learning.

School-wide organisation for learning — Teachers are taught how to use space as an enabler for learning; the school provides SMART tools and technologies for information sharing and analysis; There are schoolwide share practices & a shared philosophy and understanding of teaching as inquiry as a tool for job embedded learning. Professional development content and processes are provided by the school to ensure a whole school focus and shared pedagogical basis for practice.

Shared vision and values
Vision-led leadership works for alignment, a common purpose and an aspiring call to action.

ESTABLISHING SHARED BELIEFS & CLARITY OF PURPOSE

While school leadership has a major role to play in establishing the necessary conditions to allow collaborative working relationships to flourish, nothing is truly possible unless the hearts and minds of each staff member is truly engaged and committed to challenge, growth and learning.

Pivotal to creating any change that is to be lasting, teaching staff need opportunities to explore their own beliefs or *mental models* regarding student-centred learning, collaborative practice and the myriad of other practices that they perform on a daily basis. The espoused theories of the school with regards to shared visions and principles are only as effective as theories-in-action, when evidenced in teacher daily practice.

Where there is alignment between a strong shared vision and values espoused by school leadership and the shared mindsets of the majority of the people who worked there, the work done is both compelling and motivating. Likewise,when the practices (the systems and structures) that are established to support and reinforce the shared mental models are closely aligned, "people walked the talk".
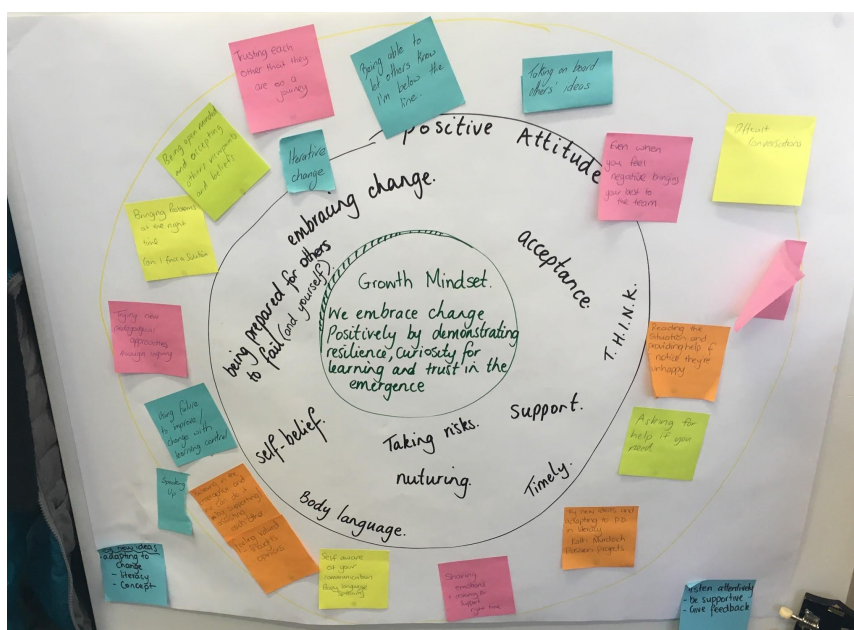

The OECD reports *Nature of Learning* and *Innovative Learning Environments* offer a compelling vision for education systems focused on learning and learners. In a review of the latter report, Helen Timperley, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, writes-

"Everyone in education is talking about innovation. What is different here is that the best of what we know about learning is at the centre and is richly illustrated with real cases to answer the question "What will this look like?"

Teachers need a compelling vision that motivates, unifies and guides their day to day

decision making. Co -constructed purpose statements must be alive in the hearts and hands of everyone in the organisation. Clear guidelines, expectations and aligned practices help ensure everyone feels they are on the same page. Thus when difficult decisions need to be made, the purpose, not the wants and needs of the loudest voices, offer direction.

In their book *Schools that Deliver* (2016 p11-13) John Edwards and Bill Martin share Robert Fritz's 'Model of Structural Tension': a model that can help us focus on the future vision rather than become bogged down in the current reality.
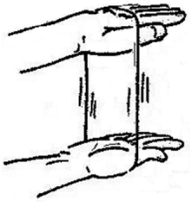
Fritz illustrates that between any vision we create for change and the current reality in which we live, there is always a structural tension, which is normal and healthy. A bit like the tension in a rubber band.

During a period of change we have two choices open to us for how to deal with this tension. If we focus on the current reality, often a very uncomfortable place, where our current beliefs and mental models are being challenged, we can react with stories of doom and gloom and cling to what we know. In this scenario, we lose our sense of personal power and can feel as if the world is pushing us around.

The alternative choice is to focus on the vision unrelentingly. This can lead to a creative tension that can bring out a capacity for perseverance and patience.

If we are working alongside others going through similar changes, the shared commitment and passion can be incredibly energising. The current reality does not disappear, but when dealt with through a future focus lens, it has the power to shift our mindsets.

The enthusiasm and energy of the 'early adopters' in any change process can be so motivating. Enthusiasm is contagious! It is important that as a school we capitalise on the learning gleaned from those early risk takers!
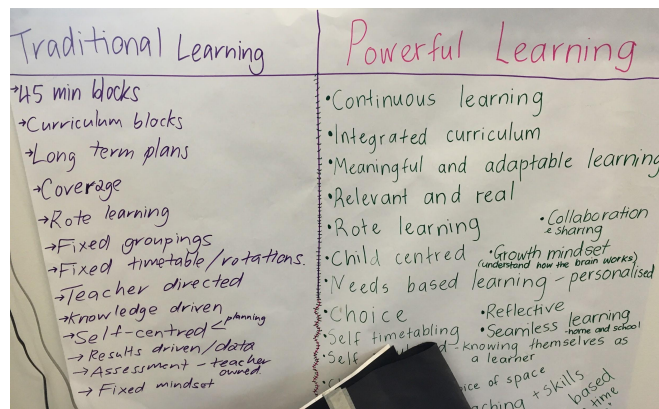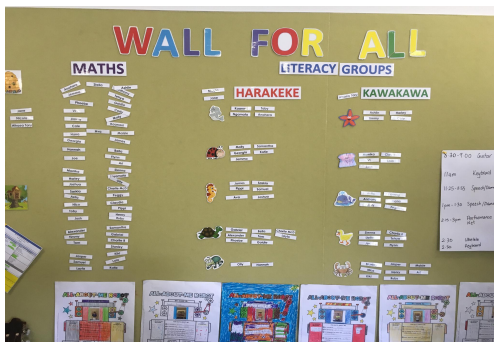
KNOW THYSELF

It can be very difficult to create opportunities for teachers that result in learning that is profound and transformative. We know that-

"For true shifts of thinking and behaviour to occur, you must be willing to challenge a person's beliefs, interrupt his /her patterns and short circuit the conviction to his/her logic even when it feels uncomfortable"

Marcia Reynolds 2014, "The Discomfort Zone"

For many decades, teaching has been a solo activity, where one teacher has worked almost exclusively with the same group of learners. To work effectively in collaborative relationships, we are challenged, first and foremost, to really know ourselves- as a learner, in relationship with others; our ability to handle change, to deal with conflict, to empathise and to collaborate on joint work.


A clear understanding and knowledge of oneself, one's mindsets and the values and beliefs that drive one's behaviour, is pivotal to high emotional intelligence. It is these skills that shape who we are as individuals and as team players.

There are a myriad of tools that help us to develop self-awareness and can be useful at the start of a new year or when new teams are being formed.
Some of these tools include:

Tom Rath's (2007) *Strengths Finder 2.0* which comes with an online code that allows you to uncover your talents and encourages development by building from one's strengths through a very detailed goal setting and action planning process.

Myers Briggs Personality tests assist you in recognising how you naturally prefer to learn, think, communicate and act, thereby empowering you to perform better.
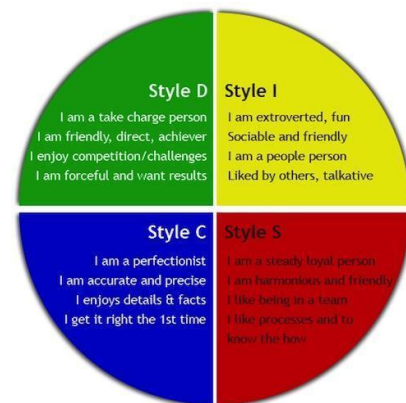
The DISC model is another useful tool to understand different personality types. By googling, '*DISC images*,' a wealth of useful diagrams are sourced to assist with and help teachers to understand the multiple ways others choose to communicate and behave.
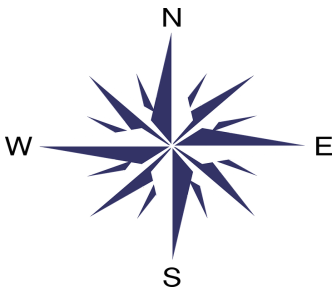
Herrmann's Brain dominance model- the NZ based website and Hermann's brain dominance model questionnaire is a simplified online questionnaire based on the fuller package available for schools to purchase.

The purpose of tools like these is not to box people but rather to raise awareness and to illustrate the range of preferences that may exist within one team or school staff.

Here is a simple activity you can do with your whole staff or teaching team to better understand each other:-

North, South, East West
An exercise in Understanding Preferences in Group Work

	NORTH Acting - "Let's do it". Likes to act, try things, plunge in.	
WEST Paying attention to detail- likes to know the who, what, when where and why before acting.	N W E S	EAST Speculating- likes to look at the big picture and the possibilities before acting
	SOUTH Caring- likes to know that everyone's feelings have been taken into consideration and that their voices have been heard before acting.	

Decide which of the four "directions" most closely describes your personal style. Then as a group spend 15 minutes answering the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of your style? (4 adjectives)
2. What are the limitations of your style? (4 adjectives)
3. What style do you find most difficult to work with and why?
4. What do people from the other "directions" or styles need to know about your style so you can work together effectively?
5. What do you value about the other three styles?

CHAMPIONING LIFE LONG LEARNING

Crucial to any growth or development is an openness to learn and a belief that one can change. Carol Dweck's writing on *Growth Mindset* is having a major influence on education systems around the world

When Leadership teams model growth behaviours in the way they relentlessly tackle hurdles and obstacles, when they are open to suspend judgement and to experiment with new ideas and welcome risk taking in their staff, then what can often follow is high levels of engagement in others and a greater willingness to assume personal responsibility for overcoming challenges to growth.

A simple mindset tool we have found effective in prompting us to reframe our thinking ad Westmere is the concept of the *Magic line.* With reference to this line a teacher might ask

themselves, *"Where am I operating from in my daily conversations?"*

Ownership   Accountability   Responsibility
_____ The Magic Line_____
Blame   Excuses   Denial
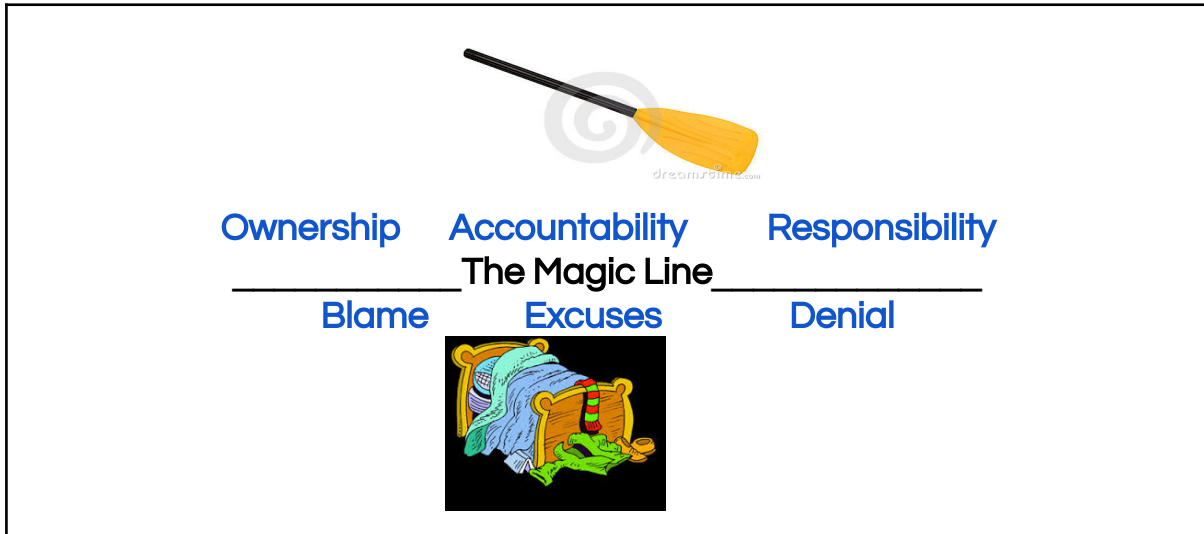
To grow a culture of operating *above the line* requires access to strong feedback relationships. For school leaders, then, it is imperative to model the type of vulnerability and openness necessary for receiving strong feedback, as it goes a long way towards setting cultural norms.

FROM ME TO WE: Building Collective Capacity

Building a healthy Team climate takes time. The foundation for this is trust. Building-in time to work *on* the team as well as *in* the team is time well spent.

Developing a set of negotiated team norms- the use of protocols and procedures help to ensure sound systems and structures are in place to minimise team dysfunction.
A useful place to start is to conduct a survey to understand team members preferences, restraints on their working styles and areas open for negotiation. **The Working collaboratively survey below** is an example of a school-built reflection tool to help generate dialogue and negotiate shared norms for working together at the early, formative stages of a team.

When teams use "Mates Agreements" or "Team Protocols" to cocreate how they will want things to be, and revisit these regularly to keep them alive, the process of negotiating areas of difference, listening to various perspectives and having to be flexible and "hold one's thinking lightly" provides an opportunity for growth.

Well functioning teams establish agreed upon meeting processes, agenda and minutes templates that build in prompts to remind them of processes they are wanting to make habitual i.e a 5 minute debrief to "arrive and be present" at the meeting, a plenary to clarify and record what actions will result from the meeting and who is responsible for what.

Studio Survey: Collaborative Practice

Westmere School , 2015

Working alone put your initials on the continuum where your preference lies
Then meet with your Studio buddies, open the Google Doc and add each person from your Studio's initials on the continuum

Dialogue it – go around your circle and let each person explain (without comment or feedback) why they have placed their initials where they have on each continuum – one question at a time. Make notes or answer any of the supplementary questions.

1. How do I want to plan?

Collaboratively on-site face-to-face		Collaboratively off-site through digital tools

Therefore as a Studio we will plan (how and when):

2. How do I feel about grouping?

I only want to teach my home group		I want to work with different groups according to needs

Notes:

3. How tidy do I need my space to be before I can function properly?

Everything in its right place all the time		I don't mind if stuff is disorganised

Notes:

4. As well as planning, there needs to be time to meet, talk and reflect.

a) What time do I normally get to school?

6:30am		8:30am

b) What time do I want to be gone on non-meeting days?

3:30pm		6pm

c) How do I like to prepare for my day?

I like my own quiet time		I like to chat/talk things over

Therefore as a Studio we will meet (when/why):

5. Sometimes decisions need to be made…

I prefer others to take the lead		I prefer to lead

6. How do I process new ideas, information, etc.?

Need time to mull it over and reflect		Want to get in there and do it right away

Notes (for 5 & 6):

7. How well do you know the strengths of the members of your Studio?

Not at all		Extremely well

Our strengths are:

8. What is my preferred way of receiving feedback from colleagues?

Face to face		Mostly on emails/shared documents etc.

We will provide feedback to one another by:

9. Is there anything you do in your current teaching situation that you're not ready to let go of?

Notes:

10. What is my general disposition during conflict/difficult situations?

I pretend nothing's wrong		I like to have honest, direct dialogue

As a Studio we will resolve conflict or difficult situations by:

11. How well do I identify and manage my stress and/or stressful situations?

Reactively		Proactively

As a studio we can support each other by:

12. What are our 'bottom line' expectations for working together?

Our 'bottom lines' are:

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Addressing and resolving conflict through dialogue with others is one of the more difficult skills to adopt as a core process for growing one's world view. Yet the capacity to confront dissonance with a growth mindset, to respectfully listen, display an openness to inquire into another's world view and change and compromise one's own worldview in the light of a differing perspective, is a fundamental communication skill needed to be able to work effectively in a truly collaborative way.

A "culture of niceness" can exist when people are too worried about hurting others' feelings and of being seen to be unkind if they raise issues that need to be aired. Te Kowhai School (Hamilton) has deliberately challenged this thinking,developing a set of collaborative norms, to reframe ideas about trust,honesty and how these qualities can be nurtured.

COLLABORATIVE NORMS- Tony Grey, Te Kowhai School

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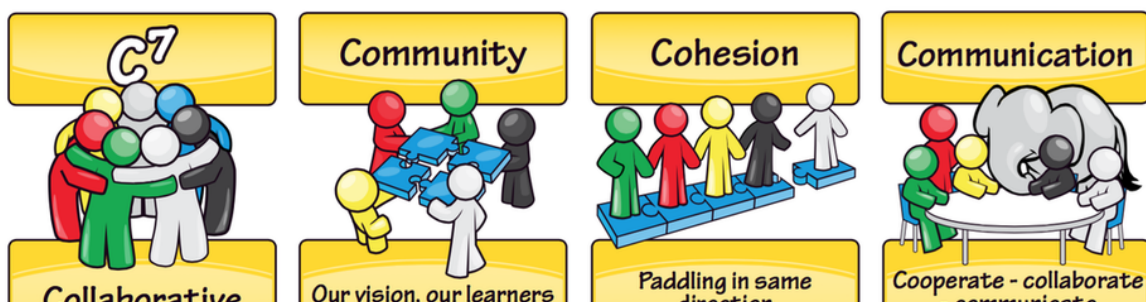
If deep trust is to develop within relationships , a raft of communication norms need to be openly discussed and incorporated into daily practices. Viviane Robinson's 'Open to learning conversations' framework provides a useful tool for holding conversations focused on the issues, not the person.

WE: The impact of Collaboration

"*If teachers are to change, they need to participate in a professional learning community that is focused on becoming responsive to students... As an intervention on its own, a collegial community will often end up merely entrenching existing practice and the assumptions on which it is based.*"   *Hattie & Timperely (2007)*

Collaborative practice is not an end goal in itself. Although improving a team's function is critical, it is only one criterion by which a team's collaborative capacity should be measured. Of equal importance to how a team collaborates, is the impact of the team's collaboration on learning.
The underlying mindset needs to be *'our teaching is focused on responding to the needs of learners';* hence the importance of having learning and a learner-centred pedagogy at the centre of school decision making.

Assumptions about which teachers can function together as a group and which cannot, add to the complexity of collaboration. A belief that working with friends will lead to higher functioning, higher impact teams, instead of putting people with different perspectives together, is a misperception (Kain, 2006).

Many schools shared with me that, particularly in the early stages of forming collaborative teams, who teachers worked with was their greatest worry. Beneath the worry is often a fear of being vulnerable.
Patrick Lecioni (2003) argues that members of a cohesive functional team need to have *vulnerability based trust.*
"(They)*...must learn to comfortably and quickly acknowledge, without provocation, their mistakes, weaknesses, failures and needs for help. They must also readily recognise the strengths of others, even when those strengths exceed their own."* (p36)

The Trust Triangle illustrates that by taking risks and being vulnerable, by proving ourselves to be trustworthy, builds the trust needed to function effectively.

Talking straight & Listening to understand:

Trust Triangle

Respect

Trust

Reliability

Honesty underpins everything- to self and others

Straight talk is a balance of respect and honesty- saying it how you perceive it and checking for understanding and listen to understand.

Making commitments:

We have obligations in a trust relationship; we need to make commitments to each other; to listen for understanding, not to what is said but "what's the feeling I'm picking up here?"

To do this draws on 7 competencies: rapport, empathy, reflecting feelings, summarising, paraphrasing, challenging inconsistencies to check understandings.

Reliability:

When we make our commitments to each other we need to follow through to do what we say we will do, and to ask for help when we need it (not to pretend we can do something when we need support)

Reliability: to behave with integrity

Trust : trust increases as we build each area of the pyramid and results in respectful relationships.