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Description automatically generated with medium confidenceDeveloping a Support Network for Program Staff

**Tip Sheet**



**What to do:** Use these tips to help create a community of trust and mutual respect, where program leaders and staff members can clearly communicate needs, listen to and understand each other, and respond.

**Why it matters:** Feeling understood, valued, and supported at work helps everyone feel, think, and perform better, so you navigate difficult moments with less stress and more success. An in-house community of care impacts student performance, too.

# Tips for Developing a Support Network

Communicate

Building a support network starts with open, honest communication. Use “I feel” statements to clearly express that these sentiments are unique to you.

*For example:* “I feel overwhelmed by my workload.”

“I’m not sure how to help my students.”

**Provide Examples**

Give specific examples to support your statements. By describing the situation clearly, you make it more likely that others will be able to help.

*For example:* “I’d like another facilitator to give me feedback on my lesson plans because I’m not sure how to make my activities more engaging.”

“I can’t finish all my work during program hours. For example, last week, I spent 3 hours on the weekend working on lesson plans. That’s personal time I want to spend with my family.”

**Listen**

Use active listening skills to understand other people’s needs. You may find that you have things in common or can provide mutual support. Active listening skills include asking questions, reflecting on the speaker’s statements, and summarizing to check your understanding. Listening shows respect and care and makes you a better coworker.

*For example:* “Can you tell me more about why you’re struggling to balance work with your personal life?”

“If I’m understanding you correctly, you’d like to have a co-teacher to help you plan lessons and manage student behavior in out-of-school time. Is that right?”

**Timing Matters**

Pick the right time to approach program leaders or peers to discuss challenging topics. You may want to talk in a private place or meet outside regular program hours.

For example: “Can we talk about some of my concerns for 15 minutes after our program ends?”

“When is a good time to discuss building self-care practices into staff training?”



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