

# Math Reform for Equity

## *Case Discussion Protocol*



**Developed by the  
Collaborative on  
Political Leadership  
in the  
Superintendency**

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# Math Reform for Equity

## Case Discussion Protocol



### **Lesson objectives:**

- To identify the political challenges that superintendents face
- To examine how micro, meso, and macro political leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions support superintendents in navigating political complexity
- To deepen understanding of the importance of proactive political leadership skills at the local level

### **Pre-reading:**

- [Framework on Political Leadership in the Superintendency](#)
- Case: Math Reform for Equity

### **Case Study questions:**

- What are the major challenges in this case?
- How does the context (who the leader is, the local context, and/or the national context) influence how the leader approaches the challenges you've identified?
- What does the leader do to be proactive in their political leadership?
- What is the educational question that most requires deliberation in this case?
- What else could the leader do?

### **Tools:**

[Graphic organizer for analysis](#)

### **Lesson Timing:**

One and a half hours; optional 30 minutes additional to make personal connections

### **OPENING (10 MIN)**

*Today, we are going to talk about a case in which the superintendent of Mountainview is attempting to de-track middle and high school mathematics and, not surprisingly, finds that not everyone agrees that this is a good thing for kids. As we explore the case, put your feet in the shoes of this leader.*

**Turn to a partner (2 min each):** Take a minute to connect, leader to leader. You've probably been through similar things. What is this case about **at its core?**



Have a few people share-out.

Possible look-fors:

- It is about making equity-focused change
- It is about making change in an environment where adults do not agree
- It is about figuring out where to compromise while still moving forward
- It is about the importance of exploring conflict in educational spaces

*Yes, this is not just about de-tracking in math. So, while you may be tempted to debate the pros and cons of math reform in this case, your job is to think deeply about how this leader can make change that improves outcomes for youth (math outcomes in this instance) in an environment where people do not agree.*

## CONTEXT (20 MIN)

*But while we've all faced similar things, every situation is different. Even when we face new challenges in our own districts, we need to reflect on the context because it is always shifting.*

- **Micro:** What do we know about the leader? Who is he in this case? Why is this important? (5 min) Chart.
- **Macro:** What do we know about the wider context (external to the district)? What is going on that might influence local change? Why is this important? (5 min) Chart.
- **Meso:** What do we know about the local context? What are the stakeholder groups? What do they bring? Why is this important? (10 min) Chart.

*Now that we have a handle on context, and let's assume that the superintendent knows this as well, let's talk about what the superintendent does.*

## ANALYSIS (30 MIN)

**Discuss in small groups:** How does the superintendent address the challenges? What are the superintendent's goals? How do they try to achieve them? How do they deal with the political challenges that arise? (15 min)

**Analyze:** Based on our research there are five interrelated proactive political leadership skills that are essential: visioning, communicating, political mapping, mobilizing and relationship building. Introduce the graphic organizer and have the map what they discussed accordingly. (15 min)



## WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION (25 MIN)

*Now, we've all been in these situations. And it is so often easier to analyze someone else's work rather than our own. To what extent was he able to use these strategies to make positive change?*

Based on your analysis, what would you say he did especially well? Ask for evidence. (5 min)

What could he have done better? Ask for evidence. (5 min)

What **knotty questions** arise from discussing the case? (10 min) (Chart the questions.)

If you had to give three major recommendations to the superintendent moving forward, that are attentive to these knotty questions, what would they be and why? Ask people to share some examples. (10 min)

## CLOSING (5 MIN)

Turn back to your original partner: What do you see as the implications for your own leadership?

Close with big ideas to remember and resources available on CPLS site.

## (OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL 30-75 MINUTES)

*Now that we've had a chance to discuss the case, it is time to turn toward our own work as political leaders.*

*Option 1:* In pairs, superintendents can talk through this [reflective tool](#).

*Option 2:* In triads, superintendents can work through [this consultancy protocol](#).

*Option 3:* In triads, superintendents can work through the grounding exercise in the [Superintendents Political Leadership Field Book](#).

## QUICK EVALUATION (5 MIN)

At the end or after the session, we suggest using this set of questions.

Prompts:

1. What do you think about the case analysis process that we went through? How did it support your learning? How could the process be improved in support of your learning?



2. What did you learn from the case discussion about navigating political challenges?
3. What are your current thoughts on what you need to work on as a political leader?