How Should We Collaborate?

People cannot always mix things up by themselves. They need deliberate designs to help them do that – without sacrificing and, indeed, also actively enhancing the quest to build deeper and stronger relationships of trust, support and solidarity throughout the school, network or system.

One way to think about all this is in terms of high and low emphases on **trust** in working relationships on the one hand, and structure, tools and **precision** in work organization, on the other. These are represented in Figure 1 (below).

Quadrants of Collaboration-

No collaboration
(low trust, low precision)
No collaboration is a culture of teaching that has to be left behind wherever it can. It insulates teachers from ideas and makes them anxious about themselves and envious or suspicious of others. There are no clear frameworks for meeting, planning or decision making, or ways of sharing and giving feedback on practice. Improvement stalls, teachers get overwhelmed and lose heart, quality deteriorates, and many teachers leave.

Contrived collegiality
(low trust, high precision)
Contrived collegiality is top-down and enforces teamwork to implement requirements set by others. Contrived collegiality fails to maintain motivation or anything more than superficial compliance. It is high threat, low yield and also leads to teachers being lost to the school or the profession.

Informal collaboration
(high trust, low precision)
Informal collaboration builds strong and enduring relationships, supports professional conversation and maintains teacher motivation. However, it tends to persist only where teachers have a strong affinity for each other and their values and styles, and it has difficulty translating promising conversations into positive action.

Collaborative professionalism
(high trust, high precision)
Collaborative professionalism is the golden cell of professional collaboration, where teachers have strong relationships, trust each other and feel free to take risks and make mistakes. There are also tools, structures and protocols of meeting, coaching, feedback, planning and review that support practical action and continuous improvement of the work undertaken together.

1. Quadrants of collaboration

	Low Trust High	
Precision High	Contrived Collegiality	Collaborative Professionalism
Precision Low	No Collaboration	Informal Collaboration