

Every sports enthusiast can identify the obvious differences in performance when teams are cohesive and have common goals. The importance and power of “TEAM” is evident to anyone who has ever had connections with successful groups of individuals working to accomplish their priorities. Garrard County educational leaders became acutely aware of these guiding principles at KASA in July 2013 when we held our first annual leadership retreat.

Our administrative team, made up of principals, assistant principals, and Central Office administrators met for the first time as a group when we held our KASA retreat last July. It was a time for learning about one another and discovering our group’s capacity for teamwork. The purpose of our retreat was to develop Group Norms that would be the foundation of future team decisions and actions. George Wilson, Executive Director of the Green River Educational Cooperative, led our group in discussions that helped form a unanimous commitment to our seven norms that include the following:

1. *We will be positive, honest and confidential.*
2. *We will use data as the basis for decision-making and prioritizing our work.*
3. *We will work together as a team toward common goals.*
4. *We will actively listen to each other and value one another’s input.*
5. *We will start and end meetings on time.*
6. *We will be free from distractions.*
7. *We will come to our meetings with a growth mindset, and will focus on student achievement.*

We agreed that norms are just like rules at school. They must be consistently enforced and must be constantly reviewed. These seven norms now guide our practice, and we read them at the beginning of each weekly administrative team meeting.

The retreat became just what we wanted it to be—a day of calibration for all of our school and district leaders—a day of coming together as a family, beginning to view ourselves as an effective unit of support across all grades and all schools in our district. The effect has been lasting as was evidenced in early March when a review team from AdvancEd visited our district for the purpose of determining re-accreditation and commended our leadership at all levels for actively seeking ways to involve and engage all stakeholders. This powerful practice began at our KASA leadership retreat in July.

Knowing that this time is productive and meaningful to our educational leaders, we have scheduled a second retreat for KASA 2014, where our focus will be on the development of a long term instructional plan for our school system. This work will be more involved and, will no doubt take longer than the process of developing our group norms, but we are ready and able to achieve this goal successfully because of the power of “TEAM”, a power we accessed and maximized through our 2013 leadership retreat.