

# Your Headline Today

We all have a story. What would be the headline to your personal story? Just as every school can be placed within one of the three types we discussed in the previous section, every leadership team or group has a story. Chances are, you have tried many things, and most of those things have not worked out like you have expected or wanted. Most likely, many of the same challenges you have been facing for months or years at your school are still present. Quite often, you might not be able to fully see or understand how your work has made much of an impact at all. On the micro level, you can say that you have helped the lives of many students and of some staff members and faculty persons. However, the big wins that you have been working so hard for may not have come. That is part of your story—and your story is a big part of what defines you.

If your team had a news article headline that described the essential, one-sentence story of your leadership group, what would it be? Would it be like one school visited recently that defined it as “Leadership group spends a million dollars and no one shows up”? Would it be, “You don’t understand our challenges”? Your story has a unique power. The story that you hold within yourself about your group, interacting with those internal stories about your group within others, creates a culture—and that culture defines what your group does, sways your group’s beliefs, and shapes who your group celebrates. For the first school we mentioned, time and time again people had taken advantage of the goodwill of this crew. Accordingly, their story was one of heartache. They began to believe that fewer and fewer people deserved their attention. Eventually, the only people that this group celebrated was themselves.

In the activities that follow, you will have the startling, often uncomfortable discussion of allowing your participants to examine what headline they feel they are currently operating under. After all, we can’t talk about becoming something new until we are clear about what we are today.

## Overview

In the activities that follow, each participant will (a) define his or her group's current "headline," (b) name their beliefs and values, and (c) identify who their group currently celebrates.

## Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Agenda

This activity is designed in three segments, delivered in a single 45-minute session.

Segment 1: The participants engage in a whole-group discussion around "Your Headline Today"

Segment 2: The participants engage in an investigation/inquiry in groups of four.

Segment 3: The participants engage in a whole-group discussion about their findings from the activity.

## Activity

### Segment 1:

1. Through storytelling and questioning strategies, define “Our Current Headline.” Illustrate how different people and different organizations have different stories. Compare and contrast the stories of some well-known individuals or organizations and how their story defined (a) what they did, (b) what they valued, and (c) who they celebrated.

### Segment 2:

2. Organize the participants into groups of four. Ideally, they are sitting in squares, such that they can collaborate around a single large sheet of butcher paper.
3. Ask participants to write at the top of the sheet (as if it were a newspaper) what they see as the current headline of this group. Prompt them with the question, “In one sentence, what do you think our story is as a group?”
4. Next, ask participants to write down three bullet points about what this group does, influenced by or as a result of this story.
5. Next, ask participants to make a list of three to five bullet points about what this group believes and values, influenced by or as a result of this story.
6. Finally, ask participants to make a list of who this group celebrates, influenced by or as a result of this story.

### Segment 3:

7. In a whole group discussion, engage with the participants around the findings of their butcher papers.
8. Point to the idea that “Until we change this story, it will be very hard to change what we do, what we value, or who we celebrate.

**Our Current Headline**

**What do we do?**

**What do we believe and value?**

**Who do we celebrate?**