

What Can School Teams Learn from Geese?

DECEMBER 13, 2012 <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/teacher-school-teams-geese-story-elena-aquilar>



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"We Learn from Geese," I wanted to share these. There are many versions of this all over the Internet, all of which say, "Author unknown." Here's a version I like.

Lessons We Learn from Geese

During the fall, thousands of Canada Geese migrate from northern Canada to the central U.S. They fly in a V-formation at speeds of 60 miles per hour, honking constantly. They can fly for 16 hours without resting.

How do they do this? Through teamwork. So what can we learn from these geese?

1. **Fact:** As each goose flaps its wings it creates "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

2. **Fact:** When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.



Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

3. **Fact:** When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on others' skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

4. **Fact:** The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

5. **Fact:** When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.

How Can We Use This?

I often offer this to teams as they begin working together. "What resonates for you?" I ask. Everyone loves the idea of honking at each other for encouragement. In one school, a teacher (who could be a little cantankerous) suggested that when attending staff meetings, everyone wear hats reading, "We're the honkers, not the honkies!" On many occasions teachers at that site began honking like geese at moments in which they wanted to cheer for each other (a little odd looking, but very meaningful for them).

What resonates for you? Have you ever worked at a site where the wisdom of geese was at play? What other symbolic representations of effective teams are moving to you

