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*Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.*

The Differences Between Allies, Accomplices & Co-Conspirators May Surprise You

by Tiffany Jana Ph. D.

Allyship is the thinking and learning stage.

- An ally is mostly someone who believes in the equal rights of all people, or a specific group of people.
- An ally is someone who supports equal justice in theory — often with thoughts and prayers, and sometimes with words in small group settings.
- An ally may care about social justice issues but doesn't actually show up and take action.

Accomplice—The reactive response

- Accomplices actively work to dismantle systems of oppression.
- They have passed through the initial phase of allyship and done the requisite work of learning and understanding their roles in upholding unjust structures.
- Accomplices begin to tap their privilege in service of justice.

Co-conspirator—The proactive phase

- Co-conspirators work alongside the communities they support.
- They have, seek, and create meaningful relationships with the people they actively support.
- Co-conspirators show up with (not just for) Black, Indigenous and People of Colour and/or LGBTQIA+ folks and they listen.
- What separates co-conspirators from allies is the willingness to put themselves on the line.

The journey

- What are some starting points you would recommend to support your staff in developing their capacity on all three levels listed above?
- As you move along the continuum from allyship to co-conspirator, know that there will be setbacks. You will make mistakes all along the way—but that should not stop you.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. What do the terms ally, accomplice and co-conspirator mean to you and your lived experiences? How do they apply in your context?

2. What are the opportunities and challenges in taking on the role of ally, accomplice and/or co-conspirator in your professional context?

3. To what extent is becoming a co-conspirator doable? What are possible risks and rewards?

4. What are some examples of actions you have observed colleagues have taken that demonstrate their role as ally, accomplice or co-conspirator? What has been the impact?

5. What are some starting points for becoming an ally which Dr. Jana says provides the foundation for becoming an accomplice and a co-conspirator?
