



Professional Learning Communities

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What are PLCs?

Learning Outcomes:

- Define what people mean when they talk about working in a PLC
- Experience the three BIG ideas important to implementing a PLC
- Discover the “cultural shift” in how teachers do their work from a focus on “teaching” to a focus on “learning”

Common Definition of a PLC

- Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators.

- DuFour, (2004)

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- Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators.
 - *Let's talk about this assumption:*

In addition...PLCs

- Provide a structure to support the processes essential for increased student learning.
- Are a model to help schools see better results.
- Provide practical strategies that challenge and empower administrators and teachers to collaborate to create a school culture that increases achievement.
- Transform schools from places teachers come to work to places where kids come to learn.

PLCs generally, focus on Three BIG IDEAS

- Focus on Learning
- Focus on Collaboration
- Focus on Results

Participants will discuss how to narrow essential learning, brainstorm options for gathering and analyzing data from common formative assessments for better results, and discuss how to intervene for ALL students' success

- Focus on Learning for ALL Students
 - Essential Learning
 - Monitor Learning with Assessments
 - Systematic Interventions

First BIG IDEA broken down...

1. Focus on Learning

*If the purpose of schools is truly to ensure high levels of learning for **all** students, schools will:*

- Clarify what each student is supposed to learn (Common Core State Standards)
- Monitor each student's learning on a timely basis (Formative Common Assessments)
- Create systems to ensure students receive additional time and support if they are not learning (Structures that are directive, timely, and systematic)

Essential Learning

Defined as....

- Critical Skills, knowledge and dispositions
- Outcomes or power standards
- Determine together what is essential
- Not just adopt standards and curriculum, work together to clarify, dissect, and agree together
- How do you decide what to teach? Resources to use?
- Guiding points to consider when deciding the essential learning (Doug Reeves):
 - Does it have endurance?
 - Does it have leverage?
 - Does it develop readiness for next level or grade?

Monitoring Student Learning

- Difference between Formative and Summative Assessments
- Summative tests are like an autopsy; they are an assessment of learning, not an assessment for learning
- Assessment is the most important tool we have for school improvement (Rick Stiggins)
- Formative tests are important because kids can improve and it shows they DO learn it.
- Time is the variable that provides additional opportunity for kids to learn it.

Systematic School-wide Interventions

- School-wide plan for extra time and support
- Not left to chance
- Timely and prompt
- Interventions occur during the school day
- Students are required and directed, not invited
- Not left to discretion of individual teacher

Reflect on Interventions

- What interventions are you, your team, or your school using?
- How might your team add systematic interventions as team?
- What kind of data are you gathering to inform your instruction?
- How do you use data to tell you who needs extra support?

Second BIG IDEA

2. Focus on Collaboration

All of the research correlates collaborative cultures to increased student achievement:

- Collaboration is a systematic process in which we work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results
- The teams focus on the right things: common goals, common practices, common outcomes
- They focus on learning, have time in the day, ask questions about why kids are not learning, have team norms to guide their collaboration
- Leadership is participative and distributed

Professional Development Definition in Action-video



Typical Assurances and Commitments Sought by Faculty

- The PLC process will not require me to work beyond my contractual day
- Results from common assessments will not be used in my evaluation in a punitive way
- Results from common assessments will not be shared with others to humiliate or cause competition
- I will be able to retain my individual autonomy in terms of instructional strategies and teaching style

These are reasonable requests... TRUST each other.

“The key to leading is to know the teachers you are leading behind.” (Dennis Sparks)

Third BIG IDEA

3. Focus on Results

Assess effectiveness of teaching on the results not the intentions:

- Teams seek relevant data and information
- Use the information to measure beginning points and continuous improvement
- Make a cultural shift in how teachers do their work (i.e. not just lesson plans and kids behavior, but are the kids making progress)

Cultural Shifts in a PLC...

- 1) Shifts in Fundamental Purpose
- 2) Shifts in Use of Assessments
- 3) Shifts in Response when Students Don't Learn and already know it
- 4) Shifts in the Work of Teachers
- 5) Shifts in Focus
- 6) Shifts in School Culture
- 7) Shifts in Professional Development

PLCs help us to be learners and leaders

- PLCs help us close the knowing/doing gap
- PLCs help us put into action what we know matters and works!
- PLCs help us with the “disconnect” between what we know and what we do.

You are professionals...

- Definition of a professional: “Use the best methods, knowledge of the time and place.”
- When professional ignore best practices and research based practices—sued for malpractice!
- As professionals, we have an obligation to intervene and assist to get the best results possible.

Why Teach?

If you believe it is important to help children and young men and women

Acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Essential to productive and satisfying lives,

Then consider being a teacher.

If you are committed to your own lifelong learning,
To an ongoing study of the art and science of your
craft,
Then consider being a teacher.

If you truly enjoy kids, if you are able to see the best
in each of them,
If you are willing to persist
When confronted by their recalcitrance or
indifference,
Then consider being a teacher.



If you feel joy in seeing students learn to believe in themselves

Because you helped them achieve what they felt was beyond their grasp,

Then consider being a teacher.

If you understand that as a teacher you can affect eternity because it is impossible to tell where your influence stops,

Then consider being a teacher.



If you recognize that giving of yourself to others and
developing others
Can be one of the most significant and fulfilling ways
In which to live your life,
Then consider being a teacher!

National Staff Development Council, 2006

Thank you!