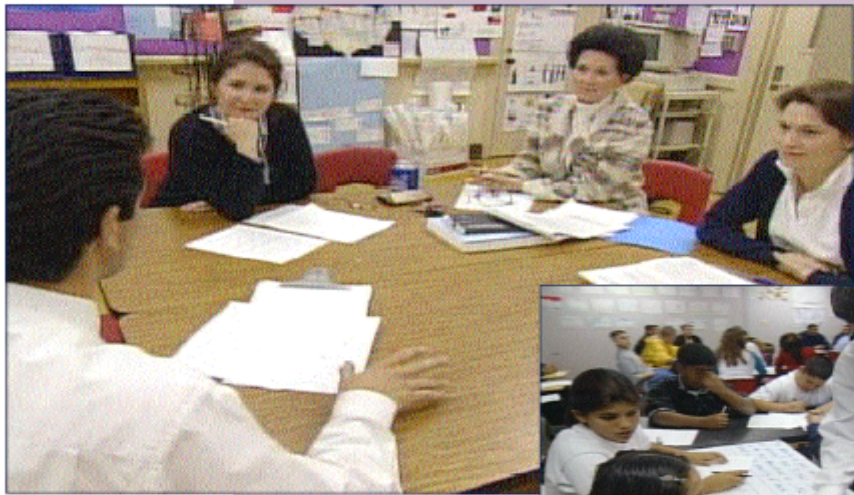


*Professional
Learning
Communities*



Professional Learning Communities

A group of teachers who meet regularly as a team:

- to study data,
- to analyze current levels of achievement,
- to set achievement goals,
- to identify essential and valued student learning,
- to develop common formative and summative assessments,
- to share strategies, and
- to research best practices.

The expectation is that this collaborative effort will produce ongoing improvement in student achievement.

In order to achieve these goals, members of the PLC need to define and answer these essential questions:

- What is it we want all students to learn?
- How will we know when each student has mastered the essential learning?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
- How will we deepen the learning for students who have already mastered essential knowledge and skills?

The purpose of the PLC is for the teacher to develop a new understanding and apply it to their classroom in order to raise student achievement. **Student achievement** is the indicator of this new learning and the change in teacher practice.

Resource: <http://www.allthingsplc.info/about/aboutPLC.php>

Expectations

- ❖ PLC teams will meet at least once a month. Teams are highly encouraged to meet more than once a month.
- ❖ PLC teams will create **SMART** (Strategic, Measureable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, Time-bound) goals and action plans based on student needs as defined by data analysis. **SIP** (School Improvement Plan) goals and district goals should be aligned.
- ❖ SMART goals, teacher learning goals and action plans will be reviewed by the principal and central office administration. (PLC Goals Action Plan Worksheet will be used to organize information.)
- ❖ PLC work will focus on learning for students. Teachers are encouraged to do so by looking at student work and/or formative and summative assessments.
- ❖ PLC teams will report progress made towards goals at year end on SIPs.
- ❖ Sites may determine how PLC teams will report progress throughout the school year.
- ❖ PLC teams will share their progress with the school staff quarterly.

Tasks to Complete

- 1) Determine a facilitator for your group this year. *
- 2) Establish norms for your group. (See Worksheet)
- 3) Set meeting dates and locations.
- 4) Submit PLC Planning and Reporting form to your principal
- 5) (See Team Planning Action Template)

* The facilitator is a vital role for your PLC. This person is in charge of setting the agenda. There is a **Team Agenda Template** in the resource section that will help you to stay on task.

Getting Started

As the previous page outlined, *selecting a facilitator is an important first step*. The facilitator will help set the meeting dates and times as well as be in charge of the agenda. When you use the Team Agenda Template, the facilitator will ensure that agenda items are aligned to school goals and are focused on results.

The second step is to complete a Professional Learning Team Data-Literacy Survey. This survey will help to identify strengths and opportunities for growth regarding the use of student data. For example, there are a few questions about common assessments that might require assistance with the development of common assessments or formative assessments.

Summative assessment...is assessment of learning which is designed to provide a final measure to determine if learning goals have been met. *Examples:* teacher-created achievement tests, final exams, state tests.

Formative Assessment... is assessment for learning which is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. *Examples:* common assessments, projects, learning logs/journals, worksheets, quizzes, or any other classroom activities that provide feedback to teachers about whether students have learned a particular learning target-while they are still teaching the unit.

The third step would be to complete the: What is our Team Monitoring? Template.

Data Study

After building data study, teachers analyze trends in student achievement data in their own PLC teams. (Some possible data sources are: benchmarks, summative assessments, classroom level formative assessments, common student work, projects or performance evaluations, etc.)

Questions to discuss during data study:

- ❖ Did your PLC achieve or make progress towards its SMART goal from last year?
- ❖ Will your PLC continue your study from last year or will your PLC need a new-targeted area to study?
- ❖ Can your PLC contribute to your building's targeted areas?
- ❖ How has student achievement changed over the last 2-3 years?
- ❖ Are there specific strengths or needs of the different demographic groups?
- ❖ Are there any curriculum issues that your PLC will benefit from studying this year?
- ❖ (See Professional Learning Team Data-Literacy Survey)

SMART Goals Aligned To SIP Goals

Determine the SIP goal your PLC team will support. Write a SMART goal for your PLC for 2010-11. **SMART goals are specific, measureable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound.**

Professional Development:

Student Work/Formative Assessments/Summative Assessments

Student work is any formative, summative, common assessment or other common work that all students complete and is aligned with the SMART goal. By reviewing student work periodically, PLC teams have the opportunity to monitor the effect/impact their instruction is having on student achievement prior to the final summative assessment identified by the SMART goal. Student work should be collected, shared, and analyzed in your PLC team to monitor the progress toward the SMART goal. Your site team/administration will be looking for evidence of this during the year.

In order to facilitate professional dialog, it is important that all PLC members bring common student work to sessions identified for analyzing results. Members are given the opportunity to present work and assessment results, and seek the advice of colleagues to collaboratively improve student achievement for all.

When meeting to share student work, PLC teams will be more successful if a protocol is used for professional dialog. A protocol consists of agreed upon guidelines for a conversation (**norms**), and it is the existence of this structure, which everyone understands and has agreed to, that permits a certain kind of conversation to occur -- often a kind of conversation which people are not in the habit of having.

Student work includes: Anything that students do that demonstrates students' increased understanding or performance based on teachers' improved instruction, and allows for meaningful professional dialog:

- ❖ Formative, Summative, or Common Assessments (highly recommended)
- ❖ Projects
- ❖ Standards Assessments
- ❖ Writing samples

Other Professional Development

The structure of PLC teams allows for the ownership of professional development for members. These reflections on professional development activities become the focus of the PLC meetings when looking at student work that is not on the agenda.

During your monthly PLC meeting, you may choose to share professional dialog regarding common assessment (formative, summative), student work, or you may determine to use building staff development resources to seek additional professional development to improve instruction in alignment with PLC goal. PLC teams should contact their building or district Staff Development committee for funding and other resources for professional development needs.

Suggestions for professional development include:

- ❖ Peer observation / classroom visits (highly recommended)
- ❖ Book, article studies, professional video studies
- ❖ Video sharing – peers demonstrating use of improved instruction
- ❖ Professional workshops aligned with the PLC initiative
- ❖ Study content related best practices
- ❖ Lesson design study

The next section is a Framework for the school year. It is intended as a possible timeline.

A PLC Inquiry and Action Cycle Model

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Week/Session 1: | Collect, Analyze and Interpret Data and Set Goals |
| Week/Session 2: | Create a Plan |
| Weeks/Sessions 3-5: | Learn/Apply/Reflect |
| Week/Session 6: | Evaluate the Learning |

Structure of a PLC

Elementary - Grade Level/Secondary - Content Area PLC teams

This section of the handbook can be used to guide the schools through the PLC process. Through the Inquiry and Action Cycle the grade level or content area PLC will work under the guidance of a PLC Leadership Team member to impact student learning through:

1. Looking at grade level/content area data
2. Identifying specific grade level needs and priorities
3. Developing PLC goals and action plans based on data and the School Improvement Plan
4. Engaging in professional learning to support teachers in addressing identified student needs
5. Applying professional learning in the classroom
6. Using common formative assessments to obtain information for guiding instruction
7. Sharing lesson plans, videos of instruction and student work to support teacher peer learning
8. Reflecting continually on student learning, teacher learning and instruction to improve outcomes

The suggested size of a PLC is 3-6 people.

Options for forming PLCs

- ❖ Each grade can form a PLC
- ❖ Two grades can combine (e.g. K-1, 2-3,4-5)
- ❖ Specialists can form their own PLC or divide among the grade level teams
- ❖ Special Education teachers and ELL teachers divide among the grade level teams
- ❖ Part-time employees of multiple buildings need to identify the building in which they will be engaging in PLC work
- ❖ Primary grades and Intermediate (for schools with limited classrooms)
- ❖ Content area teachers can form a PLC

When to meet: Your leadership team will develop the PLC meeting schedule or options for staff selection. All PLCs will follow the same schedule. It is important that these meetings take priority over other commitments so teams can work together on a consistent basis.

How often to meet: In the K-5 and K-8 buildings, PLCs will meet at least 4 times a month for at least 60 minutes. One 60 minute session per month will be whole group PD; the three remaining 60 minute sessions in the month will be PLCs.

Facilitator and note taker: These roles could rotate in the buildings.

:

PLC Notebooks should contain the following: PLC handbook, common understandings of Principles of Learning, agreed upon norms, standards, summative data, PLC log with notes, and PLC action plans.

The PLC leadership team will review all PLC notes on a weekly basis, providing feedback and holding all members accountable for their work.

Creating Conditions for Success

Whole Faculty

August or September

Using procedures established in the building, the principal identifies members of the PLC leadership team. This team will compile, analyze data, plan and facilitate whole group professional learning and create organizational structures and accountability systems for PLCs. A calendar including meeting dates and times for the leadership team will be created.

Distribute the **PLC Handbook** that has been developed as a guide to assist buildings with developing PLCs. Also included is a proposed model: **Inquiry and Action Cycle** outlining a structure for PLCs based on a six week cycle. This timeline is provided so that staff periodically examine student learning carefully to ensure that all students are learning and plan for those who are not. At times, the PLC team may need more than once a week to work through the process. The guide has additional resources in the **Appendix** for use during the PLCs.

School Wide Session: Sessions 1-4 provide an overview of the PLC process and school data. These sessions involve the whole staff and can be done in August during the site professional development day. Each session should take approximately 60-90 minutes.

Session 1: The goal of this session is to provide the building with information about where they are as a building in developing their professional learning communities and specify what needs to be done.

Independently, the staff complete the first part of the PLC continuum to determine where their school falls on the continuum (REPRODUCIBLE).

After the completion of the PLC continuum, the staff share out and dialogue. Members of the PLC leadership team should facilitate this meeting, take notes, compile all continuum feedback and discuss in order to determine a starting point for building PLCs. As a group the staff will then complete the worksheet that identifies what needs to be done.

Session 2: The goal of this session is for staff to review school vision, school improvement goals, and individually identify the role they have in helping the school improve student learning.

PLC leadership team facilitates a presentation of school data, the School Improvement Plan and Goals and past professional learning. As a whole, the staff answer the following questions:

- Where are our students now? **Assess Learning Needs**
- Where do our students need to be? **Identify Goals**
- How will we know when they get there? **Determine Focus**
- How will we respond to students experiencing difficulty in learning? **Create a plan**
- How will we deepen the learning for students who have already mastered the essential knowledge and skills? **Create a plan**

Whole school PLC meeting times and dates are collaboratively developed. The leadership team could provide several options that would work for all PLC groups. The whole staff select from among these choices.

Session 3: The goal of this session is to provide an overview of the PLC process and goals to the whole Staff. The PLC leadership team will:

- Present PLC structure, routines and accountability pieces
- Discuss types of student data, procedures for analyzing data, interpreting data.
- Review student work protocol
- Review looking at instruction, e.g. video sharing, peer observation
- Share REPRODUCIBLES (2): **Stages of Team Development** and **Team Agenda Template**.

Session 4: The goal is for teams

- to begin working together to establish a foundation for PLCs,
- to work with teams to identify mission, shared vision, shared values, goals, norms and logistics,
- to identify a facilitator and a recorder. The facilitator and recorder will remain the same person for an entire cycle,
- to identify and maintain norms-write norms in the log and provide a copy for each member

- to summarize patterns that emerged from whole school data discussion. Identify strength and concerns,
- to begin to identify some big ideas or essential learning students need and how they relate to strengths and concerns identified in school data,
- to discuss how the team could support overall school achievement,
- and to identify what is needed to begin to look at specific grade level/content area specific data in the first PLC meeting. Confirm facilitator and recorders responsibilities.

The First PLC Team Meetings

Week/Session #1 of grade level/content area PLC

Focus: Core Instruction Purpose: To answer the following questions

- “Where are our students now?”
- “Where do I want them to be?”

Overview: (for the first week only a portion of the cycle will be completed.) This is to allow the members of the team to become familiar with the PLC process. If the team has difficulty identifying instructional strategies, determining how to measure student learning, or analyzing data contact the central office for assistance.

The PLC Leadership team needs to create a **Focus for Learning:**

1. Develop or briefly review group norms.
2. Look at school goals and review specific grade level/content area data for patterns, identify needs and priorities. Refer to the **PLC Handbook** section on standards, discuss the implications (determine focus) for the specific grade level/content area students. Using the standards and assessment information, as a group, identify what learning is critical for students this year. Prioritize the list. Using this list, place the month in which this learning needs to take place.
3. Develop SMART goals considering where students presently perform and where they need to. SMART goals are written to be specific, measurable, attainable, result-oriented and time-bound. The resources section of the handbook contains a checklist to consider and sample of a SMART goal. Identify specific student learning needs to be addressed.
4. Identify additional information that would be useful for instruction.
5. Determine a common measure to use that will inform instruction.
6. Identify action prior to next PLC- collect additional student information and consider possible strategies.

For additional help determining a possible literacy strategy see additional resource section before considering the questions below. Possible questions to consider prior to next PLC:

1. What type of instructional strategies would support students in reaching these goals?
2. How can we best understand and provide this type of instruction?
3. What types of professional learning are required?
4. How can we support each other in implementing and reflecting on what we are learning in our professional learning communities?
5. How will we measure the impact on student learning?
6. How will we ensure that instruction is rigorous and effective across all classrooms in our professional learning communities?

Create a Plan

Week/Session #2 of grade level/content area PLC

Focus: Core instruction Purpose: Answer questions

- “How will I get them there?”
- “How will I know when they get there?”

Overview: (The second week will also cover only a portion of the cycle.) The team begins by answering the first two questions; “Where are my students?” and “Where do I need them to be?” They will continue with what has been established in week 1 and add to it with additional information or data. The majority of this session will focus on answering the next two questions in the cycle; “How are we going to get them there?” and “Are we on track?”

1. Review PLC SMART goal established for grade level/content area (see additional resources)
2. Review identified student needs and additional information/data members collected (e.g., F&P scores, math assessments)
3. Discuss and plan strategies to achieve the SMART goals (e.g., model lessons, co-planning, lesson sharing, sharing student work, video sharing)
4. Identify specific resources and PD needed to implement strategies. (e.g., professional reading, model lessons)
5. Determine focus of PLC cycle including implementation and/or additional PD. Begin developing a professional learning community action plan (see PLC action plan).
6. Identify items to be acted on the next week.
7. Discuss what is needed for next meeting:
8. Complete **REPRODUCIBLE Structuring Data Conversation**
9. Decide on data to review

Weeks/Sessions #3-5 of grade level/content area PLC

Focus: Core instruction Purpose: Answer questions-

- “Where are our students now?”
- “Where do we want them to be?”
- “How will we get them there?”
- “How will we know when they get there?”

Overview: The team begins by answering the first two questions; “Where are our students now?” and “Where do we want them to be?” They will continue with what has been established in week 1 and 2 and add to it with additional information or data. The majority of this session will focus on answering the next two questions in the cycle; “How will we get them there?” and “How will we know when they get there?” Finally, “Are we on track?”

1. Revisit focus of school goal/grade level/content area SMART goals and PLC focus
2. Discuss Professional Learning Community Action Plan.
 - 2.1 Members share work done around PLC focus, including learning from video sharing, peer observation, professional reading.
 - 2.2 Identify how they applied what they learned in their classroom; specifically what have they done differently, how it went and the impact on student learning.
 - 2.3 Reflect on results of student learning (formative assessment, student work, etc.) discuss whether to maintain or change the focus of the PLC.
- 3 Wrap up: Restate PLC focus. Each teacher writes out plan identifying changes, additional resources or PD needed.
- 4 Establish action step before next PLC-Implement Plan, collect student data/work.

Week/Session #6 of grade level/Content area PLC

Focus: Core instruction (Tier I) & Interventions (Tier II) Purpose: Answer questions-

- “Where are our students now?”
- “Where do I want them to be?”
- “How will I get them there?”
- “How will I know when they get there?”
- “What do we do with students who did not learn?”

Overview: Following the PLC cycle for a number of weeks, teachers have identified what students need to know, engaged in adult learning in order to apply what is learned in the

classroom through quality instruction based on student needs and reflected on teaching practice. In spite of this, some students may not have learned as expected. In order to fulfill the mission of educating all students, it will be necessary for the PLC to examine these students more carefully and create a systematic plan for them.

This part of the inquiry cycle aligns with the strategies for effective and timely assistance for low achieving students section in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). It is during this portion of the cycle that the question becomes “How will I respond when some students don’t learn?” is addressed. During this PLC session, the team engages in a problem solving process for those students not making the identified learning gains.

In preparing for this session, it may be helpful for the PLC facilitators to:

1. Revisit focus of school goal/PLC grade level or content area SMART goals
2. Revise SMART goals around questions
3. Discuss and plan what is needed to achieve the PLC SMART goals
4. Examine each student’s progress toward the identified goal. As a team identify students and answer the question, “What do we do for students who have not learned?”
5. Discuss what may be helpful for those students which may include; change in type of instruction, change in group size, increase in instructional time.
6. Determine the change to make.
7. Create a plan including how to measure progress.
8. Determine focus of PLC.
9. Create a revised action plan.