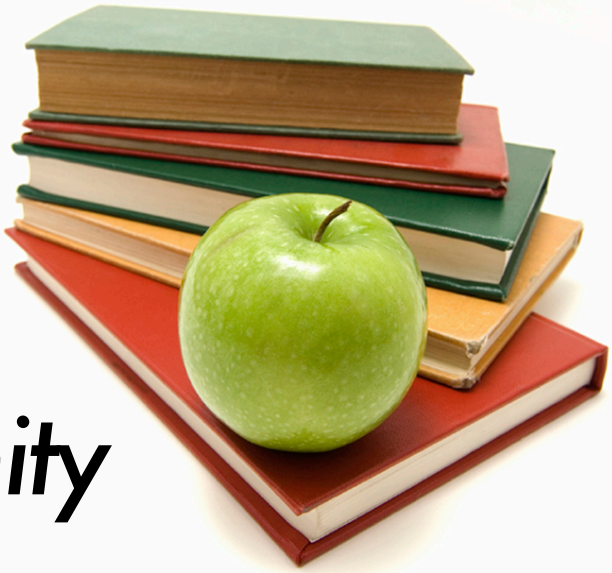
Lakeville Area Public Schools

PLC Handbook

Creating and Sustaining a Professional Learning Community



"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability for school personnel to function as Professional Learning Communities."

- DuFour & Eaker, 1998, "PLC At Work"

Department of Teaching and Learning Services
Lakeville Area Public Schools
Revised - November 15, 2010

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Introduction

What are Professional Learning Communities?

Professional Learning Communities are groups of teachers who meet regularly as a team to analyze current levels of achievement, set achievement goals, identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative and common summative assessments, share strategies, and research best practices. The expectation is that this collaborative effort will produce ongoing improvement in student achievement.

Why collaborate with Professional Learning Communities?

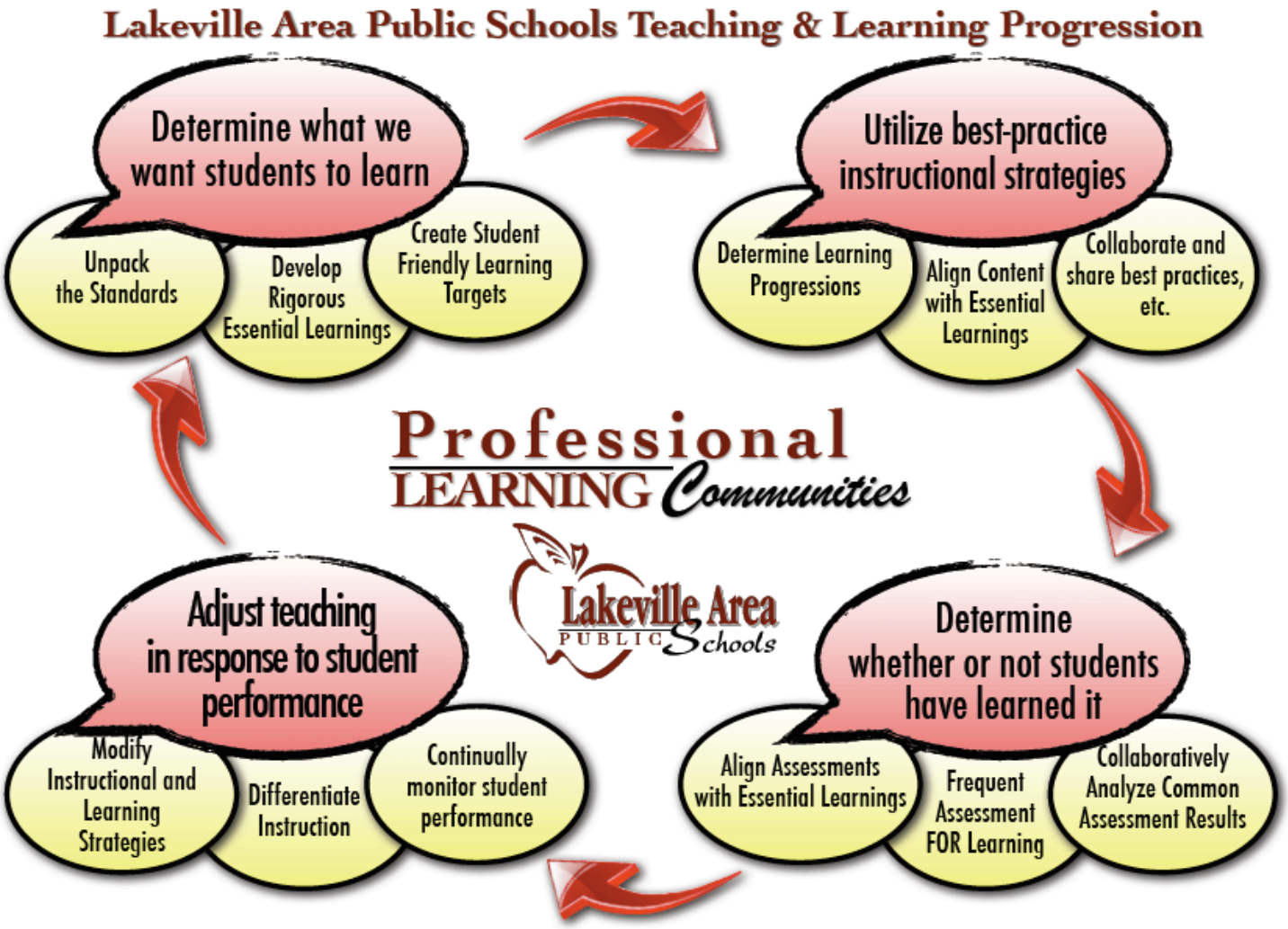
"A team can make better decisions, solve more complex problems, and do more to enhance creativity and build skills than individuals working alone...They have become the vehicle for moving organizations into the future...Teams are not just nice to have. They are hard-core units of the production" (Blanchard, 2007).

In order to achieve the goal of increased student achievement, members of the PLC need to define and answer the following key questions:

- ☑ **What do we want students to learn?**
- ☑ **How will we know if they have learned it?**
- ☑ **What will we do if they do not learn it?**
- ☑ **What will we do if they already know it?**

The purpose of the PLC is for teachers to develop new understanding and apply it to their classroom to raise student achievement. Increased student achievement is the indicator of a successful PLC.

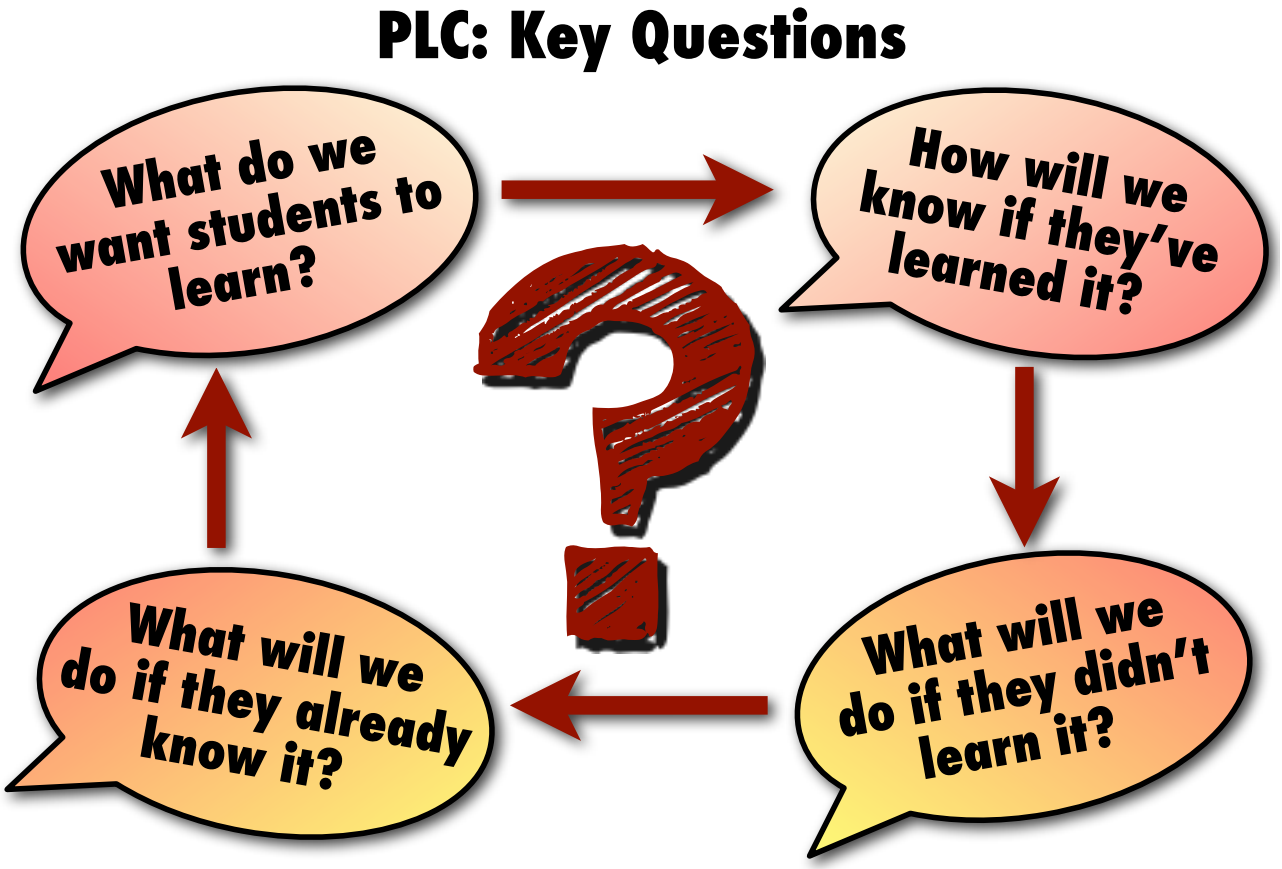
Teaching and Learning Progression



Lakeville Area Public Schools Teaching and Learning Progression was created to show the work that Professional Learning Communities could do. The document was not created to overwhelm the PLC; instead it should be used as a resource to show how the work in a PLC may logically flow. It may be that the PLC will spend more or less time working with one particular section of the teaching and learning progression because of where the PLC team is in the continuous improvement process.

For many, the four key questions in a Professional Learning Community will guide the work of the PLC.

Key Questions for Professional Learning Communities



DuFour, Eaker, DuFour, "Recurring Themes of Professional Learning Communities and the Assumptions They Challenge."

The four questions should be at the heart of every PLC discussion. In order to raise student achievement, Professional Learning Communities must be able to answer all four of these questions. To answer the four questions in a manageable way, the PLC should begin with a small focus. For example, the PLC may decide it will improve student achievement on a particular benchmark or standard. At first this may seem like a small focus, but in reality there are still many parts that make up the benchmark or standard. Some break the standard or benchmark down even further. Is the PLC interested in whether the students can use the vocabulary of the standard or benchmark? Are they looking to see if the students can apply critical thinking skills? By narrowing the focus, the Professional Learning Community will be able to manage its work and see student results faster.

Question 1:What do we want all students to learn?

The PLC should first review the course/grade level essential learnings, state standards and state/ national test specification documents. The discussion that occurs in the PLC regarding these documents will build shared knowledge and understanding of what the PLC wants all students to learn. As the PLC determines its focus, it is important to answer the focus question based on their area of greatest need.

What does a high-functioning PLC look like at the sustaining stage of Question 1?

Analyze Essential Learnings:

- All teachers collaborate to create or review state standards and content/ grade level essential learnings for current courses as well as vertically articulated courses.
- All teachers in PLC are teaching with essential learnings in mind and communicating learning targets to students.
- All teachers demonstrate high level of commitment to the essential curriculum, to students, and to PLC members.

Determine Appropriate Pacing:

- Teachers have established the essential learnings for each unit of instruction and are committed to instructing their students according to the essential learnings and to the team's agreed-upon pacing guide.

Discuss and Share Instructional Strategies:

- All teachers systematically share evidence-based effective instructional strategies and utilize newly learned strategies in their own classrooms.

The Question 1 Rubric shows the main categories that the PLC works on as they answer the first question: What do we want all students to learn? It also shows the stages the PLCs may be in as they work through each process. PLCs work to move toward the sustaining stage. The rubric allows the PLCs to see which stage they are in, where they need to go, and it will allow teams to make plans to move toward the next stage.

PLC Rubric Question 1: What do we want all students to know?

		**Pre-Initiation Stage** *The school has not yet begun to address the component.*	**Initiation Stage** *The effort has not yet begun to impact a "critical mass" of staff.*	**Developing Stage** *Staff has begun to align their thinking, practices, and structures with the component.*	**Sustaining Stage** *The component is deeply embedded in the school culture. It serves as the driving force of the work. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.*	**Next Steps...** What is your plan to move your staff to the next stage?
What do we want all students to learn?	Essential Learnings	• Teachers do not collaborate to establish a common curriculum for students. • Teachers are not teaching with the state standards or the essential learnings in mind.	• District leaders with the help of representative teachers establish essential learnings that attempt to align the district curriculum with state standards. • Teachers create learning targets individually. Learning targets may not align with state standards or essential learnings.	• Teachers work with colleagues to review state standards and district essential learnings. • Teachers attempt to clarify the meaning of the standards. • Teachers create learning targets that align to the state standards, but do not communicate the learning targets to students.	• All teachers collaborate to review state standards, test specifications and content/grade level essential learnings for current classes as well as vertically articulated courses. • All teachers in the PLC are teaching with the essential leanings in mind and communicating learning targets to the students. • All teachers demonstrate a high level of commitment to the essential curriculum , to students and to PLC members.	
	Pacing(Do we want to use pacing guide or curriculum map?)	• Teachers independently determine what they will teach and how long they will teach it.	• Teachers discuss the placement of essential learnings, but not all teachers follow an agreed-upon pacing guide.	• Teachers collectively create a pacing guide to place the essential learnings of the course. • Teachers are loosely following the agreed-upon pacing guide.	• Teachers establish the essential learnings for each unit of instruction and are committed to instruct their students according to the agreed-upon pacing guide.	
	Instructional Strategies	• Teachers do not discuss effective teaching strategies.	• Teachers share teaching strategies that they believe are effective.	• Teachers share instructional strategies found to be effective based on student data and/or research.	• All teachers systematically share evidence-based effective instructional strategies and utilize newly learned strategies in their own classroom.	

Adapted from *Learning by Doing* Dufour, Dufour ,Eaker and Many

Question 1 Rubric: What do we want students to learn?

Question 2: How will we know if students have learned it?

The PLC collectively creates and aligns common assessments to measure student progress toward meeting the team goal. Both formative and summative assessments should be used to measure progress toward the goal. The formative assessments inform the teacher of student progress as the learning is happening. The formative assessments also provide students with feedback about their progress toward the goal. The summative assessments give the teacher and students a summary of the student learning.

What does a high-functioning PLC look like at the sustaining stage of Question 2?

Create and Administer Assessments:

- Every teacher has collaborated within the PLC to develop a series of common, formative and summative assessments.
- Teachers are assessing student learning on a consistent and equitable basis.
- Every teacher administers common formative and common summative assessments.

Align Assessments:

- All assessments are entirely aligned with state standards and essential learnings.
- All assessments administered are consistent in format and rigor with those used by other teachers in the PLC.

Use Data to Evaluate Student Performance and Inform Instruction:

- Teachers collaboratively create a common scoring system and consistently use it to measure proficiency.
- Every teacher regularly uses results from common formative assessments to guide real-time instruction.
- Teachers use results from common summative assessments, make decisions for future changes in content, instruction, and assessment.
- Teachers assign grades to all summative assessments.

The Question 2 Rubric shows the main categories that the PLC works on as they answer the second question: How will we know they have learned it? It also shows the stages the PLCs may be in as they work through each process. PLCs work to move toward the sustaining stage. The rubric allows the PLCs to see which stage they are in, where they need to go, and it will allow teams to make plans to move toward the next stage.

Question 2 Rubric: How will we know they have learned it?

PLC Rubric Question 2: How will we know if they have learned it?

		Pre-Initiation Stage *The school has not yet begun to address the component.*	Initiation Stage *The effort has not yet begun to impact a "critical mass" of staff.*	Developing Stage *Staff has begun to align their thinking, practices, and structures with the component.*	Sustaining Stage *The component is deeply embedded in the school culture. It serves as the driving force of the work. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.*	Next Step… ***What is your plan to move your staff to the next stage?***
How will we know if they have learned it?	Creating and Administering Assessments	• Individual teachers create assessments to monitor student learning. • Teachers' assessments are mostly summative.	• Teachers in the PLC permit a single teacher to create an assessment that is used by other teachers in the PLC. • Teachers' assessments are mostly summative.	• Teachers collaborate to create common assessments and these assessments are administered by most teachers in the PLC. • Teachers discuss how to assess student learning on a consistent and equitable basis. • Teachers administer both formative and summative assessments	• Every teacher has collaborated within the PLC to develop a series of common formative and common summative assessments. • Teachers assess student learning on a consistent and equitable basis. • Every teacher administers common, formative and common summative assessments.	
	Aligning Assessments	• Teachers do not discuss the alignment of assessment content with state standards and essential learnings. • Teachers do not discuss the level of rigor of assessment items.	• Teachers individually align assessment content with the state standards and essential learnings. • Teachers begin to discuss the level of rigor of assessment as it aligns to the standards and essential learnings.	• Teachers collaborate occasionally to align assessment content with standards and essential learnings. • Teachers align the level of rigor of some assessments with the standards and essential learnings.	• All assessments are entirely aligned with state standards and essential learnings. • All assessments administered are consistent in format and rigor with those used by other teachers in the PLC.	

Adapted from *Learning by Doing* Dufour, Dufour ,Eaker and Many

Question 2 Rubric continued

PLC Rubric Question 2: How will we know if they have learned it?

		Pre-Initiation Stage *The school has not yet begun to address the component.*	Initiation Stage *The effort has not yet begun to impact a "critical mass" of staff.*	Developing Stage *Staff has begun to align their thinking, practices, and structures with the component.*	Sustaining Stage *The component is deeply embedded in the school culture. It serves as the driving force of the work. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.*	Next Step… ***What is your plan to move your staff to the next stage?***
How will we know if they have learned it?	Scoring Assessments and Using Data to Inform Instruction	• Teachers grade assessment using individual scoring systems. • Teachers create summative assessments to assign grades and to inform future teacher instruction. • Teachers pay little attention to the results of any assessment given.	• Teachers discuss a common scoring systems to measure proficiency, but do not implement it. • Teachers create summative assessments to assign grades and then review results to inform next year's instruction • Teachers receive analysis of state test results and use results of classroom assessments to be aware of the distribution of grades.	• Teachers collaboratively create a common scoring system however, inconsistently use it to measure proficiency. • Teachers create formative assessments that are used to inform their instruction and to provide feedback to current students and summative assessments are used to assign grades. • Teachers work collaboratively to analyze results of state tests and common assessments to find areas of strength and weakness in the curriculum, which then informs instruction.	• Teachers consistently grade assessments using common scoring to measure proficiency. • Every teacher uses student data from common assessments to guide real-time instruction. • Feedback is timely, specific and directive. • Teachers use the results from state tests and common assessments to inform and improve their individual and collective practice, to identify students who need additional time and support for learning, and to help students monitor their own progress toward agreed-upon learning targets.	

Adapted from *Learning by Doing* Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Many

Question 3: What will we do if they do not learn it?

The PLC uses the results of the common assessments to determine which students need additional time and support in learning the essential skills. Collectively, the team develops a plan to support those students who are not making progress toward the goal.

What does a high-functioning PLC look like at the sustaining stage of Question 3?

Determine Appropriate Intervention and Differentiation:

- The PLC has a highly coordinated, sequential system of interventions in place.
- The PLC identifies and makes plans for students to receive extra support even before they fail. Student achievement is monitored on a daily basis. Students who experience difficulty are required, rather than invited, to put in extra time and utilize extra support. If the current level of support is not sufficient, there is an increased amount of time and support provided.
- All students are guaranteed access to this systematic intervention regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.
- Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.

The Question 3 Rubric shows the main categories that the PLC works on as they answer the third question: What will we do if they don't learn it? It also shows the stages the PLCs may be in as they work through each process. PLCs work to move toward the sustaining stage. The rubric allows the PLCs to see which stage they are in, where they need to go, and it will allow teams to make plans to move toward the next stage.

Question 3 Rubric: What will we do if they don't learn it?

PLC Rubric Question 3: What will we do if they do not learn it?

		Pre-Initiation Stage *The school has not yet begun to address the component.*	Initiation Stage *The effort has not yet begun to impact a "critical mass" of staff.*	Developing Stage *Staff has begun to align their thinking, practices, and structures with the component.*	Sustaining Stage *The component is deeply embedded in the school culture. It serves as the driving force of the work. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.*	Next Step… ***What is your plan to move your staff to the next stage?***
What will we do if they do not learn it?	Intervention	• The PLC/ school has no systematic plan either to monitor student achievement on a timely basis or to respond to students who are not learning with additional time and support. • Teachers are solely responsible for determining what happens when a student experiences difficulty in learning.	• The PLC/school has a systematic plan to monitor students achievement and has created opportunities for students to receive additional time and support for learning before and after school. Students are invited rather than required to get this support. Many of the students who are in most need of help choose not to pursue it.	• The PLC/school has a systematic plan to monitor student achievement and is willing to provide additional time and support within the school day, but an unwillingness to deviate from the traditional schedule is limiting the opportunities for students.	• The PLC/school has a highly coordinated sequential system of intervention in place. • The PLC identifies and makes plans for students to receive additional support even before they fail. Student achievement is monitored on a daily basis. Students who experience difficulty are required, rather than invited, to put in extra time and utilize extra support. If the current level of support is not sufficient, there is an increased amount of time and support provided. • All students are guaranteed access to this systematic intervention regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.	
	Differentiation	• Teachers are not aware of what differentiation is and do not practice it in their classroom.	• Teachers are aware of what differentiation is and can describe examples of it, but do not practice it in their classroom.	• Teachers differentiate curriculum components sporadically throughout units of study.	• Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.	

Adapted from *Learning by Doing* Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Many

Question 4: What will we do it they already know it?

The PLC will use results of the common assessments to determine which students need an extension of the learning. Just as the PLC provides additional time and support for those not learning the material, the PLC needs to engage the top students as well.

What does a high-functioning PLC look like at the sustaining stage of Question 4?

Determine Appropriate Enrichment and Differentiation:

- The PLC has a highly coordinated, sequential system of enrichment in place.
- The PLC identifies and makes plans for students who have already mastered the learning.
- All students are guaranteed access to this systematic enrichment regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.
- Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.

The Question 4 Rubric below shows the main categories that the PLC will work on as they answer the fourth question: What will we do if they already know it? It also shows the stages the PLCs may be in as they work through each process. PLCs work to move toward the sustaining stage. The rubric allows the PLCs to see which stage they are in, where they need to go, and it will allow teams to make plans to move toward the next stage.

Question 4 Rubric: What will we do if they already know it?

PLC Rubric Question 4: What will we do if they already know it?

		Pre-Initiation Stage *The school has not yet begun to address the component.*	Initiation Stage *The effort has not yet begun to impact a "critical mass" of staff.*	Developing Stage *Staff has begun to align their thinking, practices, and structures with the component.*	Sustaining Stage *The component is deeply embedded in the school culture. It serves as the driving force of the work. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.*	Next Step... ***What is your plan to move your staff to the next stage?***
What will we do if they already know it?	Enrichment	• The PLC/ school has no systematic plan either to monitor student achievement on a timely basis or to respond to students who already know the essential skills. • Teachers are solely responsible for determining what happens when a student exceeds learning expectations before they have been taught.	• The PLC/school has a systematic plan to monitor students achievement and has created opportunities for students to extend their learning before and after school. Students are invited rather than required to get this support.	• The PLC/school has a systematic plan to monitor student achievement and is willing to provide additional time and support within the school day, but an unwillingness to deviate from the traditional schedule is limiting the opportunities for students.	• The PLC/school has a highly coordinated sequential system of enrichment in place. • The PLC identifies and makes plans for students who have already mastered the learning. • All students are guaranteed access to this systematic enrichment regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.	
	Differentiation	• Teachers are not aware of what differentiation is and do not practice it in their classroom.	• Teachers are aware of what differentiation is and can describe examples of it, but do not practice it in their classroom.	• Teachers differentiate curriculum components sporadically throughout units of study.	• Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.	

Adapted from *Learning by Doing* Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Many

PLC Planning Process

Getting Started

- ☐ Determine a facilitator for the PLC to type the agenda and facilitate the meetings for the semester or year.
- ☐ Determine a recorder to type the minutes and send them to the team after each PLC meeting.
- ☐ Establish norms for your group. (See Appendices C1 and C2 for a template)
- ☐ Set meeting dates and locations.
- ☐ Submit PLC Planning form to your principal. (See Appendix A)
- ☐ Create agenda for the first meeting. (See Appendices B1, B2, and B3 for template, exemplar and non-exemplar)

Expectations

- ✓ PLC teams meet at least twice per month. Teams are highly encouraged to meet more than twice per month.
- ✓ PLC teams create SMART goals and action plans based on students needs that align with building and district goals.
- ✓ PLC teams focus on improving achievement for all students. PLCs use student work, formative assessments, and summative assessments and standardized achievement data as evidence of student learning.
- ✓ PLCs will report progress made towards their goals at the end of the year to the building administrator(s).
- ✓ PLCs will report progress by submitting meeting agendas and minutes to their building administrator(s).

Resources

- Additional resources can be found on the District Professional Learning Community website.
- Building Teaching and Learning Councils are available for assistance.
- Building Administrators are available for assistance.
- Kristi Kortuem, Secondary PLC Specialist, is available for assistance. (ext. 2022)

Establishing Team Norms

Effective teams generally have a set of norms that govern individual behavior, facilitate the work of the group, and enable the group to accomplish its task. Abiding by norms is especially important for PLC teams for various reasons:

- Norms help teams to be productive and effective.
- Norms ensure that all members have the opportunity to contribute to the process.
- Norms help to keep dialogue open and respectful, even when members disagree.

Further information on the importance of team norms and developing them can be found on pages 102-111 in *Learning by Doing* by Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many and found on pages 54-56 in *The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students* by Love, Stiles, Mundry and DiRanna.

When establishing team norms, the table below provides things your PLC may want to consider.

Adapted from NSDC book Keys to Successful Meetings by Stephanie Hirsh, Ann Delehant, and Sherry Sparks. Oxford OH: National Staff Development Council, 1994.

Key Questions for Establishing Norms

Consideration	Proposed Norm
Time • When do we meet? • Will we set a beginning and ending time? • Will we start and end on time?	
Listening • How will we encourage listening? • How will we discourage interrupting?	
Confidentiality • Will the meetings be open? • Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence? • What can be said after the meeting?	
Decision Making • How will we make a decision? • Are we an advisory or a decision making body? • Will we reach decisions by consensus? • How will we deal with conflicts?	
Participation • How will we encourage everyone's participation? • Will we have an attendance policy?	
Expectations • What do we expect from members? • Are there requirements for participation?	

Setting SMART Goals

Rationale: SMART goals set the direction for educators to improve student achievement in a targeted area.

Definition: A SMART goal clarifies exactly what students should learn, the standard of learning expected and the measure used to determine if students have achieved the standard. Goals should focus on the results rather than the process or task.

A **SMART** goal is:

- ☑ **Strategic and Specific -** Focuses on specific student learning. It answers the questions - *Who will learn?* and *What will they improve?*
- ☑ **Measurable -** The success toward meeting the goal can be measured in student achievement. It answers the question - *How will you know you have achieved the goal?*
- ☑ **Attainable -** The goal is set to be achieved in a specific amount of time, with increased teacher effectiveness. It should be a stretch from current achievement data. It answers the question - *Is this realistic yet a stretch?*
- ☑ **Results Oriented –** The goal is measured on the basis of specific evidence.
- ☑ **Time-bound** - The goal has a clearly defined time frame including a target date. It answers the question - *When will the final assessment of the goal occur?*

Examples:

SMART goal:

All 5th grade students will increase their score on the spatial sense, geometry, and measurement strand to at least 80% proficiency on the 2011 Math MCA-III.

Not a SMART goal:

We will train teachers in PLCs during the 2010 - 2011 school year.

The teacher training goal focuses on a process rather than on results; the goal could be achieved and student achievement could actually decline.

Data Review

Many questions often arise as a data discussion begins, but one of the biggest is: What do we do with it?

In the PLC, data will serve two different purposes. The first purpose is to define the greatest area of need for students on the team, which will give the PLC a focus for its work, and the second is to provide immediate feedback to inform real-time instruction and improve student learning.

As a PLC determines their greatest area of need, teams may consider: MCA results, MAP results, ACT results and SAT results and other benchmark assessments (DIBELS, AIMSweb, DRA, etc.)

During the analysis of data, PLCs will use these assessments in different ways.

Using MCA data: The MCA is helpful in looking at the past as a department or team to highlight areas of strength and weakness. First, the PLC should look at overall performance to determine a trend. How has student achievement changed over the last 2-3 years? Is student achievement remaining steady? Is there an improvement in student achievement? Is there a decrease in achievement? Is the difference significant?
The PLC should then look at strand data to determine areas of strength or need. In which strands is student performance strongest? In which strands is student performance weakest? Are there any concerning trends within the individual strands? Are there areas of strength or need within the different demographic groups?

Using MAP data: The MAP test is a tool to gain information on the students currently enrolled. The data will unveil whole group needs as well as individual student areas of strength and weakness. First, the PLC should look at class performances as a team to determine greatest area of need. Then, the PLC should look at individual students to identify specific needs to increase student achievement. The PLC should consider similar questions to those the team asked while analyzing MCA data.

Using ACT and SAT data: Analyzing results for the ACT and SAT are similar to that of the MCA. The PLC should first look at overall performance and then focus on the subject scores. The PLC should follow the guidelines and questions listed above in the Using MCA data section.

Using other benchmark data: (see Using MAP data)

Data Review - continued

As a PLC looks to gain feedback that will inform real-time instruction, it will use common formative and common summative assessments that were created collaboratively by the PLC.

Using Common Formative Assessment Data: The data that can be gathered from a common formative assessment is dependent on how the assessment is designed. As PLCs collaboratively create their assessments, it is important to know what skill(s)/learning targets each item is assessing. Once the PLC knows what skills the items are assessing, they can gather data on the specific skills/learning targets students are or are not learning. Some questions to consider while analyzing the results of a common formative assessment: What skills did the students do well on? With what skills did the students struggle? Is there a need for whole group intervention? If not, which specific students need intervention or enrichment?

Using Common Summative Assessment Data: Summative assessments do not signify the end of learning. Summative data may be analyzed in much the same way as formative data to identify whole group or individual needs.

Other questions to discuss during initial data review:

- ✓ Did the PLC achieve its SMART goal from last year?
- ✓ Will the PLC continue study from last year, or will the PLC need a new targeted area to study?
- ✓ How will the PLC contribute to the building's targeted areas?
- ✓ Are there any curriculum issues that the PLC will benefit from studying this year?

Other data to consider:
As the team creates their SMART goal and implement their action plans, other forms of data may be helpful in guiding the work of the PLC.

- ✓ ECLIPSE Data (When and where essential learnings are taught, amount of time spent on each essential learning)
- ✓ Attendance data (absences, tardies)
- ✓ Grade distributions (Goal is to have all students meeting or exceeding learning targets, grades should reflect this learning)
- ✓ Classroom observations
- ✓ Student affect surveys (How students feel about the class)

Strategies of Assessment *for* Learning

Formative Assessments...

are assessments *for* learning aligned to the essential learnings and are used by teachers and students during instruction. They provide feedback used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. **Examples:** exit cards, one minute quick writes, student interview, quick quizzes, homework that provides feedback, classroom observations, classroom questioning, or any other classroom activities that provide feedback to teachers and students about whether they have met a particular learning target, while they are still teaching/learning the content.

Summative Assessments...

are assessments *of* learning aligned to the essential learnings and designed to provide a measure to determine if learning goals have been met. **Examples:** teacher-created achievement tests, final exams, state tests

Strategies of Assessment *for* **Learning**

Assessment for learning should address three questions for the student. Each question may be addressed using specific strategies.

Where is the student going?
Strategy 1: Provide students with clear learning targets.
Strategy 2: Use examples of strong and weak work.

Where is the student now?
Strategy 3: Offer regular descriptive feedback.
Strategy 4: Teach students to self-asses and set goals.

How will the teacher help the student close the gap?
Strategy 5: Design lessons to focus on one learning target at a time.
Strategy 6: Teach students focused revision.
Strategy 7: Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of their learning.

Resources

District Professional Development Webpage

Link coming soon

Includes:

- PLC 2010 -11 Handbook
- Four Key Questions For PLCs
- PLC Planning Form
- PLC Agenda Template
- PLC Norms Agreement Template
- PLC Rubric
- Developing Norms
- SMART Goals
- SMART Goal Template
- District Goals
- District Improvement Plan
- Teaching and Learning Progression

All Things Assessment

http://www.allthingsassessment.info

This site is a collaborative site where educators can discover new assessment practices, as well as ideas for refining their current systems or processes. This purely objective resource is for educators committed to ensuring student success through best assessment practices. The site allows users to share their knowledge, ask questions and get expert insight into today's most pressing challenges and most innovative ideas.

All Things PLC

http://www.allthingsplc.info/

This site was created to serve as a collaborative resource for educators and administrators who are committed to enhancing student achievement. All Things PLC invites users to share their knowledge, ask questions, and get expert insight into the issues teachers face each day in the classroom. Three main features of this website include:

- **Blogs and Discussions** which allows users to connect with other PLC practitioners by sharing insights, offering tips, and asking questions;
- **Evidence of Effectiveness** which allows users to find and compare Evidence of Effectiveness data from other PLC schools or districts like theirs;
- **Tools and Resources** which allows users to download sample agendas and activities, investigate a variety of helpful links, and more.

Assessment Training Institute (ATI)

www.assessmentinst.com

Pearson Assessment Training Institute (ATI) helps teachers improve student achievement by integrating student-involved classroom assessment into day-to-day instruction. Using the ATI learning team model of professional development, teachers quickly learn to assess accurately and use the results to promote learning even further.

Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

http://www.ascd.org/

ASCD provides expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

Learning Forward (Formerly National Staff Development Council)

http://www.learningforward.org

Learning Forward is the largest non-profit professional association committed to ensuring success for all students through staff development and school improvement.

Their purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. Learning Forward views high quality staff development programs as essential to creating schools in which all students and staff members are learners who continually improve their performance.

Solution Tree

http://www.solution-tree.com/

Solution Tree is a leading provider of educational strategies and tools that improve staff and student performance. For more than 20 years, Solution Tree resources have helped K–12 teachers and administrators create schools where all children succeed.

Key Vocabulary

accelerating the learning	Proactive response for students who have not yet mastered the essential learnings by providing additional time
acceleration (grade-level)	A student who is advanced more than one year in all content areas
acceleration (subject)	A student who is advanced more than one year in a particular content area
achievement gap	A persistent, pervasive and significant disparity in educational achievement and attainment among groups of students as determined by a standardized measure. When analyzed according to race and ethnicity, achievement disparities negatively impact educational outcomes for poor children and children of color on a consistent basis
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
benchmark	Learning outcomes
best practice instructional strategies	Instructional strategies based on current research and on the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).
cognitively guided instruction	Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) is a professional development program that increases teachers' understanding of the knowledge that students bring to the math learning process and how they connect that knowledge with formal concepts and operations
collaboration	A *systematic* process in which people work together, *interdependently*, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results
collective inquiry	Process of building shared knowledge by clarifying the questions that a group will explore together
common assessments	Teacher-created, teacher-owned assessments that are collaboratively created and scored
compacting curriculum	Eliminating content that is already known by the students which allows more time to be spent on enrichment
continuous improvement process	A team of teachers meeting regularly—and continuously-- to design, test and then adjust their lessons and strategies in light of their results. See Teaching and Learning Progression
cultural competence	Set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross–cultural situations (Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991).

culturally responsive teaching	Uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2000).
curriculum map / pacing guide	Document which details the location of required essential learnings in a given course
data review	Look for the specific data, interpret what it means for your team, and decide what will we do about it.
data versus information	Data represent facts or figures that, standing alone, will not inform practice or lead to informed decisions. To transform data into information requires putting data into context, and this typically requires a basis of comparison.
differentiated instruction	Process of designing lesson plans that meet the needs of the range of learners; such planning includes learning objectives, grouping practices, teaching methods, varied assignments, and varied materials chosen based on student skill levels, interest levels, and learning preferences.
differentiation	Changing the pace, level or kind of instruction you provide in response to individual learners' needs, styles or interests (Diane Heacox, 2002)
essential learnings	Developed by Lakeville teachers anlayzing the requirements of state standards and test specifications. The curriculum to which all Lakeville students must have equal access.
facilitator	One that helps to bring about an outcome (as learning, productivity, or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision
formative assessments	Formal and informal processes teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning.
goals	Measurable milestones that can be used to assess progress in advancing toward a vision. Goals establish targets and timelines to answer the question, "What results do we seek, and how will we know we are making progress?"
intervention	Short-term or long-term pro-active instructional action(s) taken to improve student learning. These actions are based on on-going assessment so instruction is aligned with the level of learning.
learning progression	A description of skills, understanding and knowledge in the sequence in which they typically develop: a picture of what it means to 'improve' in an area of learning (Masters and Forster, 1997)

learning targets	Learning objectives based on the content within the essential learnings written in student friendly language
level of complexity	Determined from higher-order thinking skills. For example knowledge is least complex on Bloom's Taxonomy and evaluate is most complex.
level of difficulty	Determined within each level of complexity. For example students working in the application stage of Bloom's Taxonomy may be working
mission	The fundamental purpose of an organization. Mission answers the question, "Why do we exist?"
multicultural education	A field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms for history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women studies (Banks, 1996)
norms	In PLCs norms represent protocols or commitments developed by each team to guide members in working together. Norms help team members clarify expectations regarding how they will work together to achieve their shared goals.
pacing guide / curriculum map	Document which details the location of required essential learnings in a given course
Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of inquiry 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.
remediation	Instruction intended to remedy a situation; to teach a student something that he or she should have previously learned or be able to demonstrate. Remediation is a reaction to a summative assessment. The goal is to close the academic gap.
Response to Intervention (RTI)	Integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities
rigor	Rigor is the goal of helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is *complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally or emotionally challenging*.

school culture	The assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norm for the school and guide the work of educators within it.
SMART goals	Goals that are Strategic and Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-orientated, and Timebound
standard	Statement of content or concepts
summative assessments	Assessments that provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about the student competence or program effectiveness
tier down/ tier up	To create different tasks in the same unit or lesson based on student needs
unpacking/unwrapping the standard	Analyzing the requirements within the standards
values	The specific attitudes, behaviors, and commitments that must be demonstrated in order to advance the organization's vision. Articulated values answer the question, "How must we behave in order to make our shared vision a reality?"
vertical alignment	K-12 alignment within a content area
vertical articulation	Teams of teachers getting together across K-12 content areas
vision	A realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization. Vision answers the question, "What do we hope to become at some point in the future?"

Appendices

Appendix A: PLC Planning Form Template

PLC Name: _____ Facilitator: _____ Year: _____
PLC Members:

Created group norms? Yes / No

Question 1: What do we want our students to learn? What essential learning(s) will we focus on?

PLC SMART goal Development
Our Current Reality

Our PLC SMART Goal:

Goal Alignment:
How does our PLC SMART goal align with the building and district goal(s)? Which specific building/district goal(s) does our SMART goal feed?

Building Goal:

District Goal:

Question 2: How will we know if they have learned it?
What common assessments will we use? Which ones will be formative? Which ones will be summative? Are they already developed or do we need to create them? If already developed, do any changes need to be made? How often will we administer the assessments to see how we are progressing toward our goal? How often will we analyze results?

Question 3: What will we do if the students do not learn it?

How will we modify our current practices to increase the achievement of our current students? What strategies or interventions can we use? How are we differentiating our instruction? Where can we look for additional ideas? What are other PLC teams doing in our building? What structures can we change to provide students what they need? How can we be creative with scheduling and time? What further training might we need?

Question 4: What will we do if the students already know it?

What enrichment activities or extensions can we use? How are we differentiating our instruction? Where can we look for additional ideas? What are other PLC teams doing in our building? How can we be creative with scheduling and time? What further training might we need?

ACTION PLAN (Our team TO DO LIST)

Task	**Person Responsible**	**Completion Date**

PLC Team Member Signature: Date:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Appendix B1: PLC Agenda Template

PLC Team:
PLC Agenda

Meeting Date
Meeting Time
Meeting Location

Members Present:	Members Absent:

Team Norms:

School Goal: Team Goal:
Focus questions:
Discussion and Plans:

Unanswered Questions:	Next meeting: Agenda items:

Appendix B2: PLC Agenda - Example

PLC Team: 8th grade math PLC
PLC Agenda

Meeting Date: Sept 1, 2010
Meeting Time: Noon
Meeting Location: Classroom 1

Members Present: John, Sally, Sam, Sue	**Members Absent:**

Team Norms:

- Everyone arrives on time so the meeting may start and end on time.
- A workable agenda is set for every meeting.
- Everyone has an opportunity to share.
- All opinions are valued.
- Everyone may add agenda items.

School Goal: We will increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards as measured by the MCA – III math test by 4% for 2010 – 2011 school year.

Team Goal: 100% of our 8th grade math students will be 90% accurate on their addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts as measured by the 8th grade team designed assessment by November 4, 2010.

Focus questions:
What will our benchmark test look like?
How many questions?
What type of questions will we ask?
When will we give the benchmark assessment?
How will we score the benchmark assessment?

Discussion and Plans:

Unanswered Questions:	**Next meeting:** **Agenda items:**

To prepare an agenda for each PLC Meeting, the PLC team will develop new focus questions or finish any uncompleted questions from the previous meeting.

To document/record the discussion and plans made during the PLC meeting, the PLC recorder uses the discussion and plans section of the agenda.

If a question arises during the PLC meeting that cannot be answered, the PLC team should place it in the "unanswered questions" location and determine who will find the answer to that question to report back at the next PLC meeting.

At the end of the PLC meeting, the PLC team should determine what will be on the agenda for the next meeting and remind the team when and where the next meeting is.

The facilitator will type the agenda and send it to the team prior to the next PLC meeting.
The recorder will type the minutes and send them to the team shortly after the PLC meeting.

Appendix B3: Non-Exemplar PLC Agenda - Example

PLC Team: Algebra 2 PLC
PLC Agenda

Meeting Date: Sept 1, 2010
Meeting Time: Noon
Meeting Location: Classroom 1

Members Present: John, Jane, Sam, Sue	**Members Absent:**

Team Norms:

- Don't worry be happy.
- Assume good intentions.
- Come when you can.

(**The first two norms listed above are not appropriate because they are not listed as behaviors instead they are listed as attitudes or beliefs. The third norm is not appropriate as it would allow for members not to participate.**

School Goal: In 2009-2010, 60% of students were proficient in mathematics. Lakeville South High School will increase the proficiency for all students in math (as measured by the MCA-II) by at least 10% in each of the subsequent years to reach 100% proficiency in 2014.
(The school goal <u>is appropriate</u>)

Team Goal: We will have 90% of our Algebra 2 students completing their homework by the end of the first quarter as measured by our daily homework checks.
(The team goal listed is not appropriate because it does not address the specific academic skills the students need to be proficient in math. Checking for homework completions does not mean we are checking to see the students did it correctly.)

<u>Focus questions:</u>
What percent of students completed their homework this week?
How do we get more kids to complete their homework?
(The focus questions address the team goal, but since the team goal is non-exemplary the questions may not increase student achievement.)

<u>Discussion and Plans:</u>

<u>Unanswered Questions:</u>	**<u>Next meeting:</u>** **<u>Agenda items:</u>**

Appendix C1: PLC Norms Agreement Template

We, the _____ PLC, agree to the following collaborative norms at all of our meetings for the 20__ - __ school year.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Signed,

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Print Name	Print Name
_____	_____	_____
Signature	Signature	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Print Name	Print Name
_____	_____	_____
Signature	Signature	Signature

Appendix C2: PLC Norms Agreement - Example

We, the **Example** PLC, agree to the following collaborative norms at all of our meetings for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

In order to make our team meetings positive and productive experiences for all members, we make the following commitments to each other:

- **Begin and end our meetings on time and stay fully engaged during each meeting;**
- **Maintain a positive attitude at team meetings – no complaining unless we offer a better alternative;**
- **Listen respectfully to each other;**
- **Contribute equally to the workload;**
- **Make decisions on the basis of consensus;**
- **Fully support each other's efforts to improve student learning.**

Signed,

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Print Name	Print Name
_____	_____	_____
Signature	Signature	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Print Name	Print Name
_____	_____	_____
Signature	Signature	Signature

Appendix D: PLC Administrator Form

PLC Administrator Form

PLC Team: **Meeting Date and Time:** **Next Meeting Date:**
PLC Team Members: **Meeting Location:**

Which of the four critical questions are you focusing on?

1. **What do we want all students to learn?**
2. **How will we know if they have learned it?**
3. **What will we do if they do not learn it?**
4. **What will we do if they already know it?**

If the team is working on question 1, are they working on...
Essential Learnings
Pacing
Instructional Strategies
Other

If the team is working on question 2, are they working on...
Creating the common formative assessment
Common summative assessment
Scoring the common assessment
Other

If the team is working on question 3, are they working on...
Identifying students that need extra time and support
Determining appropriate interventions
Working on differentiating their instruction
Other

If the team is working on question 4, are they working on...
Identifying students that need enrichment
Determining appropriate enrichment opportunities
Working on differentiating their instruction
Other

Reflection
What questions/need does the team have?

Comments:

I plan to follow-up by _____

Appendix E: Sample Midyear PLC Survey

Midyear PLC Survey

This survey is intended to help the school learn more about they type of work that has occurred in PLC teams so far this year and how to best plan the PLC time for the remainder of the year. The survey is divided into two sections: the ways in which your team has managed PLC meetings and the types of tasks on which your team has focused. Thank you for completing this survey in an honest and thoughtful manner.

Your grade level of course area: _____

Please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true by circling one of the four numbers using the following scale:

1 = Very true 2 = True 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Not true

We have an agreed-upon set of meeting norms in our PLC team (for example, expectations for participant behaviors during meetings).	1	2	3	4
We follow our meeting norms consistently at PLC meetings.	1	2	3	4
Our norms help us to have productive, effective conversations.	1	2	3	4
We have clear tasks to perform at our PLC meetings.	1	2	3	4
Our tasks relate directly to student learning goals.	1	2	3	4
Our tasks are determined by consensus among our team members.	1	2	3	4
A large majority of our PLC time (80 percent or more) is spent on tasks related to student learning goals.	1	2	3	4
During PLC conversations, team members sometimes disagree about ideas or practices.	1	2	3	4
When team members disagree about ideas or practices, we tend to discuss those disagreements in depth.	1	2	3	4
When I disagree with something a member of my PLC has said, I almost always voice that disagreement.	1	2	3	4
Within PLC meetings, we try to avoid emotionally charged or difficult topics or conversations.	1	2	3	4
I feel a strong sense of attachment to my team.	1	2	3	4
If we were given the option of no longer meeting as a PLC, I would still want to continue the meetings.	1	2	3	4
I have improved as a classroom teacher as a result of the conversations and work we have done in our PLC.	1	2	3	4
I have made changes to my teaching practices as a result of the work that we have done as a PLC.	1	2	3	4

Team Based Collaboration: Teaching and Learning Tasks

Please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true by circling one of the four numbers using the following scale:

1 = Very true 2 = True 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Not true

My PLC team has worked to define the most important student learning goals in our content areas.	1	2	3	4
If you were to ask each of the members of my PLC team to list the most important student learning goals in our content areas independently, we would all come up with nearly identical lists.	1	2	3	4
I could explain to a parent, in simple language, the most important grade-level learning goals for his or her child in the content areas I teach.	1	2	3	4
In my PLC team, we regularly (at least monthly) administer common assessments to our students (in other words, all students complete the same assessment).	1	2	3	4
In my PLC team, we regularly use rubrics to score students' common assessments.	1	2	3	4
In my PLC team, we have developed our own rubrics to help us score students' common assessments.	1	2	3	4
As a PLC team, we regularly (at least monthly) assess student work samples as a team.	1	2	3	4
As a PLC team, we regularly (at least monthly) analyze data from students' common assessments.	1	2	3	4
I adjust the instructional practices in my classroom based on my students' performance on common assessments.	1	2	3	4
As a PLC team, we regularly (at least monthly) make adjustments to our instructional practices across all classrooms based on students' performance on common assessments.	1	2	3	4
Over the course of this year, I have implemented numerous academic interventions in my classroom for struggling students.	1	2	3	4
As an individual teacher, I regularly think about how my specific instructional practices affect student learning and how changes in my instructional practices might lead to changes in student learning.	1	2	3	4
As a PLC team, we regularly discuss how our specific instructional practices affect student learning and how changes in our instructional practices might lead to changes in student learning.	1	2	3	4

Appendix F: Sample Culture of a PLC Survey

PLC Roadmap

Are We There Yet?

Complete this survey to assess the shifts your PLC has made in both thinking and doing. This survey should be completed at the beginning of the school year, as well as one or more times during the school year in order to assess the work of your PLC.

A Shift in Fundamental Purpose

We focus on teaching.	1———2———3———4	We focus on learning.
We emphasize what is taught.	1———2———3———4	We emphasize what students learned.
We expect coverage of content.	1———2———3———4	We expect demonstration of proficiency.
We provide individual teachers with curriculum documents (state standards and essential learnings).	1———2———3———4	We engage in collaborative discussions to build shared knowledge regarding the essential curriculum.

A Shift in Use of Assessments

We use infrequent summative assessments.	1———2———3———4	We use frequent common formative assessments.
We use assessments to determine which students failed to learn by a deadline.	1———2———3———4	We use assessments to identify students who need additional time and support.
We use assessments to reward and punish students.	1———2———3———4	We use assessments to inform and motivate students.
We assess many things infrequently.	1———2———3———4	We assess a few things frequently.
We use individual teacher assessments.	1———2———3———4	We use assessments developed jointly by collaborative teams.

We have teachers determining the criteria to be used in assessing student work.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams clarifying the criteria and ensuring consistency among team members when assessing student work.
We over-rely on one kind of assessment.	1———2———3———4	We have balanced assessments.
We focus on average scores.	1———2———3———4	We monitor each student's proficiency in every essential skill.

A Shift in Response When Student's Don't Learn

We have teachers determining the appropriate response.	1———2———3———4	We use a systematic response that ensures support for ever student.
We have a fixed amount of time and support for student learning.	1———2———3———4	We are flexible with time and support for student learning.
We use remediation.	1———2———3———4	We use intervention.
We invite students to attend sessions for support outside the school day.	1———2———3———4	We embed instructional support within the school day. Student participation is required.
We use one opportunity to demonstrate learning.	1———2———3———4	We use multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning.

A Shift in the Work of Teachers

We work in isolation.	1———2———3———4	We collaborate.
We have teachers clarifying what students must learn.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams building shared knowledge and understanding about essential learning.

We have teachers assigning priority to different standards.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams establishing priority of respective learning standards.
We have teachers determining the pacing of the curriculum.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams of teachers agreeing on common pacing.
We have individual teachers attempting to discover ways to improve results.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams attempting to discover new ways to improve results.
We have privatization of practice.	1———2———3———4	We have open sharing of practice.
We make decisions on the basis of individual preferences.	1———2———3———4	We make decisions collectively by building shared knowledge of best practice.
We are "collaboration lite" on matters unrelated to student achievement.	1———2———3———4	We have collaboration explicitly focused on issues and questions that most impact student achievement.
We believe that these are "my kids, those are "your kids".	1———2———3———4	We believe that these are "our kids".

A Shift in Focus

We have an external focus on issues outside of the school.	1———2———3———4	We have an internal focus on steps the staff can take to improve the school.
We focus on inputs.	1———2———3———4	We focus on results.
We have goals related to completion of project activities.	1———2———3———4	We have SMART goals demanding evidence of student learning.

We have teachers gathering data from their individually constructed tests in order to assign grades.	1———2———3———4	We have collaborative teams acquiring information from common assessments in order to 1) inform their individual and collective practice, and 2) respond to students who need additional time and support.

A Shift in School Culture

We work independently.	1———2———3———4	We are interdependent.
We have a language of complaint.	1———2———3———4	We have a language of commitment.
We only have a long-term strategic plan.	1———2———3———4	We plan for short-term wins.
We have infrequent generic recognition.	1———2———3———4	We have frequent specific recognition and culture of celebration that creates many winners.

A Shift in Professional Development

We have external training (workshops and courses).	1———2———3———4	We have job-embedded learning.
We have the expectation that learning occurs infrequently (on the few days devoted to professional development).	1———2———3———4	We have the expectation that learning is ongoing and occurs as part of routine work practice.
We have presentations to entire faculties.	1———2———3———4	We have team-based action research.
We learn by listening.	1———2———3———4	We learn by doing.

We learn individually through courses and workshops.	1———2———3———4	We learn collectively by working together.
We assess impact on the basis of teacher satisfaction. ("Did you like it?")	1———2———3———4	We assess impact on the basis of evidence of improved student learning.
We use short-term exposure to multiple concepts and practices.	1———2———3———4	We sustain commitment to limited, focused initiatives.

Adapted from Learning by Doing, Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many, 2006

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