Great Expectations Great Rewards
CISD
CROWLEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The PLC Handbook

A Learning Leader's Guide to Collaboration

Department of

Curriculum and Instruction

Contents

3	Welcome, The PLC Rationale, Confidentiality
4	Maintaining Focus
5	Collaboration Is Key
6	The PLC Team Timeline
7 - 8	Developing Team Norms - The Rationale And The How-To
9	Norms Development Template
10	Our Team Norms - Final Document Template
11	SMART Goals - Explanation And The Examples
12-18	Team Meeting Minutes Template
19-20	PLC Member Note Taking Templates
21	The Three Driving Questions
22	The Team Cycle
23-24	PLC Conceptual Framework
25-27	PLC Continuum Rubrics
28-29	PLC Team Feedback Survey Examples
30-35	CISD Big XII Formative Assessments
36-38	CISD Closure Explanations
09-41	Glossary Of PLC Terms

Additional Resources:
Tentative PLC Calendar
Articles

Team Planning

Team cohesiveness is critical and how you begin the year will affect the group's effectiveness. It is the intent that this handbook will assist in setting up your PLC teams and establishing a culture of collaboration. Please contact any member of the district PLC committee if you have any questions or if you would like to schedule a personal visit or observation of your PLC.

The Rationale For Collaboration

"Quality teaching requires strong, professional learning communities. Collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers. Communities of learning can no longer be considered utopian; they must become the building blocks that establish a new foundation for America's schools." (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003, p. 17)

"Effective professional development fosters collegial relationships, creating professional communities where teachers share knowledge and treat each other with respect. Within such communities teacher inquiry and reflection can flourish, and research shows that teachers who engage in collaborative professional development feel confident and well prepared to meet the demands of teaching. . . ." (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006, p. 10)

"Building a learning community that involves all teachers and places top priority on the education and healthy development of every student, teacher, and staff member . . . professional development should be integrated into the daily life of the school and directly linked to the school's goals for student and teacher success and growth. To meet these goals, people work together in study groups, focus on learning results, analyze student work, and carry out action research." (NMSA, 2003, p. 11)

"High performing schools tend to promote collaborative cultures, support professional communities and exchanges among all staff and cultivate strong ties among the school, parents, and community. . . . Teachers and staff collaborate to remove barriers to student learning. . . . Teachers communicate regularly with each other about effective teaching and learning strategies." (National Education Association, 2006)

"It is time to end the practice of solo teaching in isolated classrooms. Teacher induction and professional development in 21st century schools must move beyond honing one's craft and personal repertoire of skills. Today's teachers must transform their personal knowledge into a collectively built, widely shared, and cohesive professional knowledge base." (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee [for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future], 2005, p. 4)

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is key. It is critical that you develop a safe environment for your team members. Most people will not share unless they feel safe in their environment. If you have a team member who leaves the meeting and discusses student data, a particular team member or that member's data, that team member will shut down. The facilitator or administrator will need to address any breaches in confidentiality or your team will be hampered for the remainder of the year.

Maintaining Focus as a Team

Keeping focused on what we do is often a challenge. The workplace is filled with distractions that take our attention away from what is at hand. They cloud our thoughts, purpose and ultimately, what it is that we started to do in the first place. The same is true with our collaborative meetings. With limited time to accomplish many tasks it is imperative that the focus be maintained. One team member can derail the meeting. One off-topic conversation can take several of those too-few minutes and delay the work you intended to accomplish. Keeping the meeting on track takes skill and practice but in time the meetings will flow smoothly from one agenda item to the next. Establishing strong norms and continually referring back helps to maintain focus.

Distractions can also come from outside the meeting. The facilitator/administrator will need to keep the team cycle moving in the right direction. Looking at data, sharing strategies, making instructional decisions etc. is what the team does. Many a well-intended person will print out piles of data for your team to evaluate which is all good and well but is the data related to your SMART goal? If your SMART goal is to improve reading, what kind of data should you be looking at? The answer is simple. If it does not relate to your goal, it is not relevant at that setting. Choose another time to review and evaluate that data.

Professional articles are a great source of information. They are usually short and to the point and contain useful information and classroom strategies. Do not discount their worth in the PLC. However, the PLC meeting is not the time to read them. Professional articles should be read outside the meeting time frame. The subsequent sharing of the article's contents should not take more than five minutes of the meeting.

An agenda is a valuable tool for keeping a meeting on task. It is recommended that you use one of the meeting minutes templates found in this handbook. Prior planning will ensure that you accomplish your goals for each meeting. Most groups find it beneficial to have someone other than the facilitator to record the meeting minutes.

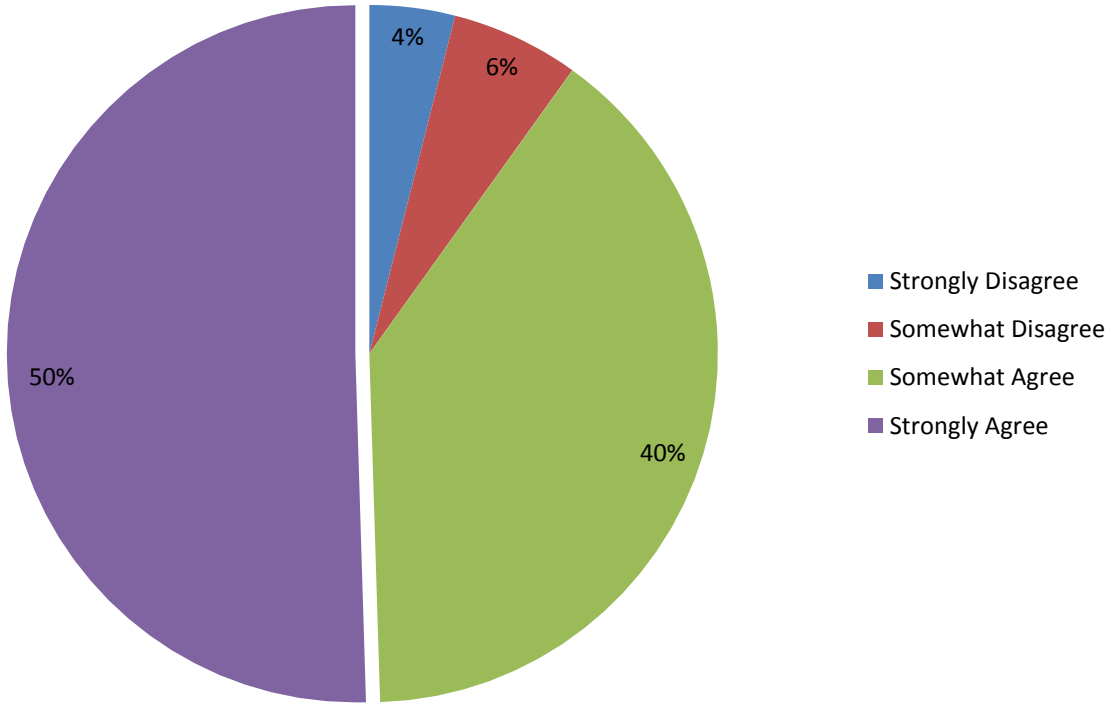
Another way to get the most out of every PLC minute is to come to the meeting prepared. If the facilitator/administrator is not prepared with an agenda, materials and data, then the team members will not be either. The facilitator/administrator will set the bar so please come to each meeting READY. Data is an integral part of each PLC meeting so make sure it is ready for sharing and discussion.

At the conclusion of each meeting the administrator will take the meeting minutes (or the facilitator will give them to the administrator) for review.

Remember, keep the main thing the main thing.

Collaboration Is Key

90% of teachers agree that "other teachers contribute to my success in the classroom."



SOURCE: MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2009

The PLC Team Timeline

Beginning	Developing	Growing	Sustaining
August	September	October - May	August - June
*Build The Team. Get To Know Each Other. Build Trust. Discuss Confidentiality.	*Complete Team Norms.	*Share Effective Strategies <u>And Use Them</u> In The Classroom.	*Continue The Sharing Of Best Practices.
*Bring The Team Together To Discuss Education Mission, Vision, Values & Goals.	*Begin Development Of And Complete The Team Smart Goal. The Goal Is Either Given To The Team By Administration Or Arrived At By Looking At The Most Recent Student Data. Formulate The Plan Of Action.	*Formulate Common Formative Assessments & Set Admin. Dates.	*Look At The Data To Identify Teachers With Strengths In Areas Of Instruction. Share Strategies. Coach Each Other.
*Discussion Of What Is A PLC. Its Rationale, Purpose And Necessity In Today's Educational Setting.		*Assess Students Regularly As It Pertains To The Goal.	*Visit Other Team Member's Classroom To Observe Best Practices.
*Team Cycle		*Bring Together The Data (Qualitative & Quantitative) And Look For Trends.	*Read Norms At Each Meeting And Modify As Needed.
*Begin Development Of Team Norms.		*Address Areas Of Weakness And Strength.	*Read Smart Goal At Each Meeting And Modify As Needed.
*Establish Meeting Dates, Times & Place.		*Remediate Students Who Did Not Achieve Proficiency.	*Record Practices That You Will Continue Next Year.
		*Enrich Students Who Reached Proficiency.	*Initiate New Smart Goal As Needed.
		*Continually Monitor Student Progress	

Developing Norms

What Are Norms And Why Do We Need Them?

Norms are the framework from which team members commit to conduct business. Attention to their development and adherence to them ensure the success of the group and facilitate the members' ability to deal with critical issues. Norms are comprised of several components that clarify team dynamics.

Norm Elements To Address

TIME: When and where will we meet? Will we start on time?

LISTENING: How will we listen to our peers? Are there any bad ideas? How will we discourage verbal interruptions when others are speaking?

CONFIDENTIALITY: What content is to be held in confidence? What can be shared after the meeting?

DECISION MAKING: How will we arrive at a decision? What if everyone doesn't agree with the group decision?

PARTICIPATION: Is participation optional? Will we have an attendance policy? What will we do if a member consistently misses meetings?

EXPECTATIONS: What do we expect from team members? Do we need a method for ensuring each member comes to the meeting prepared with appropriate data or other items?

Examples Of Team Norms

We will maintain a positive attitude during each meeting.
We will stay on topic and follow the agenda.

Tips:

Teams develop their own norms.
Read the norms at each meeting.
Less is more.
Norm violations should be addressed.

Give some thought to the development of a means to address how to ensure adherence of the NORMS . If a team member consistently breaks the norms, how will the team respond to that?

Team member signatures on the agreed-upon norms document will solidify its meaning and importance.

How To Lead Your Team With The Development Of Team Norms

1. All team members must be present.

2. Ask members to verbalize things that they have seen, heard or experienced in a meeting that they did not like. Examples: People interrupting each other, members showing up late, etc. Construct a list of their responses on chart paper.

3. Ask members to verbalize elements of a good meeting. Examples: People listen to each other, all ideas are open for consideration, stakeholders treat each other with respect, etc. Construct a list of their responses on chart paper.

4. From these lists, agree on items to put in the appropriate areas of the Norms Development Template.

5. Record the team Norms on the Our Team Norms page.

6. Ask team members to sign the completed document.

7. Distribute a copy of the finalized document to each member at your next meeting.

Tips To Ensure The Team Norms Are Successful

❖Ask a team member to read the Norms at the beginning of each meeting.
❖Post the Norms during each meeting.
❖Review the Norms monthly, or as needed, to ask members if the norms are effective or if they need revision.
❖Don't use the Norms as a rule book. They are guides.
❖If new members join the team, review the Norms and offer an opportunity for their input.

Norms Development Template

Elements To Consider	Group Proposed Norms
<u>Time</u> ❖When will we meet? ❖Where will we meet? ❖Will we be on time?	
<u>Listening</u> ❖How will we listen to our peers? ❖Are there any bad ideas? ❖How will we discourage verbal interruptions when others are speaking?	
<u>Confidentiality</u> ❖What content is to be held in confidence? ❖What can be shared after the meeting?	
<u>Decision Making:</u> ❖How will we arrive at a decision? ❖What if everyone doesn't agree with the group's decision?	
<u>Participation</u> ❖Is participation optional? ❖Will we have an attendance policy? ❖What will we do if a member regularly misses meetings?	
<u>Expectations</u> ❖What do we expect from team members? ❖Do we need a method for ensuring each member comes to the meeting prepared with appropriate data or other items?	

Team _____

Our Team Norms
Time
Listening
Confidentiality
Decision Making
Participation
Expectations
Team Member Signatures **Date:** _____

SMART Goals

SMART goals are set with the purpose of increasing student achievement. SMART goals are specific in that they clarify precisely what students should learn, the level of the learning (proficiency level), the assessments that will be used to make the proficiency determination and a time frame.
A *SMART* Goal is:
Specific - Linked to the CIP goals. It focuses on specific student learning and answers WHO and WHAT.
Measureable - Student success is measured by assessment. It answers the question – HOW.
Attainable - The goal should be set high but within reason. High goals are not always attained but this does not mean it was a failure.
Results Oriented/Relevant/Rigorous - Supporting the CIP, results tell you who has achieved proficiency. These results determine which students need remediation or enrichment.
Time Bound – All goals are bound by a clearly-defined time frame.

SMART Goal Examples

1. _____% of grade 9 math students will increase their _____ scores by _____% by the end of the second nine weeks as measured on the (assessment) _____.
2. Fifty-two percent of my writing students will increase their average writing scores by one point by the end for the first nine weeks as measured by the (assessment) _____.

NOT *SMART* Goals:

1. My students will do better on their math tests.
2. The team's students will increase their understanding of expository writing.
3. My reading students will complete 80% of their homework.

Team Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: _____Team Name: _____Facilitator: _____

Team Members in Attendance:

Topics of Discussion:

What Do We Want Students To Learn? ***('PLAN' Section Of SMART Goal).***

How Is Our Implementation Plan Working? ***('DO' Section Of SMART Goal).***

What Is Our Common Assessment Data Telling Us? ***('STUDY' Section Of SMART Goal).***

How Are Our Strategies Working For The Students Who HAVE NOT Attained Proficiency? Data based. ***('ACT' Section Of SMART Goal).***

How Are Our Strategies Working For The Students Who HAVE Attained Proficiency? Data based. ***('ACT' Section Of SMART Goal).***

Best Practices That Were Shared During The Meeting

We Need, Our Questions, Etc. (Attention School Administration)

Evidence That Our Plan Is Working: (Data Is Attached). Yes ☐ No ☐

PLC Overview

1. Assign the following PLC team roles

Job Duty	Member(s) Name
Data Diver:	Runs and prints the heat maps for respective assessments (i.e. STAAR, Benchmarks, Unit exams, etc)
TEKS Auditor:	Pulls the TEKS for the respective assessment being analyzed (i.e. STAAR, Benchmarks, Unit exams, etc)
IFD Specialist:	Pulls the specific IFD(s) being analyzed
Instructional/Materials Guide:	Ensures instructional materials and/or resources are secured for upcoming lessons; Assigns team duties and responsibilities for development of resources, copies, etc.

2. Data Diver runs and prints Heat Map(s) for two-three sets of comparison data (e.g. STAAR 2013 and STAAR 2014, 2013 Unit 1 and 2014 Unit 1, etc.)

3. Complete the "Leveraging Longitudinal Data" (Lead4ward) worksheet to record the student expectations (SE) in the appropriate column

Growth/Strength	5 or more points of growth	AT or ABOVE target
Growth/Emerging	5 or more points of growth	BELOW target
Maintained/Strength	Fewer than five points of change	AT or ABOVE target
Maintained/Concern	Fewer than five points of change	BELOW target
Declined/Concern	5 or more points of decline	

4. Read all of the SEs in the Concern columns. Discuss why they are so complex for many students. Compare/contrast teachers' perceptions and come to consensus.

5. Utilize the "Leveraging Longitudinal Data" document (Lead4ward) to determine your 3-3-3, giving attention to longitudinal concerns first, then adding others as needed.
   - **3 Process Standards *(Across all genres/units)***
     Reflect on the roles these standards play in learning and student performance
   - **3 Concern/Declining Standards *(Professional Development)***
     Science/Algebra I: Give attention to longitudinal concerns first, then add others as needed.
     Social Studies: Choose from the history reporting category to anchor to historical periods/units; Give attention to longitudinal concerns first, then add others as needed.
     Reading: Select the whole readiness genre (and associated SEs)- Across Genre, Fictional, and/or Expository- if the majority of the SEs are in the concern column.
     Writing: Select the component of the writing process with the majority of SEs in concern column- Composition, Revision, and/or Editing
     New Math TEKS: Choose from the focus readiness standards

- **3 Growth/Emerging Standard *(Interventions/Enrichment)***
  Science-Math-Social Studies: Select three readiness standards for which many students generally need extra support
  Reading: Select the whole readiness genre- Across Genre, Fictional and/or Expository, if the majority of the SEs are in the strength/emerging column.
  Writing: Select the component of the writing process Composition, Revising and/or Editing, if the majority of the SEs are in the strength/emerging column.

6. Identify the units in the district curriculum in which the focus standards are initially taught or subsequently reinforced.

7. Review within each unit to design lessons which specifically address the areas of focus (3-3-3).

PLC Snapshot

PLC Group (Subject):_____Grade Level: _____ Unit: _____ Date: _____

Job Duty	**Member(s) Name**
Data Diver:	
TEKS Auditor:	
IFD Specialist:	
Instructional/Materials Guide:	

What do we want students to learn?

Cognitive Level (Verb)	**Content**	**Context**
What does the verb say? (1) (2) (3)	What are we teaching? (1) (2) (3)	What is the context (general area) of our teaching? (1) (2) (3)
IFD Specificity What is the specific area of instructional focus? (see the IFD)		
(1) (2) (3)		

How will we know when students learn?

Students say, “I know it when I can…”

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Teachers say, “I know students have learned it when…”

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

What will we do when students do not learn?

What specific strategies, activities and/or assignments will you use during warm-ups, reteach or tutorials?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Instructional Materials needed:

Great Expectations Great Rewards

CISD

CROWLEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

PLC AGENDA AND NOTES

PLC and Accountability Norms

***P**=Punctual and Prepared* ***L**=Listen to each other/silence phones* ***C**=Contribute and Collaborate*

Accountability: to self, to peers, to students

PLC Group _____Date _____Time_____

Name	Time in	Time Out

Leading Questions

(These must be decided before any planning can begin and should drive the PLC meeting.)

1. What do we want our students to learn? *(Backwards design- This should also form the learning target and be TEK based.)*

_____

_____

_____

2. How will we know if they've learned it? *(Consider what assessment(s) you will use and how you will assess the data.) Explain the data used-attach the data if necessary.*

_____

_____

_____

3. What will we do if they don't? *(What re-teaching is necessary? How will you do this differently than the initial teaching of the skill/concept? How will you re-assess?)*

_____

_____

_____

Agenda Items

(filled out before meeting by Team Leader and sent to members for input)

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

Need to Bring:_____

Action Items

(filled out during meeting by leader or member)

Responsibilities	Person (Initial)	Date due/Completion Date
1._____		
2._____		
3._____		
4._____		
5._____		

Comments, issues, help needed:

_____

_____

_____.

Crowley ISD

Ensuring Students Learn

Collaborating Culture

Focusing on Results

My PLC Notes And Plans

Date: _____

Focus Of The Meeting	Discussion, Issues, Concerns	Ideas and Decisions

I Need To	I Need To Bring.....
Before Our Next Meeting	For Our Next Meeting

New Idea(s) That I Will Use In My Classroom	How I Implemented The Idea(s)	**Results** Did The Idea(s) Prove To Be Effective for Student Learning?

New Activity That I Will Use In My Classroom	How I Implemented The Activity	**Results** Was The Activity Effective for Student Learning? Modifications?

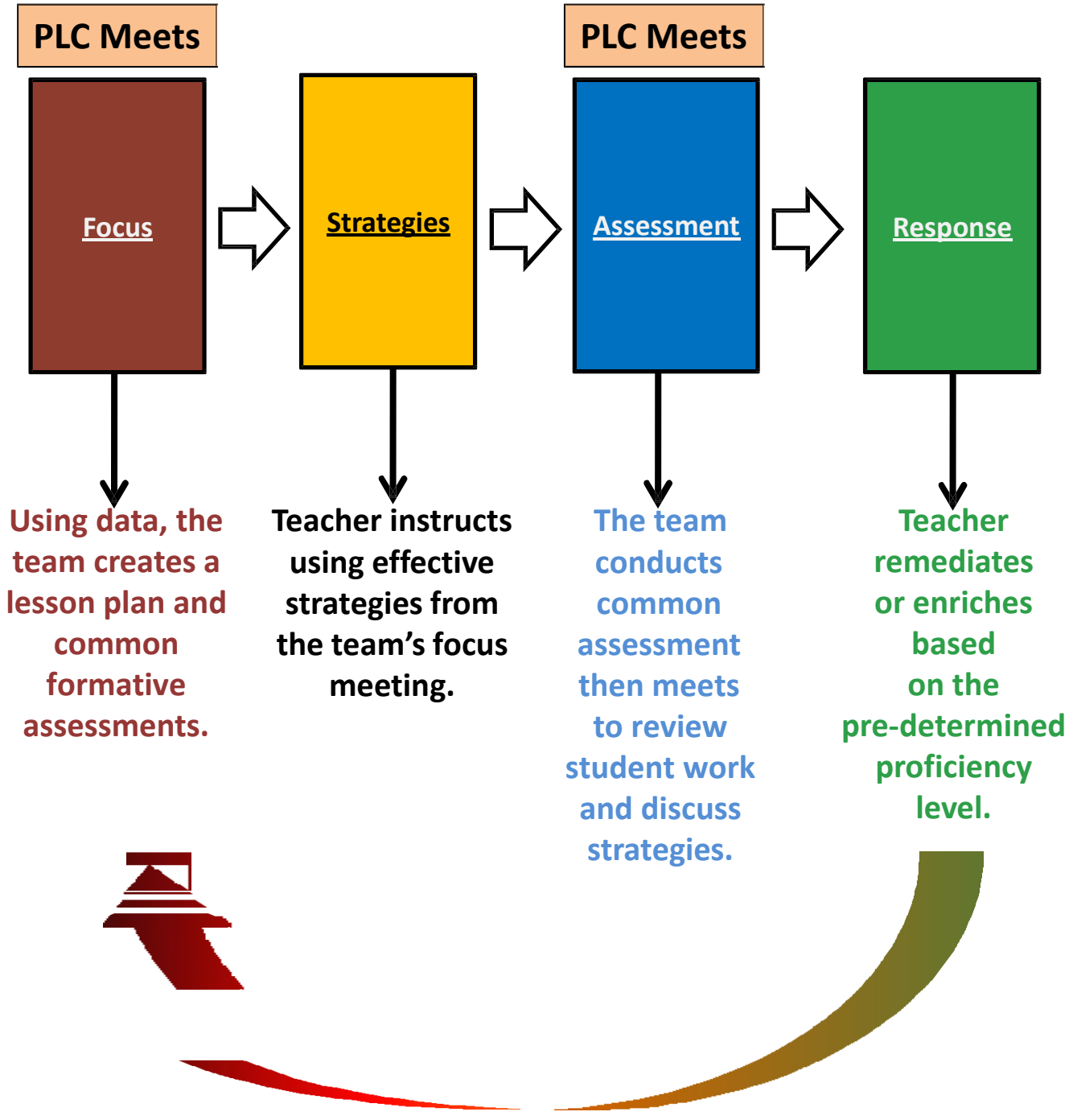
The 3 Driving Questions of a PLC

WHAT
DO WE WANT THEM TO LEARN?

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN THEY HAVE LEARNED IT?

HOW WILL WE RESPOND WHEN THEY NEED REMEDIATION OR ENRICHMENT?

The Team Cycle



PLC Conceptual Framework

"If [we] want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling- both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, [our] well-intentioned efforts will be defeated."(p. 9)

Consider:

1) How are things done in a professional learning community as opposed to more traditional schools?
2) What cultural shifts need to occur if traditional school are to become professional learning communities?

The PLC conceptual framework is grouped into three major themes evident in the policies, programs, and practices of the school and district:

1) A solid foundation consisting of collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values, and goals.
2) Collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goals
3) A focus on results as evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement.

1) A strong group (school/district) establishes and embeds the mission, vision, values, and goals in its culture creating a strong foundation to withstand inevitable stresses and personnel changes.

- Mission- Why are we here? Why do we exist?
- Vision- What kind of school/district do we hope to become? (future)
- Values- How must we behave in order to create the kind of school we hope to become? (attitudes, behaviors, commitments)
- Goals- What steps are we going to take and when will we take them? (specific targets at various stages of improvement process-SMART)

2) **Effective PLCs strive to embed collaboration into every aspect of the culture, creating a fundamental culture of collaboration.**
    - Collaboration is embedded into routine practices.
    - Time for collaboration is built into the school day and calendar.
    - Team norms guide collaboration.
    - Teams pursue specific and measurable goals.
    - Teams focus on learning.
        - What do we want students to learn?
        - How do we know they've learned it?
        - What do we do if they don't learn?
    - Teams have access and use relevant data and information.

3) **School effectiveness should be based on results not good intentions**.
    - Specify the current reality of student achievement (strengths and weaknesses)
    - Establish a SMART goal to improve the reality
    - Establish progress measure (PDSA)

How do we begin?

First Things First-Priorities:

- **Focus on learning**
- **Focus on collaborative culture**
- **Focus on results**
- **Provide timely, relevant information**

Reference:

Eaker, R., DuFour, R. & DuFour, R. (2002). ***Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities.*** **Bloomington, IN. Solution Tree.**

PLC Continuum Rubric
Where are we and where do we need to go? School: _____ Date: _____

PLC Element	Forming	Developing	Sustaining
PLC Development	An effort is being made to address the principle of the PLC. The teams are beginning their learning and questioning.	A critical mass has endorsed the principle. Members are beginning to change their thinking and practice.	The principle is deeply embedded in the school's culture. It represents a driving force in the daily work of the school. It is so internalized that it can survive changes in key personnel.
Mission Is it evident that learning for All is our core purpose?	An attempt has been made to identify learning outcomes for all grade levels – this attempt has not yet impacted the practice of most teachers.	There are clear learning outcomes for students to achieve. Strategies are being developed to assess student mastery.	Learning outcomes are clearly articulated to all stakeholders in the school, and each student's attainment of the outcomes is carefully monitored. The school has developed systems to provide more time and support for students experiencing initial difficulty in achieving the outcomes. The practices, programs, and policies of the school are continually assessed on the basis of their impact on learning.
Shared Vision Has the school identified what they are trying to create?	A vision statement has been developed for the school, but most staff is unaware of, or unaffected by it.	Staff members have worked together to describe the school they are trying to create. They have endorsed this general description and feel a sense of ownership in it. School improvement planning and staff development initiatives are tied to the shared vision.	Staff members routinely articulate the major principles of the share vision and use those principles to guide their day-to-day efforts and decisions. They honestly assess the current reality in their school and continually seek effective strategies for reducing the discrepancies between the conditions described in the vision statement current reality.
Shared Values How must we behave to advance our vision?	Staff members have articulated statements of belief or philosophy for their school; however, these value statements have not yet impacted their day-to-day work or the operation of the school.	Staff members have made a conscious effort to articulate and promote the attitudes, behaviors, and commitments that will advance their vision of their school. People are confronted when they behave in ways that are inconsistent with the core values.	The values of the school are embedded in the school culture. These shared values are evident to new staff and to those outside of the school. They influence policies, procedures, and daily practices of the school as well as day-to-day decisions of individual staff members.
Goals What are our priorities?	Staff members have participated in a process to establish goals, but the goals are typically stated as projects to be accomplished, or are written so broadly that they are impossible to measure. The goals do not yet influence instructional decisions in a meaningful way.	Staff members have worked together to establish long- and short-term improvement goals for their school. The goals are clearly communicated. Assessment tools and strategies have been developed and implemented to measure progress toward the goals.	All staff pursues measurable performance goals as part of their routine responsibilities. Goals are clearly linked to the school's shared vision. Goal attainment is celebrated and staff members demonstrate willingness to identify and pursue challenging stretch goals.
Curriculum Focus	Teacher uses local, state, and national	Teams of teachers work with local, state and	Teams of teachers collaboratively agree upon

PLC Continuum Rubric

Where are we and where do we need to go? School: _____ Date: _____

Do we know what students should be learning?	curriculum standards to decide what to teach. Curriculum overload and coverage is common.	national standards to decide what to teach. Pacing guides are developed collectively. Teachers begin to focus on the essential learning.	curriculum focus and on what students are expected to learn. Content is reduced to more meaningful (essential and important) content taught at greater depth.
Common Assessments Do we create assessments prior to learning? Do we focus on learning standards? Do we create assessments together as a goal for All learners?	Individual teachers design assessments. Student learning is documented. Teachers compare school assessment data with their own students' data to determine the relative success of their students.	Teams of teachers design common assessments to monitor student performance. Results may be shared and analyzed collectively. Student learning is documented as average achievement over time.	Teams of teachers design assessments. Data is analyzed collectively to inform their teaching. Students use the data as information about their progress toward learning goals and as a way to document their content and skill mastery. Assessment practices serve to motivate students by giving them multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Student learning is documented as it is achieved.
Collaborative Culture – Teacher Collaboration and Collective Inquiry Do teachers feel safe in learning from one another? Do teachers feel that they know how to look at data and learn from the date to change instructional practices?	Responding to students who are learning is left to the discretion of individual teachers. Teachers recognize a common curriculum that they are responsible for teaching, but there is little exchange of ideas regarding instructional materials, teaching strategies, or methods of assessment. Teachers are still unaware of what and how others are teaching.	The team attempts to respond together to students who are not learning Teachers function in work groups that meet periodically to complete certain tasks such as reviewing intended outcomes and coordinating calendars.	Staff members work together to enhance their effectiveness in helping students achieve learning outcomes. Teachers function as a team. They work collaboratively to identify collective goals, develop strategies to achieve those goals, gather relevant data, and learn from one another. Unlike a work group, they are characterized by common goals and interdependent efforts to achieve those goals.
Collaborative Culture – Principals as leaders of teacher leaders Do administrators know how to identify what learning looks like? Do we know how to articulate the learning to all educators?	Efforts have been made to reduce friction by clarifying "management rights" and "teacher rights." Both parties are protective of intrusion onto their turf.	Administrators solicit and value teacher input as improvement initiatives are developed and considered, but administrators are regarded as having primary responsibility for school improvement.	Staff is fully involved in the decision- making at the school. Administrators pose questions, delegate authority, create collaborative decision-making processes, and provide staff with the information, training, and parameters they need to make good decisions. School improvement is viewed as a collective responsibility. Teachers serve as transformational leaders.
Parent Partnerships Do we include parents in the school process to increase learning? Do we have added value with our	An effort is made to keep parents informed of events and situations at school in order to secure parental support for the school's efforts.	Structures and processes for two-way communications with parents are developed. The parental perspective is solicited on both school- wide issues and matters related directly to their own children.	The school-parent partnership moves beyond open communication. The school provides parents with information and materials that enable parents to assist their children in learning. Parents are welcomed in the school. There is an active volunteer program. Parents

Adapted from "The Professional Learning Community Continuum Rubric" - Dufour

PLC Continuum Rubric
Where are we and where do we need to go? School: _____ Date: _____

parent resource?			are full partners in the educational decisions that affect their children. Community resources are used to strengthen the school and student learning.
Action Research	While individual teachers may try experiments in their own classrooms, no structures to support, assess, or share their findings are in place. Many staff members have no knowledge of or involvement in action research. Some staff members participate in pilot action projects. The sharing of findings is largely informal.	Staff members have been trained in action research methods and conduct action research to improve their professional practice. Findings generated by this research are beginning to influence classroom practices.	Topics for action research arise from the shared vision and goals of the school. Staff members regard action research as an important component of their professional responsibilities. There are frequent discussions regarding the implications of findings as teachers attempt to learn from the research of their colleagues.
Systematic, direct and timely intervention and enrichment	Individual teachers have the discretion to invite student to participate in enrichment and intervention sessions that are offered periodically. Teachers are beginning to ask each other what is necessary to increase learning. Teachers are focused on state assessments to direct intervention for their students.	Teachers collaboratively plan interventions for students who are not learning. Additional time and support is offered regularly outside of the school day or within the school day with the same teacher. Teachers will share ideas and implement themselves.	Intervention and enrichment time is embedded in the daily schedule of the school day. Students are required to be involved when they are experiencing difficulty learning. Intervention time is clearly planned and implemented by the team and school. Members are analyzing data on student learning and on teacher effectiveness of learning. Students are grouped with the educator most skilled at reaching and teaching the learning. Intervention and Enrichment are about skill development and learning.
Focus on Results	Results have been identified – broad – focused on inputs, projects, or tasks completed rather than on student achievement.	Desired results have been identified in terms of student outcomes and student achievement indicators have been identified. Data is collected and monitored. Results are shared.	Teams of teachers are hungry for information on results. They gather relevant data and use these data to identify improvement goals and to monitor progress toward goals.
Celebration	Celebrations and recognition occur periodically and focus on a variety of school activities.	Examples of the core values at work are shared in stories and celebrations regularly. Group recognition is the norm.	Celebration is frequent, tied directly to the school's mission, vision, and values. It recognizes the accomplishments of individuals as well as groups. Recognition is given for improvements in pursuit of, as well as, accomplishments of learning goals.

Critical Questions for Team Consideration

Team Name: _____

Team Leader: _____

Date: _____

Consider the following statements in relationship to your team and indicate the level to which the statement is descriptive of your team:

This is not true of our team.		**This is true of some but not all of our team.**		**Uncertain.**	**Our team has addressed this issue.**			**We have consensus and act in accordance with our consensus.**	
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**

1. _____ Each member of our team is clear on the intended outcomes of our course in general as well as on the specific outcomes of each unit.
2. _____ We have aligned the outcomes of our course to statewide goals and to high-stakes tests.
3. _____ We have identified the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to master the intended outcomes of the course or unit.

4. _____ We have identified strategies and created instruments to assess whether students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills.
5. _____ We have agreed on how to best sequence the content of the course to help students achieve the intended outcomes.
6. _____ We have agreed on the criteria we will use in judging the quality of student work in key areas of our course such as writing, speaking, and projects.
7. _____ We have taught students the criteria we will use in judging the quality of their work and have provided them with examples.
8. _____ We have developed formative assessments that help us identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students.
9. _____ We have developed summative assessments that help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of our program.
10. _____ We have established the proficiency level we want all students to achieve on our summative assessments.
11. _____ We have identified content and/or topics that can be eliminated so we can devote more time to essential curriculum.
12. _____ We have analyzed student achievement data and established measurable team goals that we are working together to achieve.
13. _____ We have identified team norms or protocols to guide us in working together.
14. _____ We adhere to our team norms.
15. _____ We are continually looking for new ways to help students achieve at higher levels.

Mid-Year Reflections Survey

Boones Mill Elementary School

Grade-Level/Team: _____

Date: _____

Please reflect on your experiences as a member of an instructional team this school year and respond to the following questions:

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
1. I know the norms and protocols established by my team.	5	4	3	2	1

Comments: _____

_____

_____

2. Members of my team are living up to the established norms and protocols.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

_____

_____

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

3. Our team maintains focus on the established team goal(s).

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

_____

_____

4. Our team is making progress toward the achievement of our Professional Enhancement Plan.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

_____

_____

5. The principal promotes a collaborative culture in our school.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Great Expectations Great Rewards

CISD

CROWLEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

High Tech/Low Tech Response Strategies

- Plickers
- Whiteboards
- 4 Corners
- Stop Light Cups/Cards
- Fist to Four
- Thumbs Up/ Thumbs Down

Oral Strategies

- 1-2-4 Protocol
- 5 Talk Moves
- Language Frames

Formative Assessments

Self-Assessment Strategies

Written Strategies

- Think-Ink-Share
- Frayer Model
- Quick Write

Vision Statement

The vision of the C & I Department is to ensure a common standard of excellence for all students in Crowley ISD.

Mission Statement

The mission of the C & I Department is to develop consistency across the district through a guaranteed and viable curriculum, quality instruction, and continuous assessment through sharing in the responsibility for learning by providing support and guidance to ensure the success of all students.

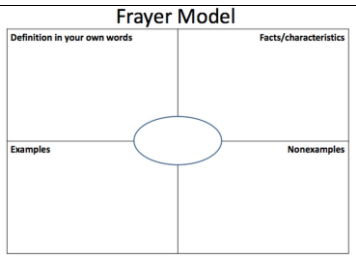
512 Peach Street • Crowley • Texas • 76036-3119
817.297.5800 • Phone
817.297.5805 • Fax

CISD Big 12 Formative Assessments* 2015-2016			
Instructional Strategy	**Instructional Steps**	**Thinking (Process TEKS Rigor)**	**Appropriate Usage (Gradual Release of Responsibility)**
High Tech/Low Tech Response Strategies			
Plickers	1. In order to scan students' responses, you must have the Plickers mobile app installed. 2. Print and distribute the Plickers response cards to students. Standard Plickers Card Set 3. The teacher then creates a question on the App. 4. The students hold up their Plicker's response card. 5. The teacher then uses his/her device to scan the student responses. 6. The teacher then has immediate feedback of the student's understanding. For a Demonstration video, visit: https://www.plickers.com	• Solve Problems • Evaluate • Communicate • Make Connections	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice
Whiteboards	1. Each student is given a whiteboard: either under their desk or picked up on the way into the classroom. 2. The teacher prompts the students with a question, cue, or sentence stem. 3. Students then have "think time" to respond on their whiteboards. 4. Students are instructed to show their responses thus giving the teacher immediate feedback.	• Evaluate • Solve Problems • Communicate • Justify • Compare/ Contrast • Analyze • Infer	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning
4 Corners	**Option 1** 1. Teacher poses a multiple choice question. 2. Students then move to the appropriate corner that corresponds to the answer they believe is correct. 3. Students then partner with someone who chose the same	• Interpret • Apply • Communicate • Solve Problems • Justify	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning

	answer and discuss why they selected that particular answer. 4. The teacher then asks a student from each group to defend their answer. 5. Once students have done so the teacher asks them to return to their seats and then discusses the correct answer.		
Self-Assessment Strategies			
Stop Light Cups/Cards	**Option 1** 1. Each student/set of students have a set of Red, Yellow and Green cups. 2. While working, students can situate the stack of cups with the appropriate cup on top. Green being they understand and do not need any assistance, Yellow the student/s are stuck and need some assistance, Red the student/s have no idea how to proceed and need more instruction. **Option 2** 1. The students are given three cards of different colors. (Red, Yellow, Green) 2. They are asked to self-assess their understanding about a concept or skill they are learning and hold up that particular card. Red = no understanding, needs more instruction, Yellow = minimal understanding, would struggle through an activity, Green= I completely understand and could teach it to a classmate.	• Reflect • Communicate • Evaluate • Monitor Comprehension	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning • Independent Learning
Fist to Four	1. Students hold up a certain amount of fingers based on understanding of concept. Closed Fist = " I have no idea." 1 = "I barely understand." 2= "I understand parts of it but I need help." 3= " I understand it and can do an adequate job explaining it." 4= " I understand it completely and can easily explain it to someone else."	• Reflect • Communicate • Evaluate • Monitor Comprehension	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice
Thumbs Up/ Thumbs Down	1. Provides a quick visual check on how well students understand a concept, procedure or skill, students simply hold up their thumbs if they feel they are ready to move on or put their thumbs down if they feel they are not ready.	• Reflect • Communicate • Evaluate • Monitor Comprehension	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice

Oral Strategies			
1-2-4 Protocol	1. Teacher gives students a prompt, question or assessment item to think about. 2. Students then pair with another student and share their thoughts or answer. The students must come to a consensus if the discussion is about a particular assessment item. 3. The pair of students then pair with another group and all four students share out their thoughts or their consensus answer. 4. Teacher then asks each group to share out.	• Communicate • Justify • Synthesize	• Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning
5 Talk Moves	The Five Talk Moves 1. "**Revoicing**" The teacher tries to repeat what a student has said, then asks the student to respond and verify whether or not the teacher's revoicing is correct. "So you're saying…" 2. "Asking Students To **Restate** Someone Else's Reasoning" The teacher asks one student to repeat or rephrase what another student has said, then follows up with the first student. "Can you repeat what he just said in your own words?" 3. "Asking Students To Apply Their **Reasoning** To Someone Else's Reasoning" Students make their own reasoning explicit by applying thinking to someone else's contribution. "Do you agree or disagree and why?" 4. "Prompting Students For Further Participation" **(Add on)** The teacher asks for further commentary. "Would someone like to add on?" 5. "Using **Wait** Time #1" The teacher waits at least ten seconds for students to think before calling on someone for an answer. "Take your time… we'll wait." "Using **Wait** Time #2" The teacher waits after the student responds without giving feedback or calling on another student. This is critical to extend students' thinking.	• Communicate • Summarize • Justify • Differentiate • Evaluate • Synthesize	• Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning
Language Frames	1. Language Frames/Sentence Stems should be used when teachers are encouraging students to use academic vocabulary.		• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice

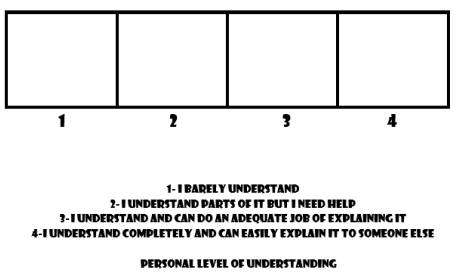
	2. Teachers should provide sentence starters/stems that provide opportunities for students to communicate using the content vocabulary. **Sample Language Frames/ Sentence Stems** I wonder why . . . How does . . . work? I'd like to ask you about . . . Am I correct in assuming that . . .? Could you expand a little bit on what you said about . . . ? Could you be more specific about . . .? Something else I'd like to know is . . . If I have understood you correctly, your point is that . . . On the whole… Basically he/she is saying that…. In this text, the author argues that…. One similarity/difference between [subject 1] and [subject 2] is …. [Subject 1] and [subject 2] are similar because they both…. [Subject 1] and [subject 2] are rather different because while [subject 1] has _____, [subject 2] has _____.		
Written Strategies			
Think-Ink-Share	1. Students think independently, at first, to answer a question the teacher has posed or an assessment item. 2. Students are then encouraged to select an answer or complete the prompt. 3. Students are then placed in pairs or small groups. 4. Students share out and discuss their answers with their group, justifying and defending their answers. **Extension** 5. Small groups then share with other groups to discuss and defend.	• Justify • Communicate • Brainstorm • Defend • Explain	• Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning
Frayer Model	**Option 1** 1. Place a vocabulary word or content specific concept in the center of the Frayer model.	• Organize • Categorize • Make Connections • Understand • Connect • Synthesize • Multiple Representations	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning • Independent Learning

	 2. Place students in pairs. 3. Have each group do a "brain dump" on sticky notes about what they know about the topic. 4. Place the stickys on the Frayer Model at the beginning of the lesson and use this as a guide for instruction. 5. At the end of the lesson, before students begin working, have them use sticky notes to complete the rest of the Frayer Model to make sure they understand the concept. **Option 2** 1. During the collaborative learning component of the Gradual Release Model, have students fill in the Frayer model with a partner about the concept they were taught that particular day.		
Quick Write	1. Occurs when an open-ended question or prompt has been posed by the teacher and students take 2-10 minutes to respond.	• Communicate • Summarization • Draw Conclusion • Solve • Make Connections • Understand • Monitor Comprehension • Evaluate • Justify	• Focused Instruction • Guided Instruction/ Practice • Collaborative Learning • Independent Learning • Closure

***This is not an exhaustive list of how these "Big 12" could be used in the classroom.**

Additional Resources for Formative Assessments:

Lead4Ward Instructional Strategies
Tools for Formative Assessments
Elementary ELAR Framework
Secondary ELAR Framework
Math Framework
Science Framework

Formative Assessments Closure Explanations	
Instructional Strategy	**Instructional Steps**
3-2-1	3 things you found out 2 interesting things 1 question you still have 3 differences between _____ 2 effects of _____ on _____ 1 question you still have about the topic 3 important facts 2 interesting ideas 1 thought to think about Write 3 questions about the text (unfamiliar words, confusing passages or ideas) Write 2 predictions based on the text (what will happen next based on the reading) Make one connection based on the text (connect to something you know or have experienced)
Consensagram	Develop an essential question. Develop 3-4 degrees of response. Students place a dot in the cell representing their initial response. Students place a dot in the cell representing their response after instructions takes place. 

Give 1, Get 1	Cooperative strategy where students write response to a prompt, meet up with another and share ideas so that each leaves with something to add to their list.
I Have, Who Has	The teacher makes two sets of cards. One set contains questions related to the unit of study. The second set contains the answers to the questions. Distribute the answer cards to the students and either you or a student will read the question cards to the class. All students check their answer cards to see if they have the correct answer. *A variation is to make cards into a chain activity*: The student chosen to begin the chain will read the given card aloud and then wait for the next participant to read the only card that would correctly follow the progression. Play continues until all of the cards are read and the initial student is ready to read his card for the second time.
I Used to Think…, Now I Think	This thinking routine helps students formulate how their thoughts about a subject have changed as a result of reading, discussing, writing, and so forth. It can be used in a variety of settings-as encouragement of student self-assessment, reflection, and metacognition.
KW**L** or KW**L+**	Students respond as whole group, small group, or individually to a topic as to "What they have learned". KWL+ asks students to organize their new learnings using a concept map or graphic organizer that reflects the key information. Then, each student writes a summary paragraph about what they have learned.
Numbered Heads	Students sit in groups and each group member is given a number. The teacher poses a problem and all four students discuss. The teacher calls a number and that student is responsible for sharing for the group.
One Word Summary	Summarize content in one word (from reading, presentation, project, or class discussion)
Parking Lot	In preparation for the next days' lesson, student should be provided with sticky notes on which to write questions or statements about a given topic or concept. They should place their notes on a large chart that is posted in the room. The teacher should take note of the questions and use them in preparing the lesson. The teacher is able to determine a general level of understanding among the students and to adjust the instruction accordingly. With this method, students who are hesitant to ask question orally will have their concerns addresses.
Portfolio Check	Check the progress of a student's portfolio. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of significant work, carefully selected, dated and presented to tell the story of a student's achievement or growth in well-defined areas of performance, such as reading, writing, math, etc. A portfolio usually includes personal reflections where the student explains why each piece was chosen and what it shows about his/her growing skills and abilities.

Quick Write	The strategy asks learners to respond 2-10 minutes to an open-ended question or prompt posed by the teacher before, during, or after reading.
Show You Know	Based on the daily objective or essential question, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of material through authentic assessment; written response or other assessment technique.
Slap It	Students are divided into two teams to identify correct answers to questions given by the teacher. Students use a fly swatter to slap the correct response posted on the wall.
Sticky Bars	Sticky Bars help students recognize that there is often a range of ideas students in the class have about a specific topic. Students are presented with a short answer or multiple choice question. The answer is anonymously recorded on a post-it note and returned to the teacher. The teacher then arranges the ideas as a bar graph that is posted in the classroom, which represents the different student responses.
Temperature Check	Teacher can gauge students' level of understanding by having them respond Hot, Warm, Cool or Cold to a given prompt/topic/question based upon the daily objective.

Glossary Of PLC Terms

Attainable Goals. Goals perceived as achievable by those who set them. Attainable goals are intended to document incremental progress and build momentum and self-efficacy through short-term wins.

Building Shared Knowledge. Learning together. Members of professional learning communities always attempt to answer critical questions by first learning together. They engage in collective inquiry to build shared knowledge. This collective study of the same information increases the likelihood that members will arrive at the same conclusion. Members of a PLC, by definition, will learn together.

Collaboration. A systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results. In a PLC, collaboration focuses on the critical questions of learning: What is it we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?

Common Assessment. An assessment of student learning that uses the same instrument or a common process utilizing the same criteria for determining the quality of student work. State and provincial assessments and district benchmark assessments are "common" assessments. However, in a PLC, common assessments are also created by a team of teachers with collective responsibility for the learning of a group of students who are expected to acquire the same knowledge and skills. Team-developed common assessments provide members with the basis of comparison that turns data into information and help individuals identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional strategies. They also help identify problem areas in the curriculum that require attention.

Common Formative Assessment. An assessment typically created collaboratively by a team of teachers responsible for the same grade level or course. Common formative assessments are used frequently throughout the year to identify (1) individual students who need additional time and support for learning, (2) the teaching strategies most effective in helping students acquire the intended knowledge and skills, (3) curriculum concerns—areas in which students generally are having difficulty achieving the intended standard—and (4) improvement goals for individual teachers and the team.

Community. A group linked by common interests. Whereas the term organization tends to emphasize structure and efficiency, community suggests shared purpose, mutual cooperation, and supportive relationships.

Consensus. Consensus is achieved when (1) all points of view have not only been heard but also solicited, and (2) the will of the group is evident even to those who most oppose it.

Continuous Improvement Process (PDSA). The ongoing cycle of planning, doing, studying, and acting designed to improve results—constantly. In a PLC, this cycle includes gathering evidence of current levels of student learning, developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning, implementing those strategies and ideas, analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not, and applying the new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement.

Criterion-referenced Assessment. An assessment used to determine if a student or group of students have met a specific standard or intended learning outcome (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006).

Essential Learning. The critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions each student must acquire as a result of each course, grade level, and unit of instruction. Essential learning may also be referred to as essential outcomes, power standards (Reeves, 2002), guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003), essential academic goals (Lezotte, 1991), learning intentions and success criteria (Hattie, 2009), or learning expectations and tangible exemplars of student proficiency (Saphier, 2005).

Formative Assessment. An assessment for learning used to advance and not merely monitor each student's learning; the assessment informs the teacher regarding the effectiveness of instruction and the individual student regarding progress in becoming proficient. The checks for understanding that individual teachers use in the classroom on a daily basis are examples of formative assessments. In a PLC, collaborative teams also use common formative assessments to (1) identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their learning, (2) provide those student with additional time and support in a way that does not remove them from new direct instruction, and (3) give them additional opportunities to demonstrate their 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?

Norm-referenced Assessment. An assessment designed to compare the performance of an individual or group with a larger "norm" group typically representing a national sample with a wide and diverse cross-section of students (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006).

Professional Learning Community (PLC). An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles 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.

Pyramid Of Interventions. A systematic school wide plan that ensures every student in every course or grade level will receive additional time and support for learning as soon as he or she experiences difficulty in acquiring essential knowledge and skills. The multi-tiered intervention occurs during the school day, and students are required rather than invited to devote the extra time and secure the extra support for learning.

SMART Goals. Goals that are Strategic & Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Timebound (O'Neill & Conzemius, 2005)**.**

Summative Assessment. An assessment of learning (Stiggins, 2002) designed to provide a final measure to determine if learning goals have been met (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006). Summative assessments yield a dichotomy: pass or fail, proficient or not proficient. Additional timely support is typically not forthcoming.

Team. A group of people working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members are held mutually accountable. Collaborative teams are the fundamental building blocks of PLCs.

Team Learning Process. The cyclical process in which all teams in a PLC engage to stay focused on learning. The team learning process includes: clarifying essential student learnings (skills, concepts, and dispositions) for each course and content area; agreeing on common pacing of instruction; developing multiple common formative assessments aligned to each essential outcome; establishing specific, rigorous target scores or benchmarks that will lead to success on high-stakes assessments; analyzing common assessment results; and identifying and implementing improvement strategies. Teams address each step in the process by first building shared knowledge rather than pooling opinions.

Team Norms. In PLCs, norms represent collective 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.

Learning by Doing © 2006, 2010 Solution Tree Press • solution-tree.com
Visit **go.solution-tree.com/PLCbooks** to download more PLC terms.

PLC TEAM

Spotlight Date	Purpose	Essential Questions	Learning Targets	Focus	Evidence of Learning
July 2015	To establish district norms, expectations, common vocabulary, and create a culture of collaboration	1. How do I define PLC? 2. What does collaboration look like on my campus? 3. How do or can PLCs benefit my campus? 4. As the campus principal, what is my role in PLCs?	To understand the PLC concepts and components To understand the rationale and benefits of a PLC	District-wide PLC foundation and framework: To develop a shared PLC mission, vision, values, and goals statements To plan for campus roll-out or renewal and recommitment To share the PLC framework	• Principals' PLC mission, vision, values, and goals • Each principal's campus plan for PLC implementation or recommitment
Sept. 2015	To focus on student learning by viewing and discussing components of high functioning and non-functioning PLCs	1. Does my campus focus on teaching or student learning? 2. What do we want our students to learn?	To recognize a high functioning PLC which focuses on student learning	To participate in a PLC using guiding question #1: "What do we want students to learn?"	• Daily lesson plan using the PLC agenda and gradual release model
Oct. 2015	To focus on formative assessment and data by viewing and discussing components of high functioning and non-functioning PLCs	1. What is the purpose of formative assessment? 2. What do we do with the formative assessment information? 3. How can we be data rich and information poor?	To recognize a high functioning PLC which focuses on student work, formative assessment, and valid and reliable data	To participate in a PLC using guiding question # 2: "How do we know students have learned?"	
Spotlight Date	Purpose	Essential Questions	Learning Targets	Focus	Evidence of Learning

DRAFT

PLC TEAM

Spotlight Date	Purpose	Essential Questions	Learning Targets	Focus	Evidence of Learning
Nov. 2015	To focus on intervention and extension (differentiation) by viewing and discussing components of high functioning and non-functioning PLCs	1. What is differentiation? 2. When should intervention occur in the classroom? 3. Why should we enrich those who do learn?	To recognize a high functioning PLC which focuses on intervention and extension (differentiation)	To participate in a PLC using guiding question # 3: "What do we do when students don't learn?" and question #4: "How do we support students who have learned?"	
Jan. 2016	To focus on campus-wide effective interventions before STAAR	1. Are all students making progress? 2. What are the components to designing and implementing effective interventions?	To recognize a high functioning PLC which focuses on using data to plan strategic interventions for STAAR	To participate in a PLC using guiding questions #3: "What do we do when students don't learn?"	
Feb. 2016	To focus on improving a PLC through effective communication	1. Is communication a barrier to success on your campus? 2. Do the norms you established create an environment conducive to effective communication?	To learn how to improve PLC communication	To participate in a PLC using effective communication	

DRAFT

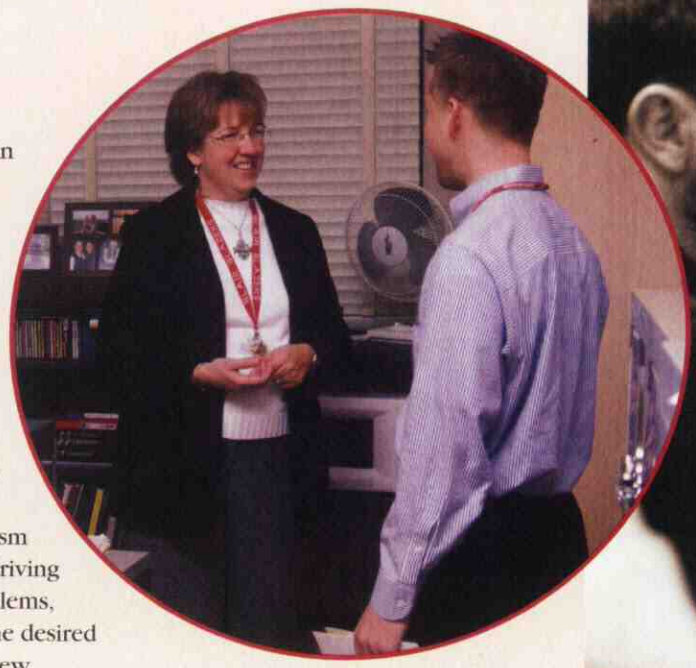
PLC TEAM

March 2016	**To focus on sustaining an effective PLC after testing**	**1. How can my campus maintain effective PLCs after testing?**	**To learn how to sustain professional learning**	**To participate in a PLC which maintains meaningful student learning**	
April 2015	**To focus on continuous improvement and sustaining the PLC culture**	**1. Reflecting on the past year's PLCs:** • **Did we achieve our goals?** • **Did your campus meet its PLC goals?** • **What components were effective?** • **What components need improvement?** • **What components of your campus' PLCs should be refined to promote progress?**	**To learn continuous improvement and how it relates to PLC** **To learn how to sustain the PLC momentum and build for next year**	**To participate in a PLC using PDSA and the three framework components:** **Ensuring students learn** **Culture of collaboration** **Focusing on Results**	

What Is a "Professional Learning Community"?

To create a professional learning community, focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results.

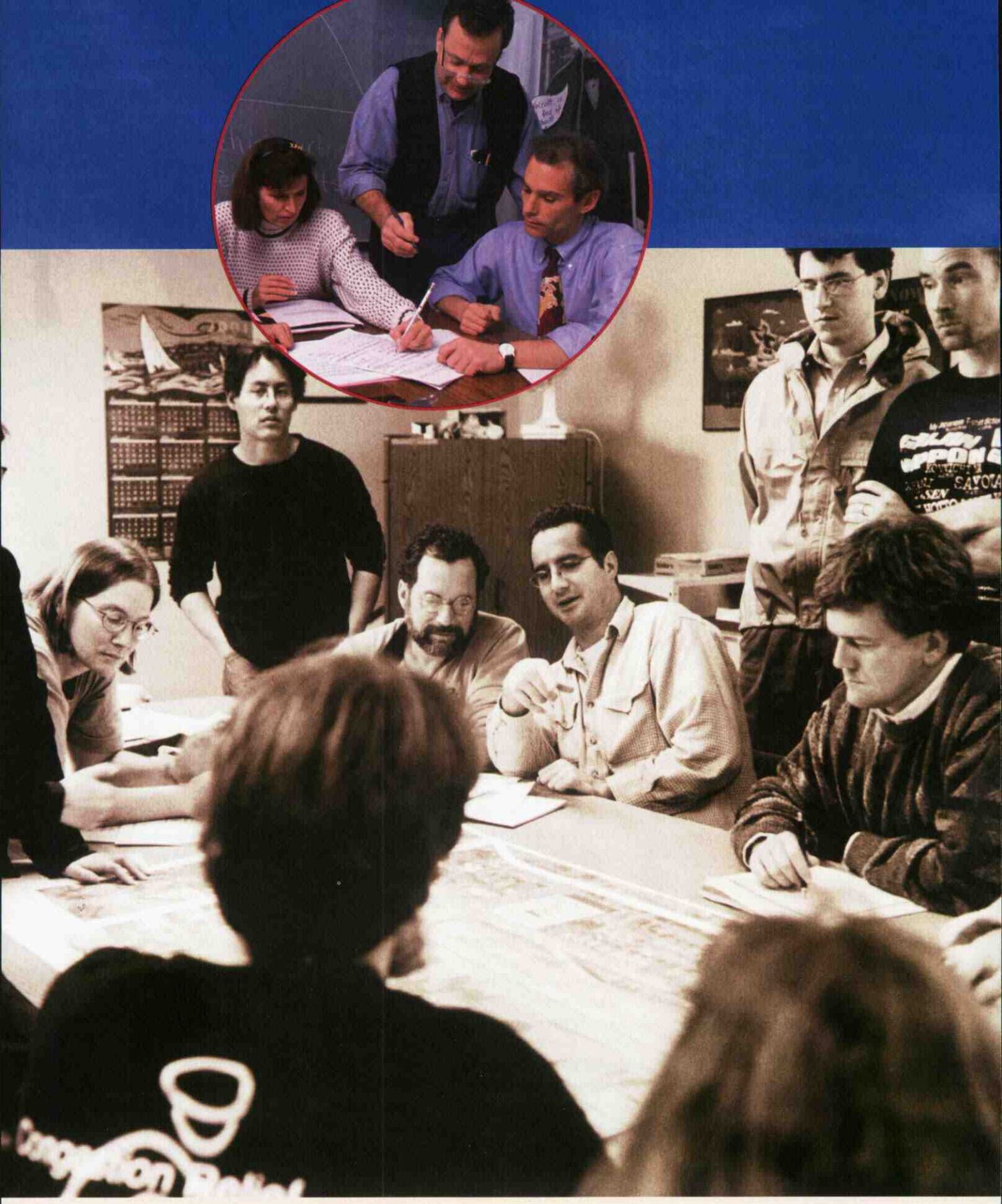
Richard DuFour



The idea of improving schools by developing *professional learning communities* is currently in vogue. People use this term to describe every imaginable combination of individuals with an interest in education—a grade-level teaching team, a school committee, a high school department, an entire school district, a state department of education, a national professional organization, and so on. In fact, the term has been used so ubiquitously that it is in danger of losing all meaning.

The professional learning community model has now reached a critical juncture, one well known to those who have witnessed the fate of other well-intentioned school reform efforts. In this all-too-familiar cycle, initial enthusiasm gives way to confusion about the fundamental concepts driving the initiative, followed by inevitable implementation problems, the conclusion that the reform has failed to bring about the desired results, abandonment of the reform, and the launch of a new search for the next promising initiative. Another reform movement has come and gone, reinforcing the conventional education wisdom that promises, "This too shall pass."

The movement to develop professional learning communities



Photos clockwise, from left: © Gale Zucker, Will Hart/PictureQuest, Susie Fitzhugh.

can avoid this cycle, but only if educators reflect critically on the concept's merits. What are the "big ideas" that represent the core principles of professional learning communities? How do these principles guide schools' efforts to sustain the professional learning community model until it becomes deeply embedded in the culture of the school?

Photo by Reece Quinones

Big Idea #1: Ensuring That Students Learn

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools.

School mission statements that promise "learning for all" have become a cliché. But when a school staff takes that statement literally—when teachers view it as a pledge to ensure the success of each student rather than as politically correct hyperbole—profound changes begin to take place. The school staff finds itself asking, What school characteristics and practices have been most successful in helping all students achieve at high levels? How could we adopt those characteristics and practices in our own school? What commitments would we have to make to one another to create such a school? What indicators could we monitor to assess our progress? When the staff has built shared knowledge and found common ground on these questions, the school has a solid foundation for moving forward with its improvement initiative.

As the school moves forward, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

The answer to the third question separates learning communities from traditional schools.

Here is a scenario that plays out daily in traditional schools. A teacher teaches a unit to the best of his or her ability, but at the conclusion of the unit some students have not mastered the essential outcomes. On the one hand, the teacher would like to take the time to help those students. On the other hand, the teacher feels compelled to move forward to "cover" the course content. If the teacher uses instructional time to assist students who have not learned, the progress of students who have mastered the content will suffer; if the teacher pushes on with new concepts, the struggling students will fall farther behind.

What typically happens in this situation? Almost invariably, the school leaves the solution to the discretion of individual teachers, who vary widely in the ways they respond. Some teachers conclude that the struggling students should transfer to a less rigorous course or should be considered for special education. Some lower their expectations by adopting less challenging standards for subgroups of students within their classrooms. Some look for ways to assist the students before and after school. Some allow struggling students to fail.

When a school begins to function as a professional learning community, however, teachers become aware of the incongruity between their commitment to ensure learning for all students and their lack of a coordinated strategy to respond when some students do not learn. The staff addresses this discrepancy by designing strategies to ensure that struggling students receive additional time and support, no matter who their teacher is. In addition to being systematic and schoolwide, the professional learning community's response to students who experience difficulty is

- *Timely.* The school quickly identifies students who need additional time and support.
- *Based on intervention rather than remediation.* The plan provides students with help as soon as they experience difficulty rather than relying on summer school, retention, and remedial courses.
- *Directive.* Instead of *inviting* students to seek additional help, the systematic plan *requires* students to devote extra time and receive additional assistance until they have mastered the necessary concepts.

The systematic, timely, and directive

intervention program operating at Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, provides an excellent example. Every three weeks, every student receives a progress report. Within the first month of school, new students discover that if they are not doing well in a class, they will receive a wide array of immediate interventions. First, the teacher, counselor, and faculty advisor each talk with the student individually to help resolve the problem. The school also notifies the student's parents about the concern. In addition, the school offers the struggling student a pass from study hall to a school tutoring center to get additional help in the course. An older student mentor, in conjunction with the struggling student's advisor, helps the student with homework during the student's daily advisory period.

Collaborative teacher conversations must quickly move beyond "What are we expected to teach?" to "How will we know when each student has learned?"

Any student who continues to fall short of expectations at the end of six weeks despite these interventions is required, rather than invited, to attend tutoring sessions during the study hall period. Counselors begin to make weekly checks on the struggling student's progress. If tutoring fails to bring about improvement within the next six weeks, the student is assigned to a daily guided study hall with 10 or fewer students. The guided study hall supervisor communicates with classroom teachers to learn exactly what homework each student needs to complete and monitors the completion of that homework. Parents attend a meeting at the school at which the student, parents, counselor, and classroom teacher must sign a contract clarifying what each party will do to help the student meet the standards for the course.

Stevenson High School serves more than 4,000 students. Yet this school has found a way to monitor each student's learning on a timely basis and to ensure that every student who experiences academic difficulty will receive extra time and support for learning.

Like Stevenson, schools that are truly committed to the concept of learning for each student will stop subjecting struggling students to a haphazard education lottery. These schools will guarantee that each student receives whatever additional support he or she needs.

Big Idea #2: A Culture of Collaboration

Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture.

Despite compelling evidence indicating that working collaboratively represents best practice, teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation. Even in schools that endorse the idea of collaboration, the staff's willingness to collaborate often stops at the classroom door. Some school staffs equate the term "collaboration" with congeniality and focus on building group camaraderie. Other staffs join forces to develop consensus on operational procedures, such as how they will respond to tardiness or supervise recess. Still others organize themselves into committees to oversee different facets of the school's operation, such as discipline, technology, and social climate. Although each of these activities can serve a useful purpose, none represents the kind of professional dialogue that can transform a school into a professional learning community.

The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement.

Collaborating for School Improvement

At Boones Mill Elementary School, a K–5 school serving 400 students in rural Franklin County, Virginia, the powerful collaboration of grade-level teams drives the school improvement process. The following scenario describes what Boones Mill staff members refer to as their *teaching-learning process.*

The school's five 3rd grade teachers study state and national standards, the district curriculum guide, and student achievement data to identify the essential knowledge and skills that all students should learn in an upcoming language arts unit. They also ask the 4th grade teachers what they hope students will have mastered by the time they leave 3rd grade. On the basis of the shared knowledge generated by this joint study, the 3rd grade team agrees on the critical outcomes that they will make sure each student achieves during the unit.

Next, the team turns its attention to developing common formative assessments to monitor each student's mastery of the essential outcomes. Team members discuss the most authentic and valid ways to assess student mastery. They set the standard for each skill or concept that each student must achieve to be deemed proficient. They agree on the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work, and they practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. Finally, they decide when they will administer the assessments.

After each teacher has examined the results of the common formative assessment for his or her students, the team analyzes how all 3rd graders performed. Team members identify strengths and

weaknesses in student learning and begin to discuss how they can build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. The entire team gains new insights into what is working and what is not, and members discuss new strategies that they can implement in their classrooms to raise student achievement.

At Boones Mill, collaborative conversations happen routinely throughout the year. Teachers use frequent formative assessments to investigate the questions "Are students learning what they need to learn?" and "Who needs additional time and support to learn?" rather than relying solely on summative assessments that ask "Which students learned what was intended and which students did not?"

Collaborative conversations call on team members to make public what has traditionally been private—goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results. These discussions give every teacher someone to turn to and talk to, and they are explicitly structured to improve the classroom practice of teachers—individually and collectively.

For teachers to participate in such a powerful process, the school must ensure that everyone belongs to a team that focuses on student learning. Each team must have time to meet during the workday and throughout the school year. Teams must focus their efforts on crucial questions related to learning and generate products that reflect that focus, such as lists of essential outcomes, different kinds of assessment, analyses of student achievement, and strategies for improving results. Teams must develop norms or protocols to clarify expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and relationships among team members. Teams must adopt student achievement goals linked with school and district goals.

Removing Barriers to Success

For meaningful collaboration to occur, a number of things must also *stop* happening. Schools must stop pretending that merely presenting teachers with state standards or district curriculum guides will guarantee that all students have access to a common curriculum. Even school districts that devote tremendous time and energy to designing the *intended* curriculum often pay little attention to the *implemented* curriculum (what teachers actually teach) and even less to the *attained* curriculum (what students learn) (Marzano, 2003). Schools must also give teachers time to analyze and discuss state and district curriculum documents. More important, teacher conversations must quickly move beyond "What are we expected to teach?" to "How will we know when each student has learned?"

In addition, faculties must stop making excuses for failing to collaborate. Few educators publicly assert that working in isolation is the best strategy for improving schools. Instead, they give reasons why it is impossible for them to work together: "We just can't find the time." "Not everyone on the staff has endorsed the idea." "We need more training in collaboration." But the number of schools that have created truly collaborative cultures proves that such barriers are not insurmountable. As Roland Barth (1991) wrote,

> Are teachers and administrators willing to accept the fact that they are part of the problem? . . . God didn't create self-contained classrooms, 50-minute periods, and subjects taught in isolation. We did—because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together. (pp. 126–127)

A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.

In the final analysis, building the collaborative culture of a professional learning community is a question of will. A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.

Big Idea #3: A Focus on Results

Professional learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Working together to improve student achievement becomes the routine work of everyone in the school. Every teacher team participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress. The focus of team goals shifts. Such goals as "We will adopt the Junior Great Books program" or "We will create three new labs for our science course" give way to "We will increase the percentage of students who meet the state standard in language arts from 83 percent to 90 percent" or "We will reduce the failure rate in our course by 50 percent."

Schools and teachers typically suffer from the DRIP syndrome—Data Rich/Information Poor. The results-oriented professional learning community not only welcomes data but also turns data into useful and relevant information for staff. Teachers have never suffered from a lack of data. Even a teacher who works in isolation can easily establish the mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and percentage of students who demonstrated proficiency every time he or she administers a test. However, data will become a catalyst for improved teacher practice only if the teacher has a basis of comparison.

When teacher teams develop common formative assessments throughout the school year, each teacher can identify how his or her students performed on each skill compared with other students. Individual teachers can call on their team colleagues to help them reflect on areas of concern. Each teacher has access to the ideas, materials, strategies, and talents of the entire team.

Freeport Intermediate School, located 50 miles south of Houston, Texas, attributes its success to an unrelenting

focus on results. Teachers work in collaborative teams for 90 minutes daily to clarify the essential outcomes of their grade levels and courses and to align those outcomes with state standards. They develop consistent instructional calendars and administer the same brief assessment to all students at the same grade level at the conclusion of each instructional unit, roughly once a week.

Each quarter, the teams administer a common cumulative exam. Each spring, the teams develop and administer practice tests for the state exam. Each year, the teams pore over the results of the state test, which are broken down to show every teacher how his or her students performed on every skill and on every test item. The teachers share their results from all of these assessments with their colleagues, and they quickly learn when a teammate has been particularly effective in teaching a certain skill. Team members consciously look for successful practice and attempt to replicate it in their own practice; they also identify areas of the curriculum that need more attention.

Freeport Intermediate has been transformed from one of the lowest-performing schools in the state to a national model for academic achievement. Principal Clara Sale-Davis believes that the crucial first step in that transformation came when the staff began to honestly confront data on student achievement and to work together to improve results rather than make excuses for them.

Of course, this focus on continual improvement and results requires educators to change traditional practices and revise prevalent assumptions. Educators must begin to embrace data as a useful indicator of progress. They must stop disregarding or excusing unfavorable data and honestly confront the sometimes-brutal facts. They must stop using averages to analyze student performance and begin to focus on the success of each student.

Educators who focus on results must also stop limiting improvement goals to factors outside the classroom, such as student discipline and staff morale, and shift their attention to goals that focus on student learning. They must stop assessing their own effectiveness on the basis of how busy they are or how many new initiatives they have launched and begin instead to ask, "Have we made progress on the goals that are most important to us?" Educators must stop working in isolation and hoarding their ideas, materials, and strategies and begin to work together to meet the needs of all students.

students learn will rise. If they fail to demonstrate the discipline to initiate and sustain this work, then their school is unlikely to become more effective, even if those within it claim to be a professional learning community. The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school—the commitment and persistence of the educators within it. ■

Photo by Kevin Davis

Hard Work and Commitment

Even the grandest design eventually translates into hard work. The professional learning community model is a grand design—a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. But initiating and sustaining the concept requires hard work. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement.

When educators do the hard work necessary to implement these principles, their collective ability to help all

References

Barth, R. (1991). Restructuring schools: Some questions for teachers and principals. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73*(2), 123–128.

Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Copyright © 2004 Richard DuFour.

Richard DuFour recently retired as Superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois. He currently resides in Moneta, Virginia, and may be reached at (540) 721-4662; rdufour@district125.k12.il.us. His forthcoming book is *Whatever It Takes: How a Professional Learning Community Responds When Kids Don't Learn* (National Educational Service, in press).

Copyright of Educational Leadership is the property of Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.