

Professional Learning Communities

Grades K-12

2010-2011

Professional Learning Communities

Perry Local Schools

Mission

- o To emphasize excellence in learning and provide opportunities for every child to realize his/her potential in a safe environment.
- o To encourage students to become responsible productive citizens and lifelong learners.

Shared Commitments

- o Model integrity, trust, honesty, fairness, and a good work ethic while demonstrating loyalty to the organization and one another
- o Evaluate the effectiveness of the organization and implement changes that must occur for success.
- o Utilize collaborative structures and resources to achieve results-driven learning goals.
- o Provide a positive and safe learning environment that encourages and supports risk taking while maintaining high expectations.
- o Model lifelong learning.
- o Celebrate our successes.

Purpose of PLCs

The PLC process provides staff with a collaborative process to help fulfill the mission and shared commitments of the district.

Guidelines

- o A total of **8.5 hours** is to be used for PLC collaboration in which 4.5 hours are to be used during the first semester; 4 hours are to be used during the second semester. At least two meetings per semester are required.
- o Teams are to establish goals for the year, design a plan for student improvement, and determine the allotment of required hours and meeting times. This process must be completed by September 30.
- o When administrators require data tabulation and record keeping of individual students beyond what is typically required for grade cards, then PLC time or released time shall be granted.
- o Developing the Ohio Improvement Plan (OIP) is part of the allotted time for PLCs; however, no more than 1.5 hours may be counted toward the 8.5 hours of required time.
- o Teams are to submit a plan for the year to the building administrator by September 30.
- o Attendance by all team members is expected at each meeting.
- o Meetings should be held in school buildings. If a team has a special need to meet in a different location, this must be approved by the building administrator.
- o A final report will be shared with the entire staff and/or building administrator by May 31.

Three questions PLCs must address:

- o Content: What do we want students to learn?
- o Assessment: How do we know when students have learned it?
- o Intervention: What will we do when students don't learn?

Action Plan:

We must continually assess our effectiveness in accomplishing our mission and shared commitments on the basis of results – tangible evidence that our students are acquiring the knowledge, skills and dispositions essential to their current and future success.

The Action Plan should address the following questions:

- o What will we do to improve student learning?
- o How will our work tie content, assessments, and intervention together?
- o How will technology be incorporated?
- o What assistance does the administration need to provide?

Specifically:

- o Identify student needs based on standardized and classroom data.
- o Establish priorities.
- o Determine the gaps between where we are and where we want to be (explore why these gaps exist).
- o Establish measurable goals.
- o Create the action plan procedures/activities to fix the problem(s).
- o Make it happen in the classroom (increase student learning!).

Menu of Items to Implement PLC Goals:

- o Develop curriculum, pacing guides, and research-based intervention plans.
- o Analyze data and student work in order to address “gaps” in achievement.
- o Identify obstacles leading to student achievement.
- o Develop and implement a OIP and then reflect on the results.
- o Develop common assessments/scoring tools.
- o Develop engaging lessons and differentiated instruction.
- o Discuss professional articles/books and “best practices” in our field.
- o In-service on pertinent teaching tools.
- o Develop lessons to incorporate the use of technology.
- o Create tools for tracking growth over time.

Logistics

- o Choose a *team leader* if you do not have a department chair (this responsibility can be rotated).
- o Choose a *recorder* to document the *minutes* of each meeting (this responsibility can be rotated). The minutes are to be made available to administrators upon request.
- o Determine and document the projected dates, times, and locations for each meeting.
- o Determine and document the operating procedures and standards of behavior for the group (called norms). The *norms* should be specific, behavioral, and observable (e.g. “Team members will be on time”). The norms may be revised at any time to accommodate the needs of all the members.

Characteristics of Effective Teams

- o Shared beliefs and attitudes.
- o High levels of trust that in turn result in open communities, mutual respect for people and opinions, and a willingness to participate.
- o The belief that individuals have the authority to make important decisions and a willingness to assume responsibility for the decisions made.
- o Effectively managed meetings with clearly defined norms, agendas developed with input from all, defined roles for members, and minutes to provide continuity.
- o Ongoing assessment of and discussions regarding the functioning of the team. Conflict is dealt with openly and is considered important to decision-making and personal growth.
- o Members share in the successes of the team.
- o Members participate in professional training growth to update their skills.

The PLC process has been specifically described in the following books:

Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement
by Richard DuFour, Robert Baker, Robert E. Eaker
ISBN: 1879639602 January 1998

Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities
by Robert Eaker, Richard DuFour, Richard Dufour, Rebecca DuFour, Rebecca Burnette
ISBN: 1879639890 January 2002

Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn
by Richard DuFour, Robert Eaker, Rebecca DuFour, Gayle Karhanek, Rebecca DuFour
ISBN: 1932127283 June 2004

On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities
by Roland Barth, Michael G. Fullan, Lawrence Lezotte, Robert Eaker, Rebecca Dufour
ISBN: 1932127429 March 2005

Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work
by Richard DuFour, Robert Eaker, Rebecca DuFour
ISBN: 1932127933 July 2006

PLC SCHEDULE

Team: _____ Building: _____

Team Leader: _____ School year: _____

First Semester (4.5 hours)		
Date	Time	Purpose

Second Semester (4.0 hours)		
Date	Time	Purpose

Per Negotiated Agreement:

Up to 2 days of the school year can be used for professional development. The practice of using one of these days (6.5 hours) for PLCs was established during the 2001-02 school year. These hours must occur beyond the normal workday.

Up to 11 building meetings can be required each school year that occur beyond the normal school day or during common elementary planning time. These meetings shall not extend longer than one hour. Two of these meetings have been designated for PLC work, which may occur during common planning time. Since time is allocated for PLCs during the Pfeiffer workday, no meetings beyond the school day are required for the Pfeiffer staff.

PLC ACTION PLAN FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Building:

Team:

Goals must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound (“SMART” Goals).

As relevancy permits, each PLC goal should incorporate the following District OIP goals:

OIP Reading Goal: By the end of the 2013-2014 school year, all students in grades K-12 will improve performance on the state standardized tests and local assessments by 5% each year in reading.

OIP Math Goal: By the end of the 2013-2014 school year, all students in grades PreK-12 will have 100% passage rate on state standardized tests and/or local summative assessments (K-12) in mathematics.

OIP Climate/Culture Goal: By the end of 2013-2014, the Perry Local School District will have a 100% graduation rate and be prepared for work and/or be college ready.

“SMART” goal(s): Each PLC should determine *at least one* goal for the 2010-11 school year:

1.

2.

3.

Action Steps: When our PLC meets, we will do the following work to meet our “SMART” goal(s) (utilize the menu of items listed on the bottom of page 3)

1.

2.

3.

APPENDIX

Index of Topics:

1. **Task, Maintenance, and Self-Oriented Behaviors**
2. **Data Analysis Examples**
3. **Role of the Principal**

Task, Maintenance, and Self-Oriented Behaviors

Some behaviors frequently are associated with content—with trying to get the job done—and other behaviors concern the process in the group and function to help maintain harmony in the group. Because group members tend to fill the same roles over a series of meetings, the group leader might find it helpful to identify the roles that members typically fill.

Task-Oriented Behaviors

Task oriented behaviors occur in trying to get a job done. There are several behaviors that are useful when a group is fulfilling a task:

- o Initiating: proposing tasks or goals; defining a group problem; suggesting a procedure for solving a problem.
- o Seeking information or opinions: requesting facts; soliciting expressions of value; seeking suggestions and ideas.
- o Giving information or opinion: offering facts; providing relevant information; giving suggestions and ideas; expressing an opinion about a matter before the group.
- o Clarifying and elaboration: interpreting ideas or suggestions; clearing up confusions; defining terms; indicating alternatives and issues before the group.
- o Summarizing: pulling together related ideas; restating suggestions after the group has discussed them; offering a conclusion for the group to accept or reject.

Maintenance Behaviors

Maintenance behaviors, on the other hand, occur when the group (or an individual in a group) is focusing on the way that the group is relating (process). We have discussed several different issues that are considered process (atmosphere, level of participation, typical decision-making procedures, etc.). Here are some of the behaviors that are used frequently to help maintain a good working relationship among group members.

- o Harmonizing: attempting to reconcile disagreements; reducing tension; getting people to explore differences.
- o Gatekeeping: helping to keep communication channels open; facilitating the participation of others; suggesting procedures that permit sharing remarks.
- o Encouraging: being friendly, warm, and accepting of others; responding to others' contributions (verbally or nonverbally).
- o Compromising: offering a compromise when one's own idea is in conflict with another's; admitting error; being willing to sacrifice one's own status in favor of group cohesiveness.

Self-Oriented Behaviors

Finally, there are those people whose own interests are dominant over any others that may exist. These people are so self-oriented that their behavior doesn't address either task or maintenance issues – serves to fill their own emotional needs and to hinder the group's progress. Some examples of this self-oriented behavior are:

- o Recognition seeking: trying to become center of attention; engaging in eye-catching behavior; trying to get attention from others; not staying on the topic.
- o Dominating: trying to make all decisions; not listening to others; trying to monopolize the group.
- o Withdrawing: trying to withdraw from all activities; making no contributions; appearing to make a statement or express an opinion.
- o Aggressive blocking: attacking others' remarks; being first to criticize; trying to put others down; being hostile and negative.
- o Help seeking: trying to belittle his/her own contributions; playing down own abilities; frequently asking opinion and advice from others.

Summary

In most groups, all of these behaviors are likely to occur at some point. A group must attend to its maintenance functions if it is to succeed at task or growth activities. Of course, the amount of time a group spends on process and maintenance activities is a function of its purpose and its composition. In so-called group therapy groups, where self-oriented behaviors are common, virtually all of the group's time can be devoted to process and trying to improve the way the members of the group function. In problem-solving groups, less time will be devoted to maintenance and much more to task activities. Let us emphasize, however, that in any successful group, the maintenance functions must be considered for progress and growth to occur.

Data Analysis Examples

PLCS will address *student* needs. Student needs are identified from the data that the team members review. Gathering the data, and then analyzing it, is one of the most important "first steps" that will focus the productivity of the team.

Data might include one or more of the following:

- o Standardized test results over a span of several years: The faculty will need the item analysis of all the subcategories tested, subject area subscores, or any other reporting system the test maker uses to show how students did in specific areas tested. (Example: ACT, Achievement Tests, Terra Nova, Cogat, TCS, Diagnostic Tests)
- o Performance of students on the district's academic content standards.
- o Early Literacy Assessment or other tests that indicate how successful students are in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade classes.
- o Oral reading assessments, Dominic Assessment, IRI's, etc.
- o Informal reading inventories.
- o Criterion-referenced tests.
- o Writing assessments.
- o Journals, authentic writing samples.
- o Student portfolios that contain at least one year of work in one content area.
- o Checklists from textbook companies (e.g., reading series often have end-of-book tests).
- o Performance assessments.
- o Results of open-ended response questions.
- o Results of tests given by Title I and other special testing programs.
- o Cumulative grade point averages by subject area and grade for a random sample of students.
- o An analysis of why students are referred for disciplinary action (suspension data, expulsion data).
- o An analysis of why students are absent.
- o Gifted education data.
- o Distribution of student grades by subject and grade levels.
- o An analysis of why students are referred to special education and how many referrals are placed in special programs.
- o Promotion and retention rates by grades and subjects.

Role of the Principal

The Principal . . .

- o Is the sponsor and key advocate.
- o Uses the PLCs as the primary units to implement the school's improvement plan.
- o Is an active participant in training and planning sessions.
- o Meets regularly with CI Teacher Leaders or Department Chairs about PLC activities.
- o Receives the action plans and responds to the plans.
- o Posts PLC action plans so all faculty can see what the teams are doing.
- o Receives team agendas, attendance sheets, recorder's notes, and meeting schedules.
- o Ensures that there is time for PLCs to meet and guards that time.
- o Helps identify expertise, both internal and external, to support the work of PLCs.
- o Assists in making arrangements for teachers to observe students in each other's classes.
- o Establishes and maintains internal communication networks among PLCs.
- o Attends meetings when possible.
- o Communicates to district leaders, parents, and the general community what PLCs accomplish.
- o Is assertive in providing technical assistance to a PLC that loses its momentum or is not doing work that is likely to affect student learning in a positive manner.
- o Initiates procedures for the PLCs assessing progress of the work of the groups and uses the assessment information to strengthen the work.
- o Charts impact of PLCs on student learning by always keeping student data in front of the faculty.