PLC Guiding Steps

Four Essential (Corollary) Questions for PLCs (+ 1):

1**. What is it we want student to know?** What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must all students acquire as a result of this grade level, this course, and this unit we are about to teach? What systems have we put in place to ensure we are providing every student with access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum regardless of the teacher to whom that student might be assigned?

2. **How will we know if our students are learning?** How can we check for understanding on an ongoing basis in our individual classrooms? How will we gather evidence of each student's proficiency as a team? What criteria will we establish to assess the quality of student work? How can we be certain we can apply the criteria consistently?

3. **How will we respond when students do not learn?** What steps can we put in place to provide students who struggle with additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, and systematic rather than invitational and random? How can we provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning?

4. **How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?** How can we differentiate instruction among us so that the needs of all students are being met without relying on rigid tracking?

5. **How will we engage in relevant pedagogy and professional development to ensure that we are collectively answering these questions?** Job-embedded PD, research-based strategies, develop shared knowledge before making decisions, make decisions based on research and evidence not opinion.

Decision Making

Build Shared Knowledge

A Cardinal Rule: Professional learning communities always attempt to answer critical questions by first BUILDING SHARED KNOWLEDGE – engaging in collective inquiry – LEARNING together.

Consensus

You have arrived at consensus when all points of view have been heard, and the will of the

group is evident – even to those who oppose it. It is not majority rules nor is it compromise. It is based on the will of the group.

In Attempting to Build Consensus

Did we build shared knowledge regarding best practice?
Did we honestly assess our current reality?
Did we ensure all points of view were heard?
Was the will of the group evident even to those who opposed it?

IF THE ANSWER TO EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS IS "YES", GO FOR IT!

Common Mistakes in Building Consensus

We try to go it alone, rather than building a guiding coalition
We use a forum that is ill-suited to the dialogue that is typically necessary for consensus
We use a process that allows cynics and skeptics to dominate
We pool opinions rather than build shared knowledge
We feel we need consensus on each, specific detail of implementation
We set an unrealistic standard for consensus and invest too much energy in resisters

Step 1: Set Team Norms

Tips for Team Norms

Each team establishes its own norms.

Norms are stated as commitments to act or behave in certain ways.

Norms are reviewed at the beginning and end of each meeting, until they are internalized.

One norm requires a team to assess its effectiveness every six months. This assessment should include a review of adherence to norms and the need to identify new norms.

Less is more. A few key norms are better than a laundry list.

Establish a process for addressing violations or norms.

Step 2: Identify Essential Outcomes

First Essential (Corollary) Question for PLCs:

1**. What is it we want students to know?** What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must all student acquire as a result of this grade level, this course, and this unit we are about to teach? What systems have we put in place to ensure we are providing every student with access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum regardless of the teacher to whom that student might be assigned?

a. Identify essential standards in CCSS which teams will work collaboratively to implement

b. Identify the nature and breadth of essential standards

c. Articulate levels of knowledge and learning progressions for essential standards

d. Develop learning objectives based on essential standards

Criteria for Identifying Essential Common Outcomes

To separate the essential from the peripheral, apply these three criteria to each standard:

1. **Endurance** – Are students expected to retain the skills or knowledge long after the test is completed?

2. **Leverage** – Is the skill or knowledge applicable to many academic disciplines?

3. **Readiness for the next level of learning**: Is this skill or knowledge preparing the student for success in the next grade or course?

(Reeves & Ainsworth, *Power Standards: Identifying the Standards That Matter Most*, 2003)

Step 3: Set SMART Goals

Use pre-assessment data on your essential outcomes to identify your benchmarks and set your SMART Goals. DCAS data may be used as part of this process; however, common formative curricular assessments in conjunction with DCAS data will provide a broader view of student performance in relation to the essential outcome.

Use Common Formative Assessments (Step 4) to monitor student progress towards the SMART Goal.

Step 4: Develop Common Formative Assessments

Second Essential (Corollary) Question for PLCs:

2. **How will we know if our students are learning?** How can we check for understanding on an ongoing basis in our individual classrooms? How will we gather evidence of each student's proficiency as a team? What criteria will we establish to assess the quality of student work? How can we be certain we can apply the criteria consistently?

    a. Explore CCSS SBAC released items

    b. Develop proficiency scales for each essential standard

    c. Develop common formative assessments using proficiency scales

    d. Employ concept of unidimensionality (one standard assessed) when designing and scoring common formative assessments. May use multidimensional (two or more standards) assessments; however, would have multiple scores for assessments.

Step 5: Work through the Cycle of Inquiry

The Team Cycle

PLC Meets | PLC Meets

Focus → Strategies → Assessment → Response

Using data, the team creates a lesson plan and a common assessment

Teacher instructs using effective strategies from the team's focus meeting

The team conducts common assessment then meets to analyze data and discuss strategies

Teacher remediates or enriches based on the pre-determined proficiency level