Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

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Elizabeth Barge

Introduction

- Graduated from Grace College
  Winona Lake, IN USA

- 6th year teaching elementary school

- First year teaching and living overseas

- Attended the Professional Learning Communities at Work Institute

- Was an active member of a Professional Learning Community for 5 years

What is a Professional Learning Community?

"A PLC is 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."

—DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2010

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Educators meeting and working as a team on a weekly or biweekly basis to discuss student **learning**, analyze data, and creatively problem solve. The primary goals in the implementation of PLCs are both to improve communication between staff members and to **improve student learning**.

What is a Professional Learning Community?

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- Professional Learning Communities switch the focus from teachers teaching information, to teachers working together to ensure students are learning.

- If students are not learning, educators need to work together to find another way to present the information.

- We are responsible for the education of all the students at our school, not just the ones in our classroom. We must collaborate (work together) to ensure that **all** students are succeeding.

What PLCs Are Not...

- Professional Learning Communities are **<u>not</u>** a time to discuss the school calendar, gossip about students or staff, talk about field trips, etc.

- <u>Bad Example of a PLC</u>

PLCs Are...

- A set meeting time where teachers gather together to discuss student data, problem solve, and share instructional practices. This meeting is focused on working together to improve student learning.

- "Typically, PLC meetings include the following activities:
  - Reviewing student data
  - Setting learning goals
  - Reflecting on teaching practice
  - Exploring resources to learn about new practices
  - Planning how to apply new learning."
  - LaRena Heath
    https://www.activelylearn.com/post/build-effective-plcs

Why Do We Need PLCs?

- Increase in student achievement

Why Do We Need PLCs?

Campbell Elementary Student Growth Data
State Accountability: Colorado Measure of Academic Success(CMAS)
Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of students in English Language Arts(ELA)

Academic Growth

Disaggregated Group	2015–2016		2016–2017		2017-2018	
	Campbell	State	Campbell	State	Campbell	State
Free & Reduced Lunch Eligible	53%	48%	40%	51%	65%	48%
Non-FRL Eligible	53%	56%	62%	58%	65%	56%
Minority	69%	50%	51%	50%	69%	50%
Non-Minority	51%	52%	54%	51%	62%	52%
Special Education	48%	36%	46%	39%	45%	41%
Non-SPED	53%	52%	53%	51%	70%	51%

Campbell Elementary Student Growth Data
State Accountability: Colorado Meaure of Academic Success(CMAS)
Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of students in Mathematics

Academic Growth

Disaggregated Group	2015–2016		2016–2017		2017-2018	
	Campbell	State	Campbell	State	Campbell	State
Free & Reduced Lunch Eligible	48%	45%	48%	46%	65%	46%
Non-FRL Eligible	52%	51%	57%	50%	57%	51%
Minority	39%	46%	43%	47%	77%	47%
Non-Minority	56%	53%	57%	53%	48%	53%
Special Education	55%	40%	48%	42%	41%	42%
Non-SPED	49%	51%	56%	51%	68%	51%

Why Do We Need PLCs?

- Increase in student achievement

- Student-first mindset

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Why Do We Need PLCs?

- Increase in student achievement

- Student-first mindset

- Raised morale among teachers

- Opportunities for growth and improvement among teachers

The Focus of Schools

Our focus should not be on teaching the material, it should be on student learning. Are students learning in our classrooms?

Essential Questions

1. What is it you want your students to learn?

2. How will you know when each student has learned it?

3. What will you do if they have not learned it?

4. What will you do if they already know it?

Essential Questions

1. What is it you want your students to learn?

- Should be based on the standards your school is using, not textbooks.

Essential Questions

2. How will you know when each student has learned it?

- What will the assessment look like for checking if students have learned the standard?
    - If there is more than one teacher in your grade level, the assessment used should be the same in both classrooms.

Essential Questions

3. What will you do if they have not learned it?

- How will you help the students who have not learned this standard yet? Can you teach it another way? What worked well in other classrooms?

Essential Questions

4. What will you do if they already know it?

- How can you help those who have succeeded in learning the standard, go deeper in their understanding?

My Experience with PLCs

- Attended the Professional Learning Communities at Work Institute

- Reality in the classroom

- School district prioritized PLCs

- Knew learning goals for grade level and collaborated with others

- First year without a PLC

Sample PLC Meeting

- Arrive on time for the meeting.
- Look at student data we had agreed to discuss at our last meeting.
  - This data is based on one of our power standards (a standard we really want to focus on for the quarter).
  - The assessment used was the same across classrooms.
  - We had graded the assessment with a common grading scale (usually color coded groups).

Sample PLC Meeting

1. Anya	9
2. Sawyer	9
3. Hunter	3
4. Liliana	
5. Melayna	9
6. Cooper	9
7. Yurem	6
8. Kaiden	9
9. Emily	
10. Sage	0
11. Nathan	8
12. Campbell	9
13. Ian	9
14. Isabella	0
15. Angel	8
16. Isaac	0
17. Jaelyn	9
18. Carter	9
19. Simone	5
20. Quetzalli	9
21. Braxton	9
22. Amber	9
23. Audrie	9
24. Jonah	3

Sample PLC Meeting

- Arrive on time for the meeting.
- Look at student data we had agreed to discuss at our last meeting.
- Discuss strategies or ways we taught the lesson to help students learn.
  - It is especially important to hear from the person whose class had the higher scores. Was there something this teacher did differently that will help all of our students learn?

Sample PLC Meeting

- Arrive on time for the meeting.
- Look at student data we had agreed to discuss at our last meeting.
- Discuss strategies or ways we taught the lesson to help students learn.
- What is our next step?
  - What will we do to help the students who have not learned the standard yet? What will we do to further the depth of knowledge for the students who already know the standard?
  - If you have more than one teacher in your grade level, this might be an opportunity to share students across your grade level and reteach the subject.

Sample PLC Meeting

- Arrive on time for the meeting.
- Look at student data we had agreed to discuss at our last meeting.
- Discuss strategies or ways we taught the lesson to help students learn.
- What is our next step?
- What is our plan for our next PLC meeting? What standard will we cover? What data should we bring with us?
  - Post-assessment data to see if students improved in their understanding of the material.
  - Data from a new standard (again, common assessment across the grade level).

Example of Post-Assessment Data

1. Anya	9	9
2. Sawyer	9	9
3. Hunter	3	5
4. Liliana		
5. Melayna	9	9
6. Cooper	9	9
7. Yurem	6	7
8. Kaiden	9	9
9. Emily		
10. Sage	0	3
11. Nathan	8	9
12. Campbell	9	9
13. Ian	9	9
14. Isabella	0	4
15. Angel	8	8
16. Isaac	0	5
17. Jaelyn	9	9
18. Carter	9	9
19. Simone	5	9
20. Quetzalli	9	9
21. Braxton	9	9
22. Amber	9	9
23. Audrie	9	9
24. Jonah	3	5

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

https://b.socrative.com/login/student/

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How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- Time
    - Effective Professional Learning Communities should meet weekly or biweekly.
    - 30 minutes to an hour should be allowed for a PLC meeting.
    - School leadership can support PLCs by scheduling time into the school day for meetings to occur.

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- Time
- Teams
  - PLCs are usually set up as grade level teams on the elementary level and content level teams on the secondary level.

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- Time
- Teams
- Norms
  - Expectations for PLC times.
    - PLC teams create their own norms (behavior expectations for meeting times).

Example of Norms

1. Members should be prepared to begin and end meetings on time.
2. Members will be respectful when listening and speaking during a meeting.
3. Members will respect confidential matters discussed in the group.
4. Members will keep the best interest of the students in mind when making decisions.
5. Every member should actively participate in the group.
6. It is expected that members will come prepared to meetings and focus on the task designated for the meeting time.

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- Time
- Teams
- Norms
- Buy-in
  - School leadership needs to be invested in PLCs, but they also need staff members who believe in collaboration to improve student learning. It cannot be forced upon the staff.

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- Time
- Teams
- Norms
- Buy-in
- Accountability
  - Some principals have PLCs fill out a reflection on what they discussed and covered during their meeting. Then the team sends it to the principal after each meeting.
  - Teams should be held accountable to each other and to school leadership.

How to Implement PLCs in Schools

- How might you help your school buy-in to the idea of Professional Learning Communities to improve student learning? What opposition to PLCs might occur? Turn and talk to the people at your table about this topic.

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

- Meeting to discuss curriculum and teaching strategies does not actually improve student learning as much as regularly meeting to assess the outcome of lessons and how to help students grow in their understanding of the material would.

- Collaboration must still happen in small schools!

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

Vertical Teams

- Look at the standards or learning goals. See what goals grade level teachers have in **common**.
- Spend your meeting times focusing on what you have in **common**, rather than what is different for each teacher.
- What **common** outcome do you want for students?
- Come up with a **common** rubric or assessment that can be used to evaluate student achievement.
- Share **common** strategies to improve student learning.

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

Vertical Teams

- What **common** skills do you and the grade level below and above you have in language arts (reading, writing, etc.)?
  - List some common skills you can think of. Share them with your table if you feel comfortable.

- When vertical teams create student learning targets for each grade level, effective collaboration about student learning can occur.

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

Subject Type Teams

- All the science teachers form a team to ensure students are achieving at high levels in content area.

- Similar to vertical teams, teachers focus on what content skills they have in **common.**

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

Electronic Learning Teams

- Twitter
- Instagram

- Teachers Pay Teachers
- Youtube

Challenges for Small Schools and Collaboration

School Teams

- Small schools could team up with another small school so teachers could collaborate.

- Find another third grade teacher who you can work with to create common assessments, discuss student learning, share teaching strategies, and work with to increase student learning in your classroom.

What Did You Learn?

- Work with your group to fill out the **Learned** section of your KWL chart.
- Please take a moment to take the following survey about the workshop...

- https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/28KFZYZ

Resources

- https://www.slideshare.net/wferriter/plcs-for-singletons-and-teachers-in-small-schools
- https://www.activelylearn.com/post/build-effective-plcs
- https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/professional-learning-community-pitfalls-best-practices.shtml
- https://www.startheregoplaces.com/teacher/professional-development/how-create-winning-professional-learning-community/
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjrLOQr9k64
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv3WlaA7Uko
- http://www.allthingsplc.info/evidence/
- https://schoolleadersnow.weareteachers.com/plc-benefit-school/
- https://www.advanc-ed.org/source/professional-learning-communities-key-improved-teaching-and-learning
- https://soltreemrls3.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/solution-tree.com/media/pdf/event-materials/singapore-session-materials/HO_Hansen_Wood-SmallSchoolsandSingletons.pdf