Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Overview and Guidelines

Red Clay Consolidated School District

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Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Learning as Our Fundamental Purpose

We, in the Red Clay Consolidated School District, acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our schools is to help all students achieve high levels of learning, and therefore, we are willing to examine our practices in light of their impact on learning. We will develop and employ highly effective Professional Learning Communities to ensure the highest quality of instruction is afforded to every student. In addition, students will receive timely, research-based instructional strategies. Instruction will be monitored and adjusted, as needed, using a regular cycle of data analysis by each PLC team. Furthermore, to help us achieve this vision schools will build collective knowledge on the CCSS, develop and utilize frequent common formative assessments, provide a system of intervention and enrichment, and utilize data to adjust and modify instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Building a Collaborative Culture Through High Performing Teams

We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We will cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams. To help us achieve this vision schools will ensure collaborative teams meet on a regular basis to work interdependently to clarify what students must learn, gather evidence of student learning, analyze the evidence, identify most effective instructional practices/strategies, develop the capacity of all team members, and work to achieve their SMART goals.

Focus on Results

We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams, and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement. To achieve this vision schools will frequently analyze data from common formative assessments in the cycle of inquiry to provide appropriate instruction and support for all students.

Adapted from Fairfax County Public Schools

PLC Overview

The PLC Overview will provide background information on PLCs as well as the components, procedures and protocols of effective PLCs based on research.

PLC Definition:

The professional learning community 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.

PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. (Rick DuFour, 2010)

Another definition: Fairfax County Public Schools believe that a PLC can be defined as a group of educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students it serves (*Learn by Doing*).

Fundamental Assumptions:

1. We can make a difference: Our schools can be more effective.
2. Improving our people is the key to improving our schools.
3. Significant school improvement will impact teaching and learning.

In a Professional Learning Community, "learning" is the fundamental purpose of the school.

The Big 3:

1. Focus on learning
2. Collaboration
3. Focus on results

What is Collaboration:

A **systematic** process in which we work together **interdependently**, to analyze and **impact** professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results.

Myth about Collaboration:

People love to collaborate. People in general are congenial to one another; however, this is not collaboration. Collaboration is a difficult task and requires time, practice and accountability. Effective collaboration is not something people seek or particularly enjoy. Leaders attempting to develop a collaborative environment in their school must understand that just giving people time will not create the environment they envision. In order to be successful, collaborative meetings need to be focused and result in measurable adult actions. This takes time, persistence and coaching.

Simultaneous Loose-Tight Leadership and Culture

Simultaneous loose *and* tight cultures establish clear parameters and priorities that enable individuals to work within established boundaries in a creative and autonomous way. PLCs are characterized by '*directed empowerment*' or what Marzano and Waters refer to as 'defined autonomy' – *freedom to act and lead within clearly articulated boundaries*."

- DuFour & DuFour (2012); Marzano & Waters (2009)

The articulated boundaries, as mentioned above, are the PLC Overview and Guidelines, District Strategic Plan, School Success Plan, and determined by the Building Leadership Team. For learning teams to

reach their full potential it is critical that they have ample opportunities to act and lead within those boundaries with minimal interruptions by activities that do not align with the instructional goals outlined the District Strategic Plan and School Success Plan. It is expected that PLC meeting times not be considered a repository of time where time can be taken from for other activities. School districts that have made great gains in student achievement ensured that PLC is "sacred" time for teachers to work together as professionals.

Empowerment:

Effective empowerment does not mean encouraging people to go off and do whatever they want. It means creating the conditions that help people succeed. Those conditions include:

1. Establishing clear purpose, priorities, and parameters that allow people to be creative and autonomous within clearly established boundaries.
2. Providing people with access to the resources that enable them to make informed decisions rather than pooling opinions.
3. Engaging them in establishing clear, unambiguous benchmarks so they can monitor their own progress.
4. Ensuring they have relevant and timely data that informs their practice and allows them to make adjustments.
5. Building the capacity of people to be successful in what they are attempting to do by providing them with training, support, and resources that lead to success.

Empowerment means establishing a culture in which people are hungry for evidence and are willing to face the brutal facts when things don't go as hoped.

(DuFour & Marzano, 2011)

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

1. What is it we want student 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

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. Develop proficiency scales for each essential standard
    b. Develop common formative assessments using proficiency scales
    c. 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

Utilize lesson study, action research and instructional rounds (BLT and PLC members participate) to monitor the instructional effectiveness and make instructional adjustments.

3. How will we respond when students do not learn? What steps can we put in place to provide student 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?

    a. Differentiated instruction – flexible groups
    b. School-wide RTI based on essential standards

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?

    a. Provide enrichment activities in each lesson based on proficiency scales
    b. School-wide enrichment based on essential standards

5. How will we engage in relevant pedagogy and profession development to ensure that we are collectively answering these questions?

    a. Job-embedded PD, research-based strategies
    b. develop shared knowledge before making decisions, make decisions based on research and evidence not opinion.

Through the PLCs' responses to these questions, they will be better able to align their daily work and professional development needs with the specific needs of students. Through this process of collaborative inquiry, the teachers gain a deeper knowledge of their students, pedagogy and content. **Professional development becomes job-embedded rather than a stand-alone event and is closely connected to the specific needs of our students as exhibited by their data.** The benefit of this work, and how we evaluate our effectiveness, is the success of our students.

PLC Cardinal Rule:

Professional learning communities always attempt to answer critical questions by first **BUILDING SHARED KNOWLEDGE** – engaging in collective inquiry – **LEARNING together**. If people make decisions based on the collective study of the same pool of information, they increase the likelihood that they will arrive at the same decision (DuFour & DuFour, 2012, personal communication).

Characteristics of Effective PLCs:

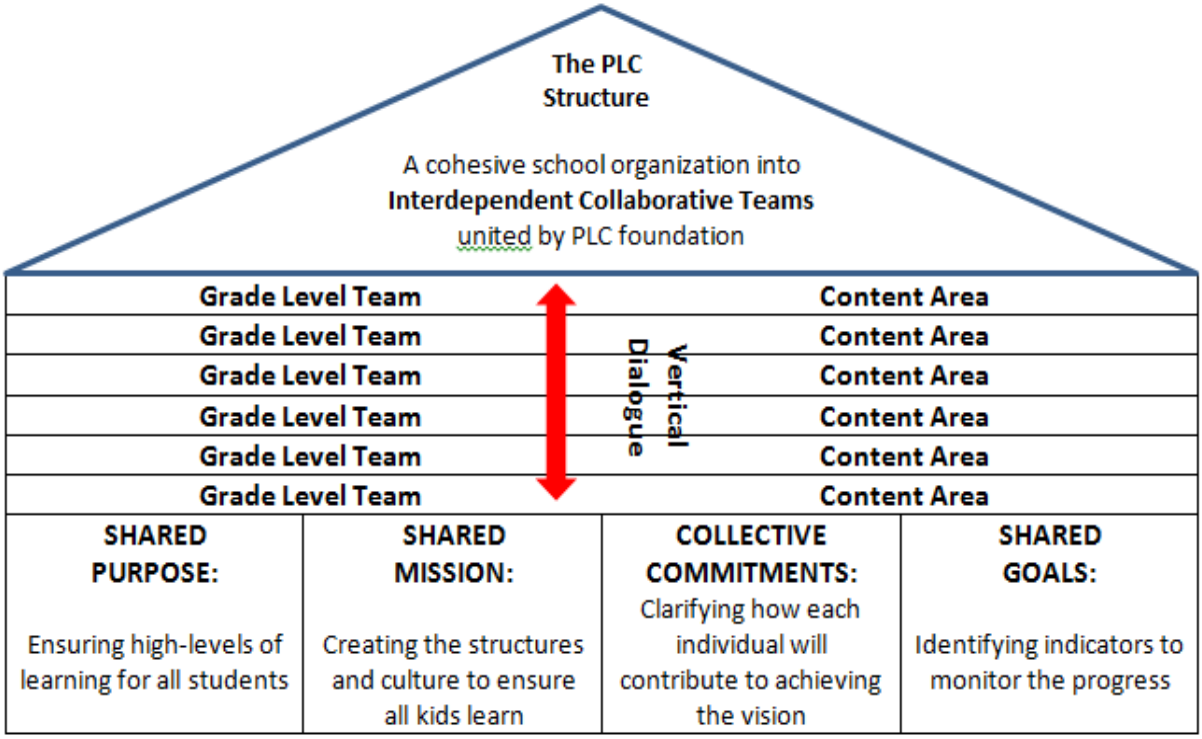
1. Shared Mission, Vision and Goals: District-wide and school-wide
2. Collaborative Culture: Professionals in a learning community work in teams that share a common purpose. They learn from each other and create a momentum that drives improvement. They build within the organization the structure and vehicles that make collaborative work and learning effective and productive. There should be mutual accountability for student achievement among all team members.
3. Collective Inquiry: People in a learning community relentlessly question the status quo, seek new methods of teaching (research-based)and learning, test the methods, and reflect on the results
4. Action Orientation/Experimentation: The members of a PLC constantly turn their learning and insights into action. They recognize the importance of engagement and experience in learning and in testing new ideas.
5. Commitment to Continuous Improvement: Members of a PLC are not content with the status quo and continually seek ways to bring present reality to the future ideal.
6. Results Orientation: Professionals in a learning organization recognize that no matter how well-intentioned the efforts, the only valid judgment of improvement is observable and measureable results. Assessment and re-evaluation are the keys to continued improvement.
7. Authentic Assessment: Teachers in the community hold themselves collectively accountable for improving student achievement, by using assessments that give them real-time feedback on student learning and teaching effectiveness. These assessments are valued – not because they are linked to high stakes consequences – but because they are essential tools to improve student learning.
8. Self-Directed Reflection: Teams establish a feedback loop of goal-setting, planning, standards and evaluation, driven by the needs of both teachers and students.
9. Stable Settings: The best teams cannot function within a dysfunctional school. Effective teams require dedicated time and space for their collaborative work to take place. This requires the support and occasionally, positive pressure from school leadership.
10. Strong Leadership Support: Successful teams are support by their school leaders who build a climate of openness and trust in the school, empower teams to make decisions based on students' needs, and apply appropriate pressure to perform.

Note: PLCs are NOT another program. PLCs are HOW WE OPERATE collectively to ensure ALL STUDENTS achieve. We just don't work collaboratively during the meeting, it is ongoing collaboration to help teachers and students improve. Our students improve as much as we improve.

PLC → Classroom Practice → Student Achievement

"Talking is not doing. Planning is not doing. Goal setting is not doing. Training is not doing. Even directing resources to support a plan is not doing. It is not until people are *doing differently* that any organization can expect different results." Rick DuFour

PLC Structure



(DuFour & DuFour, 2012)

PLC Components

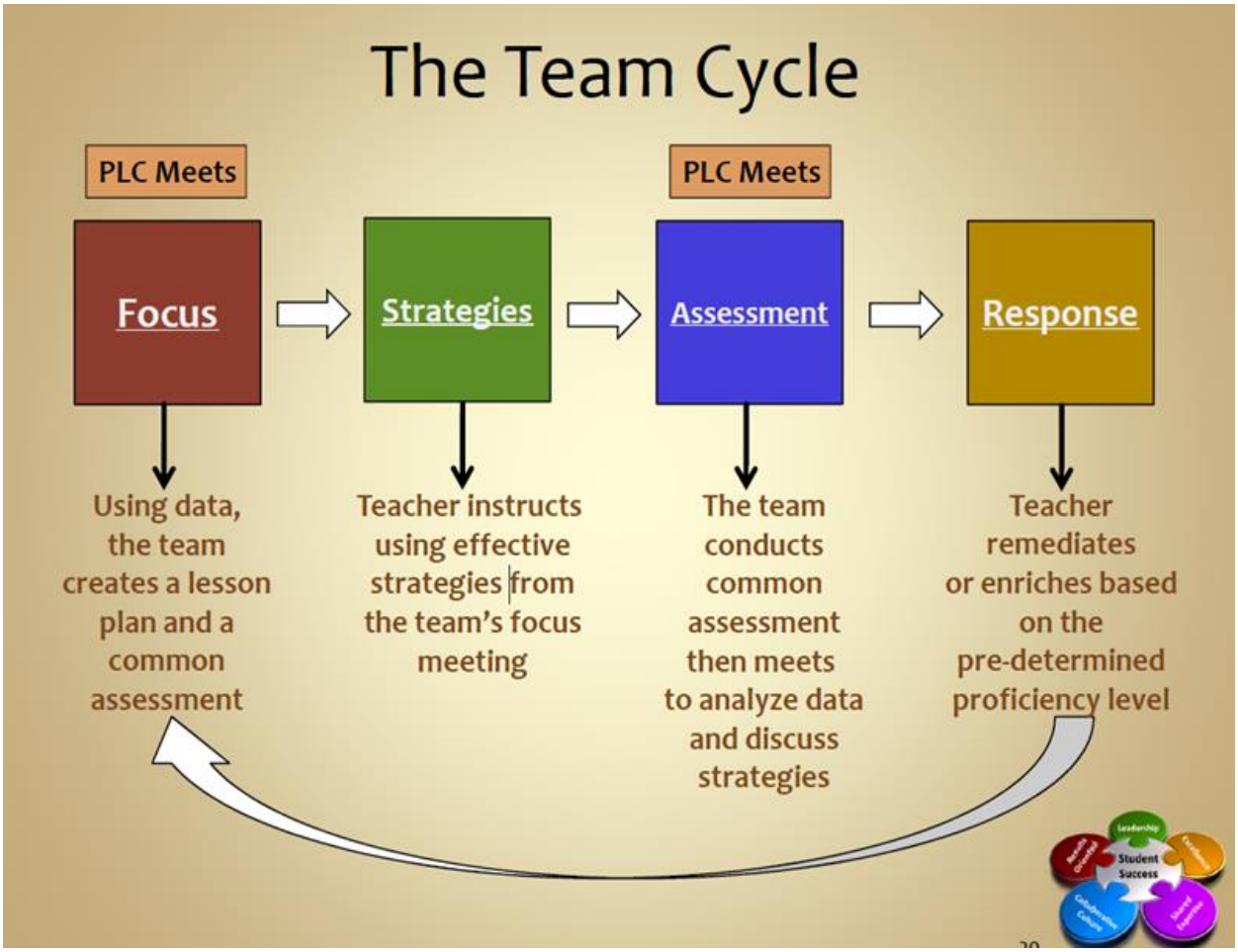
Component	Definition	Example
Group Norms	-The group/team expectations on how everyone within the group will conduct themselves. -Group expectations -Determine how decisions will be made.	<u>Team Commitments</u> 1. Consider All Viewpoints 2. Have a Positive Attitude 3. Be Supportive 4. Seek Feedback From Team Members 5. Be On Task and Be Prepared 6. Make decisions based on

		group consensus – "fist-to-five" 7. Use research to build new knowledge to help students 8. We are accountable to each other and we will work together to help all students achieve
Essential Outcomes (EO)	-EOs are the most important thing we want students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit/marking period/class/grade. -Typically 8 – 10 EOs per content area. At the elementary level, start with ELA and Math. -EOs are based on student data, standards and school success plan. -Some of the EOs may be a unit long, may last a marking period or last all year. -EOs need to be "big" topics. Teams should think that if they work on the EOs with their students, they are the most important thing for their students and will have the greatest impact on their overall achievement.	3rd Grade example: **<u>Essential Outcomes for Reading</u>** *- Ongoing: Assess throughout the school year 1. Students will be able to summarize what they read by using story elements. * *<u>Assessment:</u>* Students will write a summary of an anthology story using a story map for story elements. 2. Students will be able to draw conclusions in the story to arrive at a valid conclusion. * *<u>Assessment:</u>* Students will complete a graphic organizer that requires the students to draw conclusions on a text read. 3. Students will be able to compare and contrast items, story elements, and concepts. * *<u>Assessment:</u>* Students will compare and contrast items using a Venn diagram. **<u>Essential Outcomes for Math</u>** *- Ongoing: Assess throughout the school year 1. Students will be able to communicate their mathematical answer through pictures, number sentences and words. (Standard 7) * *<u>Assessment:</u>* Unit 3 Home Practice Part 2 DAB pg. 46 2. Students will be able to

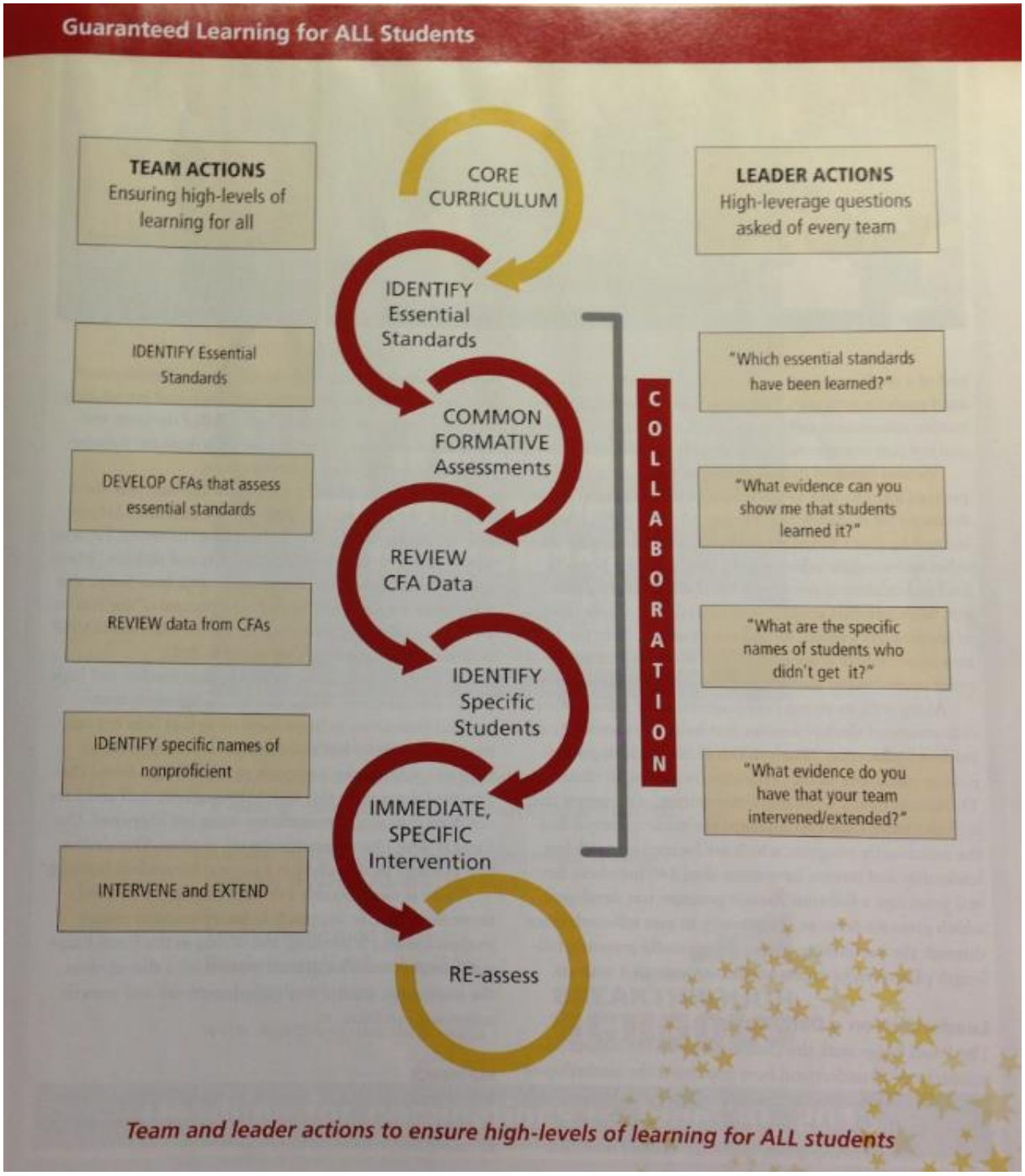
		identify fractions as parts of unit wholes, compare the size of common fractions using models. *
Common Assessments	-The group/team decides how they will determine whether students have met the target of the EOs and how they will monitor student progress, make adjustments to instruction and provide additional support to ensure all students reach the targets.	-3rd grade examples listed above -DIBELS, DCAS, Unit Quizzes and Unit Assessments (may be only selected items within assessments) -Assessments developed by the team (may be any format – observation, verbal student responses, paper-pencil, computer, presentation, etc.). Must be agreed upon by team, align with EO and be a good indicator of student progress/achievement
Analyze Data	-Analyze data to find strengths and weaknesses of <u>individual students</u> and <u>classrooms</u>. -Identify what is working and what is not working in the classrooms to improve student achievement. -Based on the team analysis of the data and educational research, make refinements to the lessons to better reach the students.	-If goal is 90% of the students in the classroom and the overall student performance is 92%, the class met the target. However, there are individual students that did not meet the target. The PLC should ask: Why did they not meet the target and what will the team do differently to ensure they meet the target? The students that met the target, were some of them already able to meet the target before the unit of study? Did the team pre-assess students and how did the team help accelerate and extend these students' learning and achievement?
Differentiate Instruction	-Students receive instruction based on their specific needs -Flexible grouping and intensive intervention in the classroom provided by classroom teacher is the norm -Eventually, flexible grouping across classrooms for short periods of time (1-2 days) may be used. This is not another way to homogeneous group students and should be used sparingly. This is small	- Students receive small group, intensive instruction in the classroom for 10 – 30 minutes of the class period and then work with their peers for the remainder of the class time. - Similar to reading RtI and can eventually branch into math RtI

	group/classroom instruction for students to receive specific instruction to ensure all students accelerate. Struggling students would be in a classroom with the best teacher on the team for teaching that particular EO (standard) and would have a smaller student-teacher ratio than the other classrooms.	

PLC Flowchart/Cycle of Inquiry:



Another Example of the PLC Flowchart



Sample Long-Range Plan: The below long-range plan illustrate how to coordinate common assessments with PLC meetings.

ontent Areas	Week 1 Nov. 2	Week 2 Nov. 9	Week 3 Nov. 16	Week 4 Nov. 23	Week 5 Nov. 30	Week 6 Dec. 7 Interims	Week 7 Dec. 15	Week 8 Dec. 22	Week 9 Jan. 4	Week 10 Jan.11 MP2
eading	Wild Shots *Author's Purpose *Use text structure and format *Singular/Plural Nouns *words w/ /s/ and /j/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	Little Grunt, Big Egg * Word Relations *Self Question *Plural Nouns *Words with /oi/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	Rosie, A Visiting Dog *Decode Long Words *Use Context to Confirm Meaning *Singular Possessive Nouns *Words with /ou/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	**Theme 2 Review of Skills** *Review Skills *Holistic #2 (for learning) Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies *Assessment* #5 Holistic- Author's Purpose	**Theme 3** The Stories Julian Tells *Sequence *Read Ahead *Plural Possessive Nouns *Spelling: Possessives and Plurals Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	The Talent Show *Prefixes and Suffixes *Mental Images *Abbrev. *Words with /o/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies *Assessment* SWBS- Graphic Organizer	Centerfield Ballhawk *Sequence *Summarize *Singular and Plural Pronouns *Words with /oo/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies *Assessment* Sequence of events __X___	Ramona Forever *Prefixes and Suffixes *Decode and Phonics *Subject Pronouns *Words with /ar/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	Sayings We Share *Narrative Elements *Make and Confirm Predictions *Object Pronouns *Words with /ar/ Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies	**Theme 3 Review of Skills** *Review Skills *Holistic #3 (of learning) Small Group QAR,RARE, Reading Strategies *Assessment* Holistic Assessment to assess knowledge of skills in theme/unit.

LC Essential Outcomes Assessed This Marking Period for Reading: (*- Indicates ongoing essential outcomes)

1. Students will be able to communicate in writing by restating and answering, giving reasons and examples of the question in their responses utilizing RARE format. *
   Assessment: Bloom's leveled questions relating to anthology stories. (2- higher level questions)

2. Students will be able to answer QAR type questions. *
   Assessment: Verbally assess students using QAR questions during small group instruction. (Track using running records)

3. Students will be able to identify story elements and create a summary of the story. *
   Assessment: Students will create a story map for the story (SWBS) and create a summary.

4. Students will be able to sequence events in the story.
   Assessment: Sequence the events of the story Centerfield Ballhawk- ____x____ (format)
5. Students will be able to identify the author's purpose.
   Assessment: Holistic number #3, question 5.

3rd Grade Curriculum Map
Marking Period Two

ontent Areas	Week 1 Nov. 2	Week 2 Nov. 9	Week 3 Nov. 16	Week 4 Nov. 23	Week 5 Nov. 30	Week 6 Dec. 7 Interims	Week 7 Dec. 15	Week 8 Dec. 22	Week 9 Jan. 4	Week 10 Jan. 11 MP End15th
lath	Unit 4- Place Value	Unit 5- Area of Different Shapes *Pre-Assess for Unit 5	Unit 5- Area of Different Shapes Assess- Unit 5 DAB pg. 81 Part 3	Unit 5- Area of Different Shapes *Pre-Assess for Unit 6	Unit 5- Area of Different Shapes/ Unit 6- More adding and Subtracting Assessment DPP A Shortcut Subtraction Area Quiz	Unit 6- More adding and Subtracting	Unit 6- More adding and Subtracting *Pre-Assess for Unit 7	Unit 6- More adding and Subtracting Unit 7- Exploring Multip.	Unit 7- Exploring Multip. Assessment Unit 7 Katie's Job, URG 39-40	Unit 13- Fractions .

LC Essential Outcomes Assessed This Marking Period for Math:

1. Students will be able to solve word problems. (Standard 5) *
   * Assessment: Unit 7 Katie's Job URG pg. 39-40
2. Students will be able to solve basic computation problems. (Connect counting up and counting back to addition and subtraction). *
   * Assessment: Unit 6 DDP AA Shortcut Subtraction, Unit 7 Katie's Job URG pg. 39-40
3. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding that our number system is based on combinations of 1s, 10s, and 100s-place value. *
   * Assessment: Unit 6 DDP AA Shortcut Subtraction
4. Students will be able to communicate their mathematical answer through pictures, number sentences and words. (Standard 7) *
   *Assessment: Unit 7 Katie's Job URG pg. 39-40
5. Students will be able to identify the area and perimeter of shapes.
   *Assessment: Unit 5 L3 Home practice part 3, DAB pg. 81 (Area only)

ndicates ongoing essential outcomes.

PLC Procedures:

1. An agenda is created and distributed to all team members prior to the PLC meeting.
2. Meeting minutes – recorded and given to building principal and all team members. If possible, create format in SchoolStream. Minutes should include

Meeting Minutes for (Date):	**Group:**		
In Attendance:			
SMART Goal:			
Summary of Meeting:			
NEXT STEPS CHART			
WHAT	WHO	WHEN	HOW
What are you going to do?	Who's responsible for doing what?	What's the timeline for the task?	How is it going to be done?

3. Typical timeframe for completing the initial PLC Components:
    - **1st Meeting:** Identify/Review Team Commitments (Norms)
    - **2nd Meeting:** Identify 8 – 10 Essential Outcomes for each content area (begin with ELA and Math at the elementary level) and develop SMART Goals (data and standards drive EOs)
    - **3rd Meeting:** Finish Essential Outcomes and SMART Goals
    - **4th Meeting:** Develop/Identify Common Assessments
    - **5th Meeting:** Analyze data from common assessments and develop differentiated lessons
    - **6th Meeting:** Reflect on implementation of differentiated lessons, review student progress, and develop additional differentiated lesson-common assessments-etc.
4. Pre-Assess students to identify where they are in relation to the intended target and determine whether students have the prerequisite knowledge needed to be successful with upcoming unit/topic. Students should typically be pre-assessed early enough to give the team time to collect the data, analyze the data during a PLC meeting to plan and implement strategies to build background knowledge of students before the unit is taught.
5. Differentiated instruction should be aligned with students' specific needs (similar to RtI but on a team level). For example, if a group of students need extra support with fractions, the students would receive the additional support in a small group setting in the classroom provided by the classroom teacher during the math period. Students would receive intensive, small group support for a specific amount of time provided by the classroom teacher and then work with their peers for the remainder of the class period (flexible grouping).
6. Action Research is one element of PLCs and limited amount of time may be devoted to doing action research during PLC meetings.
7. Book studies are another element of PLCs and limited amount of time may be devoted to book studies during PLC meetings. Before doing book studies during PLC meetings, several factors should be considered:
    a. How does the book support students' needs? What data substantiates the need?
    b. Is the book (content/strategies) research-based? The evidence to support the research must be considered as well. Are the research studies rigorous? Have the studies behind the book been examined thoroughly?
    c. Does the entire book need to be read or can sections be read?
    d. How will the PLC use the content of the book (i.e. change in instructional practice)?
    e. From reading the book, what changes are we expecting to see in teachers' practices in the classroom? How will we evaluate these changes and their effectiveness?
    f. How will any new knowledge from doing the book study be shared with others?
    g. What is the cost(time)-benefit analysis? Meaning, does the benefit of doing the book study outweigh the time used during PLC meetings?
8. As with book studies, a thoughtful process should be considered before doing professional development:
    a. How does the PD support students' needs? What data substantiates the need?

b. Are the strategies gained from the PD research-based? The evidence to support the research must be considered as well. Are the research studies rigorous? Have the studies behind the PD been examined thoroughly?
c. How will the PLC use these strategies to improve student achievement?
d. What changes are we expecting to see in the teachers' practices in the classroom? How will we evaluate these changes and their effectiveness?
e. How will any new knowledge from the PD be shared with others?
f. Cost(time)-benefit analysis?

9. Sharing data – at first, data may be kept to the individual teacher when discussing results within the PLC team. Sharing individual teacher data within the team may be difficult for some teachers, since it may expose perceived weaknesses. Sharing data too early may make it more challenging to build the trust among the team members that is necessary for teachers to open up about their practices and take risks. Eventually, once trust has been established within the group, the data should be displayed for all to see and analyze within the PLC team…make the data public within the school setting. Team data should be shared, from the beginning, with the school and celebrate each team's successes. However, individual teacher data is monitored by the principal/administrator throughout the entire process and conversations with individual teachers are conducted to ensure teachers receive encouragement but also receive a clear message about the importance of changing practices to ensure students improve.
10. The principal will meet with each team at least once a month to review student data, the PLC team's reflection on their practice and their plan to further improve student achievement. Leadership is key to the success of PLCs and administrators should meet with teams on a regular basis to review results, listen to the team's plans for improvement, provide support where necessary for successful implementation of instructional strategies**,** monitor the change in instructional practices during walk-throughs and observations, and regularly attend PLC meetings (this does not include the once a month data review meetings).

Artifacts generated from the work done by PLCs:

1. Group Norms
2. Essential Outcomes
3. SMART Goals
4. Common Assessments
5. Student Data
6. Differentiated Lesson Plans
7. PLC Minutes

PLC meetings should <u>not</u> be used for…

- Trainings that can occur during a faculty meeting. For example, DPAS II, Child Abuse, etc.
- Planning field trips, curriculum nights or other grade level events
- Discussion of homework policies
- Entering data, grades or grading papers
- Working on newsletters

- Meeting about individual student attendance or behavior
- Meetings for IEPs or 504s
- School-wide or District-wide professional development initiatives, unless they are truly embedded and closely aligned with the PLC teams' essential outcomes

PLC meetings <u>may</u> be used for…

- Professional development that is job-embedded and closely aligned with essential outcomes
- Development of common assessments or identification of existing assessments to be used as common assessments that align with essential outcomes
- Planning of common differentiated instruction lessons that are aligned with essential outcomes
- Further data analysis
- End-of-Cycle RtI Data Day Meetings
- IST meetings that meet the following criteria
    - No more than one 45 minute per month
    - Academically based
    - The difficulties the students are having impede their ability to improve academically to meet the targets associated with the Essential Outcomes
    - The PLC team utilized a pyramid of interventions through the PLC process (differentiated instruction, analyzing data, modifying lessons, cycles of inquiry, tiered instruction, etc.) and the students are not responding to these interventions.

The above lists are not all inclusive

Teacher Input and Responsibility for PLC Meetings:

Educators that are facilitating PLC meetings should be cognizant that teacher empowerment is a priority. Teachers have many opportunities for input and responsibility for the PLC meetings through the development of group norms, essential outcomes, SMART goals, common assessments, student data, development and implementation of differentiated lesson plans, PLC minutes, setting agendas, etc. Building administrators will monitor the progress of PLCs by attending PLC meetings, drop-ins during PLC meetings, review of artifacts (see previous list), and walk-throughs in the classroom to see whether the PLC work is translating into instructional practices in the classroom.

Strategies for using Specialists and Support Staff in PLCs:

Support staff (ED, School Psychologist, Speech, etc.) may have their own PLC or work with specific PLCs in the school. For example, if support staff are working in their own PLC, they could review a list of "targeted students" (students needing extra support – behaviorally, academically, socially, and/or emotionally) and they would generate strategies/interventions to help support the students and the teachers who are teaching these students. Another strategy for support staff is to identify students on their case load and work closely with the teachers who have these students. In this example, the support staff member is part of a grade-level or content PLC and works closely with the teachers on specific strategies to accelerate the learning for the students.

Specialists (art, music, PE, etc.) may have their own PLC. Each of the grade-level or content PLCs would send their essential outcomes to the exploratory/specialist teacher PLC. The exploratory/specialist teacher PLC would review the essential outcomes, identify where there is a natural overlap (where a core content concept could naturally be integrated into their lessons to further develop, reinforce, or extend the concept for students) and plan/implement lessons aligned with these essential outcomes.

Suggested Timeline for PLC Activities:

	1st MP	2nd MP	3rd MP	4th MP
PLC Activities	• Set Norms • Establish logistics for year (schedule, location, long-range planning calendar, roles) • Review needs data (DCAS, School Success Plan, etc.) • Establish PLC SMART Goals • Implement strategies in classroom • Share learning with PLC • Determine Common Assessments • Determine PLC documentation strategies (artifacts)	• Review Norms • Implement strategies in the classroom • Cycles of Inquiry • Use Protocols for looking at student work • Review Common Assessments • Peer observations • Lesson Studies • Action Research • Document work • Monitor progress towards SMART Goals	• Review Norms • Implement strategies in the classroom • Cycles of Inquiry • Use protocols for looking at student work • Review Common Assessments • Peer observations • Lesson Studies • Action Research • Document work • Monitor progress towards SMART Goals	• Review Norms • Implement strategies in the classroom • Cycles of Inquiry • Use protocols for looking at student and teacher work • Review Common Assessments • Peer observations • Lesson Studies • Action Research • Document work • Monitor progress towards SMART Goals
Student Data & Sources	• Test scores (DCAS, DIBELS, Common Assessments, etc.)	• Test scores (DCAS, DIBELS, Common Assessments, etc.) • Student assignments • Teacher observations • Exit tickets • Other formative assessments	• Test scores (DCAS, DIBELS, Common Assessments, etc.) • Student assignments • Teacher observations • Exit tickets • Other formative assessments	• Test scores (DCAS, DIBELS, Common Assessments, etc.) • Student assignments • Teacher observations • Exit tickets • Other formative assessments
Resources	• School Success Plan • District Strategic Plan • Common Core Standards • I-Tracker Pro			

SMART Goals:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

*Who: Who is involved?
*What: What do I want to accomplish?
*Where: Identify a location.
*When: Establish a time frame.
*Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
*Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

Measurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly *believe* that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Timely - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

T can also stand for **Tangible** - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

Key Priorities and Essential Outcomes

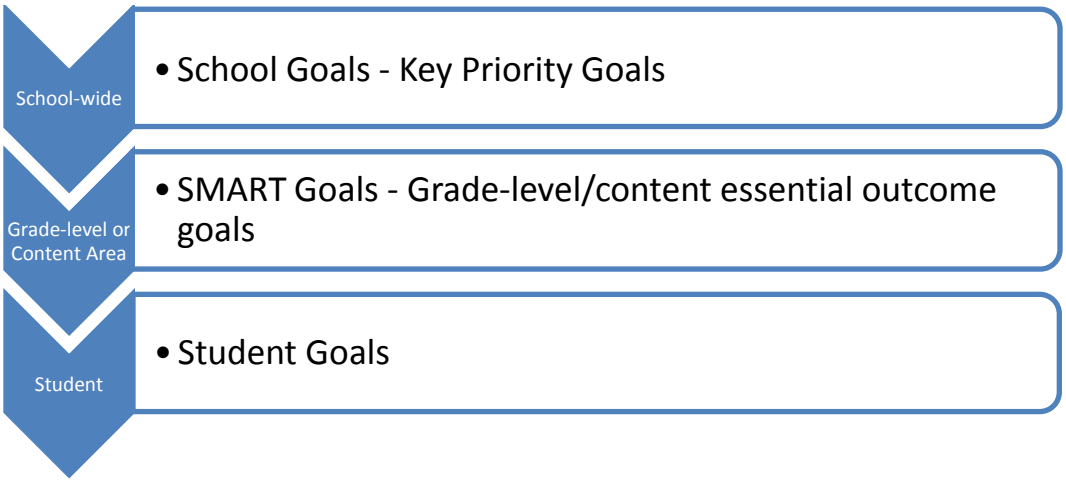
Key Priorities (school-wide goals/initiatives) are set by the BLT and are aligned with school level data and the District's Strategic Plan. **Essential Outcomes** are grade-level/content specific and set by the PLC team (Note: there may be overlap between the school's Key Priorities and PLC team's Essential Outcomes since both are based on student data; however, PLC teams will have additional Essential Outcomes that are grade-level specific).

Goal Setting

School goals (**Key Priority Goals**) are the overarching goals for the school and align with the school improvement plan (District Strategic Plan, School Success Plan and Key Priorities). Some of the Grade-level Essential Outcomes (and grade-level s goals will align with Key Priority Goals; however, grade-level only specific goals will align with Grade-level Essential Outcomes that only apply to that particular grade level.

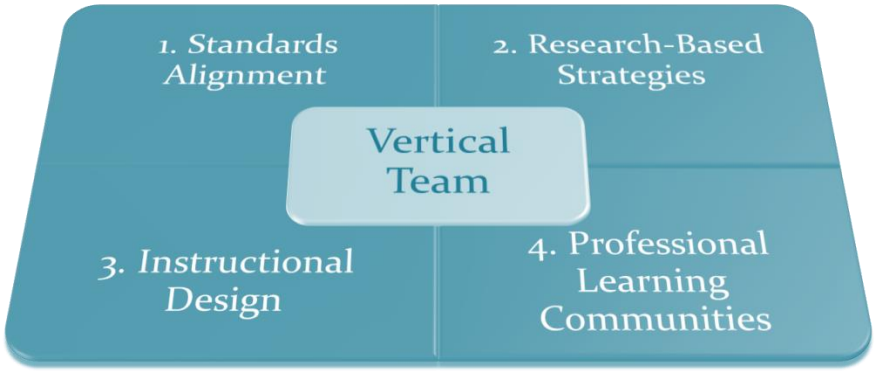
Grade-level Essential Outcomes will be the basis for grade-level **SMART Goals**. Note: Grade-levels or content areas may have additional goals that are specific only to their area and not the entire school.

Student Goals may align with Grade-Level Essential Outcome SMART Goals.



Vertical Articulation

Establishing vertical articulation can be done through the development of a Vertical Team. Vertical Team members are teacher leaders from each grade level or department (one per grade level or department). Vertical teams meet to discuss the cornerstones listed below (standards alignment, research-based instructional strategies, instructional design, and PLCs). The vertical teams can meet monthly to identify the key aspects of each cornerstone and communicate this information to PLCs and work through PLCs to achieve their outcomes.



Professional Development

A thoughtful process should be considered before doing professional development:

1. How does the PD support students' needs? What data substantiates the need?
2. Are strategies gained from the PD research-based? The evidence to support the research must be considered as well. Are the research studies rigorous? Have the studies behind the PD been examined thoroughly?

3. How will the PLC use these strategies to improve student achievement?
4. What changes are we expecting to see in the teachers' practices in the classroom? How will we evaluate these changes and their effectiveness?
5. How will any new knowledge from the PD be shared with others?
6. Cost-benefit analysis?

The school's Key Priorities will help guide school-wide professional development (occur during faculty meetings, some PLC meetings due to alignment, teachers attend conferences, schools contract with external experts, etc.) Grade-level specific essential outcomes are grade-level professional development (occur during PLC meetings, book studies, action research, lesson study, PD360, review of research and literature, etc.). **Use the PLC Instructional Plan form in SchoolStream to make a professional development request to the district.**

Protocols:

Below are protocols to help teams through the collaborative work in their Professional Learning Community. Protocols are a structured process or a set of guidelines to promote meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning. Protocols give time for active listening and reflection so all voices in the group are heard and honored (NSRF, n.d.).

Building Consensus

Decisions made based on data and research. Research-based, data driven decision making. This is a great opportunity to gain new knowledge that is aligned with the most effective and proven instructional strategies.

Make **decisions through consensus** whenever possible.

a. Consensus means that:
    i. I can live with the decision
    ii. I will support my colleagues in implementing the decision
    iii. I will do absolutely nothing to impede the implementation of the decision
b. Everyone has an opportunity to be heard
c. It is the will of the group and not "majority rules"
d. After the team fully explores the proposal and all concerns have been addressed, double check for consensus by using "fist-to-five" or asking:
    i. Are there any other questions, issues or concerns regarding this proposal?
        1. If no one speaks, then the facilitator calls for an affirmation of this consensus to formally acknowledge that a decision has been made.
        2. If consensus cannot be achieved, the people who are not in consensus are responsible for meeting with the proposing group to present their concerns.
e. Once consensus has been made, the team will decide how and who to communicate the decision to.

f. Note: It is important to understand that "consensus" does not mean majority rules. It means that "the will of the group" is to take action on the proposal and that everyone in the group has had an opportunity to be heard and their concerns addressed. It does not mean that every person in the group has to be convinced and change their mind for the group to move forward. This goes back to (a).

Setting group norms

a. Ask each team member to write down what they need in order to work effectively in a group.
b. Each person names the one thing that is most important to them from their list. Once an item has been listed, it cannot be repeated by another team member.
c. May have up to 10 items
d. Ask if everyone can abide by the items in the list
e. Ask in any one of the items might be hard for the group to follow. Discuss that item and then monitor to see if it would need to be dropped or modified.
f. Review the norms at the beginning of each meeting until everyone understands them. Then refer to them when necessary to help the group process.
g. Periodically reflect on the norms as a group to determine whether any of them need to be enhanced.

Identify Essential Outcomes

a. Criteria for identifying the essential from the peripheral, apply these three criteria to each standard:
    i. **Endurance**: Are students expected to retain the skills or knowledge long after the test is completed?
    ii. **Leverage**: Is this skill or knowledge applicable to many academic disciplines?
    iii. **Readiness for the next level of learning**: Is this skill or knowledge preparing the student for success in the next grade or course?

(Ainsworth, 2003)

b. 8 – 10 Essential Common Outcomes (EOs) for ELA and 8 – 10 EOs for Math per semester at the elementary level if classrooms are self-contained (the classroom teacher teaches all subjects). At the secondary level, select 8 – 10 EOs for each content area per semester. EOs are the **skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions** we want to students to have.
c. After analyzing data and reviewing content standards, each person writes down the 10 most important things they believe, based on the data and standards, students should know and be able to do. The "Essential" (E) and "Important" (I) Common Core Standards must be considered during this process.
d. Create a chart listing each team members EOs.

e. Find the common EOs from the team and determine through consensus if everyone agrees the EOs listed are the most important things they want students to know and be able to do.
f. If the team does not have at least 8 EOs for ELA and 8 EOs for Math, continue to review the data and standards and as a group determine the additional EOs for each content area.
g. Another procedure to conduct at the start of the process for identifying EOs as a team is:
    i. Ask the next grade-level team to list the 8 – 10 most important things they want their students to know and be able to do when they enter that grade. For example, the 3rd grade team would ask the 4th grade teachers to list the prerequisite skills and knowledge that they want students to have when they enter 4th grade.
    ii. The current grade-level team can use the list created by the next grade-level team as a starting point for discussion after reviewing the data and standards. For example, after the 3rd grade team reviews the student data and content standards and develop their list, they can use the 4th grade list to help fill in any gaps within the EOs.

Goal Setting

a. Prepare: Access data
b. Inquire:
    iii. How does this data compare with our Essential Outcomes?
    iv. Are there any trends in the data? Areas where students are struggling? Areas of strength?
    v. Are there other Essential Outcomes that we need to consider based on the data?
    vi. If data demonstrates students are doing well in that area associated with a particular Essential Outcome, how will we accelerate and extend their learning?
    vii. What are the instructional concerns associated with the areas that students struggle?
    viii. Are there any obstacles? If so, what will we need to do in order to minimize the obstacles?
    ix. Does the group have more than a superficial understanding of the reasons behind students' areas of low performance?
    x. Does it make logical sense in how and why the team arrived at the specific problem identified?
    xi. Are there multiple sources of data to support the identified area of concern?

c. Act:
    xii. Develop a SMART Goal(s)and Assessment Plan to monitor student progress along the learning continuum.

xiii. What does research say? What instructional strategies will we need to use to improve student performance?
xiv. What are the indicators (common assessments) that we will use to monitor student progress?
xv. How will we know if the strategies are having the desired impact?
xvi. How will we know the strategies are being effectively implemented?
xvii. What is the teacher evidence of strategy use?

Lesson Planning

Lesson Planning Protocol – Mike Schmoker

1) FOCUS (3-5 minutes): Identify the specific learning objective. Display for all participants to see, e.g., on a flipchart.

2) CREATE AN ASSESSMENT aligned with the standard/learning objective.

3) QUIET WRITE (1 minute): Write individually and quietly: privately brainstorm, on paper, for elements, steps or strategies that might go into an effective lesson for that particular standard/objective, i.e. a lesson which would help the greatest number of students to succeed on the assessment created in step 2, above.

4) BRAINSTORM (4-7 minutes): As a team, use good brainstorming protocol (see "Brainstorming Guidelines" on p. 3 of RESULTS: THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS..." handout) to capture 12-14 ideas on a flipchart.

5) SELECT (3-8minutes): As a team, select the best strategies, steps, elements--those which would combine most effectively to promote student success on your assessment.

6) OUTLINE LESSON (5-15 minutes): As a team, use the best ideas (which you just selected—in step 4) to build an outline of the lesson. Collect related ideas together, sequence them, and add or rearrange ideas as necessary. Outline the lesson on one flipchart page.

7) Implement the lesson in the coming days/weeks--and assess results: literally the number/percentage of students who succeeded on the assessment.

8) NEXT MEETING: Discuss results--i.e. how many students succeeded ("62 out of 80 students" or "76% of students succeeded")--as well as areas of strength or weakness. Then discuss adjustments to instruction--relative to the area of strength or weakness.

Record all of the above—briefly--on the "Team Learning Log" (p. 5 in the Results handout).

Common Assessments

a. What is the best indicator of whether our students have mastered the essential outcome (summative)? How will we know when the students know?
b. What are the best indicators of whether the students are appropriately progressing towards the essential outcome (formative)?
c. Assessments may be any format; however, they are agreed upon and used by every member of the team to determine student progress. Formats include but not limited to teacher observation, student presentations, student responses, paper-pencil, etc. Common assessments do not need to be lengthy to be effective.
d. Common assessment data will be collected and recorded before PLC meetings.
e. Analyze common assessment data during PLC meetings to determine appropriate instructional strategies and/or adjustments to ensure all students improve.

Responsive Facilitation

A responsive facilitator has to…

a. Pay attention to group dynamics all the time.
b. Pay attention to inclusion of all members (set procedures for doing this).
c. Attend to agreed upon group norms.
d. Continually assess group needs and adjust agenda as needed to meet group needs, while maintaining focus on the purpose/goals of the team meeting.
e. Ensure the group is on-task and maintains focus. Place items that need further discussion/research in the "parking lot" to be handled later.
f. Work for balance between process and content.
g. Develop a safe environment where team members can share ideas.
h. Acknowledge and celebrate when the team moves from a pseudo community to the beginnings of a real learning community. Substantive discussions are difficult to have when everyone is being "nice". This transition can be challenging; however, it leads to a learning community and tests the team's group norms. Moving through this transition demonstrates overall team growth.
i. Keep a sense of humor.
j. Ensure the role of facilitator is rotated between all team members.

Critical Friends – PLC Meetings

a. Analyze data to identify trends or issues related to student learning
b. Identify why some students are improving and why others are not. Identification must be related to instructional practice not some external factor (i.e. home environment)
c. Review research to identify the best methods to meet the needs of students who are not improving and plan differentiated lessons based on the research and students' needs

d. Identify strategies to further extend the students that have already met the target and implement those strategies in the lessons
e. If one particular teacher is consistently receiving better "growth" results, conduct peer observations and debriefing sessions to identify what this teacher is doing differently than the others.
f. Reflect – review results and critically examine instructional practices to determine if they had an impact on student achievement.
g. Revise – make appropriate adjustments to plan based on new knowledge.
h. Act – Implement new instructional plan

Sharing Student or Teacher Work

A good protocol by the National School Reform Faculty for sharing student work or teacher work can be found here http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/doc/tuning.pdf

Book Study

a. Based on the EOs, identify an EO that the team would feels they need further professional development and can accomplish the professional development through a book study.
b. Select a book that clearly meets the team's desired professional development needs. To help the team select a book, they may reach out to the Curriculum and Instruction Department for suggestions of books, get in touch with experts at the local university, ask peers and administrators, etc. Select one person from the team to preview the book to determine whether it meets the team's needs. If there are multiple books to preview, select several team members to review them and then discuss each book at a meeting to determine which book best meets the team's needs.
c. Once a book is selected, the team should decide on which chapters to read and the timeframe for completing the readings and discussions.
d. Allow team members to read the material before the meetings
e. Book Study Discussions (below is one type of protocol for facilitating book study discussions)
    i. Each team member silently identifies what s/he considers to be the most significant idea addressed in the reading.
    ii. When the team is ready, a team member shares what they believed was the most important idea s/he read.
    iii. The team reflects on the team member's idea.
    iv. The other team members each have 1 minute to respond, saying what it meant to them, what it made them think about, what questions it raises for them, etc.
    v. The team member that shared their idea now has 3 minutes to state why s/he chose that as the most significant idea from the reading or build on what s/he heard from their colleagues.

vi. This pattern continues until all team members have an opportunity to share and discuss their significant idea from the reading. Times may be adjusted to ensure all members have an equal amount of time to share and discuss.

vii. Debrief the experience. Set goals for next reading. Essential questions may be generated and distributed to team members to help them reflect while they read and be prepared for future discussions.

viii. After debriefing, discuss how this new information can become the impetus for change in current instructional practices or how it can be currently used in the classroom (depending on the book).

ix. The ultimate goal of a book study is to gain new knowledge and use that knowledge to make changes in instructional practices to better meet the needs of the students. The changes in instructional practices may begin at any point during a book study where the team feels that have enough information to try implementation.

Things to Consider with Book Studies:

Before doing book studies during PLC meetings, several factors should be considered:

1. How does the book support students' needs? What data substantiates the need?
2. Is the book (content/strategies) research-based? The evidence to support the research must be considered as well. Are the research studies rigorous? Have the studies behind the book been examined thoroughly?
3. Does the entire book need to be read or can sections be read?
4. How will the PLC use the content of the book (i.e. change in instructional practice)?
5. From reading the book, what changes are we expecting to see in teachers' practices in the classroom? How will we evaluate these changes and their effectiveness?
6. How will any new knowledge from doing the book study be shared with others?
7. What is the cost(time)-benefit analysis? Meaning, does the benefit of doing the book study outweigh the time used during PLC meetings?

Lesson Study

a. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS – Identify a common research theme (sometimes a school-wide theme) based upon student performance data
b. COORDINATE the SUPPORT of an external expert (Curriculum and Instruction Department) to support your team's lesson study cycle.
c. Review current educational research and COLLABORATIVELY PLAN LESSON(s) aligned with standards that clearly defines expected outcomes in terms of student learning

d. IMPLEMENT the planned lesson. Videotape the lesson or utilize peer observation (alogn with specific protocols) to record data pertaining to what students were thinking and doing throughout the lesson, as well as student performance outcomes
e. EVALUATE the effectiveness. Reflect upon, analyze, and discuss the lesson and student data collected and then synthesize your team's findings.
f. Define NEXT STEPS based upon what the teams has learned.
g. REPEAT the process using a new or revised lesson plan with the same research theme.

Action Research

Introduction

Action research is a model of professional development that promotes collaborative inquiry, reflection, and dialogue. "Within the action research process, educators study student learning related to their own teaching. It is a process that allows educators to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to monitor improved student learning" (Rawlinson & Little, 2004). "The idea of action research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where the action is: at the classroom and school level. By integrating research into these settings and engaging those who work at this level in research activities, finding can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly" (Guskey, 2000).

Therefore action research is a continuous and reflective process where educators make instructional decisions in their classrooms based on student needs reflected by classroom data.

The action research process involves four phases:

1. Identifying a classroom problem
2. Developing and implementing an action research plan
3. Collecting and analyzing data
4. Using and sharing results

Action research provides teachers and administrators with an opportunity to better understand what happens in their school. This process establishes a decision-making cycle that guides instructional planning for the school and individual classrooms.

Within the action research process, teachers may choose to focus their study on one student, a small group of students, a class or several classes, or a whole school. The focus and level of participation among school and district colleagues depends on the level of support, needs, and interests of the teacher(s) and school. Emily Calhoun (1993) described three approaches to

action research: individual teacher research, collaborative action research, and school-wide action research. Even though the environments are different, the process of action research remains the same. This process uses data to identify classroom/school problems, creates and implements a plan of action, collects and analyzes data, uses and shares the results, and makes instructional decisions to improve student learning continuously.

Individual teacher research focuses on studying a problem or issue within a single classroom. The teacher who engages in individual teacher research may or may not have support from colleagues and administration to share, brainstorm, and discuss the topic of action research. Although just one teacher may become directly involved in action research, support from knowledgeable educators at the school or district site is still important for successful teacher research to occur. Also, universities, educational agencies, and districts may encourage teacher action research by providing ongoing professional development related to the needs of the individual teacher researcher. These resources may also provide different venues for sharing the successes of the action research.

Collaborative action research focuses on studying a problem or issue within one or more classrooms. Teachers may collaborate and work together to study a particular problem in many different ways.

- co-teachers in one classroom studying a specific group of students
- a team of teachers focusing on a grade level issue (PLC/CT)
- a teacher and district, educational agency, or university personnel learning and studying a particular instructional practice
- a group of teachers in the same school studying the same instructional concern.

This collaborative action research approach fosters a joint effort because more than one teacher is involved in a specific area of study. Opportunities for sharing and dialogue are more likely to occur.

School-wide action research is a school reform initiative. Every faculty member of the school is involved in studying a specific issue identified from school data. This approach requires a great deal of support from the administrators and lead teachers/personnel, but the results can lead to school-wide change. Successful school-wide action research is directly related to initiatives contained within the school improvement plan.

Please refer to the chart on the following page to read examples of research questions that were studied using the different approaches of action research.

Different Approaches to Action Research

Approaches	Level of Focus	Level of Participation	Example of Research Questions
Individual	Single classroom	Individual teacher	1. What impact can daily phonemic awareness activities have on my kindergarten students' oral language development? (kindergarten teacher) 2. How can using concrete objects (manipulatives) improve my students' ability to identify and extend patterns in mathematics? (third grade teacher)
Collaborative	One or more classrooms	Co-Teachers, teams, departments, educational agencies & teachers, university faculty & teachers, teachers within a district, etc.	1. How can students with disabilities experiencing deficits in phonemic awareness show improvement in those skills by participating in additional and intensive instruction in phonemic awareness activities at least four times per week? How will it affect their overall reading ability? (exceptional student education (ESE) teacher & literacy coach) 2. How can implementing "Organizing Together," a Strategic Instruction Model curriculum, improve students' abilities to come to class organized and prepared? (grade 6 teachers in a middle school team)
School-Wide	School Improvement	Whole faculty	1. How can we teach our students to organize, analyze, synthesize, and interpret what they read? (school-wide questions) • How can modeling through readalouds improve students' abilities to organize, analyze, synthesize, and interpret what they read? • There are several action research teams within the school. The above example is one question being studied by one action research team. 2. How can implementing a school-wide positive behavior support program improve students' safety and increase appropriate student behaviors within the school? (all faculty)

Action research is a process in which teachers systematically investigate instructional practices and techniques in order to improve their teaching. The impact of a specific instructional practice on student learning is measured, and the results become the basis for educational planning and decision-making.

Teachers need to work together to plan what instructional practices and techniques need to be implemented, what changes can occur, and how to evaluate their instruction. The more teachers learn, the more likely they will think of changes to implement to enhance student learning.

Teachers must look at action research and ask

- What do we want our students to achieve related to the curriculum standards and student needs?
- Which instructional practices and techniques are we using which have a research base?
- What instructional practices, programs, and materials should we investigate to verify the effects on student learning?
- How will we know that all students are mastering the established goals and objectives?

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Appendix A

Sustainable PLCs

The Red Clay Consolidated School District, along with the Delaware Department of Education, has determined that research indicates the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)is likely to lead to higher student achievement. A common theme through the research is that strong leadership, teacher engagement and ownership are critical components of effective PLCs. To help develop and maintain highly effective PLC teams, Academic Deans or Assistant Principals (for schools without Academic Deans) will help each PLC team in their school to develop, implement and monitor the essential components of PLCs. ***Teacher ownership of the PLC team processes, procedures and accountability (student achievement and professionalism) are essential. Through the gradual release of responsibility from the Academic Deans and Assistant Principals to the teachers, we will be able to help teachers take greater ownership of their work with PLCs.*** As instructional leaders within the building, it is important to develop the teacher capacity and leadership of every teacher on every PLC team. In addition, as instructional leaders it is important to determine which PLCs are working at a level consistent with sustainability and which PLCs may need continued, ongoing, direct support.

The work of highly effective PLCs is focused on the Four Essential Questions during every PLC meeting. Additionally, highly effective PLCs are continuously focusing on learning (student and their own), results, and have developed a collaborative culture. Below are criteria to help building principals decide which PLCs have demonstrated the capacity to work at a high level of proficiency that can be sustained with minimal direct support by the Academic Deans and Assistant Principals. It is not necessary for the PLC to meet every criterion to demonstrate that they are on the path to becoming a highly effective PLC. However, the criteria are there to provide principals a benchmark to make their decisions.

Four Essential Questions for PLCs:

1. What should students know and be able to do as a result of this course, class, or grade level? What is it we expect them to learn?
2. How will we know when the students learned it? What are the common assessments/measures that we will use to ensure students reach the target?
3. How will we respond when students have not reached the target?
4. How will we respond when students have already met the target?

Criteria:

1. Are PLCs continuously working on the Four Essential Questions during their meetings?

Focus on Learning

2. Have the PLCs identified Essential Outcomes, developed SMART goals, and aligned their work with the Essential Outcomes and SMART goals?

3. Do the PLCs use team-adopted common standards of success to evaluate student learning?

4. Do the PLCs identify increasingly more effective instructional strategies based on research?

Collaborative Culture

5. Have the PLCs developed Group Norms and are operating by their Norms?

6. Are there high levels of trust in the PLCs?

7. Are the PLC members open and honest about what they do well and not so well?

8. Do the PLC members hold each other accountable for student learning?

Focus on Results

9. Have the PLCs identified or developed a variety of common formative assessments aligned with their essential outcomes?

10. Do the PLCs examine results of common formative assessments to identify students needing additional learning opportunities?

11. Does every student not meeting the essential outcomes participate in additional learning opportunities?

12. Do the PLCs examine the results of common formative assessments to determine the most effective instructional practices?

A PLC walk-through tool is in Observation360 to help evaluate each PLC. The tool is the **"PLC Walkthrough Feedback Form – Red Clay Consolidated"**.

It is suggested that the Building Leadership Team (BLT) work with the building administration to make a collaborative decision on which PLCs will continue with direct support from the Academic Deans and Assistant Principals and which PLCs will be on monitoring status. Note: Schools designated as Coach-the-Coach will still need their School PLC Leads to facilitate the "Taking Action with Data" PLC meetings. It is recommended that schools receiving direct facilitation from the Data Coaches would still have their School PLC Leads attend the "Taking Action with Data" PLC meetings with the Data Coach to continue to build their capacity in implementing highly effective PLCs.

Although some PLCs may no longer need the direct support from Academic Deans and Assistant Principals, ongoing monitoring of the progress of those selected PLCs is essential. Below is an excerpt from the District's PLC Overview and Guidelines.

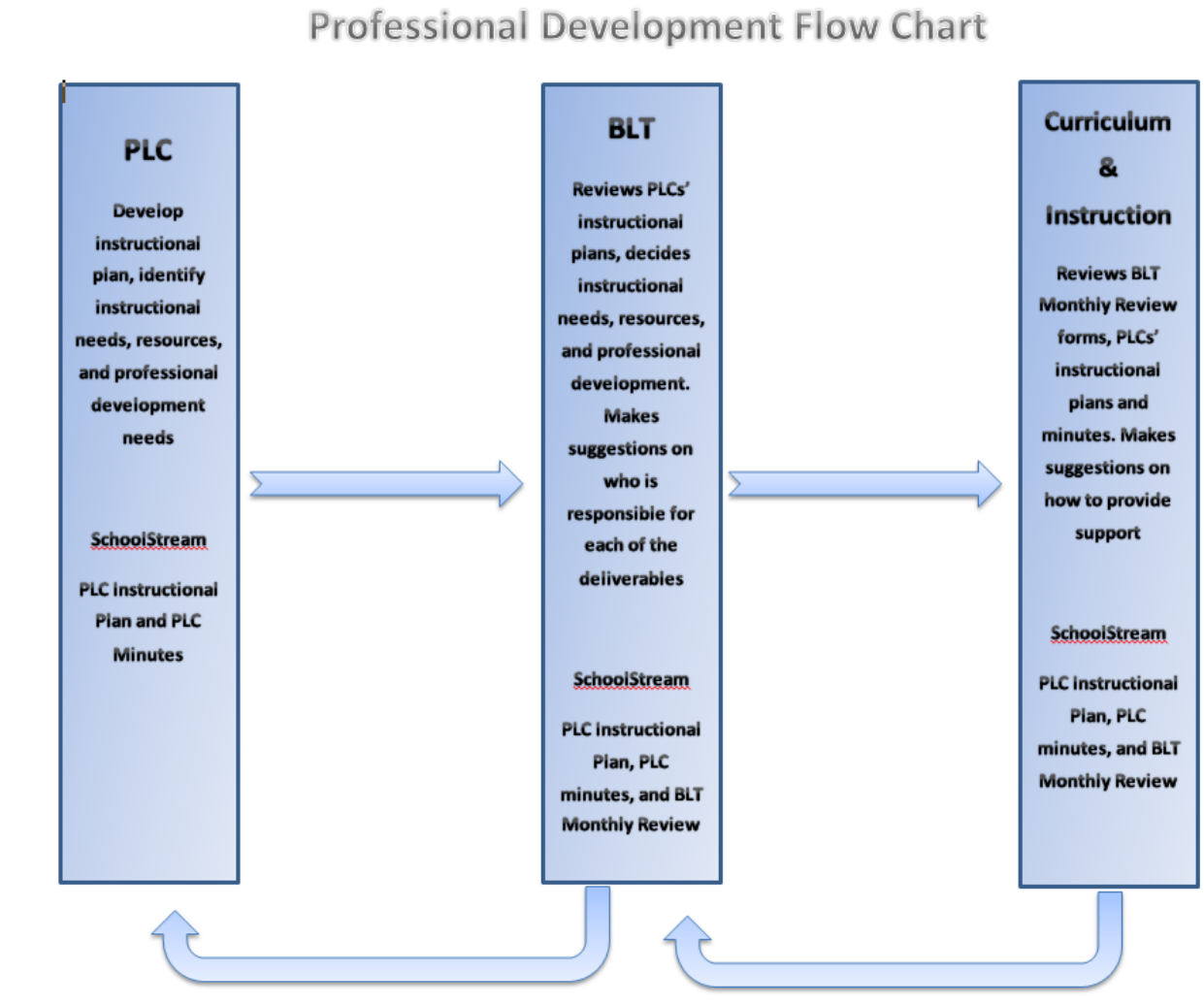
> The principal will meet with each team at least once a month to review student data, the PLC team's reflection on their practice and their plan to further improve student achievement. Leadership is key to

the success of PLCs and administrators should meet with teams on a regular basis to review results, listen to the team's plans for improvement, monitor the change in instructional practices during walk-throughs and observations, and regularly attend PLC meetings (this does not include the once a month data review meetings).

In addition, the progress of the PLCs should still be continually monitored through "drop-ins" during PLC meetings, review of PLC artifacts (minutes, essential outcomes, common assessments, data associated with the essential outcomes and common assessments, differentiated lesson plans based on the data), and walk-throughs in the classroom to see whether the actions from the PLC meetings are translating in to changed instructional practices in the classrooms.

Appendix B

Professional Development Flow Chart



Appendix C

SMART Goal Example/CT Action Plan

Below is an example of a SMART Goal to provide you with some assistance while you develop your goal for Component 5 ~ Goal Setting.

Essential Outcome:

Increase 3rd grade students' critical thinking through the use of higher level questions.

SMART Goal:

The third grade team's SMART goal is that 80% of the students in our ELA classes will be able to respond to higher level questions (Level 1-IV DOK) with 80% accuracy by May 2015.

Instructional Plan:

Baseline Data and Monitor of Student Progress:

Level of Performance	Benchmarks	Date
54% of the students are meeting the Smart Goal at this point in the school year.	Scott Foresman Baseline Assessment	Sept. 2014
	Scott Foresman Unit Benchmark Assessments	Every 6 weeks
	Scott Foresman Fresh Reads	Every 2 weeks

Activities Used to Help Achieve Goal:

Activities	Resources	Schedule
* Implement the use of a concept map to introduce key concepts, background knowledge, and deepen conceptual understanding.	* Concept map resources available on the wiki. *Use SF teacher manual.	* Weekly/ Daily
* Engage students in a read aloud—explicitly teaching/modeling skills/strategies.	* Use graphic organizers provided on the wiki. *Use the "what" and "why" skill posters given to teachers during professional development (also available on the wiki). *Use the authentic text when reading the story. *Models response to text dependent questions through think alouds and scaffolding, during	* Weekly / Daily

	read alouds.	
* Ask text dependent questions before, during, and after the read loud.	*Use text dependent questions available on curriculum tracker (Level 1-IV DOK). *Sticky note text dependent questions in authentic text.	* Weekly/ Daily
*Provide extended response opportunities for each main selection.	*Use culminating tasks available on curriculum tracker. *Use additional selections included in SF to allow for synthesizing across multiple texts.	*Weekly
* Students will use a 2 point rubric to score extended responses.	* Smarter Balanced 2 point rubrics hanging in the classroom for reference.	* Weekly
*Teachers and students will analyze benchmark results.	*Analyze reports available on *I-Tracker Pro* and *Online Test Reporting*.	*Every 6 weeks

Appendix D

Lesson Study Example

Lesson Study (Example from DHS)	
What is the Objective of the Lesson? On what critically important content is the lesson focused?	
Authentic Problem / STEM Connection What is the real life application?	
Use of Technology? What technology will be used by students to engage them in the lesson (if applicable)?	
What are the key knowledge and skills on which the lesson is focused?	
What background knowledge is required?	
What are the key activities that require students to actively confront the material? • Teacher Role • Student Role	
How will I formatively assess student attainment of the objective? What tool(s) will be used? How will the tool help me identify student success and/or needs?	
Did the formative assessment work? Do I know if they "got it?" How can I show they got it or didn't get it? What will I do if they did get it? What will I do if they didn't get it? Do I understand anything about why they didn't get it? Identify who didn't get it.	
How do the results of the formative assessment impact the next lesson? What will I do to enrich and remediate for the next lesson? What is the plan to provide enrichment and support?	

Source: Dickinson High School

Appendix E

Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community

Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community

A Shift in Fundamental Purpose	
From a focus on teaching . . .	to a focus on learning
From emphasis on what was taught . . .	to a fixation on what students learned
From coverage of content . . .	to demonstration of proficiency
From providing individual teachers with curriculum documents such as state standards and curriculum guides . . .	to engaging collaborative teams in building shared knowledge regarding essential curriculum
A Shift in Use of Assessments	
From infrequent summative assessments . . .	to frequent common formative assessments
From assessments to determine which students failed to learn by the deadline . . .	to assessments to identify students who need additional time and support
From assessments used to reward and punish students . . .	to assessments used to inform and motivate students
From assessing many things infrequently . . .	to assessing a few things frequently
From individual teacher assessments . . .	to assessments developed jointly by collaborative teams
From each teacher determining the criteria to be used in assessing student work . . .	to collaborative teams clarifying the criteria and ensuring consistency among team members when assessing student work
From an over-reliance on one kind of assessment . . .	to balanced assessments
From focusing on average scores . . .	to monitoring each student's proficiency in every essential skill
A Shift in the Response When Students Don't Learn	
From individual teachers determining the appropriate response . . .	to a systematic response that ensures support for every student
From fixed time and support for learning . . .	to time and support for learning as variables
From remediation . . .	to intervention
From invitational support outside of the school day . . .	to directed (that is, required) support occurring during the school day
From one opportunity to demonstrate learning . . .	to multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

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A Shift in the Work of Teachers	
From isolation . . .	to collaboration
From each teacher clarifying what students must learn . . .	to collaborative teams building shared knowledge and understanding about essential learning
From each teacher assigning priority to different learning standards . . .	to collaborative teams establishing the priority of respective learning standards
From each teacher determining the pacing of the curriculum . . .	to collaborative teams of teachers agreeing on common pacing
From individual teachers attempting to discover ways to improve results . . .	to collaborative teams of teachers helping each other improve
From privatization of practice . . .	to open sharing of practice
From decisions made on the basis of individual preferences . . .	to decisions made collectively by building shared knowledge of best practice
From "collaboration lite" on matters unrelated to student achievement . . .	to collaboration explicitly focused on issues and questions that most impact student achievement
From an assumption that these are "my kids, those are your kids". . .	to an assumption that these are "our kids"
A Shift in Focus	
From an external focus on issues outside of the school . . .	to an internal focus on steps the staff can take to improve the school
From a focus on inputs . . .	to a focus on results
From goals related to completion of project and activities . . .	to SMART goals demanding evidence of student learning
From teachers gathering data from their individually constructed tests in order to assign grades . . .	to collaborative teams acquiring information from common assessments in order to (1) inform their individual and collective practice and (2) respond to students who need additional time and support

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A Shift in School Culture	
From independence . . .	to interdependence
From a language of complaint . . .	to a language of commitment
From long-term strategic planning . . .	to planning for short-term wins
From infrequent generic recognition . . .	to frequent specific recognition and a culture of celebration that creates many winners
A Shift in Professional Development	
From external training (workshops and courses) . . .	to job-embedded learning
From the expectation that learning occurs infrequently (on the few days devoted to professional development) . . .	to an expectation that learning is ongoing and occurs as part of routine work practice
From presentations to entire faculties . . .	to team-based action research
From learning by listening . . .	to learning by doing
From learning individually through courses and workshops . . .	to learning collectively by working together
From assessing impact on the basis of teacher satisfaction ("did you like it?") . . .	to assessing impact on the basis of evidence of improved student learning
From short-term exposure to multiple concepts and practices . . .	to sustained commitment to limited focused initiatives

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Appendix F

Learning as Our Fundamental Purpose Rubric

The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Learning as Our Fundamental Purpose (Part I)

DIRECTIONS: Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our school is to help all students achieve high levels of learning, and therefore, we work collaboratively to clarify what students must learn and how we will monitor each student's learning.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
We work with colleagues on our team to build shared knowledge regarding state, provincial, and/or national standards; district curriculum guides; trends in student achievement; and expectations for the next course or grade level. This collective inquiry has enabled each member of our team to clarify what all students must know and be able to do as a result of every unit of instruction.	Teachers have been provided with a copy of state, provincial, and/or national standards and a district curriculum guide. There is no process for them to discuss curriculum with colleagues and no expectation they will do so.	Teacher representatives have helped to create a district curriculum guide. Those involved in the development feel it is a useful resource for teachers. Those not involved in the development may or may not use the guide.	Teachers are working in collaborative teams to clarify the essential learning for each unit and to establish a common pacing guide. Some staff members question the benefit of the work. They argue that developing curriculum is the responsibility of the central office or textbook publishers rather than teachers. Some are reluctant to give up favorite units that seem to have no bearing on essential standards.	Teachers have clarified the essential learning for each unit by building shared knowledge regarding state, provincial, and/or national standards; by studying high-stakes assessments; and by seeking input regarding the prerequisites for success as students enter the next grade level. They are beginning to adjust curriculum, pacing, and instruction based on evidence of student learning.	Teachers on every collaborative team are confident they have established a guaranteed and viable curriculum for their students. Their clarity regarding the knowledge and skills students must acquire as a result of each unit of instruction, and their commitment to providing students with the instruction and support to achieve the intended outcomes, give every student access to essential learning.

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Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
We work with colleagues on our team to clarify the criteria by which we will judge the quality of student work, and we practice applying those criteria until we can do so consistently.	Each teacher establishes his or her own criteria for assessing the quality of student work.	Teachers have been provided with sample rubrics for assessing the quality of student work.	Teachers working in collaborative teams are attempting to assess student work according to common criteria. They are practicing applying the criteria to examples of student work, but they are not yet consistent. The discrepancy is causing some tension on the team.	Teachers working in collaborative teams are clear on the criteria they will use in assessing the quality of student work and can apply the criteria consistently.	Collaborative teams of teachers frequently use performance-based assessments to gather evidence of student learning. Members have established strong inter-rater reliability and use the results from these assessments to inform and improve their individual and collective practice. The team's clarity also helps members teach the criteria to students, who can then assess the quality of their own work and become more actively engaged in their learning.
We monitor the learning of each student's attainment of all essential outcomes on a timely basis through a series of frequent, team-developed common formative assessments that are aligned with high-stakes assessments students will be required to take.	Each teacher creates his or her own assessments to monitor student learning. Assessments are typically summative rather than formative. A teacher can teach an entire career and not know if he or she teaches a particular skill or concept better or worse than the colleague in the next room.	The district has established benchmark assessments that are administered several times throughout the year. Teachers pay little attention to the results and would have a difficult time explaining the purpose of the benchmark assessments.	Teachers working in collaborative teams have begun to create common assessments. Some attempt to circumvent the collaborative process by proposing the team merely use the quizzes and tests that are available in the textbook as their common assessments. Some administrators question the ability of teachers to create good assessments and argue that the district should purchase commercially developed tests.	Teachers working in collaborative teams have created a series of common assessments and agreed on the specific standard students must achieve to be deemed proficient. The user-friendly results of common assessments are providing each member of the team with timely evidence of student learning. Members are using that evidence to improve their assessments and to develop more effective instructional strategies.	Collaborative teams of teachers gather evidence of student learning on a regular basis through frequent common formative assessments. The team analysis of results drives the continuous improvement process of the school. Members determine the effectiveness of instructional strategies based on evidence of student learning rather than teacher preference or precedent. Members who struggle to teach a skill are learning from those who are getting the best results. The frequent common formative assessments provide the vital information that fuels the school's system of intervention and enrichment. The assessments are formative because (1) they are used to identify students who need additional time and support for learning, (2) the students receive the additional time and support for learning, and (3) students are given another opportunity to demonstrate that they have learned.

REPRODUCIBLE

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The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Learning as Our Fundamental Purpose (Part II)

DIRECTIONS: Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our school is to help all students achieve high levels of learning, and therefore, we provide students with systematic interventions when they struggle and enrichment when they are proficient.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
We provide a system of interventions that guarantees each student will receive additional time and support for learning if he or she experiences initial difficulty. Students who are proficient have access to enriched and extended learning opportunities.	What happens when a student does not learn will depend almost exclusively on the teacher to whom the student is assigned. There is no coordinated school response to students who experience difficulty. Some teachers allow students to turn in late work; some do not. Some teachers allow students to retake a test; some do not. The tension that occurs at the conclusion of each unit when some students are proficient and ready to move forward and others are failing to demonstrate proficiency is left to each teacher to resolve.	The school has attempted to establish specific policies and procedures regarding homework, grading, parent notification of student progress, and referral of students to child study teams to assess their eligibility for special education services. If the school provides any additional support for students, it is either a "pull-out" program that removes students from new direct instruction or an optional after-school program. Policies are established for identifying students who are eligible for more advanced learning.	The school has taken steps to provide students with additional time and support when they experience difficulty. The staff is grappling with structural issues such as how to provide time for intervention during the school day in ways that do not remove the student from new direct instruction. The school schedule is regarded as a major impediment to intervention and enrichment, and staff members are unwilling to change it. Some are concerned that providing students with additional time and support is not holding them responsible for their own learning.	The school has developed a schoolwide plan to provide students who experience difficulty with additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, and systematic. It has made structural changes such as modifications in the daily schedule to support this system of interventions. Staff members have been assigned new roles and responsibilities to assist with the interventions. The faculty is looking for ways to make the system of interventions more effective.	The school has a highly coordinated system of intervention and enrichment in place. The system is very proactive. Coordination with sender schools enables the staff to identify students who will benefit from additional time and support for learning even before they arrive at the school. The system is very fluid. Students move into intervention and enrichment easily and remain only as long as they benefit from it. The achievement of each student is monitored on a timely basis. Students who experience difficulty are required, rather than invited, to utilize the system of support. The plan is multilayered. If the current level of time and support is not sufficient to help a student become proficient, he or she is moved to the next level and receives increased time and support. All students are guaranteed access to this system of intervention regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned. The *school* responds to students and views those who are failing to learn as "undersupported" rather than "at risk."

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The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Building a Collaborative Culture Through High-Performing Teams

DIRECTIONS: Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high-performing teams.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
We are organized into collaborative teams in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals that directly impact student achievement. Structures have been put in place to ensure: 1. Collaboration is embedded in our routine work practice. 2. We are provided with time to collaborate. 3. We are clear on the critical questions that should drive our collaboration. 4. Our collaborative work is monitored and supported.	Teachers work in isolation with little awareness of the strategies, methods, or materials that colleagues use in teaching the same course or grade level. There is no plan in place to assign staff members into teams or to provide them with time to collaborate.	Teachers are encouraged but not required to work together collaboratively. Some staff may elect to work with colleagues on topics of mutual interest. Staff members are congenial but are not co-laboring in an effort to improve student achievement.	Teachers have been assigned to collaborative teams and have been provided time for collaboration during the regular contractual day. Teams may be unclear regarding how they should use the collaborative times. Topics often focus on matters unrelated to teaching and learning. Some teachers believe the team meeting is not a productive use of their time.	Teachers have been assigned to collaborative teams and have been provided time for collaboration on a weekly basis during the regular contractual day. Guidelines, protocols, and processes have been established in an effort to help teams use collaborative time to focus on topics that will have a positive impact on student achievement. Team leaders are helping lead the collaborative process, and the work of teams is monitored closely so assistance can be provided when a team struggles. Teams are working interdependently to achieve goals specifically related to higher levels of student achievement and are focusing their efforts on discovering better ways to achieve those goals.	The collaborative team process is deeply engrained in the school culture. Staff members view it as the engine that drives school improvement. Teams are self-directed and very skillful in advocacy and inquiry. They consistently focus on issues that are most significant in improving student achievement and set specific, measurable goals to monitor improvement. The collaborative team process serves as a powerful form of job-embedded professional development because members are willing and eager to learn from one another, identify common problems, engage in action research, make evidence of student learning transparent among members of the team, and make judgments about the effectiveness of different practices on the basis of that evidence. The team process directly impacts teacher practice in the classroom, helping each teacher clarify what to teach, how to assess, and how to improve instruction.

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Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
We have identified and honor the commitments we have made to the members of our collaborative teams in order to enhance the effectiveness of our team. These articulated collective commitments or norms have clarified expectations of how our team will operate, and we use them to address problems that may occur on the team.	No attention has been paid to establishing clearly articulated commitments that clarify the expectations of how the team will function and how each member will contribute to its success. Norms do emerge from each group based on the habits that come to characterize the group, but they are neither explicit nor the result of a thoughtful process. Several of the norms have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the team.	Teams have been encouraged by school or district leadership to create norms that clarify expectations and commitments. Recommended norms for teams may have been created and distributed. Norms are often stated as beliefs rather than commitments to act in certain ways.	Each team has been required to develop written norms that clarify expectations and commitments. Many teams have viewed this as a task to be accomplished. They have written the norms and submitted them, but do not use them as part of the collaborative team process.	Teams have established the collective commitments that will guide their work, and members have agreed to honor the commitments. The commitments are stated in terms of specific behaviors that members will demonstrate. The team begins and ends each meeting with a review of the commitments to remind each other of the agreements they have made about how they will work together. They assess the effectiveness of the commitments periodically and make revisions when they feel that will help the team become more effective.	Team members honor the collective commitments they have made to one another regarding how the team will operate and the responsibility of each member to the team. The commitments have been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. They have helped members work interdependently to achieve common goals because members believe they can rely upon one another. The commitments facilitate the team's collective inquiry and help people explore their assumptions and practices. Members recognize that their collective commitments have not only helped the team become more effective, but have also made the collaborative experience more personally rewarding. Violations of the commitments are addressed. Members use them as the basis for crucial conversations and honest dialogue when there is concern that one or more members are not fulfilling commitments.

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The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Focusing on Results (Part I)

DIRECTIONS: Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
The members of each of our collaborative teams are working interdependently to achieve one or more SMART goals that align with our school goals. Each team has identified specific action steps members will take to achieve the goal and a process for monitoring progress toward the goal. The identification and pursuit of SMART goals by each collaborative team are critical elements of the school's continuous improvement process.	Goals have not been established at the district or school level. Teams are not expected to establish goals.	Teams establish goals that focus on adult activities and projects rather than student learning.	Teams have been asked to create SMART goals, but many teachers are wary of establishing goals based on improved student learning. Some attempt to articulate very narrow goals that can be accomplished despite students learning less. Others present goals that are impossible to monitor. Still others continue to offer goals based on teacher projects. There is still confusion regarding the nature of and reasons for SMART goals.	All teams have established annual SMART goals as an essential element of their collaborative team process. Teams have established processes to monitor their progress, and members work together in an effort to identify strategies for becoming more effective at achieving the team's SMART goal.	Each collaborative team of teachers has established both an annual SMART goal and a series of short-term goals to monitor their progress. They create specific action plans to achieve the goals, clarify the evidence that they will gather to assess their progress, and work together interdependently to achieve the goal. This focus on tangible evidence of results guides the work of teams and is critical to the continuous improvement process of the school. The recognition and celebration of efforts to achieve goals helps sustain the improvement process.

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The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Focusing on Results (Part II)

DIRECTIONS: Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

Individuals, teams, and schools seek relevant data and information and use it to promote continuous improvement.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
Collaborative teams of teachers regard ongoing analysis of evidence of student learning as a critical element in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are provided with frequent and timely information regarding the achievement of their students. They use that information to: ■ Respond to students who are experiencing difficulty ■ Enrich and extend the learning of students who are proficient ■ Inform and improve the individual and collective practice of members ■ Identify team professional development needs ■ Measure progress toward team goals	The only process for monitoring student learning is the individual classroom teacher and annual state, provincial, or national assessments. Assessment results are used primarily to report on student progress rather than to improve professional practice. Teachers fall into a predictable pattern: they teach, they test, they hope for the best, and then they move on to the next unit.	The district has created benchmark assessments that are administered several times throughout the year. There is often considerable lag time before teachers receive the results. Most teachers pay little attention to the results. They regard the assessment as perhaps beneficial to the district but of little use to them. Principals are encouraged to review the results of state assessments with staff, but the fact that the results aren't available until months after the assessment and the lack of specificity mean they are of little use in helping teachers improve their practice.	Teams have been asked to create and administer common formative assessments and to analyze the results together. Many teachers are reluctant to share individual teacher results and want the analysis to focus on the aggregate performance of the group. Some use the results to identify questions that caused students difficulty so they can eliminate the questions. Many teams are not yet using the analysis of results to inform or improve professional practice.	The school has created a specific process to bring teachers together multiple times throughout the year to analyze results from team-developed common assessments, district assessments, and state or provincial and national assessments. Teams use the results to identify areas of concern and to discuss strategies for improving the results.	Teachers are hungry for information on student learning. All throughout the year, each member of a collaborative team receives information that illustrates the success of his or her students in achieving an agreed-upon essential standard on team-developed common assessments he or she helped create, in comparison to all the students attempting to achieve that same standard. Teachers use the results to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their individual practice, to learn from one another, to identify areas of curriculum proving problematic for students, to improve their collective capacity to help all students learn, and to identify students in need of intervention or enrichment. They also analyze results from district, state or provincial, and national assessments and use them to validate their team assessments.

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Appendix G

PLC Instructional Plan Form (example)
(Professional Development Request)

School: PLC School of Excellence	
Date: October 24, 2011	**Group: 3rd Grade PLC**
Attendance: Joe, John, Jordan, Sue, Tara	
Content Area: ELA	

Essential Outcome:

Increase 3rd grade students' critical thinking through the use of higher level questions.

SMART Goal:

The third grade team's SMART goal is that 90% of the students in our ELA classes will be able to respond to level IV and above (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) questions (Bloom's Taxonomy) with 92% accuracy (3 or 4 on the rubric) by April 2012.

Instructional Plan:

Baseline Data and Monitor of Student Progress:

Level of Performance	Benchmarks	Date
27% of the students are meeting the Smart Goal at this point in the school year.	End of Selection Test- Substitute original questions with 2 RARE response questions with higher-level thinking.	Sept. 2011
	Scott Foresman Test Questions for Extended Response (higher level)	Every 6 weeks

Activities Used to Help Achieve Goal:

Activities	Resources	Schedule
* Small Group and Whole Group Instruction- verbal and written assessment of comprehension using questions from Bloom's	* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart with ready-made questions for each level. *Differentiated Instruction professional development	* Weekly

Taxonomy.		
* Think and Respond Questions at end of story (change to include higher level thinking questions from Bloom's Taxonomy).	* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart and book questions.	* Weekly
* Read books on best practices regarding Bloom's Taxonomy and QAR	* Read QAR and Bloom's Taxonomy books to increase comprehension through subject matter. *The Literacy Coach will come into the classroom to give a lesson on QAR.	* Ongoing
* Instruction on short answer responses using RARE to answer questions regarding the SF stories and leveled books.	* Utilize SF materials. * Literacy Coach will come into the classroom to give a lesson on RARE.	*Weekly in small group.
* Instruction on Super QAR lessons with 6 booster lessons to reinforce concepts of QAR for higher level thinking questions	* Read super QAR lessons and teacher guide book to reinforce instructional practices.	* February * Booster lessons: (Prior to DCAS).
* Students will use a 2 point and a 4 point rubric to score responses.	* 2 and 4 point rubrics hanging in the classroom for reference.	* Weekly

Professional Development Need: QAR Model Lessons	**Professional Development Source:** School
Professional Development Need: RARE Model Lessons	**Professional Development Source:** School
Professional Development Need: Differentiated Instruction (small reading groups, tiered, centers)	**Professional Development Source:** District Office
Professional Development Need:	**Professional Development Source:**
Professional Development Need:	**Professional Development Source:**

Appendix H

7 Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a spirit of inquiry

"I would like to know more about your idea/ position." "Tell me more about…"
(Seek first to understand before advocating for your own idea.)

2. Pausing . . .

"I am waiting a minute to allow time to think first."
(Pausing before responding and/or asking a question allows for think time for yourself and others.)

3. Paraphrasing

"So…" "As you are…" "You're thinking…" "You're wondering…" "The intention seems to be…"
(Efficient paraphrases help all members hear and understand the ideas being presented.)

4. Probing for specificity

"Please say more…" "I'm curious about…" "I'd like to hear more about…" "Then, you are saying…" "Do you mean everyone?" "Specifically what…"
(Asking questions to increase clarity and understanding as well as the precision of the group's thinking.)

5. Putting ideas on the table

Label the intention of your comments: "Here is one idea…" "One thought I have is…" "Here is a possible approach…" "Here is one idea…" "Another consideration might be…"

6. Paying attention to self & others

How am I reacting to what is being said? How am I feeling? How are others reacting to what I am saying? Have I used possible charged language unintentionally?
(Watch for body language and check perceptions by paraphrasing and probing for specificity.)

7. Presuming positive intentions

"I know we are trying to learn more about all angles so let me share…" "Knowing that we would like to make a decision that works for all of us, let's…"
(Thinking in your head thoughts like: "I am sure she didn't mean to sound charged when she said that.")

Adapted from www.adaptiveschools.org

Appendix I

Typical Group Roles

- **Discussion Leader.** The **discussion leader** works to keep the group on track. He or she is charged with ensuring full participation from all team members, and helps to moderate individuals who may try to dominate the group discussion. Typical comments from the discussion leader may include the following:
    - "Let's focus on the problem."
    - "Should we move on the next question?"
    - "John, what do you think about this issue?"

- **Recorder/Record Keeper.** The **recorder** keeps track of unresolved issues, records group strategies, maintains archives of all work sheets and electronic files, and convenes the group outside of class as necessary. You'll frequently hear the recorder say things like this:
    - "Did we get all of the learning issues down?"
    - "Is this the diagram we want to use?"
    - "I have a copy of our files. I also posted them to our File Exchange section in Blackboard. That way, everyone in the group will have access to the files we created today."

- **Reporter** . The **reporter** assembles the draft of the group's solution for the project, solicits feedback from all group members, incorporates agreed-upon changes, and submits the project. The reporter is often heard uttering these phrases:
    - "Is everyone in agreement with this document?"
    - "Everyone needs to review this draft and get back to me with comments before Wednesday."

- **Accuracy Coach.** The **accuracy coach** probes for group understanding and makes sure that all team members are familiar with all aspects of the project. He or she locates valid, legitimate resources, and brings them to class if necessary. The accuracy coach may also review the entire project for accuracy and completeness, although all team members typically have some responsibility for that activity. You'll probably hear the accuracy coach say things like this:

- "Where did you find that information?"
- "Are we all clear about the underlying logic behind this formula?"
- "Does the text have information we might be able to use as we prepare our response to this problem?"
- "Is this calculation correct?"
- "Did we investigate all of the learning issues on our list?"

- **Skeptic.** The **skeptic** challenges group consensus, and poses alternative solutions or different ways to think about the problem. The skeptic may make these kinds of comments:
  - "I'm not sure we're on the right track."
  - "Should we consider other ideas?"
  - "Are we sure this is the only way to look at this issue?"
  - "What if the underlying conditions change? Will our solution still work, or should we look at ways to make our solution more flexible?"

- **Timekeeper.** The **timekeeper** makes sure the group stays on schedule – for the current group meeting and for the project as a whole. You'll hear the timekeeper say things like this:
  - "We only have ten minutes left in this class period. Are we ready to write our meeting summary for today?"
  - "The project is due in four days. We should have our final draft ready by noon tomorrow. That way, everyone can review it and we'll have time to incorporate changes before we turn it in."

- **Reflector/Summarizer** . Reflection is a very important part of the PBL process. When you take the time to reflect on what you've done, you tend to come up with ways to improve how your group operates from class to class and from project to project. When group operations improve, the quality of the final project submissions tends to improve as well. The **reflector/summarizer** spearheads the reflection process. He or she summarizes the progress of the group at various stages of the project. This helps ensure that all team members are on the "same page," and provides a vehicle through which team members can make recommendations for improvements. The

reflector/summarizer also works with the **accuracy coach** to check for group understanding. The reflector/summarizer tends to make comments like this:

- "Here's where I think we are right now. Joe, what do you think?"
- "Maria, you mentioned that we need to come up with a better review process for our final draft than the process we followed on the last project. We should discuss this as a team before we get too far along in this next project."
- "Wow – I can't believe this class period is almost over! Let's talk about what we accomplished today."
- "We're at the mid-point of our project. Here's what we've finished so far. Sue, does this agree with your records of our progress to date?"

[†] Adapted from Allen, D. A., Duch, B.J., and Groh, S. E. (2001). Strategies for using groups. In B.J. Duch, S.E. Groh, & D.E. Allen (Eds.), *The Power of Problem-Based Learning* (pp. 59-68). Sterling , VA : Stylus Publishing and Watson, George H. Silicon, Circuits, and the Digital Revolution (SCEN 103). 11-Feb-2000 . Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Delaware . Retrieved 31-May-2005. <http://www.physics.udel.edu/~watson/scen103/colloq2000/question1.html>.

Appendix J

Evaluating Actions Taken; Reflective Data Conversations

Taking Action with Data

Evaluating Actions Taken; Reflective Data Conversations

PLC Team members_____ Date _____

What
What standards, objectives and lesson EQs were the focus of the lesson?_____

_____

_____

What cues and/or questions were specifically planned to be implemented into this lesson?

_____

_____

_____

So What (Discussion of the data)

1. Thoughts on my instruction and use of the cues and/or questions

2. Patterns/trends/outcomes/other observations from the lesson regarding student learning and my use of cues and/or questions

Now What (Instructional Changes)

What instructional changes will I make for the next lesson, unit, etc.? (with a focus on the use of cues and/or questions)

For which students will I make these changes (all, small group, individuals)?

What is the evidence of why I need to make this change?

When and how will the instructional changes be implemented?

Next Steps (Action Plan & Reflections)

After implementing the changes, when will we reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of our changes?	If I were to teach this lesson again or use this strategy again in the future, what changes would I make?

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