Assumption: Teachers Matter

- Regardless of the research basis, it is clear that effective teachers have a profound impact on student achievement and ineffective teachers do not. In fact, ineffective teachers might actually impede the learning of their students.
  – Marzano (2003), p. 75

Assumption: Schools Matter

An analysis of research conducted over a thirty-five year period demonstrates that schools that are highly effective produce results that almost entirely overcome the effects of student backgrounds.

Assumption: Effective Schools Require More than Competent Individual Teachers

Student achievement gains and other benefits are influenced by organizational characteristics beyond the skills of individual staff. We saw schools with competent teachers that lacked the organizational capacity to be effective with many students. The task for schools is to organize human resources into an effective collective effort.


Assumption

We now know how to create schools that help more kids learn at higher levels. In fact, there has never been greater consensus regarding the schools it will take to raise student achievement.

The Power of Professional Learning Communities

The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community.

The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities. —Milbrey McLaughlin (1995)
## Educational Researchers
### Who Endorse PLC Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alyson Adams</th>
<th>Angela Greenwood</th>
<th>Jonathan Saphier</th>
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<td>Elaine Allensworth</td>
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<td>Fred Newmann</td>
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<td>Ron Gallimore</td>
<td>Douglas Reeves</td>
<td>Art Wise</td>
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<td>Carl Glickman</td>
<td>Doreen Ross</td>
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Organizations That Endorse
Professional Learning Community Concepts

American Federation of Teachers
Annenberg Institute for School Reform
California Teachers Association
Center for Performance-Based Assessment
Center for Teaching Quality
Council of Chief State School Officials
ETS Assessment Training Institute
Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
The MacKenzie Group
Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Board of Professional Teaching Standards
National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future
National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching
National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
National Council of Teachers of English
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Education Association
National Middle School Association
National Science Education Leadership Association
National Science Teachers Association
National Staff Development Council
North Central Association, Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
The Partnership for 21st Century Schools
Research for Action
Research for Better Teaching, Inc.
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
The Wallace Foundation
WestEd

For more information, please visit www.allthingsplc.info “Articles & Research.”
What is a PLC?

Clarity Precedes Competence!

Traditional School Structure

Independent Kingdoms

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<th>Grade</th>
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Pseudo PLC Structure

Individual Kingdoms organized into isolated groups on an infrequent basis

- Kindergarten Group
- First Grade Group
- Second Grade Group
- Third Grade Group
- Fourth Grade Group
- Fifth Grade Group
Professional Learning Community (PLC) Defined

An **on-going 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.

---

**Is the Professional Learning Community Concept Based**

…adherence to core practices or individual teacher autonomy?

…strong administrative leadership or teacher empowerment?

…recognition and celebration of current efforts and achievements or discontent with the status quo?

…approaching school improvement with a sense of urgency or demonstrating the patience to sustain an improvement initiative over the long haul?
The Tyranny of “or” Versus the Genius of “And

The tyranny of “or” is the rational view that cannot easily accept paradox, cannot live with two seemingly contradictory forces at the same time. It **must be A or B, but not both.**

The genius of “and” is to embrace both of the extremes at the same time. This is not just a question of balance. Balance implies 50-50, going to the midpoint. **Visionary leaders did not seek the gray of balance, but were determined to be distinctly both A and B at the same time.**

- Jim Collins and Jerry Porras

Simultaneous Loose AND Tight School Cultures

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

The BIG IDEAS of a PLC

- We accept **learning** as the fundamental purpose of our school and therefore are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.

- We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose. We cultivate a **collaborative culture** through development of high-performing teams.

- 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.
If the purpose of school is truly to ensure high levels of learning for all students, schools will:

- Clarify what each student is expected to learn

Team Learning Process

- Clarify 8-10 Essential Common Outcomes
  - (skills, knowledge, dispositions)
  - per semester by Course/Content Area

The 1st Step in Decision Making in a PLC: Building Shared Knowledge

Professional Learning Communities always attempt to answer critical questions by BUILDING SHARED KNOWLEDGE - engaging in collective inquiry - LEARNING TOGETHER.

If people make decisions based upon the collective study of the same pool of information, they increase the likelihood that they will arrive at the same conclusion.
Resources To Help Teams Build
Shared Knowledge & Clarify “Learn What”

- State/Provincial/National Standards (e.g. NCTE/NCTM, Common Core Standards)
- Vertical articulation
- District or department curriculum guides
- Assessment Frameworks (how will they be assessed)
- Data on past student performance (local/state/national)
- Examples of student work and the criteria by which the quality of student work will be judged
- Textbook Presentation of Curriculum
- Curriculum Framework of High Performing Schools

Criteria for Identifying Essential Common Outcomes

To separate the essential from the peripheral, apply these 3 criteria to each standard:

1. **Endurance** - are students expected to retain the skills/knowledge long after the test is completed
2. **Leverage** - is this skill/knowledge applicable to many academic disciplines
3. **Readiness for the Next Level of Learning** - is this skill/knowledge preparing the student for success in the next grade/course

- Doug Reeves

Advantages of Team Discussion of Essential Learning

- Greater clarity regarding interpretation of standards
- Greater consistency regarding importance of different standards
- Greater consistency in amount of time devoted to different standards (common pacing)
- Common outcomes and common pacing are essential prerequisites for a team to create common assessments and team interventions
- Greater ownership of and commitment to standards

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Levels of Curricula at Work in Your School

1. Intended - What we want them to learn
2. Implemented - What actually gets taught
3. Attained - What they actually learn

*To impact the attained curriculum in the most powerful way, make certain the implemented curriculum is guaranteed and viable.

- Robert Marzano

To Improve Student Achievement

• create a guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano)
• establish a limited number of power standards (Reeves)
• pursue clear and focused essential academic goals (Lezotte)
• identify learning intentions and success criteria (Hattie)
• develop a compact list of learning expectations and tangible exemplars of student proficiency (Saphier)

If we want all students to learn at high levels, those who teach them must be able to answer the questions, “learn what” with a consistent voice.

Assessing Your Current Reality

Consider the descriptions of 5 stages of PLC progress regarding:

1. Clarity on What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do

Individually, silently, and honestly assess the current status of your school for each indicator on the Professional Learning Community at Work Continuum.
Why Should We Ensure Students Have Access to a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum?

One of the most significant factors that impacts student achievement is that teachers commit to implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum to ensure no matter who teaches a given class, the curriculum will address certain essential content (Marzano, 2003).

To improve student achievement, educators must determine the power standards—learning standards that are most essential because they possess the qualities of endurance, leverage, and readiness for success at the next level; “the first and most important practical implication of power standards is that leaders must make time for teachers to collaborate within and among grade levels to identify the power standards” (Reeves, 2002, p. 54).

One of the keys to improving schools is to ensure teachers “know the learning intentions and success criteria of their lessons, know how well they are attaining these criteria for all their students, and know where to go next in light of the gap between students’ current knowledge and understanding and the success criteria”; this can be maximized in a safe and collaborative environment where teachers talk to each other about teaching (Hattie, 2009, p. 239).

“The staff in the effective school accepts responsibility for the students’ learning of the essential curricular goals.” (Lezotte, 2002, p. 4, emphasis added)

Professional learning communities are characterized by an academic focus that begins with a set of practices that bring clarity, coherence, and precision to every teacher’s classroom work. Teachers work collaboratively to provide a rigorous curriculum that is crystal clear and includes a compact list of learning expectations for each grade or course and tangible exemplars of student proficiency for each learning expectation (Saphier, 2005).

“[Effective teachers] clarify . . . goals and assessment criteria in ways that will help students understand what they need to learn and what strategies are likely to be most useful in enabling them to do so.” (Brophy, 2004, p. 79, emphasis added)

“Implementing a strategy of common, rigorous standards with differentiated resources and instruction can create excellence and equity for all students.” (Childress, Doyle, & Thomas, 2009, p. 133, emphasis added)
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Implementing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
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<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</table>
Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clearly Defined Outcomes</th>
<th>What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school?</th>
<th>Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities?</th>
<th>What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity?</th>
<th>What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.
Progress and Problems

Share your assessment with your colleagues:

• Where are areas of agreement?
• Where are the areas of disagreement?
• Where can you celebrate the greatest progress?
• What areas are you finding problematic?

Closing the Knowing-Doing Gap

• What steps could you take to make progress in these indicators?

• Complete the “Where Do We Go From Here” worksheet to begin your plan for becoming a school committed to a focus on learning.

If the purpose of school is truly to ensure high levels of learning for all students, schools will:

• Clarify what each student is expected to learn
• Monitor each student’s learning on a timely basis
Team Learning Process

- Clarify 8-10 Essential Common Outcomes (skills, concepts, and dispositions) per semester by Course/Content Area
- Develop multiple Common Formative Assessments for each Course/Content Area

What are Common Formative Assessments?

We will make the case that common formative assessments are the lynchpin of the collaborative team process in a PLC.

- Define “common” assessment.
- Define “formative” assessment.

Keys to Formative Assessments

To determine if an assessment is formative, ask:

1. Is it used to identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their learning?
2. Are students who are having difficulty provided with additional time and support for learning?
3. Are students given an additional opportunity to demonstrate their learning?
4. Do teachers use the results to inform and improve their individual and collective professional practice?
Resources to Help Teams Build Valid Common Assessments

- List of Essential Outcomes/Pacing Guides for Each Course/Subject
- Recommendations from assessment experts such as Stiggins, Reeves, Ainsworth, William...
- Released items from district, state, provincial, and national assessments (ACT, SAT, ITBS, NAEP, etc.)
- Websites such as:
  - www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/
- Data from past indicators of achievement
- Methods of alternative assessments
- Examples of rubrics
- Assessments from other high-performing teams

Two Essentials of Performance Based Assessment

- Can we agree on the criteria by which we will judge the quality of student work?
- Can we apply those criteria consistently (inter-rater reliability)?

Team Learning Process

- Clarify 8-10 Essential Common Outcomes (skills, concepts, and dispositions) per semester by Course/Content Area
- Develop multiple Common Formative Assessments for each Course/Content Area
- Establish Specific Target/Benchmark so rigorous it will lead to success on high stakes assessments
- Analyze Results
- Identify & Implement Improvement Strategies
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH - FOLEY, T(00-01) - % Mean 0.72</td>
<td>(89%) 63 of 71 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
<td>80% Selected.</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH – (00 – 01) - % Mean 0.73</td>
<td>(89%) 562 of 630 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH - FOLEY, T(00-01) - % Mean 0.72</td>
<td>(61%) 43 of 71 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>(73%) 458 of 630 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>10-3: TERMS &amp; STRUCT LIT</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH - FOLEY, T(00-01) - % Mean 0.72</td>
<td>(87%) 62 of 71 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>NON-MASTERY</td>
<td>9 13%</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH – (00 – 01) - % Mean 0.73</td>
<td>(90%) 564 of 630 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>564 90%</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH - FOLEY, T(00-01) - % Mean 0.72</td>
<td>(80%) 57 of 71 Students have Mastered this Local Standard.</td>
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<td>ENG110FR ENGLISH – (00 – 01) - % Mean 0.73</td>
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<td>80% Selected.</td>
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## Item Analysis for 630 Students

### 02/14/2001  2000-2001 School Year

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<th>C (5%)</th>
<th>D (9%)</th>
<th>E (1%)</th>
<th>Space (3%)</th>
<th>Diff (5%)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0.632</td>
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</table>
Free Data Analysis Software

For information on and an illustration of free software to help teams build and analyze data from common assessments go to:

http://www.edoctrina.org

Is the Team Learning Process Loose or Tight?

- Clarify 8-10 Essential Common Outcomes (skills, concepts, and dispositions) per semester by Course/Content Area
- Develop multiple Common Formative Assessments per year for each Course/Content Area
- Establish Specific Target/Benchmark
- Analyze Results
- Identify & Implement Improvement Strategies

Assessing Your Current Reality

Consider the descriptions of 5 stages of PLC progress regarding:

Assessing Student Learning on the Essential Curriculum

Individually, silently, and honestly assess the current status of your school for each indicator on the Professional Learning Community at Work Continuum
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Implementing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We work with colleagues on our team to clarify the criteria by which we</td>
<td>Each teacher establishes his or her own criteria for assessing the quality of</td>
<td>Teachers have been provided with sample rubrics for assessing the quality of</td>
<td>Teachers working in collaborative teams are attempting to assess student work</td>
<td>Teachers working in collaborative teams are clear on the criteria they will</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>will judge the quality of student work, and we practice applying those</td>
<td>student work.</td>
<td>quality of student work.</td>
<td>according to common criteria. They are practicing apply the criteria to</td>
<td>use in assessing the quality of student work and can apply the criteria</td>
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<td>criteria until we can do so consistently.</td>
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<td>examples of student work, but they are not yet consistent. The</td>
<td>consistently.</td>
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<td>discrepancy is causing some tension on the team.</td>
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<td>We monitor the learning of each student’s attainment of all essential</td>
<td>Each teacher creates his or her own assessments to monitor student learning.</td>
<td>The district has established benchmark assessments that are administered</td>
<td>Teachers working in collaborative teams have begun to create common</td>
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<td>outcomes on a timely basis through a series of frequent, team-developed</td>
<td>Assessments are typically summative rather than formative. A teacher can</td>
<td>several times throughout the year. Teachers pay little attention to</td>
<td>assessments. Some attempt to circumvent the collaborative process by</td>
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<td>common formative assessments that are aligned with high-stakes assessments</td>
<td>teach an entire career and not know if he or she teaches a particular skill</td>
<td>to the results and would have a difficult time explaining the purpose of</td>
<td>proposing the team merely use the quizzes and tests that are available in</td>
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<tr>
<td>students will be required to take.</td>
<td>or concept better or worse than the colleague in the next room.</td>
<td>the benchmark assessments.</td>
<td>the textbook as their common assessments. Some administrators question</td>
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<td>the ability of teachers to create good assessments and argue that the</td>
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<td>district should purchase commercially developed tests.</td>
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<td>Teachers working in collaborative teams have created a series of common</td>
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<td>assessments and agreed on the specific standard students must achieve to</td>
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<td>be deemed proficient. The user-friendly results of common assessments are</td>
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<td>providing each member of the team with timely evidence of student learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Members are using that evidence to improve their assessments and to</td>
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<td>develop more effective instructional strategies.</td>
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### Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet
#### Monitoring Each Student’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of a PLC at Work</th>
<th>What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school?</th>
<th>Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities?</th>
<th>What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity?</th>
<th>What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Progress and Problems

Share your assessment with your colleagues:

• Where are areas of agreement?
• Where are the areas of disagreement?
• Where can you celebrate the greatest progress?
• What areas are you finding problematic?

Closing the Knowing-Doing Gap

• What steps could you take to make progress in these indicators?

• Complete the “Where Do We Go From Here” worksheets to begin your plan for becoming a school committed to a focus on learning.

The BIG IDEAS of a PLC

■ We accept learning as the fundamental purpose of our school and therefore are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.

■ We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose. We cultivate a collaborative culture through development of high-performing teams.
Barriers to a Learning Community

- A professional norm of teacher isolation.

Why Should We Collaborate?

- Gains in student achievement
- Higher quality solutions to problems
- Increased confidence among all staff
- Teachers able to support one another’s strengths
- and accommodate weaknesses
- Ability to test new ideas
- More support for new teachers
- Expanded pool of ideas, materials, and methods

—Judith Warren Little (1990)

Group IQ

There is such a thing as group IQ. While a group can be no smarter than the sum total of the knowledge and skills of its members, it can be much “dumber” if its internal workings don’t allow people to share their talents.

Why Should We Use Teams as Our Basic Structure?

“Empowered teams are such a powerful force of integration and productivity that they form the basic building block of any intelligent organization.” (Pinchot & Pinchot, 1993, p. 66)

“We are at a point in time where teams are recognized as a critical component of every enterprise—the predominant unit for decision making and getting things done. . . . Working in teams is the norm in a learning organization.” (Senge et al. 1994, pp. 354–355)

“Leaders of the future will have to master the art of forming teams. . . . Future leaders will have to master teamwork . . . and work with and through others because no one person can possibly master all the divergent sources of information necessary to make good decisions.” (Ulrich, 1996, p. 213)

Teams “bring together complementary skills and experience that . . . exceed those of any individual on the team.” Teams are more effective in problem solving, “provide a unique social dimension that enhances . . . work,” motivate, and foster peer pressure and internal accountability (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 18).

The best way to achieve challenging goals is through teamwork: “Teams nurture, support and inspire each other” (Tichy, 1997, p. 180).

“We have known for nearly a quarter of a century that self-managed teams are far more productive than any other form of organizing. . . . by joining with others we can accomplish something important that we could not accomplish alone.” (Wheatley, 1999, pp. 152–153)

“A team can make better decisions, solve more complex problems, and do more to enhance creativity and build skills than individuals working alone . . . They have become the vehicle for moving organizations into the future. . . . Teams are not just nice to have. They are hard-core units of the production.” (Blanchard, 2007, p. 17)

“Influencers increase the capacity of others by asking them to work in teams with interdependent relationships. . . . We increase capacity when we work together rather than in isolation.” (Patterson et al., 2008, p. 183)
The Smart and Good School

Great schools row as one; they are quite clearly in the same boat, pulling in the same direction in unison. The best schools we visited were tightly aligned communities marked by a palpable sense of “we.”

- Lickona & Davidson (2005, p. 65)

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.

—DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker (2002)
Why Should We Collaborate?

When teachers work in collaborative teams schools are more likely to see gains in student achievement, find higher quality solutions to problems, promote increased confidence among staff, create an environment in which teachers support one another’s strengths and accommodate weaknesses, provide support for new teachers, and provide all staff with access to an expanded pool of ideas, materials, and methods (Little, 1990).

“The single most important factor for successful school restructuring and the first order of business for those interested in increasing the capacity of their schools is building a collaborative internal environment.” (Eastwood & Seashore Louis, 1992, p. 215)

Improving schools requires a collaborative culture: “without collaborative skills and relationships it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn” (Fullan, 1993, p. 18).

When groups, rather than individuals, are seen as the main units for implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they facilitate development of shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility to achieve it (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

High-performing schools promote collaborative problem solving and support professional communities and exchanges among all staff. Teachers and staff collaborate to remove barriers to student learning and communicate regularly with each other about effective teaching and learning strategies. They have regularly scheduled time to learn from one another (National Education Association, 2003).

“[High-achieving schools] build a highly collaborative school environment where working together to solve problems and to learn from each other become cultural norms.” (WestEd, 2000, p. 12)

“It is imperative that professional learning be directed at improving the quality of collaborative work.” (National Staff Development Council, 2006)
“The key to ensuring that every child has a quality teacher is finding a way for school systems to organize the work of qualified teachers so they can collaborate with their colleagues in developing strong learning communities that will sustain them as they become more accomplished teachers.” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003, p. 7)

“Collaboration and the ability to engage in collaborative action are becoming increasingly important to the survival of the public schools. Indeed, without the ability to collaborate with others, the prospect of truly improving schools is not likely.” (Schlechty, 2005, p. 22)

“It is time to end the practice of solo teaching in isolated classrooms.” (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005)

“[Today’s teachers must] transform their personal knowledge into a collectively built, widely shared and cohesive professional knowledge base.” (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2004, cited in Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005)

Teacher collaboration in strong professional learning communities improves the quality and equity of student learning, promotes discussions that are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion, and fosters collective responsibility for student success (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

“Quality teaching is not an individual accomplishment, it is the result of a collaborative culture that empowers teachers to team up to improve student learning beyond what any one of them can achieve alone.” (Carroll, 2009, p. 13)

High-performing, high-poverty schools build deep teacher collaboration that focuses on student learning into the culture of the school. Structures and systems are set up to ensure teachers work together rather than in isolation, and “the point of their collaboration is to improve instruction and ensure all students learn” (Chenoweth, 2009, p. 17).
The Focus of Collaboration

Collaborative cultures, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things they may end up being powerfully wrong.

- Michael Fullan

A Key Question in PLCs

The critical question in a PLC is not, “do we collaborate,” but rather, “what do we collaborate about.”

You must not settle for “Collaboration Lite.”

Critical Corollary Questions: If We Believe All Kids Can Learn:

- What is it we expect them to learn?
- How will we know when they have learned it?
- How will we respond when they don’t learn?
- How will we respond when they already know it?
1. Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with FOCUS ON LEARNING.

The Criterion for Creating Teams

The fundamental question in organizing teams is:

“Do the people on this team have a shared responsibility for responding to the critical questions in ways that enhance the learning of their students.”

Possible Team Structures:
Provided Focus Is on LEARNING

- All teachers teaching the same grade level
- All teachers teaching the same course
- Vertical teams (K–2/3–5 or French I–IV)
- Electronic teams
  - Professional organizations
  - www.firstclass.com
  - www.betterlesson.org
- Interdisciplinary teams
- District or regional teams
- Similar-responsibility teams
To facilitate electronic collaboration, utilize these resources

- **voicethread.com**: For continuing dialogue at times convenient to each individual
- **Google Docs** or **Moodle** for sharing agendas, minutes, essential outcomes, assessments, data
- **www.skype.com** and/or **iChat** to facilitate real-time dialogue
- **Mikogo**: To see each other’s desktops, documents, and videos

Seven Keys to Effective Teams

1. **Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with FOCUS ON LEARNING.**

2. **Schedule time for collaboration into the school day and school calendar.**

Parameters for Collaborative Time

- Can not keep the kids at home
- Can not increase costs
- Can not significantly impact instructional time
Making Time for Collaboration

The issue of finding time for collaboration has been addressed effectively—and often—in the professional literature and is readily available for those who are sincerely interested in exploring alternatives. The National Staff Development Council alone has addressed the issue hundreds of times in its publications, and the www.allthingsplc.info website lists over 150 schools that have created time for teachers to collaborate in ways that don’t require the school to be shut down, don’t cost money, and don’t result in significant loss of instructional time. The following strategies do not form a comprehensive list; rather, they illustrate some of the steps schools and districts have taken to create the prerequisite time for collaboration.

Common Preparation

Build the master schedule to provide daily common preparation periods for teachers of the same course or department. Each team should then designate one day each week to engage in collaborative, rather than individual, planning.

Parallel Scheduling

Schedule common preparation time by assigning the specialists (physical education teachers, librarians, music teachers, art teachers, instructional technologists, guidance counselors, foreign language teachers, and so on) to provide lessons to students across an entire grade level at the same time each day. The team should designate one day each week for collaborative planning. Some schools build back-to-back specials classes into the master schedule on each team’s designated collaborative day, thus creating an extended block of time for the team to meet. Specials teachers must also be given time to collaborate.

Adjusted Start and End Time

Gain collaborative time by starting the workday early or extending the workday one day each week. In exchange for adding time to one end of the workday, teachers get the time back on the other end of that day. For example, on Tuesdays, the entire staff of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, begins their workday at 7:30 am rather than the normal 7:45 a.m. start time. From 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., the entire faculty engages in collaborative team meetings. Classes, which usually begin at 8:05 a.m., are delayed until 8:30 a.m. Students who can arrange for their own transportation arrive to school then. Buses run their regular routes so that no parent is inconvenienced and deliver students to the school at 7:40 a.m. Upon their arrival they are supervised by administrative and noninstructional staff in a variety of optional activities (such as breakfast, library and computer research, open gym, study halls, and tutorials) until classes begin. To make up for the twenty-five minutes of lost instructional time, five minutes is trimmed from five of the eight fifty-minute class periods. The school day ends at the usual time (3:25 in the afternoon), and again buses run on their regular schedules. Because they began work fifteen minutes early (7:30 rather than 7:45), Stevenson teachers are free to leave fifteen minutes earlier than the normal conclusion of their workday (3:30 rather than 3:45). By making these minor adjustments to the schedule one day each week, the entire faculty is guaranteed an hour of collaborative planning without extending their workday or workweek by a single minute.
Shared Classes

Combine students across two different grade levels or courses into one class for instruction. While one teacher or team instructs the students, the other team engages in collaborative work. The teams alternate instructing and collaborating to provide equity in learning time for students and teams. Some schools coordinate shared classes so older students adopt younger students and serve as literacy buddies, tutors, and mentors during shared classes.

Group Activities, Events, and Testing

Teams of teachers coordinate activities that require supervision of students rather than instructional expertise, such as watching an instructional DVD or video, conducting resource lessons, reading aloud, attending assemblies, or testing. Nonteaching staff members supervise students while teachers engage in team collaboration.

Banked Time

Over a designated period of days, extend the instructional minutes beyond the required school day. After you have banked the desired number of minutes, end the instructional day early to allow for faculty collaboration and student enrichment. For example, in a middle school, the traditional instructional day ends at 3:00 p.m., students board buses at 3:20, and the teachers’ contractual day ends at 3:30. The faculty may decide to extend the instructional day until 3:10. By teaching an extra ten minutes for nine days in a row, they “bank” ninety minutes. On the tenth day, instruction stops at 1:30, and the entire faculty has collaborative team time for two hours. The students remain on campus and are engaged in clubs, enrichment activities, assemblies, and so on, sponsored by a variety of parent and community partners and cosupervised by the school’s nonteaching staff.

In-Service and Faculty Meeting Time

Schedule extended time for teams to work together on staff development days and during faculty meeting time. Rather than requiring staff to attend a traditional whole-staff in-service session or sit in a faculty meeting while directives and calendar items are read aloud, shift the focus and use of these days and meetings so members of teams have extended time to learn with and from each other.

For more ideas on making time for collaboration from successful PLC schools, visit allthingsplc.info and select “Evidence of Effectiveness.”
Seven Keys to Effective Teams

1. Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with FOCUS ON LEARNING.
2. Schedule time for collaboration into the school day and school calendar.
3. **Focus teams on critical questions.**
4. **Make products of collaboration explicit.**

The Importance of Team Products

*Without discrete team work-products produced through the joint, real contributions of team members, the potential of teams to dramatically improve performance goes untapped.*

Katzenbach and Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams* 1993, p. 90

Example of a Timeline for Team Products

By the end of the:
- **2nd week:** Team norms
- **4th week:** Team SMART goal
- **6th week:** Common essential outcomes
- **8th week:** First common assessment
- **10th week:** Analysis of student performance on first common formative assessment
The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement.

The Critical Issues for Team Consideration guide the collective inquiry and action research of each collaborative team in a professional learning community. This plan book explores these issues in greater detail at strategic intervals. You and your teammates will be challenged to build shared knowledge—to learn together—about each issue and ultimately generate a product as a result of your collective inquiry and action research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues for Team Consideration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Members: _______________________________________________________________________________</td>
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*Use the scale below to indicate the extent to which each of the following statements is true of your team.*

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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not True of Our Team</td>
<td>Our Team Is Addressing</td>
<td>True of Our Team</td>
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</table>

1. ___ We have identified team norms and protocols to guide us in working together.
2. ___ We have analyzed student achievement data and have established SMART goals that we are working interdependently to achieve.
3. ___ Each member of our team is clear on the essential learnings of our course in general as well as the essential learnings of each unit.
4. ___ We have aligned the essential learnings with state and district standards and the high-stakes exams required of our students.
5. ___ We have identified course content and/or topics that can be eliminated so we can devote more time to essential curriculum.
6. ___ We have agreed on how to best sequence the content of the course and have established pacing guides to help students achieve the intended essential learnings.
7. ___ We have identified the prerequisite knowledge and skills students need in order to master the essential learnings of our course and each unit of this course.
8. ___ We have identified strategies and created instruments to assess whether students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills.
9. ___ We have developed strategies and systems to assist students in acquiring prerequisite knowledge and skills when they are lacking in those areas.
10. ___ We have developed frequent common formative assessments that help us to determine each student's mastery of essential learnings.
11. ___ We have established the proficiency standard we want each student to achieve on each skill and concept examined with our common assessments.
12. ___ We have developed common summative assessments that help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of our program.
13. ___ We have established the proficiency standard we want each student to achieve on each skill and concept examined with our summative assessments.
14. ___ We have agreed on the criteria we will use in judging the quality of student work related to the essential learnings of our course, and we practice applying those criteria to ensure consistency.
15. ___ We have taught students the criteria we will use in judging the quality of their work and have provided them with examples.
16. ___ We evaluate our adherence to and the effectiveness of our team norms at least twice each year.
17. ___ We use the results of our common assessments to assist each other in building on strengths and addressing weaknesses as part of a process of continuous improvement designed to help students achieve at higher levels.
18. ___ We use the results of our common assessments to identify students who need additional time and support to master essential learnings, and we work within the systems and processes of the school to ensure they receive that support.
Reciprocal Accountability

Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every expectation I have of you to perform, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation.

- Richard Elmore, 2006

To Help Build the Capacity of Teams, Address...

- Why - (Rationale)
- How - (Process)
- What - (Common Language, Tools, Templates, Materials, Resources, Examples)
- When - (Timeline)
- Guiding Questions
- Criteria for Clarifying Quality of Each Product
- Tips and Suggestions

Seven Keys to Effective Teams

1. Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with FOCUS ON LEARNING.
2. Schedule time for collaboration into the school day and school calendar.
3. Focus teams on critical questions.
4. Make products of collaboration explicit.
5. **Establish team norms to guide collaboration.**
The Significance of Team Norms

• When all is said and done, the norms of a group help determine whether it functions as a high-performing team or becomes simply a loose collection of people working together.

• Positive norms will stick only if the group puts them into practice over and over again. Being explicit about norms raises the level of effectiveness, maximizes emotional intelligence, produces a positive experience for group members, and helps to socialize newcomers into the group quickly.
  
  - Daniel Goleman

Importance of Team Norms

• Social psychologists learned long ago that if you make a commitment and then share it with others, you are far more likely to follow through than if you simply make the commitment to yourself.

  - Kerry Patterson et. al. Influencers, p. 152

The Importance of Norms

• One thing is clear: having clear norms gives teams a huge advantage. A key to effective teams is involving all members in establishing norms, and then holding everyone accountable to what they have agreed upon.

  - Patrick Lencioni, Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team
Why Should We Create Norms?

Teams improve their ability to grapple with the critical questions when they clarify the norms that will guide their work. These collective commitments represent the “promises we make to ourselves and others, promises that underpin two critical aspects of teams—commitment and trust.” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 60)

Norms can help clarify expectations, promote open dialogue, and serve as a powerful tool for holding members accountable (Lencioni, 2005).

“When self-management norms are explicit and practiced over time, team effectiveness improves dramatically, as does the experience of team members themselves. Being on the team becomes rewarding in itself—and those positive emotions provide energy and motivation for accomplishing the team’s goals.” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKe, 2004, p. 182)

Explicit team norms help to increase the emotional intelligence of the group by cultivating trust, a sense of group identity, and belief in group efficacy (Druskat & Wolf, 2001).

Referring back to the norms can help “the members of a group to ‘re-member,’ to once again take out membership in what the group values and stands for; to ‘remember,’ to bring the group back into one cooperating whole” (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, p. 194).

Inattention to establishing specific team norms is one of the major reasons teams fail (Blanchard, 2007).
The Importance of Team Norms

- At the heart of team interaction lies a commitment-building process. The team establishes a social contract among its members that relates to their purpose, and guides and obligates how they must work together. At its core, team accountability is about the promises we make to ourselves and others, promises that underpin two critical aspects of teams: commitment and trust.

  - Katzenbach and Smith, The Wisdom of Teams

Norms of High Performing Teams

- Willingness to consider matters from another’s perspective
- Accurate understanding of spoken and unspoken feelings and concerns of team members
- Willingness to confront a team member who violates norms
- Communicating positive regard, caring, and respect
- Willingness and ability to evaluate the team’s own effectiveness
- Seeking feedback about and evidence of team effectiveness from internal and external sources
- Maintaining a positive outlook and attitude
- Proactive problem-solving
- Awareness of how the group contributes to the purpose and goals of the larger organization

Criteria For Team Norms

- The norms have clarified our expectations of one another.
- All members of the team participated in creating the norms. All voices were heard.
- The norms are stated as commitments to act in certain ways.
- All members have committed to honoring the norms.
Our Team’s Collective Commitments

In order to make our team meetings positive and productive experiences for all members, we make the following collective commitments to each other:

- Begin and end our meetings on time and stay fully engaged during each meeting;

- Maintain a positive attitude at team meetings – no complaining unless we offer a better alternative;

- Listen respectfully to each other;

- Contribute equally to the workload;

- Make decisions on the basis of consensus;

- Encourage one another to honor our commitments and candidly discuss our concerns when we feel a member is not living up to those commitments; and

- Fully support each other’s efforts to improve student learning.
Developing Norms

Comments to the Facilitator: This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely. For this reason, it is essential to provide pens or pencils or to ask that everyone use the same type of writing implement.

Supplies: Index cards, pens or pencils, poster paper, display board, tape, tacks

Time: Two hours

Directions

1. Explain to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that govern individual behavior, facilitate the work of the group, and enable the group to accomplish its task.

2. Provide examples of norms by posting the list of norms that appears on page 212.

3. Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms:
   - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
   - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
   - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.

4. Give five index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group.

5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards. Time: 10 minutes.

6. Shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.

7. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.

8. When all of the cards have been sorted, ask the group to write the norm suggested by each group of cards. Have one group member record these new norms on a large sheet of paper.

9. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

Developing Norms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Establishing Norms, Consider:</th>
<th>Proposed Norm</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ When do we meet?</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Will we set a beginning and ending time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Will we start and end on time?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ How will we encourage listening?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How will we discourage interrupting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confidentiality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Will the meetings be open?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What can be said after the meeting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How will we make decisions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Are we an advisory or a decision-making body?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Will we reach decisions by consensus?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How will we deal with conflicts?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How will we encourage everyone's participation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Will we have an attendance policy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What do we expect from members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Are there requirements for participation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We encourage collaborative teams to engage in routine self-reflection regarding their effectiveness, productivity, results, and adherence to team norms. During the first few months of team meetings we advise members to begin and end every meeting with a review of their norms and to monitor and adjust personal behaviors to increase the team’s effectiveness. High-performing teams in PLCs also engage in a more formal assessment at least twice each year as a way to ensure high levels of team learning and continuous improvement. The Survey on Team Norms is one way to evaluate your team’s effectiveness.

Survey on Team Norms

Team: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Use the following ratings to honestly reflect on your experiences as a member of a collaborative team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ___ I know the norms and protocols established by my team.
   Comments: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. ___ Members of my team are living up to the established norms and protocols.
   Comments: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. ___ Our team maintains focus on the established team goal(s).
   Comments: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. ___ Our team is making progress toward the achievement of our goal(s).
   Comments: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. ___ The team is having a positive impact on my classroom practice.
   Comments: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Tips For Team Norms

• Each team establishes its own norms.
• Norms are stated as commitments to act or behave in certain ways.
• Norms are reviewed at the beginning and end of each meeting until internalized.
• One norm requires team to assess its effectiveness every six months. This assessment should include review of adherence to norms and the need to identify new norms.
• Less is more. A few key norms are better than a laundry list.
• Establish a process for dealing with violations of the norms.

Keys to Responding to a Resister

• Assume good intentions
• Seek to understand
• Use strategies of persuasion

Seven Ways to Change Someone’s Mind

1) Reason. Appealing to rational thinking and decision making.
2) Research. Building shared knowledge of the research base supporting a position.
3) Resonance. Connecting to the person’s intuition so that the proposal feels right.
4) Representational Re-descriptions. Changing the way the information is presented (for example, using stories or analogies instead of data).
5) Resources and Reward. Providing people with incentives to embrace an idea.
6) Real-World Events. Presenting real-world examples where the idea has been applied successfully.

- Howard Gardner, 2004
The Sequence of Changing Attitudes (Including Your Own)

- **Attitude**
  - is shaped by
- **Experience**
  - is a result of
- **Behavior**

Keys to Responding to a Resister

- Assume good intentions
- Seek to understand
- Use strategies of persuasion
- **Identify specific behaviors essential to the success of the initiative**
- **Focus on behavior not attitude. Monitor behavior.**

We Can Behave our Way to New Attitudes

- There is a large literature demonstrating that attitudes follow behavior. People accept new beliefs as a result of changing their behavior.
  - Pfeffer and Sutton
Assessing Your Current Reality

Consider the descriptions of 5 stages of PLC progress regarding:

**Collaborative Teams that focus on issues that directly impact student learning**

Individually, silently, and honestly assess the current status of your school for each indicator on the Professional Learning Community Continuum.

---

Progress and Problems

Share your assessment with your colleagues:

- Where are areas of agreement?
- Where are the areas of disagreement?
- Where can you celebrate the greatest progress?
- What areas are you finding problematic?

---

Closing the Knowing-Doing Gap

- What steps could you take to make progress in these indicators?
- Complete the “Where Do We Go From Here” worksheets to begin your plan for becoming a school committed to building a collaborative culture.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Implementing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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:</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Teachers have been assigned into 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.</td>
<td>Teachers have been assigned into 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. Teams 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.</td>
<td>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 skilled 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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
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<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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 in crucial conversations and honest dialogue when there is concern that one or more members are not fulfilling commitments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet
### Collaborative Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of a PLC at Work</th>
<th>What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school?</th>
<th>Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities?</th>
<th>What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity?</th>
<th>What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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:</td>
<td>1. Collaboration is embedded in our routine work practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The BIG IDEAS of a PLC

• We accept learning as the fundamental purpose of our school and therefore are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.

• We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose. We cultivate a collaborative culture through development of high performing teams.

• 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.

Professional Learning Communities Focus on Results to Identify...

• The specific learning needs of each student

• Strategies to improve upon our individual ability to teach each essential skill and concept

• Strategies to improve upon our collective ability to teach each essential skill and concept

Seven Keys to Effective Teams

1. Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with FOCUS ON LEARNING.

2. Schedule time for collaboration into the school day and school calendar.

3. Focus teams on critical questions.

4. Make products of collaboration explicit.

5. Establish team norms to guide collaboration.

6. **Pursue specific and measurable team performance goals.**