This manual was developed as part of the School System Improvement (SSI) Project, a collaboration between multiple universities and charter schools funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement as part of the Teacher Incentive Fund program (awarded to Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; #S374A120060).

The positions and opinions expressed in this manual are of the SSI Project staff only.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are sustained arrangements that allow teachers to inquire about problems of practice over time. In PLCs teachers work together to understand their student populations, curricula, etc. in greater depth. These are often teacher-led processes that empower practitioners. PLC activities are cyclical, employing inquiry cycles involving teachers in questioning, studying, planning, and assessing, as well as experimenting to inform and reflecting upon problems of practice.

Substantial research supports the use of PLCs in schools. This research began in the 1960s and continues today. The most often-cited research is that of DuFour (2007) DuFour & Eaker (2004; 2007; 2009), DuFour & DuFour (2010), and DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many (2006).

The School System Improvement (SSI) Project incorporates PLCs to help schools to empower teachers, to increase retention, to engender reflective-practice and dialogue, and to improve outcomes for teachers and students. PLCs must be well planned and maintained over time in order to accomplish these goals.

When planning PLCs, there are some key components to ensure success:

- Establish group roles
- Establish group norms
- Contextualize PLC work by keeping school-wide goals and improvement in mind
- Collect and chart data
- Hold persons accountable to shared outcomes
- Hold persons accountable to rigorous student learning
- Make PLCs meaningful- do not allow them to be reduced to teacher complaint sessions, reformatted staff meetings/opportunities to disseminate information, or activities that are not linked to true teacher learning
The purpose of this manual is to serve as a resource for administrators and teachers interested in implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within their schools. PLCs, in an effort to increase student achievement, provide an opportunity for shared leadership, and serve as a way to make the school more effective.

This guide is a summation of the possible processes and outcomes that can be generated from effective PLC implementation. It is intended to help practitioners better understand the process and anticipate the benefits, as well as the barriers of PLC implementation. The SSI Project recommends that you follow this guidance with more extensive reading (see sample resources in Section Four) and other learning opportunities.
I. PLCs – WHAT AND WHY

What is a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?

Definition

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are collaborations between teachers, administrators, parents, and students, typically formed to identify and/or to develop best practices, to test those practices in the classroom, and to continuously improve teaching practices, all with a focus on results. PLCs operate with supportive and shared leadership and provide for a collective opportunity to increase student achievement and improve the professional practice of staff. PLC members are part of a supportive network that functions to maintain their community, learn collectively, and apply lessons in their classrooms and schools. In PLCs, teachers determine goals based on issues they see as relevant to their teaching, often as a result of perceived gaps in student data.

PLCs should have common characteristics in that members share leadership, vision, values, and practices (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The first common characteristic is to have shared mission, vision, and values. PLC teams should begin by collaboratively formulating shared missions, visions, and values, and hold all members accountable to them throughout the year. PLC members should understand that building a shared mission, vision, and values requires time and commitment. DuFour and Eaker (1998) also propose that PLCs must engage in collective inquiry. PLCs, therefore, cannot be run by predetermined leaders or solely follow prescribed resources. Instead, all stakeholders must be included in choosing, analyzing, and making decisions about areas of professional study. In order to sustain collective inquiry, PLCs should engage in a systematic process of analysis and experimentation. PLCs can use structured protocols to support this work (see Select Resources in Section Four for examples). Finally, successful PLCs commit to continuous improvement toward results, refining goals over time through a constant reevaluation of available sources of knowledge. With these characteristics in place, members of PLCs can have a clear idea of “how to operate within it” which can allow PLCs to be more transformational for school communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 25).

History

PLCs were originally conceived by experts in adult learning in the 1960s and 1970s. The field of adult learning had recently distinguished the ways in which adults learn from the ways in which children learn. For example, whereas children learn from new experiences, adults use previous experiences as a “living textbook” to interpret and decide the usefulness of new knowledge (Merriam, 2013). Adult educators thus proposed many novel ideas about more adult-centered learning activities that engaged learners in more personalized and motivating pursuits that would allow adults to be self-directed learners, such as by using learner-generated goals to lead learning. Professional learning for teachers changed in response to wider changes in the field of adult learning. Over time, however, researchers realized that teachers, in particular, needed more collaborative approaches to learning, such as the PLC model, to reduce isolation of traditional closed-door classroom life.
The research in the late 1980s and early 1990s was largely supportive of PLCs. Many studies indicated that schools that had such professional structures in place were more effective than those that did not (e.g., Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Kruse et al., 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). These studies incorporated both anecdotal data and interviews, as well as large scale correlational data.

Although research was supportive, schools did not begin to widely adopt PLC models until the beginning of this century, spurred by the work of DuFour and Eaker (1998). Today, most schools continue to use traditional professional learning models, such as one-day workshops, which are often disjointed from the regular work of teachers and rarely allow for practical application. Many schools have begun to adopt approaches that are embedded within the work of teachers, such as PLCs and coaching.

Why Should Schools Create PLCs?

As described, researchers saw many potential benefits to the more collaborative, sustained learning that PLCs could provide. However, this is a nascent field. As more schools adopt PLCs, researchers’ understandings of potential benefits continue to grow. Often, when teachers have opportunities for collaboration and shared inquiry, they develop and share a body of wisdom gleaned from these experiences (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). This act of creating and disseminating shared knowledge professionalizes the field of teaching, which can lead to many positive consequences for individual teachers and for the field as a whole.

Individual teachers who engage in collaborative inquiry report that they feel supported in their own ongoing learning. Restructuring professional learning to support teacher inquiry and collaboration also serves to remedy some of the well documented shortcomings of traditional models of professional development that rely on isolated workshops that are neither situated in teacher work nor sustained in a meaningful way. Teachers that engage in PLCs use more effective classroom practices than those who participate in more traditional workshops (Rosenholtz, 1989).

PLCs serve as vehicles for teacher professional development and ongoing learning focused on instruction. When teachers engage in PLCs they create knowledge, develop common vocabulary, and generate shared approaches to common problems of practice. Team activities revolve around an action-inquiry cycle that engages teachers in questioning, studying, planning, experimenting, reflecting, and assessing. Breaking down the traditional isolation of the classroom and creating shared conceptions of practice have the added benefit of distinguishing teaching as a profession, rather than a craft or vocation. In countries where PLCs are frequently used, teachers are more likely to report satisfaction and self-efficacy, and public opinion more often reflects a higher regard for teachers and teaching than is typically observed in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Outcomes of PLCs
PLCs can help your school:
  - Increase student achievement
  - Increase teachers’ knowledge and expertise
  - Develop teacher leaders
  - Develop a culture of collaboration
  - Focus on learning and results
  - Support teachers in review and analysis of data
  - Implement new initiatives
  - Apply new practices, strategies, and ideas for teaching and learning
  - Share ideas efficiently

➢ Positive Outcomes:
  - Improved culture and collaboration
  - Increased focus on student learning
  - Supported and shared leadership
  - Shared vision and values among staff
  - Shared/common practice and language
  - Collective learning and application of new skills
  - Supportive conditions for the maintenance of PLCs and teaching practice

II. Examples of PLCs

Meeting with a Reading Focus

Green Acres is a K-5 school in central NJ. It was built two years ago, becoming the sixth elementary school in its district. The school serves a diverse student population, with more than 80% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. During the previous school year, administrators learned many graduating 5th grade students left the school reading at about a 3rd grade level.

The district hired a new principal and vice principal, both of whom believe strongly in the importance of teacher professional knowledge generation, and who have integrated a well-developed PLC schedule during the first year. They assembled a task force, including community members and teachers, who collectively decided they should implement a reading intervention program. The school dedicated its PLC time to reading comprehension in the upper elementary school division.
The group began by looking at available data sources and discussing their utility for the task at hand. They decided to focus upon a school-wide annual assessment. Teachers and administrators work together to refine PLCs, and the model is very successful.

Because of school-wide commitment to the model, and the establishment and refinement of a shared mission, vision, and values, teachers feel very safe sharing ideas and even speaking about problems they have with their own instructional practices.

Below is the goal that the group collaboratively set:

**Goal:**
Increase the percentage of 4-5th grade students scoring at proficiency or higher on the annual district reading common assessment. Percent of students reaching proficiency will increase from 42% to 70% by the end of the school year as measured by the end of year (May) district common assessment administered by each classroom teacher.

**Sources of Data:**
- English’ Language Arts (ELA) common assessment/benchmark scores
- ELA Standardized Test Scores:
  - MAP (NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress)
  - PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) or other state tests
- Individual Teacher Assignments and Rubrics
- Examples of Student Work

**Possible Outcomes:**
- Develop or select a variety of instructional strategies to help students learn all essential skills at or above grade level proficiency targets.
- Create a variety of common benchmark assessments designed to monitor student progress on each unit of study in reading and writing throughout the year.

**Meeting with a Behavioral Focus**

*In a nearby district, Rose Gardens School serves a similar K-5 population. After almost a decade of strong leadership, a charismatic principal left the school due to an emergency situation. Since that time, the school has hired six different principals, none of whom were able to unite the staff or meet student needs. This year, Rose Gardens has hired a new principal. As of November, she has been able to turnaround some of the issues at the school and teachers seem to like her, although they are cautious because of the legacy of divisiveness over the past few years.*

*Rose Gardens is also implementing PLCs this year for the first time. Teachers are extremely excited to work with their colleagues, and share positive stories, but all remain silent when the principal asks what instructional problems they would like to discuss. The principal decides that this PLC should focus on a “non-threatening” issue and that she*
Goal:
Increase the school attendance rate, as measured by daily attendance records, from 75% to 88% by the end of the school year.

Sources of Data:
- Monthly Analysis of Attendance by Grade Level
- Parent Interview
- Student Survey
- For this PLC, the teachers decide to consult with the school nurse and counselor for student specific issues that may hinder students from attending school

Possible Outcomes:
- Create an incentive plan to increase attendance rates
- Identify the specific grade levels with the highest percentage of absenteeism and identify a plan to increase attendance for each
- Decrease the number of students who miss 10 or more days during the school year

III. STRUCTURING YOUR PLC MEETING

Establishing Group Roles

PLCs work well when they are structured in a way that maximizes collaborative learning. The work of PLCs runs smoother when everyone understands and values what their individual contributions to meetings should be, and how these contributions relate to others’ contributions and the goals of the PLC. The following is an outline of suggested roles for PLC participation. This list is not exhaustive or mandatory; schools that use other structures are also successful.

Facilitator

Facilitators are necessary members of the PLC meeting. Some schools choose to keep the same facilitator over the course of the year, while others choose to rotate this task so that team members share responsibilities equally. Facilitators can be teachers or administrators. Facilitators should be experienced in the PLC model and have good leadership skills in order to keep the team on task, ensure that all members are heard, help the team work through conflict, and help the team come to consensus. Many schools use administrators to lead PLCs. While this can be successful, especially in schools like Rose Gardens where teachers are not yet ready to collaborate fully, teachers should be empowered to take on this role whenever possible (Darling-Hammond; 2003; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Moore Johnson, 1998).

PLC Facilitators should:
Establish and support team cohesiveness and effectiveness
Demonstrate excellent planning and organizational skills
Communicate to the site administration the questions, needs, and concerns of the team
Develop the agenda and distribute it to team members prior to meetings
Ensure that all voices are heard

**Team Members**

Team members include any individuals who attend the PLC meetings. PLCs work well when members are encouraged to attend regularly and when members are accountable to the group. That means that members bring back data and follow schedules established by the group.

Team Members should:

- Read the agenda prior to the upcoming meeting
- Gather necessary materials and student evidence related to the topic of discussion
- Focus the discussion on the agenda topic and follow established values of the group when discussing conflicting opinions
- Follow the next steps and the action plan developed in meeting

**Optional Roles:**

**Note-taker:** The note-taker maintains detailed records of each PLC team meeting including deliverables for the next meeting. The SSI Project suggests using a binder, Google drive, or clipboard to keep a running record of notes and deliverables over time. The note-taker might review the previous meeting notes at the beginning of each new meeting in order to keep the group accountable. In some PLCs the note-taker role is held by the facilitator.

**Timekeeper:** The timekeeper keeps the team on schedule. Typically, this includes redirecting members to the topic of discussion. One tool that can help is a “parking lot” poster on which members record ideas (using a post-it note) that can be more discussed at a later time. In some PLCs the timekeeper role is held by the facilitator.

**Administrator**

Administrators include school leaders, department chairs, and other management-level personnel. Administrators can be involved in PLC meetings, but it is more beneficial for administrators to be involved in other ways, such as:

- Communicating regularly with PLC team facilitators
- Reading team agendas and minutes
- Observing PLCs in action and providing specific feedback
- Identifying and providing connections to relevant supports, materials, training, and resources

Schools do PLC Teams differently. Some schools choose to arrange grade or subject-centric teams and focus solely on instructional tasks. Others use varied teams to meet school-wide leadership goals or to differentiate approaches to student behavior. As in the previous examples, decisions to organize school teams should be based on the culture of the school and the quality of school structures and supports for forging effective communications and collaborations related to school improvement. For example, because Green Acres teachers are familiar with PLC roles, teachers were able to lead teams on their own and to tackle big topics. However, at Rose Gardens, the principal led the PLC meeting with hopes of transitioning responsibility to team leaders over time.

Establishing Group Norms

The first thing the PLC team needs to do is to establish norms and a method to monitor them. In a PLC, norms represent group rules and preferred culture, as well as the protocols used to guide members and the commitments group members make. Norms help team members clarify expectations regarding how they will work together to achieve their shared goal.

For a school like Rose Gardens where teachers do not yet trust each other, establishing norms may take a long time and may be difficult during the PLCs initial meetings. However, norms are extremely important in schools that are just starting the PLC process, so it is crucial to continue this difficult work. Further, even for schools like Green Acres with established norms, PLC groups should revisit norms quarterly, as well as when conflicts arise.

When establishing group norms, consider:

TIME and PLACE

- When do we meet?

  Teams meet regularly throughout the school year. PLCs may meet before or after school or during a common prep period. Considerations for when meetings occur should include times that allow each participant to be comfortably present throughout the meeting, to meet during contracted hours, and to have access to a large enough space for collaboration.

- Where do we meet?

  Because the purpose of these meetings is to generate teacher-led collaboration, meetings should be held in neutral spaces. Avoid the principal’s office or other formal locations. PLCs should provide internet access and projectors to support PLC work.
- How will we address late comers and/or meetings that go over time?

  *Respecting members’ time is important when working collaboratively. Team members must be able to hold each other accountable to shared commitments. Talking about time is an essential part of developing group norms.*

**LISTENING**

- How will we encourage listening?

  *Collaboration will be difficult if group members do not feel that their contributions are heard and appropriately addressed. To encourage active listening, consider potential barriers such as teacher affiliations, rivalries, or hierarchies, and the degree to which the school culture encourages the sharing of teacher practices. Think about how the group can respond to these barriers.*

- How will we encourage active listening and respectful, professional dialogue?

  *Next, it will be important to think about how to hold the group accountable to listening and speaking norms once they are set. These efforts should encourage all members to continue sharing aspects of their practice. Groups that do not allow all members to have a voice, or allow for frequent interruptions, may risk losing buy-in to the collaborative process. Think about how to deal with conflicts and underdeveloped listening before they arise so that all team members are comfortable responding in ways consistent with group norms.*

**DECISION-MAKING**

- Are we a decision-making body?

  *PLC members must understand the boundaries of their work before beginning. Some PLCs have the ability to make decisions and influence school practices beyond their meetings. The ability to do so will depend largely on formal school leaders’ beliefs about teachers’ roles in school-wide decision-making. It will be helpful to clarify the PLC’s potential for influencing practice before beginning PLC work. Successful groups work within the limits set by their school administrations, but use the full range of their power to spur positive changes.*

- How will we make decisions?

  *Regardless of the potential for school-wide change, all PLCs make decisions that influence teachers and students. Members will need to decide how those decisions will be made. Consider whether consensus must be reached for all decisions, and what to do in case the group does not reach consensus.*
- How will we deal with conflicts?

*Along the same lines groups should prepare for the possibility of conflict when consensus is not met. By speaking about the norms for arguments before they arise, the PLC will be better equipped to mediate conflict. Think through ways that members should express and resolve conflicting issues.*

**EXPECTATIONS**

- What do we expect from members?

*PLCs can be more successful when members are clear about how often and in what ways they must participate. Some PLCs are attended voluntarily, while others mandate that members meet and follow through generated action steps.*

- What data or student work will we bring to meetings?

*Most PLCs use some form of data at each meeting. This can include anything from anecdotal, teacher-level data to standardized, state-level data. Teachers are often uncomfortable sharing data, especially data that may be interpreted as unfavorable. The PLC will need to decide what types of data to include in meetings, and to develop ways for teachers to share all kinds of data, including the good, the bad, and the “ugly.”*

- What will the team do with the work it generates?

*Teams keep documentation of their work, and some choose to share this publicly. Considerations for how to document and track, as well as with whom to share, work will impact the team’s accountability to each other and its potential for instigating change at the school, district, or wider levels.*

These questions are ones that will require deep forethought and, often, trial and error at your school. There are typically multiple correct answers, and successful PLCs can answer these questions in different ways. The SSI Project recommends that you use additional resources before beginning this process (see Section Four of this guide). Especially helpful for this stage is *The reflective educator’s guide to professional development: Coaching inquiry-oriented learning communities* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). In addition, you can use Table 1 to think about characteristics of successful PLCs that might help you to better structure your own approach. Regardless of the sources used, the establishment of group norms is an important step in creating collaborative cultures through which teachers can engage in authentic dialogue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Select Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aligned with School Goals</strong></td>
<td>Group works with school administration to align inquiry to school goals.</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collegial Relations</strong></td>
<td>Members treat each other kindly, focus on the work, and rise above conflict.</td>
<td>Little &amp; McLaughlin (1993) Darling-Hammond et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Led</strong></td>
<td>Groups are led by teachers and topics for inquiry are initiated by teacher needs and questions.</td>
<td>Garet et al. (2001) Cohen &amp; Hill (2001)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Potential Barriers**
Assessing Meeting Quality

Throughout the year, the team should monitor the quality of its meetings by reviewing team norms, assessing team members’ adherence to these norms, and making needed changes.

PLCs can fall apart if teachers start to use this time to grade papers, make copies, or talk about topics that do not impact student achievement. Continuously revisiting norms and rededicating your group to its mission can help your PLC stay on task. As the examples illustrate, revisiting PLC norms is extremely important to sustained growth. Even successful PLCs, like the one described at Green Acres School, consistently revisit norms together.

Dealing with Conflict

Team members may become discouraged if initial meetings do not go smoothly. For example, schools may find that more experienced or popular teachers dominate the conversation and drown out other voices. Learning to work together is a gradual process that may begin with friction among team members. As the team establishes procedures and coalesces around a common purpose, meetings usually evolve into collegial interaction, interdependence, and trust.

Starting the year with trust building activities can help to bypass conflicts in group dynamics. Team members should also be reminded that conflict can be a normal part of any team setting as members become accustomed to sharing divergent ideas and opinions. Conflict and dialogue can be healthy and constructive when they encourage members to challenge their views in respectful ways. Incorporating PLC protocols can help the group to shape these collaborative conversations. See “Setting Up PLCs” and “Generating Learning in PLCs” in Section Four of this guide for many resources that can help your PLC build trust and structure conversations.

Contextualizing PLC Work

Once group roles and norms are established, PLCs should choose an area of inquiry upon which to focus. PLCs can work on individual, classroom, or school level goals, and should choose areas of common interest arising from members’ problems of practice. In our examples, the Green Acres PLC group worked on a classroom-level goal, choosing reading instruction as an area of focus. By contrast, the Rose Gardens PLC focused on a school-level goal of increasing attendance. PLCs can also work on individual goals, such as studying one student’s behavior modification plan in depth.

In order to choose a PLC topic, groups should collaboratively discuss the issues that are most relevant to each member, and for which change could lead to increased student achievement or increased teacher empowerment. Remember that goal selection was a way to create safety at Rose Gardens School. That can be a primary focus for new PLCs. The Student Growth Goal Setting Form Section Four can help to collaboratively formulate goals.
Regardless of the level of focus or area of inquiry, PLC groups should create one SMART goal at a time to address as a group. SMART goals are exactly what should be done, the standard of expectation, and the measures used to determine whether the goal has been met.

A SMART goal is:

**Strategic and Specific**: Focuses on specific outcomes, targeting the *who* and *what* of the goal.

**Measurable**: Data used to gauge progress towards the goal; the *how* of the goal.

**Attainable**: Considerations given to the specific, but realistic, periods of time to achieve goal.

**Relevant / Rigorous**: Focus on achievement in one defined and rigorous area.

**Time Bound**: Goal has a clearly defined time-frame including a target date; the *when* of the goal.

Both goals from Green Acres and Rose Gardens are examples of SMART goals. Both goals clearly define the percentage by which targeted behavior will increase and specify a particular data source through which to measure that increase. They both target that increase to a period of one school year.

**Ideas for Classroom-Level Curriculum Goals**

Below are some ideas for choosing SMART goals for classroom-level curriculum. We choose to elaborate on this area because it is likely that most PLCs will be devoted to this level of focus. Remember that incorporating classroom data can be a difficult task for new PLCs and requires the development of trust between group members. Thus, Green Acres’ teachers were able to work together effectively, but Rose Garden’s teachers were not. The proposed sequence below is loosely based upon Wiggins and McTighe’s (2011) model of backwards design.

**Examine Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS).** Begin with a small-time element: a month, unit, chapter, or quarter. Below are some basic guidelines for doing so. For more help on specific areas of instruction see “PLCs in Different Content Areas” in Section Four.

- “Unpack” standards and examine the specific learning targets for that time period
- Formulate questions
- Identify concepts and skills students teaching during this time will yield with students
  - What do students need to know and be able to do?
  - How will we know when they have learned it?
  - What will we do when they have not learned it?
  - What will we do when they already know it?

**Create a common post-assessment.** A common assessment, based on the standards students must master, will be administered at the conclusion of the specified instructional period.
- Use identified concepts and skills students must master to generate assessment questions.
- When possible, use commercially created assessments because these are often more valid than those that teachers can create.
- When possible, use assessments that go beyond basic skills and incorporate higher-levels of student thinking.

**Administer a common post-assessment BEFORE teaching.** At this time, the assessment acts as a pre-assessment. Administering the assessment prior to teaching addresses the following questions:

- What foundational knowledge do students already have?
- What knowledge, understanding, and skills do students already have about the topic that they are about to study?
- Which students are starting absolutely at square one in terms of understanding the concepts and/or applying the skills?

**Collect and chart data.** This data is generated from the pre-assessment. PLC Facilitators can prepare a simple table with pre-assessment data, including total number of students, number students who are proficient or higher, and percentage of students who are proficient or higher. With this in mind, teachers can determine:

- Whether a specific initiative needs to be implemented on a school-wide, classroom-wide, or individual student level
- What specific concepts or skills are most in need of review
- What specific concepts or skills should be extended

### IV. PLC Resources

Please consider the resources on the following pages for running successful PLCs. You may adapt these resources or use them in their current form.
Professional Learning Community Meeting Agenda

School: ___________________________  Grade Level(s): ___________________________  Date: _______________________

Meeting Focus
__Student Achievement  __Instructional Strategies
__Behavioral Management  __Data Analysis/Decision Making
__Student Needs  __Instructional Material
__Other: (Specify) ___________________________

Facilitator: ____________________________________________

Note Taker: ____________________________________________

Participants: ____________________________________________

Notes

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Deliverables/Outcomes for next meeting:

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Resources/Support needed from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Administrator</th>
<th>Instructional Coach</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</table>

Guide to Professional Learning Communities 18
Student Growth Goal Setting Form

Form adapted from Instructional Framework: 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning
(Center for Educational Leadership at University of Washington)

My area of focus for inquiry: ____________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

PLC

Student growth criterion 8: Exhibiting collaborative and collegial practices focused on improving instructional practice and student learning.
8.1: Establish team student growth goals. Consistently and actively collaborates with other grade, school or district team members to establish goal(s), to develop and implement common, high-quality measures, and to monitor growth and achievement during the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus learning content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor growth and achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whole Group

Student growth criterion 6: Using multiple student data elements to modify instruction and improve student learning.
6.1: Establish student growth goal. Establishes appropriate student growth goals for whole classroom. Goals identify multiple, high-quality sources of data to monitor, adjust, and evaluate achievement of goals.
6.2: Achievement of student growth goal. Multiple sources of growth or achievement data from at least two points in time show clear evidence of growth for none/some/most/all or nearly all students.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor, adjust and evaluate achievement of goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subgroup

Student growth criterion 3: Recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs.
3.1: Establish student growth goal. Establishes appropriate student growth goals for subgroups of students not reaching full learning potential. Goals identify multiple, high-quality sources of data to monitor, adjust, and evaluate achievement of goals.
3.2: Achievement of student growth goal. Multiple sources of growth or achievement data from at least two points in time show clear evidence of growth for none/some/most/all or nearly all students.

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<tr>
<td>Evidence of growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level of Focus

- Student Level
- Classroom Level
- School Level

Less than half of students in the classroom are in need of intervention. Goal can focus on one student or subset of students.

More than half of students in the classroom are in need of intervention.

Similar need is found across several classrooms or several student sub-populations.

Area of Focus:  □ Behavioral  □ Academic

Determined Area of Focus: ______________________________________________________

Think through SMART questions?

**Specific:** What will be the outcome, and for whom: ____________________________

**Measurable:** What high quality sources of data will be used: ____________________________

What will be the evidence of growth: ____________________________________________

**Attainable:** Why is this goal one that you believe can be met in the given time frame:

**Relevant / Rigorous:** In what ways is this goal rigorous: ____________________________

Is this goal the most relevant for the population’s needs: ____________________________

**Time Bound:** By what date will this goal be completed: ____________________________

Using the questions above as a guide, what is the SMART goal for your PLC:

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Guide to Professional Learning Communities
Data Organizer

School: ______________________________

Assessment Measure: _________________________

Date of Analysis: ____________________________

Proficiency Standard: _________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students Assessed</th>
<th># of Students Proficient</th>
<th>% of Students Proficient</th>
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<tbody>
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Based on Percent of Students Proficient, will this be a school-wide, classroom-wide, or individual student level goal? _________________________________

Brainstorm and discuss possible instructional strategies that will improve or have improved student performance for the assessment being targeted. Think about what specific concepts or skills are most in need of review and which need to be extended.

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## Select Resources

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<tr>
<th>Initial Research on PLCs</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Websites</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement</em> by Dufour and Eaker</td>
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<td><em>Demystifying Professional Learning Communities: School Leadership at Its Best</em> by Hipp and Bumpers Huffman</td>
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<td>Setting Up PLCs</td>
<td><em>Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work</em> by DuFour</td>
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<td><em>The reflective educator’s guide to professional development: Coaching inquiry-oriented learning communities.</em> by Dana and Yendol-Hoppey</td>
<td>mcsk12.net/schools/hickoryridge.mi/site/documents/PLCForms.pdf</td>
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<td>Generating Learning in PLCs</td>
<td><em>Protocols for Professional Learning</em> by Easton</td>
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<td><em>Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices From Research and Practice</em> by Hord and Sommers</td>
<td>nsrfharmony.org/free-resources/protocols/a-z</td>
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<td>PLCs in Different Content Areas</td>
<td><em>Common Formative Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Learning Communities at Work</em> by Bailey</td>
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<td><em>The Learning Communities Guide to Improving Reading Instruction</em> by Hastings, Gregory, and Rozzelle</td>
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<td><em>Professional Learning in Action: An Inquiry Approach for Teachers of Literacy</em> by Risko and Vogt</td>
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<td><em>Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work: Leader's Guide</em> by Fisher and Frey</td>
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<td><em>Common Core Mathematics in a PLC at Work, Leader's Guide</em> by Kanold</td>
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<td><em>Professional Learning Communities for Science Teaching: Lessons From Research and Practice</em> by Mundry and Stiles</td>
<td>depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/LforLSummary-02-03.pdf</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.rider.edu/files/tlc-MontgomeryPLC">http://www.rider.edu/files/tlc-MontgomeryPLC</a> TrifoldFall09.pdf</td>
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References


