

Dimensions of a professional learning community

This resource may be used by leaders of PLC development in schools to identify how well each dimension is established by reflecting on whether the practices described are observed in their school. This should include seeking feedback from staff by using the practices listed as a prompt for conversations or focus groups, or as a basis for survey questions, in order to identify any dimensions to focus on improving. A selection of practices could also be chosen as prompts for teachers to self-reflect individually or in small groups to assess their own beliefs and skills related to working in a PLC.

DIMENSION	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE
Strong school leadership develops and sustains the PLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaders communicate the evidence about the impact of PLCs on student learning• Leaders have a clear sense of their own values and vision• Leaders model good practice• Leaders promote a school-wide focus on student learning• Leaders create a culture of respect where staff feel valued• Leaders make the best use of resources and structure, for example in how time is allocated to the PLC• Leaders monitor and evaluate the PLC• Senior leaders in a school engage with the research evidence about PLCs
There is a culture of trust, respect, inquiry and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers are confident to approach colleagues to ask for advice and share their experiences or concerns• Teachers feel there is a good balance between expectations and support• Trust is built alongside inquiry through respectful discussions and conversations• Teachers feel safe to share openly about their classroom practice

<p>There is a shared vision for improving student learning that drives decision-making and cycles of continuous improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion about teaching practice is focused on how it impacts student learning • All staff share similar educational values and there is no hierarchy of subjects • All students have access to high-quality curriculum and instruction • Teachers regularly reflect on their practice in order to improve it
<p>Student learning is promoted through shared leadership and collective responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are involved in determining problems of practice on which to focus in the PLC • Teachers co-construct PLC meeting agendas • Teachers are supported to take on leadership roles within the PLC • All staff feel that they can positively impact student learning, and don't allow external factors to make them feel that they cannot make a difference
<p>There is a culture of collaboration focused on student and teacher learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and support staff discuss the progress of individual students • Teachers work together to plan teaching, develop resources and share materials • Teachers develop common formative assessment tasks to help monitor student progress • Teachers share their knowledge with others: for example, by running school workshops • Teachers work together to monitor student learning and analyse and improve classroom practice • Teacher practice is deprivatised: observations of lessons are common, and teachers feel safe discussing questions and concerns • Teachers ask questions that promote deep learning • Collaboration extends beyond the school to build connections with the community and staff at other schools • Staff value their own learning and may be studying for higher degrees, conducting research projects and study visits, and meeting to reflect on learning from external courses

<p>Teachers engage in cycles of collaborative reflective inquiry involving reflection, planning, trialing of new or adapted practice, analysis of results and adaptation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers try different ways to improve learning and teaching • Teachers conduct action research • Teachers are involved in projects with other teachers, which could include collaborating with teachers in other schools • Teachers set and monitor targets for individual students • Teachers gather feedback from students on their learning experiences • Classroom observation is regularly used to gain feedback • Data about student progress is used to inform discussions and decision-making • Teachers respond to problems or concerns that are evident in student progress data • Teachers are comfortable with discussions of problems and the sharing of different ideas, even when this leads to dissensus and even conflict
<p>Student progress data is used to inform discussion, decision-making and changes to teaching practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers use evidence, such as the curriculum and student achievement data, to identify essential knowledge and skills student need to develop • Student work is brought to meetings to analyse what they have learnt • Student progress data is used to identify teachers who have been particularly effective in certain areas so that they can share their strategies with others • Goals are set in relation to student progress, not the implementation of teaching practices • Teachers decide on reasonable evidence to monitor the progress towards goals
<p>Resources such as time, money and people are used effectively to support the PLC work and all staff have access to these resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school day is structured so that teams of teachers can meet for PLC work • Classes may be scheduled at the same time to allow teachers to team teach • Time for PLC work is allocated throughout the whole school year • Internal or external experts, such as literacy coaches or expert teachers, are used to support PLC groups • Shared spaces are provided for staff to work, perhaps with tea and coffee available

References

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