2021

Middle School Educators' Perspectives of the Influence of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Student Achievement

Glen Edward Worthy
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

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Glen Worthy

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, University of Bridgeport, 1993

BS, Western Connecticut State University, 1988

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Walden University

September 2021

Abstract

Middle school students in an urban school district located in the northeastern United States struggled to improve their academic performance. In response to this problem, the superintendent initiated a districtwide professional learning community (PLC); however, students' test scores in five schools declined. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs had on teachers' instructional practices to improve student achievement. Wenger's theory of the community of practice guided this study. A purposeful sample of two school administrators and six teachers, who completed PLC implementation training and participated in PLCs for at least 2 years, volunteered and participated in semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed through coding and theme development. Administrators need to create structures for time allocation for PLC members to share ideas, reflect on teaching practices, and discuss problems and for a variety of accountability measures for planning best approaches to improve student achievement. Teachers believed that instructional coaches and funding for teacher observation opportunities during class time might increase their instructional capacity. Based on the findings, a three-day professional development was created for administrators and teachers to improve and sustain the current PLC. This endeavor could contribute to positive social change if administrators initiate and support PLC teams, who share a collaborative culture, collective inquiry, actionable decision making, and a commitment to continuous improvement, as a platform to improve student achievement.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Morgan and Madison, my two lovely daughters, and Maria, my only granddaughter, and my wife, Alysa. I want to thank you all for giving me the space and time away from you to accomplish something that only a few people have done which is to obtain an Ed.D. Let this be a symbol that you, too, can also do anything if you put your mind and spirit into it.

Acknowledgments

There are so many people I want to thank for their encouragement and support while I was on this journey. I really want to acknowledge my two chairs, Dr. Poplau and Dr. Hallums. Without you I would not have made it. Thank you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

There is no universal definition of a professional learning community (PLC) and the interpretations of its meaning can differ depending on context (Egizii, 2015). Gray et al. (2015) explained that a PLC is a group where professionals coexist in unison and contribute to each other's learning. Hudson et al. (2013) stated that a collaborative body of teachers and administrators seeking to improve students' experiences and outcomes through shared practice and reflective learning can be considered a PLC. In both definitions, and in other attempts to define PLCs (Aylsworth, 2012; Pirtle, 2014), the contribution of individual knowledge or reflective sharing has been highlighted. Thus, reflective learning is one of the crucial elements of a PLC. In this context, teachers and other concerned individuals exist in unison and contribute their knowledge to reflect on how their learning can benefit students (Heller et al., 2012).

On September 15, 2014, the superintendent, whose urban school district is in the northeast and identified as *in need of improvement* under the No Child Left Behind Act, announced to his school community that an existing pilot PLC would be expanded district wide. A district-wide PLC was launched that school year to promote job-embedded, PD to support all teachers with their classroom instruction. This 2-year initiative was funded by a teacher incentive fund (TIF) grant, which provided funds to train and empower teacher-leaders and to help identify their PD needs. The overall goal in addressing these needs was to improve instruction. The existing pilot of schools participating in PLCs consisted of five K-8 schools; all considered Tier III turnaround

schools. The students who attend these schools had demonstrated consistently low performance and were not showing academic improvement nor operating as effective organizations. In the school district understudy, these targeted schools were restructured to dramatically accelerate student progress. After the implementation of PLCs in these five schools, the problem is student achievement did not improve in all five schools on the state's criterion reference test.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

To measure educational success, educators in the schools located in the northeastern United States administer the Criterion Reference Test (CRT). All students in Grades 3-8 complete the CRT. The test measures a student's knowledge in reading, writing, and mathematics (with science included for students in Grades 5 and 8). According to the State Department of Education website, test results on the CRT for 2012 and 2013 for the five pilot schools showed a 2-year decline of students scoring proficient or above on the CRT. Table 1 and Table 2 indicate the 2012-2013 school years, reading and mathematics proficiency and at/above goal results of the K-8 schools under study. Both tables below show students' scores in the district on the state's criterion reference test, which indicates a 2-year decline in reading and mathematics scores.

Table 1

Mathematics test data following implementation of PLCs

Group	Year	Number Tested	Average Scale Score	% At/Above Goal	% At/Above Proficiency
District	2012	1369	233.2	41.7	69.7
	2013	1326	220.4	29.9	58.0
School A	2012	45	215.4	28.9	62.2
	2013	69	203.8	13.0	43.5
School B	2012	70	223.0	32.9	67.1
	2013	70	200.6	14.3	41.4
School C	2012	48	222.8	39.6	66.7
	2013	54	211.8	20.4	50.0
School D	2012	77	227.0	36.4	68.8
	2013	66	213.8	25.8	59.1
School E	2012	51	229.2	31.4	64.7
	2013	43	206.1	16.3	46.5

Note. www.sde.ct.gov

Table 2

Reading test data following implementation of PLCs

Group	Year	Number Tested	Average Scale Score	% At/Above Goal	% At/Above Proficiency
District	2012	1336	219.7	32.6	51.4
	2013	1306	213.9	27.8	42.3
School A	2012	44	212.3	27.3	36.4
	2013	69	204.0	17.4	34.8
School B	2012	68	198.1	13.2	29.4
	2013	68	197.1	11.8	19.1
School C	2012	48	211.6	20.8	39.6
	2013	53	201.3	7.5	35.8
School D	2012	72	214.6	33.3	52.8
	2013	66	213.7	30.3	47.0
School E	2012	49	218.9	32.7	59.2
	2013	43	198.2	18.6	30.2

Note. www.sde.ct.gov

Professional learning has been found to have a very powerful effect on the skills and knowledge of a teacher (Margolis & Doring, 2012). It has a great influence on students' learning especially when sustained over time and when the PD is directed and focused on the important academic content. When a well-designed PD criterion is established, it offers teachers opportunities that help them master the academic content and polish their teaching skills. While participating in professional learning, teachers can evaluate their performance and their students' performance. Effective criterion will also ensure that the teacher can identify and address the changes that are needed to be implemented to improve learning. This can eventually lead to improved student performance and increased knowledge levels of the teacher (Stephen, 2013).

The lack of coherence and connection across professional learning opportunities, competition for teacher attention and time, and lack of differentiation to the particular needs of individual teachers represent challenges to PLCs in the school district under study (Kelcey et al., 2014). According to the talent director of the district under study, teachers have expressed their displeasure with the implementation of the PLCs. Teachers felt that, although leadership had good intentions in implementing PLCs, some of the meetings were fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face. The school district personnel seek to provide teachers with opportunities for PD that will establish a sustainable environment that demands a high standard of teaching and retain a high-quality workforce.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Several studies featured shared vision as a basis upon which to develop an effective PLC (see Hudson et al., 2013; Louis et al., 2010), stating that only when teachers and school administrators share the same vision can the schoolwork collectively for the benefit of the students. However, simply sharing a vision does not guarantee the formation or successful deployment of a PLC (Hudson et al., 2013). How the vision is perceived and implemented is what shapes the structure and effectiveness of a PLC. Holmes et al. (2013) discussed the importance of adding reflective practice as a vital part of developing a shared vision. The reflective process includes school administrators and teachers collaborating to establish common goals.

One of the fundamental areas needing further refinement for PLCs to be implemented successfully and sustained over time is school administrators (Ellerania & Gentile, 2013). Ideally, the school principal is supposed to take the authoritative position in both the formation of PLC and the implementation of innovative interventions. However, Van Es (2012) claimed that it should be the teachers who possess the authoritative or decision-making role in PLCs, as they are the ones who best know their students. Thus, ill-defined roles and positions of teachers in the practical implementation of the PLC outcomes raise serious issues for the framework of PLCs. The concept of shared leadership explains that school administrators should share their vision with the teachers, distribute their authority amongst the teachers to implement innovative procedures or propose experimentation strategies and leave the final decision-making in the hands of the teachers. The success of a PLC depends on all district leaders employing

annual evaluations to ensure effectiveness and sustainability (Thessin, 2015). The purpose of this project study was to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement. A functioning structure to support teacher collaboration, such as a PLC, can have a positive effect on student achievement (Gray et al., 2015). If the PLC is appropriately implemented, Levine (2010) argued that it might become a catalyst in transforming teachers' instructional practices. Based on this argument and the problem at the research site, the purpose of this study was to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs had on instructional practices to improve student achievement.

Definition of Terms

Leadership capacity: Leadership capacity refers to the school's aptitude to sustain reform initiatives even after a change of school administrators (Lambert, 2003).

Professional learning community (PLC): A PLC is a forum where professional educators can meet to share their experiences and knowledge for all involved to exchange and learn new information and teaching strategies. PLCs serve as arenas where professional educators can analyze their teaching approach with other educators and compare their results with student learning outcomes (Townsend, 2013).

School administrators: Principal, an assistant principal, and two instructional coaches who develop school improvement plans and ensures that resources are available to support these plans (Walther-Thomas, 2016).

Shared leadership: Shared leadership refers to a horizontal or non-hierarchical form of leadership wherein leader responsibilities are distributed among individuals in an organization (Holmes et al., 2013).

Shared personal practice: Shared personal practice refers to collective efforts from every individual involved in a PLC to help guarantees the formation of a creative learning environment for students (Tahir et al., 2013).

Shared values and visions: Shared values and visions refer to individuals making a collective mental image about the execution of the idea, determining its structural requirement, and establishing the procedure that executes the practice of the idea (Aylsworth, 2012).

Supportive conditions and relationships: Supportive conditions and relationships are strong collegial relationships that include the following: positive educator attitudes; widely shared vision; norms of continuous critical inquiry and improvement; and respect, trust, and positive, caring relationships between colleagues (Nelson et al., 2013).

Tier III Turnaround School: To be eligible for federal funds, a school labeled Tier III Turnaround School must replace the principal, rehire no more than half the teachers and adopt a new governance structure to oversee the development of curriculum reform and the development of teacher's instructional practices (Connecticut State Department of Education [CSDE], 2020).

Significance of the Study

The local school district implemented PLCs in five K-8 schools to improve student achievement. However, this school district continues to experience a decline in

student performance on criterion-referenced tests. The district hypothesized that the lowering scores on the criterion-referenced tests are the result of the poor instructional methods of the teachers charged with delivering content to students. However, there is no evidence that a PLC has been successful in improving the instructional practice of teachers at the local middle school. To measure the potential success of PLCs, there is a need to understand school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement.

Research Question

The purpose of this basic qualitative design study is to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement. Teachers at the local school have been challenged to improve their instructional practices and student achievement.

The following questions guided the study:

RQ 1: What are the school administrators' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices to improve student achievement?

RQ 2: What are middle school teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on their instructional practices to improve student achievement?

Review of the Literature

The objective of this literature review is to present a synthesis of research on the influence that PLCs have on instructional practice to improve student achievement. Effective implementation of PLCs has been shown to support collaboration and a shared vision between school administrators and teachers (Hudson et al., 2013). The way

teachers and school administrators work together to implement PLCs can help enhance the effectiveness of PLCs (Hudson et al., 2013).

Professional literature was located for this review through a comprehensive search using Walden University's online library. Databases and search tools used included Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Google Scholar, and SAGE. Search terms included the following terms and combination of terms: *professional learning communities*, *school administrators*, *teachers*, *shared vision*, *shared values*, and *collaboration*. Because the aim was to gain a scholarly understanding of the current state of research on PLCs, preference was given to peer-reviewed articles published within the past 5 years. However, for theoretical and historical perspectives, it was necessary to review some material outside of the 5-year window.

This review of literature begins with an explanation of the theoretical framework for this project. Next, a discussion of PLCs will be provided. The review also includes an analysis of the six dimensions of PLCs, including collaborative culture, shared visions, shared leadership, shared personal practice, and supportive conditions, and the influence these dimensions have on student performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study was the work of Wenger (1998). Wenger drew attention to the fact that learning communities are not new and are becoming more universal. Wenger argued that a school needs a systematic and functioning community to improve students' achievement. Wegner's theory of social learning and engagement rests upon four main premises. First, the central aspect of

learning is to realize people as social beings whose learning is influenced by their social environment and circles. Second, knowing is not simply the acquisition of information, but the art of participation. Third, knowledge gains value and competence when it is polished with *valued enterprise*; this refers to the applicability of knowledge. Fourth, meaning is, ultimately, what learning produces, and this meaning can differ for everyone (Wenger, 1998). Thus, the formation of a well-thought-out and structured community that fulfills these principles can be deemed as a PLC, where knowledge is shared and negotiated in the learning process to extract meaning out of learning (Wenger, 1998).

According to Herbers et al., (2011), community of practice (CoP) is used is to support the transformation of schools in their professional practices. CoPs and PLCs foster a positive communal relationship by promoting the benefits achieved because of teachers sharing their best instructional practices with all involved and creating an opportunity for new knowledge to improve teacher's instructional practice. Whereas the CoP structure is fluid and flexible, the PLC is more structured with the use of protocols to guide the work. It can be argued that a PLC could be incorporated into CoP, folding the six dimensions into the three CoP components. The three components of CoP are:

1. Domain - Members in this group share the same interests and concerns and value their shared knowledge and learning from each other.
2. Community - Members actively engage in a mutual discussion and share information. As a community, members develop a positive relationship to foster a platform for the group to learn from each other.

3. Practice - Members develop their instructional practice repertoire through shared knowledge (Herbers et al., 2011).

The educational field is increasingly implementing PLCs as a promising way to stimulate and facilitate the PD of teachers (Hanraets et al., 2011). The CoP is a framework in which teachers who have a common concern or problem can come together to solve the problem using best practices (Holmes, et al., 2013). A CoP intends to provide participants a structure for collaborative inquiry to experiment with teaching methods through a reflective sharing process (Herbers, et al., 2011).

Professional Learning Communities

Research has supported implementing PLCs by schools to improve teachers' professional knowledge and student learning (Heller et al., 2012). Conventionally, the concept of PLCs emerged from the desire to reculture schools as learning organizations to improve the work of teachers, and therefore, improve student outcomes (Louis et al., 2010; Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). While there is no single definition of PLCs, some common features have been identified from the research. First, all PLCs have a shared vision and values between school administrators and teachers with focus on student learning and instructional practice (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Second, PLCs have a collaborative culture that enables the sharing of responsibilities for student outcomes, learning, and working together to achieve a common purpose. Third, PLCs have a focus on evaluation to improve student outcomes through a commitment to result-oriented approaches and continuous improvement. Fourth, PLCs exhibit shared and supportive leadership between administrators and teachers. Finally, PLCs have shared personal

practices that result from teachers learning and working together through collective inquiry (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

Achieving higher academic achievement requires the creation of conditions wherein the school administrators and the teachers have the opportunity for continual learning (Lippy & Zamora, 2013). PD experiences are likely to influence student achievement if they promote coherence, focus on student outcomes, engage individuals in meaningful discourse, and connect to teachers' previous experiences (Lippy & Zamora, 2013). According to Heller et al., (2012), the most important PD characteristics for enhancing skills and knowledge include a focus on content, active learning, opportunities for hands-on learning, and greater coherence of PD practices and other learning activities. This implies that to enhance PD, it is important to focus on collective participation, session duration, and core features such as coherence, active learning, and content. Margolis and Doring (2012) also found that intensive and sustainable PD influenced student outcomes. The researchers indicated that teachers who received extensive PD increased student achievement by a significant margin. However, low-level PDs do not influence student outcomes.

Research also indicated that the PD experience for school administrators and teachers was more successful when it was based on the theory of adult learning (Woodland & Mazur, 2015). According to adult learning theory, individuals learn best when learning experiences require them to interpret and make sense of situations based on personal mental models (Burke, 2013). Such mental models are then used in making sense of and comparing new situations with previous experience to inform new mental

models for knowledge (Patton, 2010). Based on this process, adults self-determine and self-regulate actions to meet their innate needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence.

According to Burke (2013), the working environment can enhance learning when they promote constructive controversy where PLCs are the custom and new learning is nurtured as a complex social process that happens between groups and individuals. Constructing school activities around teams and collaboration, rather than individually, is a growing trend in education and has been shown to significantly enhance team and individual performance (Holmes & Woodhams, 2013). Additionally, effective districts and schools focus on a group of teachers rather than individuals, and teachers in these schools participate in various PLCs (Holmes & Woodhams, 2013).

When individuals are working in teams, their performance is relatively high as compared to when they are working individually (Holmes & Woodhams, 2013). According to Holmes and Woodhams (2013), the performance of individuals was nearly doubled at the team level as compared to that of the individual level. At the team level, both potency (the belief that the team will achieve its objective regardless of the task) and efficacy (the belief that the team can accomplish the task assigned) not only increased team performance but also collaborative efforts. In the absence of collaborative relationships and skills, it is impossible to continuously learn.

DuFour et al. (2005) provided three critical areas that should form the fundamental reference points for developing and implementing PLCs in any institution. The first principle that DuFour et al. suggested is the shift from teaching students to

ensuring that the students learn. Traditional learning methods emphasize teaching a student and not on student learning content. Entwistle (2013), who stated that traditional learning approaches assume that all students are the same and hence they are taught with the same content using a singular approach, corroborates this. This is unlike community learning that despite shared values and principles, learners are diverse. According to Entwistle (2013), in a PLC, teachers develop ways to maximize their interactions respectfully and to ensure all the parties' benefit.

DuFour et al. (2005) indicated the second principle of developing an effective PLC is instilling a culture of collaboration. These researchers stated that a methodical process that enables teachers to act collaboratively in analyzing and subsequently improving their collective classroom practice characterizes collaboration in a PLC. The systematic approach includes teachers working in teams that challenge their practices and engage with each other continuously to promote learning. Continuous collaboration and teamwork can lead to higher degrees of students' achievement (DuFour et al., 2005).

The third and last principle of PLCs, which DuFour et al. (2005) have advocated for, is that learning should not be limited to assessment scores. Instead, educators should rate students regarding how much the student has improved on tests and in other spheres of life including the student's discipline and extracurricular talents.

The very nature of PLCs, when implemented thoughtfully, shows great promise for teachers and students (Holmes & Woodhams, 2013). However, despite the potential for PLCs to positively influence teachers' practice and student outcomes at the study site, the data continue to reveal unfavorable outcomes. As a result, more information was

needed to better understand school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement.

The Role of School Administrators

School administrators have an important role in the success of PLCs, including setting the expectations for participation and providing necessary support and resources for PLCs to be sustained (Bahous et al., 2016). Lindle (2016) went on to explain practices essential for effective school administrators, which include shaping a vision of success based on high academic standards and creating a conducive environment where teachers collaborate to improve each other's instructional capacity. Other practices essential for effective school administrators include developing teachers' leadership capacities so that teachers participate in the realization of the school's vision and the improvement of instruction, as well as managing data to enhance the school environment (Lindle, 2016). While teachers need to be empowered by school administrators, school administrators must be prepared to and equipped to lead their schools and support teachers and students.

Educators and researchers have attempted to create meaningful school reform to improve the performance of students. These efforts, however, have often lacked a vital element: the understanding of the effectiveness of school administrators to sustain school change (Zepeda, 2013). There are many ways school administrators can demonstrate effective school leadership and bring about effective and positive school reform. Though, one area of school leadership, instructional leadership, has become a well-researched theme that has emerged in the literature on effective school reform (Thessin & Starr, 2011; Weiser, 2012). According to Zepeda (2013), school administrators' practices aimed

at enhancing instruction had a significant influence on student achievement. Specifically, the literature suggests that when school administrators' instructional leadership capacity is developed, they are more equipped to address poor teacher performance and achieve improved student performance. The impact of school administrators' leadership may be felt in other ways. According to Egizii (2015), positive school change may be influenced by the creation of favorable school conditions for success by school administrators. Thus, school administrators play a vital role in the improvement of teacher practice and student achievement.

Studies have been conducted to link school administrators and student achievement. Penuel et al. (2012) indicated the key role played by school administrators in top-performing schools. They found that student performance was higher in schools where the principal led and undertook the reform process. This is related to literature that highlight the importance of school administrators, and their support, to the success of PLCs (Bahous et al., 2016). In addition to providing support for PLCs, school administrators must demonstrate the capacity to engage in the work alongside teachers. Sun and Leithwood (2012) indicated a significant link between students' academic achievement and the competencies of school administrators. The relationship between these two variables is further evidence that effective leadership and the support of school administrators are needed for PLCs.

To further illustrate the significance of school administrators' roles in PLCs, Kruse and Johnson (2017) noted that PLCs sometimes fail due to ineffective school leadership. One flaw in school leadership that impacts PLCs is a tendency toward a

hierarchical, or top-down, approach to school reform. Instead, it is crucial to ensure that the community leader has trust in staff members that enables teams and individuals within the district or school to develop innovative and new strategies that can improve student outcomes. Although the school principal or other school administrators implement the formation of a PLC, individual teachers and the support staff play the greatest role in ensuring it works (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). Further, proper leadership can help facilitate the process, build shared knowledge about the PLC and its purpose, and help in the realization of the desired results by promoting team engagement (Lindle, 2016).

It is important to note that the role of the school leader does not end when implementation is over; school administrators should continuously review the plan, including how team productivity and student mastery are monitored and how teams are responding to challenges and obstacles (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). School administrators can influence student achievement, although most of the influence is indirect and often mediated through teachers (Egizii, 2015). Further, shared leadership in schools enhances the working relationships between teachers and school administrators and can help to improve student achievement. According to Egizii (2015), effective leadership involves the creation of favorable conditions for success. Effective leadership means knowing what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and why to do it. PLCs require the support of school administrators for them to be successful.

Leadership decisions and actions significantly influence student learning and performance (Walther-Thomas, 2016). Today, leadership reforms, specifically, principal

leadership, are a top priority in top-performing schools. A survey of policymakers and school administrators by Simkin et al., (2010) indicated that principal leadership was second after teacher quality in importance in student performance. It should be noted that school and district leadership provide a vital bridge between educational-reform activities or initiatives and ensuring that such initiatives have a significant influence on student performance. Improving student learning in an already top-performing institution is only possible through the improvement of instruction quality and the development of an internal culture that supports the use of effective instructional practices (Lemons & Helsing, 2008). The focus on instruction requires school administrators to acquire a greater complex understanding of instructional strategies (Lemons & Helsing, 2008). Researchers have also called for effective school administrators of PLC teams (DuFour & Eaker, 2008; Louis et al., 2010). However, there is limited evidence to support the claim that the action of school administrators in a PLC directly influences teacher practices and student achievement. Ellerania and Gentile (2013) indicated that the action of school administrators in PLCs did not have a direct influence on student achievement, but leaders who create a climate of collective learning and a sense of belonging among teachers can positively improve student's achievement. This study suggested that the influence of school administrators on school climate and culture positively impacted the creation PLCs and student performance. The school culture must be one in which stakeholders value and support collective learning for the betterment of the entire school community (Ellerania & Gentile, 2013).

The findings of Heller et al. (2012) are consistent with the findings of Byrd et al. (2007) who found that while the school administrators can influence student achievement, most of the influence is indirect and often mediated through teachers. Further, Walther-Thomas (2016) validated these earlier studies, by indicating that shared leadership in schools enhances the working relationships and improves student achievement. Additionally, teachers feel more attached to a professional community and there is a higher probability of using instructional practices that improve student learning. According to Walther-Thomas (2016), effective leadership involves the creation of favorable conditions for the success of a PLC. Effective leadership means knowing what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and why to do it (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2014). PLCs need to be supported by school administrators for them to be successful.

Although, as previously stated, much of administrators' influence on students is indirect, it is, nevertheless, significant. Research studies have been designed to examine the link between school administrators and increased student academic achievement and researchers have suggested there are specific ways school leaders influence student achievement (see Davis et al., 2005; Egizii, 2015). Some of the common elements in the studies include that school leaders and teachers should presume collective ownership of student's learning in their culture (DuFour & Eaker, 2008); school administrators and teachers must build trusting relationships; and school administrators should ensure internal and external coherence to support learning and teaching (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2014) and creating an urgency for change. These are all elements school administrators may directly influence. Additionally, these elements are closely related to elements of

effective PLCs (DuFour et al., 2005), and they are examples of some of the ways school administrators may support PLCs.

Effective school administrators shape the vision of success based on high academic standards, creating a conducive environment where cooperative spirit, safety, and other basics of meaningful interaction prevail. Effective school administrators can also cultivate leadership in teachers so teachers can play their parts in the realization of the school's vision. Finally, effective school administrators can help improve instruction and manage processes, data, and people to enhance the school environment (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2014). Instructional leadership is the most common theme that has emerged in the literature (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2014). Hoaglund et al., (2014) noted that school administrators' practices that aimed at enhancing instruction had a significant influence on student achievement. To address poor teacher performance and facilitate increased student achievement, school district leaders should develop the capacity of school administrators, so they have a thorough understanding of instructional leadership (Egizii, 2015; Walther-Thomas, 2016).

A Review of the Six Dimensions of PLCs

As stated earlier, there is no single definition of a PLC, as it can take on many forms (Kelemen, 2009). The extensive review conducted by Tahir et al. (2013) resulted in the identification of six core dimensions of PLCs which include collaborative learning, collective learning, shared values and vision, shared and supportive leadership, shared practice, and supportive conditions for professionals. Exploring each dimension in further detail will provide greater insight as to the dynamics of a PLC.

Collaborative Culture and Collective Learning

When teachers collaborate with other teachers and remove the boundaries of grade-level, subjects, and hierarchical positions, truly collaborative culture is formed within the school (Ellerania & Gentile, 2013). In this collaborative culture, teachers and other school staff members work together to find the best solutions to the challenges they face in the classroom. All school organizations have internal and external conflicts. To cite a few, the school's educators may be having difficulty justifying the school's vision, meeting common core state standards, or meeting the expectations of parents (Warren, 2011; Woodland & Mazur, 2015). Under such challenging circumstances, teachers who work as individuals and focus on their class and subject rather than school progress can create a formula for mediocre school proficiency and student outcomes (Addley, 2014).

Shared Values and Vision

Participants of a PLC should have a unified vision for school reformation and student progress and work to assure that their vision produces the framework that guides educational and administrative decisions. A shared vision does not simply mean agreeing with a good idea. Satisfying the overall vision requires making a mental image about the execution of the idea, determining its structural requirement, and establishing the procedure that executes the practice of the idea (Aylsworth, 2012). In several schools, the vision of the administration is not the same as that of the teachers, and this difference results in internal conflicts and prevailing gaps between idea sharing and idea execution (Tahir et al., 2013).

Discussing a different dimension of shared values, Ellerania and Gentile (2013) explained that a learning community engages and develops the commitment and talents of all individuals in a group effort, who, then, advocate for a commitment to continuous PD. The positive core values, embedded in the day-to-day actions of the school staff, are exercised even greater within the PLC culture. Self-awareness, self-critique, and a commitment of members to seek ongoing renewal and improvement are strengthened by the support of shared values within the learning community. For example, Intanam and Wongwanich (2014) discussed that staff members picture students as academically capable and envision learning environments that can realize and foster each student's potential achievement. Sharing this common value, school norms and teachers' behaviors can easily be adjusted to empower students and build a stronger communication network between teachers and students. In this setting, students can contribute to their learning environment. This shared value entirely changes the role of teachers; they act more as mediators and mentors in fostering student progress rather than as supervisors or instructors (Hanraets, et al., 2011). The most proper implementation of teachers as mediators and mentors is only possible when all participants share the same values and vision (Intanam & Wongwanich, 2014).

Shared Leadership

A recent researcher on school reform and instructional efficacy has shown that school improvement and increased student achievement have been significantly influenced at the building level by the school principal (Egizii, 2015). It should be noted that school and district leadership provide a vital bridge between educational

reform activities or initiatives and ensuring that such initiatives have a significant influence on student performance (Herbers et al., 2011). The concepts of supportive and shared leadership highlight the role of school administrators in the formation, sustenance, and implementation of PLCs. In PLCs, a school principal is viewed not as a separate participant, but as an equal participant with teachers. Thus, in forming a PLC structure in a school or district, school administrators must realize their vital role in achieving the common goals of teacher learning and improved student outcomes (Levine, 2010).

Lindle (2016) proposed a set of practices essential for effective school administrators. This includes shaping a vision of success based on high academic standards; creating a conducive environment where cooperative spirit, safety, and other basics of meaningful interaction prevail; cultivating leadership in teachers to enable them to contribute to the realization of school's vision; and improving instruction and management of data-driven instruction to enhance the school environment (Lindle, 2016). In terms of transforming informal teacher networks into PLCs, the role of school administrators is quite pivotal in a PLC's success (Zhao, 2013). The success of PLCs depends on school administrators employing that delicate "tight/loose" balance (i.e., strict and strong when enforcing the essential elements of an effective PLC, yet flexible enough to allow each school to formulate its unique strategies and processes for meeting these goals). Given this premise, several questions arise regarding the credibility and assessment of the PLC framework: How can a PLC be implemented successfully in a district-wide setting without disturbing teacher's routine and other

student facilitation activities? How can positive interaction be assured between distinctive entities and schools (Kelcey et al., 2014)?

According to the tenets of shared leadership, the school principal should not have an administrative edge or upper hand over the teachers when the administrator becomes part of a PLC. As all participants share the same interest and goals, the leadership within the community should also be shared (Holmes et al., 2013). School administrators need to identify potential teachers who can design practical ways for achieving the shared objectives and provide them with adequate administrative support and guidance to implement the collaborative knowledge derived from the PLC (Holmes et al., 2013).

For the successful implementation of new strategies and interventions in schools, it is necessary that the school administrators and professional teacher-base work together without any hierarchical differences (Aylsworth, 2012). In a recent study, Intanam and Wongwanich (2014) found that the involvement of school administrators in the school reform process has a direct and discernible influence on teaching procedures and student outcomes. In another study, Aylsworth (2012) found that student achievement levels were significantly higher on the state's academic performance index when school administrators undertook and led the school reform process. When individuals are working in teams, their performance is relatively high as compared to when they are working solo. According to Lezotte and Snyder (2011), the performance of individuals was nearly double at the team level as compared to that of the individual level. At the team level, both potency (the belief that the team will

achieve its objective regardless of the task) and efficacy (the belief that the team can accomplish the task assigned) not only increase team performance but also collaborative efforts. In the absence of collaborative relationships and skills, it is impossible to continuously learn. School administrators and teachers are better positioned to work in teams and develop new mental models that enhance performance. PLCs are likely to be successful when they are supported by adult learning theory and PD.

Shared Personal Practice

Collective efforts from every individual involved in PLCs guarantee the formation of a creative learning environment for students (Tahir et al., 2013). When teachers and the principal share their personal experiences, it becomes simpler to identify the gaps in the curriculum to develop fruitful learning strategies for students (Tahir et al., 2013). When teachers are confined within the boundaries of their classrooms, they often continue with the same conventional, sometimes ineffective teaching approach. However, when teachers are placed in an inquiry-oriented practice, they learn from their peers and broaden their approach (Louis et al., 2010; Shah, 2012).

One of the fundamental benefits of the shared practice is that teachers develop higher-order thinking skills based on the learning and teaching experiences of the other teachers. When information is exchanged through personal sharing and collaborative learning, teachers achieve a more diversified teaching experience (Ellerania, & Gentile, 2013). As discussed earlier, acquiring knowledge and skills has become much more diversified; teaching has become a more challenging job. The dimension of the shared

practice of a PLC addresses this very issue. By engaging in a collaborative learning experience, teachers might be more equipped to meet the diverse needs of students. When teachers are asked to share their classroom practices, they become cautious of what they say and simultaneously analyze their practices (Shah, 2012). Thus, educators' engagement in a PLC can result in opportunities to learn from peer knowledge and experience, and honed self-analysis ability, as teachers share their practices (Kord & Karimi, 2015; Shah, 2012).

Supportive Conditions and Structures

Supportive conditions are bound by school structures that shape the capacity to create and develop a PLC (Gray, et al., 2015). A structured framework with a fundamental vision that is defined is essential for effective PLCs. The existence of such a structured framework within the school establishes a set of conditions to ensure the formation and successful implementation of a PLC. If a school's structure does not emphasize collective learning, then, most likely, the teachers are not practicing a collaborative teaching environment (Levine, 2010). Only when school administrators support collaborative learning and shared practice can a PLC be effective (Addley, 2014).

Two types of supportive structures are required of PLCs: structural conditions and collegial relationships (Penuel et al., 2012). The structural conditions entail time management, communication procedures, adequate resources for collaboration, the proximity of teachers to one another, and staff development procedures (Penuel et al., 2012). If a school's administration supports the formation and implementation of a PLC

but has failed to schedule time in the teacher's schedule to collaborate or to establish proper communication networks between the teachers, then the administrators and teachers may fail to meet the purpose of an effective PLC (Penuel, et al., 2012). It is indispensable to create a proper structure, time allocation, resources, knowledge, and communication networks as vital components to the success of a formal learning community (Levine, 2010).

Supportive Conditions and Relationships

An effective PLC includes a strong collegial relationship as well as the following: positive educator attitudes; widely shared vision; norms of continuous critical inquiry and improvement; and respect, trust, and positive, caring relationships between colleagues (Nelson et al., 2013). The presence of social conflicts and feelings of distrust between school administrators and teachers would not work in favor of the shared vision of school reformation and improved student results (Woodland & Mazur, 2015). Thus, school administrators and teachers must develop positive and collegial relationships before they may form a PLC. Otherwise, results may be tainted by personal vengeance, interpersonal conflicts, or negative attitudes within the group (Ellerania & Gentile, 2013).

Implications

Student achievement in American schools continues to be a major concern to all stakeholders (Backhoff et al., 2012). Policymakers have implemented national testing for all students in mathematics and literacy with the intent of measuring and promoting

improvement in student achievement, but this initiative has yielded minimal improvement (Backhoff et al., 2012).

To improve student achievement, the local school district's administrators implemented PLCs as a strategy to improve teacher instructional practice and student achievement. Policy makers have emphasized that one key to improving educational outcomes lies in enhancing the quality of teachers and their instructional practices (Barrett et al., 2012). According to Hanraets et al., (2011), educators are increasingly considering PLCs to stimulate and facilitate PD. Further, Hoaglund et al. (2014) stated that a structure for teacher collaboration is one of the end results of an effective PLC. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on their instructional practices to improve student achievement. Based on the findings of this study, a PD model was created for school administrators on how to implement and sustain a PLC. As a result of engagement in this PD, school administrators may have increased capacity to improve professional discourse within their school focusing on reflective practice, action research, and collaborative problem-solving.

Summary

This qualitative study explored school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement. The goal of using PLCs is to improve instruction to make significant gains in student achievement (Lippy & Zamora, 2013). In section 1, I presented my problem statement and research questions as well as reviewed the literature on PLCs. In

section 2, I outlined the research approach, the research design, the setting and sample, and described the instruments that were used for data collection. In Section 2, I also explained how the data collection and analysis process and describe the assumptions, limitations, and scope of the study. Section 3 contains a description of the purpose and outcomes of this study as well as the proposed project resulting from my study. A review of the literature on the project genre is also included.

Section 4 provides a reflection and conclusion with a narrative of the school administrators' and teachers' perspectives in participating in PLCs. In this section, I address the sustainability of PLCs. A discussion about my professional growth as a scholar conducting this study was also presented. Finally, I provided possible directions for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

To investigate the research questions for this project study, I used a basic qualitative research design to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs had on their instructional practice to provide a formal structure that will improve school administrators' leadership capacity.

The questions that guide this study are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the school administrators' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices to improve student achievement?

RQ 2: What are middle school teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on their instructional practices to improve student achievement?

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The district administration under study selected five underperforming Kindergarten to 8th (K-8) grade schools to implement PLCs. After the implementation, there was a 2-year decline in student performance on the state's mathematics and reading criterion reference test. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the middle school administrators' and schoolteachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on teachers' instructional practices to improve student achievement.

In basic qualitative research, a researcher is interested in capturing the individual's point of view through one data collection strategy, interviewing (Creswell, 2014). General and broad questions are posed to participants in a way that allows them

to share their views relatively unconstrained by others' perspectives (Kozleski, 2017). Creswell (2014) indicated the quantitative design is appropriate when assessing for statistically significant relationships between numerically measurable constructs. Therefore, a quantitative design was not appropriate for this study because a quantitative study is used to explain the relationships between two variables. Qualitative studies are not restricted to the number of data sources. A qualitative study, according to Creswell, has multiple data points that describe and compare information, which is then used to provide insight into an issue.

The basic qualitative research design (BQRD) was appropriate for me to explore the topic of perspectives of influence PLCs have on instructional practices. According to Gizir and Yildiz (2018), BQRD can provide information on the respondents' perspectives about issues in education. A researcher using BQRD attempts to depict the participants accurately, including capturing their opinions and viewpoints about the phenomenon. BQRD is therefore an appropriate research design when one's goal is to offer an in-depth perspective of the research subjects (Harris & Stamp, 2016; Lodico et al., 2010). A BQRD approach is also useful for researchers to describe the phenomenon itself or the unique characteristics of the target population sample (Lodico et al., 2010). A BQRD is used to explore the perspectives of the participants being studied (Gizir & Yildiz, 2018). Instructional practices of school administrators and teachers could have far-reaching implications for students' and schools' performances, and a study with a basic qualitative research design is appropriate for a better understanding of these practices.

Justification

A BQRD was appropriate for this study since it allowed me to understand participants' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement of effective PLCs. I used a BQRD to investigate school administrators' and teachers' perspectives about the influence PLCs have on teachers' instructional practices to improve student achievement. I used interviews to gather information from a targeted population to obtain participants' perspectives on the influence PLCs have on their instruction to improve student achievement.

There are five qualitative approaches, which include case study, narrative analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory (Creswell, 2014). Researchers use a case study design to capture participants' opinions and viewpoints about a phenomenon by collecting data over a long period (Creswell, 2014). I did not use a case study design because I was not interested in collecting data over a long time. In narrative analysis, participants share stories about their lives, while a phenomenological study directs the researcher to identify the essence of an experience about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). These two models did not align with the purpose and research questions of this study. Ethnography is a type of study in which a researcher focuses on a cultural group in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). I decided against using the ethnography approach because this is not a study of a specific culture. The grounded theory is described as a study which involves a researcher capturing an individual's point of view through multiple data collection strategies such

as interviewing and observation to generate theory (Creswell, 2014). Grounded theory was not appropriate because the result of the study is not to develop a new theory.

BQRDs do not entail a focus on explaining causal relationships such as the cause of a given or situation (Harris & Stamp, 2016). Instead, a BQRD is used to explore the perspectives and attitudes of the participants being studied (Harris & Stamp, 2016). I chose this design for my study because a basic qualitative study is used to gauge perspectives of and attitudes about a phenomenon..

Participants

The setting for this study was a middle school where school administrators and teachers implemented PLCs in an urban public school district in the northeastern United States. The school under study serves approximately 476 students. According to the district's website, 70% of the student population is identified as Hispanic, making up the largest subgroup of the student body and 30% of the students are African American. A typical school in the district under study is made up of 33.1% Hispanic students, so the middle school has a considerably different ethnic distribution compared to other schools in the district. Additionally, 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Participants

The superintendent for the site of study authorized me to conduct interviews for my project study. Participants from the school were two school administrators and six classroom teachers who were chosen based on meeting the criteria for selecting participants. In Table 3, I have included the demographics of the participants.

Table 3

Participants' Demographics

Participants	Job Title	Gender
SL-1	Principal	Male
SL-2	Assistant Principal	Female
T-1	5th Grade	Female
T-2	5th Grade	Female
T-3	6th Grade	Female
T-4	6th Grade	Female
T-5	7th Grade English	Female
T-6	7th Grade Science	Male

Criteria for Selecting Participants

I invited school administrators consisting of one principal and one assistant principal and six teachers to participate in my study. The inclusion criteria for the study were the following:

1. The participating school administrators and teachers who currently work at the school for at least 2 years where the PLC is being practiced.

2. The school administrators and teachers who have completed all the training associated with the PLC implementation and have participated in PLCs for at least 2 years.

Justification for the Number of Participants

To select the participants for the study, I used a purposeful sampling technique based on the selection criteria to participate in the interview process. Purposeful heterogeneity sampling is, generally, a sampling method that a researcher might use to secure a sample from a population with common characteristics or traits (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, all eight participants involved in the study met the selection criteria.

Patton (2010) stated that in qualitative research, there are no specific rules to determine appropriate sample size. Rather, in qualitative research, the sample time allotted, resources available, and study objectives should determine the size of the sample.

Establishing Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

The relationship between the participants and me was critical to the success of this project study. For example, it was important that the participant viewed the researcher-participant relationship as a two-way interaction and that participants felt comfortable in contributing to the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I was not the supervisor of the participants of this study. As an employee of the school district under study, I ensured the participants that I understand the complexities and sensitivity of our relationship and completely respect their privacy. I remained objective in my opinions regarding the participants' responses to prevent any bias that might taint the study. Due to the nature of this study, it was my obligation to ensure that the participants knew that no harm would come to them because of their participation in the study. The participants of this study were assured that the information provided would only be used for the study and will not be disclosed to any third party. I observed participants' confidentiality participants were not required to disclose any identifying information such as name or address.

Ethical Protection of Participants

There were various ethical issues to consider in carrying out my research, including issues related to informed consent. The participants in this study were given background information concerning the study. The letter each participant received

detailed the purpose of the study. Only participants who voluntarily agreed took part in the study. They were not required to answer all interview questions. They could have declined to participate or refuse to answer questions at any time with no penalty. After approval from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board was granted, I provided a consent form to each participant that contained information about the study and requested the middle school administrators and teachers to volunteer to participate in this study.

To address the ethical issue of confidentiality of information of the participants, I assured the participants that their information will only be used for the study. Each participant was given a number value and only I knew who the participants were, and real names were not used in the publication of the report. I will store all data in my password-protected computer locked in my home office for 5 years beyond the completion of the study. All data that were collected will be kept in my home office under lock and key.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, general and broad questions are posed to participants, allowing participants to share their views relatively unconstrained by others' perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative studies are not restricted to the number of data sources. A qualitative study, according to Creswell (2014), has multiple data points that describe and compare information that is then used to provide insight into an issue. The primary data collection platform was a semistructured interview where the participants described their perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices that improve student achievement.

Interviews

I interviewed six middle school teachers and two school administrators who have participated in the PLC at the local site. According to Merriam (2009), in qualitative research, the sole data source may be semistructured interviews. Semistructured interview protocols contain open-ended questions that researchers ask of all participants, with additional probing questions to gather additional information (Appendix B and C).

The questions for the semistructured interview were used to elicit detailed information from the participants. This format allowed me to respond to an answer to the question and ask for clarification of the response from the participant. The questions for the interviews were generated by me using the constructs and concepts found in Olivier et al.'s (2010) Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA-R) tool.

The PLCA-R tool, developed by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, is an online questionnaire. PLCA-R has six factors relating to an effective PLC: Shared values and vision, collective learning and practice, shared and supportive leadership, shared personal practice, supportive relationships, and supportive structures. All teacher participants were asked the same questions, and the school administrators were asked another standardized set of questions about the topic. At the convenience of the school administrators and teachers, the interviews took place at the local school site. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission, and I transcribed the interviews for later data analysis. Interviews took about 30-60 minutes, and each

participant was interviewed only once. The interviews of participants were scheduled in advance at a mutually agreed time and place during noninstructional time.

Access to Participants

I sent a letter via school email to the district supervisor of Research, Assessment, and Analytics requesting permission to conduct this study, which follows local school district protocol. The district supervisor sent me a letter of approval via school email. I submitted the approval notice along with the application to conduct my study to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon receipt of my IRB approval (06-25-19-0370956), I invited selected school administrators and teachers to participate in this study. Participants who agreed to be part of my study respond to my school email address.

Role of the Researcher

This is my fourth year as a principal of a high school in the district under study. For 10 years, I was the principal of one of the five pilot schools where I was instrumental in implementing the PLCs. My current professional position did not affect data collection. Presently, I have no authority over any of the participating school administrators or teachers because I no longer serve as an administrator at the school site where the participants are employed. My previous position at the local school may result in a potential bias on my part. To mitigate this, I engaged in reflective journaling of my own experiences throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

Following the data collection, I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews into a word processing document for data analysis. Following the reading, I then used thematic analysis to analyze the responses to find emerging themes. I used open and axial are coding strategies which were used to reduce data to determine themes or subthemes. Open coding is a search for the repetition of words, phrases, or concepts. Axial coding is a two-step process. Step 1 is a search for relationships among the open codes and raw data for categories. Step 2 categories are reviewed to search for patterns among the categories which may result in themes or temporary themes. (Merriam, 2009).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyze the interview data. It involved the identification of themes or patterns within qualitative data (Braun et al., 2014). The core skills researchers need to perform TA are useful for conducting other forms of qualitative data analysis. As a method rather than a methodology from the perspective of teaching and learning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), TA is not tied to a particular theoretical or epistemological approach. It is a more flexible approach than other qualitative methodologies. Analyzing qualitative data using TA follows a six-phase coding process proposed by Braun et al., (2014). The phases of thematic analysis include becoming familiar with the qualitative data collected, generation of open codes, theme search, reviewing themes, the definition of themes, and write-up.

Phase 1: Becoming Familiar with the Qualitative Data Collected

I needed to be familiar with the entire data corpus by reading and rereading transcripts and making notes to jot down early impressions. I immersed myself in the data collected through repeated reading of the interview transcripts of school administrators and teachers and any other information gathered (Braun et al., 2014).

Phase 2: Generation of Open Codes

The generation of open codes involves organizing data into a systematic and meaningful way and was a process by which I reduced the data into small chunks of meaning (see Braun et al., 2014). I analyzed the participants' responses and then wrote notes in the margins of transcripts and recorded general thoughts about the data at this stage (see Creswell, 2014). Consideration was given to overlaps, disjuncture, patterns, and what they say about the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Each code had to give meaning to the coded data. Open coding was completed by searching the raw data for repeated words and phrases, then labeling the code to give the code meaning.

Phase 3: Coding and Theme Development

Coding and theme development can either be directed by the content of gathered data (inductive approach) or directed by existing ideas and concepts (deductive approach) (Braun et al., 2014). Theme development is based on axial coding. I searched the axial codes for patterns among the codes and the raw data for each group of participants. The patterns I found became emerging or temporary themes. The emerging or temporary themes were organized to form broad themes, which make a connection to the research

questions and the conceptual framework. These connections may determine the relationship of the codes to themes and the theory as the framework to analyze the data with a thematic approach (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Researchers must ensure that themes are used to answer the RQs and align with the framework. During this phase, I reviewed the data with the open themes to determine if the data supports the themes. Consideration was given to whether the themes are distinct and if there are sufficient data to support them. It should be decided if the theme supports the research question (Braun et al., 2014). It may be determined that something is missing, and subthemes should be generated (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Phase 5: Definition of Themes

In this step, the researcher aims to identify the core of what each theme is saying and determine whether the themes fit the research questions (Braun et al., 2014). Ravitch and Carl (2020) indicated this is the step where the stories of the themes are written. Not only are the data included supports the themes, but it is necessary to explain how the themes and the data connect. Additionally, the story shares the relationship of the themes to the research questions and the many ways the theory frames the themes.

Phase 6: Write-Up

I answered the question to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives with this final narrative. In this write-up, I ascertained the merit of the study, the worth, and the significance. In this phase, I also provided the reader a summative description of the study (Braun et al., 2014).

Evidence of Quality

Evidence of quality is achieved when a study uses qualitative methods needed to check the validity and prevent bias of the research questions by analyzing the questions through multiple perspectives. I followed the procedures from Walden University's Institutional Review Board to ensure credibility and accuracy. I offered a summary of these results to participants for member checking purposes whereby participants reviewed to ensure that the results of the data analysis adequately and accurately captured their perspectives in participating in PLCs. In qualitative study, member checking is a technique used to establish credibility and trustworthiness (Morse, 2015).

Discrepant or Nonconforming Cases

In a qualitative study, it is possible to identify data that might contradict the findings. One way of addressing this is by identifying those discrepancies in the data that do not seem to fit well (Anderson & Aydin, 2005). I considered all data, including seemingly contradictory data, and actively searched for negative cases or those that disconfirm other results during the data analysis process. This is consistent with Braun et al., (2014) thematic analysis, as described earlier in this section. Such data were included in the analysis and summary.

Limitations of the Findings

Limitations, potential weaknesses, or problems of a study may affect the results and relate to inadequate measures of variables, loss or lack of participants, small sample sizes, and other factors typically related to data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). The findings of this study are limited by two factors: sample size and research site. The

sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling which restricted the sample size. The semistructured interviews consisted of eight participants which may not be typical of other populations. While the number of participants decreased the volume of the data, it is important to note that the data collected met the criteria for trustworthiness.

Data Analysis Results

Description of How Data Were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

The participants of this study were interviewed to understand their perspectives about the influence of PLCs have on teachers' instructional practices to improve student achievement. This basic qualitative design was used to capture the school administrators' and teachers' points of view through interviews (Kozleski, 2017).

At the study site, semistructured individual interviews were conducted with two school administrators and six classroom teachers. I scheduled the interviews for the school administrators and the classroom teachers over 3 days. Each interview was conducted privately in the school's conference room. A sign was placed on the door (Do Not Disturb) to prevent any interruptions while the interviews were in progress. The open-ended questions were asked in a way to allow each participant to share views unhindered by the views of other participants in the study. On the first day, four teachers were individually interviewed at four different times. On the second day, individual interviews were conducted with the two school administrators and two teachers. On the third and final day, I interviewed the remaining two teachers. The interviews each lasted between 25 to 35 minutes.

At the start of each interview, the interview protocol (Appendix C) was used to ensure that each participant was given the same directions. I thanked the participants for agreeing to be part of the study and reviewed the consent form to ensure that each participant understood their rights. At the end of each day of interviews, I uploaded the data into my home computer for additional safety and security of the information. Additionally, I saved the information to a USB flash drive and labeled each participant's file with the code given to remove any identification of their names.

Findings

After transcribing the audio recordings onto Microsoft Word documents, I began the process of organizing the information onto the transcripts. Study participants from the local site were two school administrators and six classroom teachers who were chosen based upon the fixed criteria for participant selection. Job title identification was important because it distinguished between information shared by administrators and teachers.

Phase 1: Becoming Familiar with the Qualitative Data Collected

The first step in this qualitative analysis was to immerse me in the data and to ensure that the data were in a format to ensure ease of analysis. I read each of the transcripts three times and searched for words or phrases that stood out or were repeated. After reviewing each of the transcripts, I listened carefully to the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the data that were written. I chose one transcript at a timed transcript and noted in the margins my understandings and thoughts. I continued this

process with the rest of the transcribed documents. These margin comments were used during the second phase of analysis.

Phase 2: Generation of Open Codes

In this preliminary stage, I used open coding while searching through the data for repeated words and phrases that were transcribed from the recorded audio. The open coding that resulted from the search from the participants' open responses were reviewed a second time The generation of open codes inculcates organizing data into a systematic and meaningful way and is a process by which the researcher reduces the data into small chunks of meaning (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I analyzed the school administrators' interview data first followed by an analysis of the teacher's data. I then wrote notes in the margins of transcripts and recorded general thoughts about the data at this stage (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). To make sense of the data, notes were written to organize thoughts about the data and the emerging themes and patterns. Each code must give meaning to the coded data. Open coding is completed by searching the raw data for repeated words and phrases, then labeling the code by color to give the code meaning. Chunks of data (repeated words or central ideas) were pulled exactly as written from the data (Saldana, 2015). Upon the completion of the open coding process, axial coding was used to combine the codes into categories. Axial coding is grouping open codes to form categories by examining the raw and open coded data for relationships among the codes (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Similar codes and supporting data were highlighted using the same color. The colors supported the organization of similar codes into categories

Phase 3: Coding and Theme Development

In this project study, an inductive approach was used along with open and axial coding. Interview transcripts were read to determine initial codes. After completing the initial coding, I sorted the codes into groupings or categories using axial coding. I grouped similar codes and created categories based on the relationships among the initial codes. Once these categories were determined, I then searched the data for repeated categories to determine emerging themes. Temporary themes were determined by the number of codes that emerged within the categories. At this time, codes were further reviewed and analyzed for patterns and ideas that might be connected to the research questions. Nowell et al. (2017) suggested temporary themes may be directly connected to the data and broad ideas suggested by the participants.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The purpose of reviewing and defining themes is to search the emerging or temporary themes to determine whether the themes answer the research question. During this phase, I again read the responses from the participants who were interviewed. I also reviewed the themes that emerged from the data. In this phase, a chart was created to illustrate the themes along with the supporting data to provide a summary of the raw data collected.

Phase 5: Defining Themes

In this phase, temporary themes were reviewed to determine themes that were aligned with the research questions. This phase included me determining whether each theme that emerged from a temporary theme was connected to the data and how it was

connected. I reviewed the data collected and created a thematic graph to illustrate how the codes fit into the themes. The graph supported me in sorting the codes into themes. The themes allowed me to develop greater meaning from my findings and determine whether the codes, categories, themes, and research questions were aligned.

Phase 6: Write-Up

Once the identification of the themes was determined, a comprehensive report was written. The thematic graph was used to guide the written narrative of the findings and participants' excerpts were included to support each theme. Findings from the data analysis were supported by the responses of the interviews. Information was cross-checked with the participants to ensure accuracy of the data. In table 4, I illustrated the connection amongst the codes, categories and themes that emerged from the data from the participants' responses from the interviews.

Table 4

Outline of Codes, Categories, and Themes

RQ1: What are the school administrators' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices to improve student achievement?		
Codes	**Categories**	**Themes**
• Grade level • Data teams • Building data teams • Staff meetings • Google	• Vertical alignment • Shared strategies • Problem of practice	Share ideas, problems to improve their instruction.
• Student work • Math data • Social-Emotional learning • Ethnic groups • Benchmark • Peer Observations • School administrators' observations	• Common formative assessments • Improvement process • Community	Accountability
RQ2: What are the middle school teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices to improve student achievement?		
Codes	**Categories**	**Themes**
• Goals • Groups of teachers • More opportunities to share ideas • Vertical team meetings • Meeting norms • Coverage	• Schedule • Communication • Time	Absence of structure.
• Group chat • Mentorship • Environment • Support • Instructional coaches • Evaluation cycle	• Discourse • Sharing of best practices • Teachers reflecting on their practices	Human capital to support teacher instructional capacity.
• Technology • Innovative instruction • Student engagement • ELL students • Math program • Classroom libraries • Educational journals • Substitutes • Online program	• Student engagement • Technology • Resources	Limited resources to support PLCs

Theme 1: Share Ideas, Problems to Improve their Instructional Capacity.

The structural conditions entail time management, communication procedures, adequate resources for collaboration, the proximity of teachers to one another, and staff development procedures. If a school's administration supports the formation and implementation of a PLC but has failed to schedule time in the teacher's schedule to collaborate or to establish proper communication networks between the teachers, then that there is a good chance that the PLC will not be effective in its purpose. It is indispensable to create a proper structure, time allocation, resources, knowledge, and communication networks as vital components to the success of a formal learning community.

SL-1 indicated: "We [school community] feel we need to monthly talk about our problems of practice." SL-2 also indicated: "We have a shared drive in Google Drive for [instructional] topics like small group instruction." The school administrators' theory of action is to strengthen teacher-to-teacher interaction through PLCs and to address low student achievement on state criterion-referenced assessments by enabling teachers to have the resources to carve out time for professional learning. The school administrators' expectation is for PLCs to address the needs of all students.

When a well-designed PLCs criterion is established, it offers teachers opportunities that help them master their course content and polish their teaching skills. PLCs allow teachers to participate in school development and to promote improved working conditions. These activities can shape the learning environment directly, and indirectly, affecting better student outcomes. School administrators' expectation is for

teachers to learn by interacting and collaborating with their peers on pedagogy. Both school administrators also stated that if teachers are given time to share and to reflect on their practice, their teaching quality will improve.

Theme 2: Accountability

Once PLC teams have an effective structure where educators are collaborating, sharing of best practices can start. This commences by building shared knowledge where the team outlines essential outcomes based on available resources, assessment frameworks, district benchmark assessments, and federal standards. Team members should be interdependent, and they should work towards a shared goal and should be mutually accountable for the results. The goals of the teams should be measurable, specific and strategic, attainable, time-bound and result oriented. By identifying the goals, the team may focus on a measurable target within a specified timeframe. When the goal is measurable and bounded by time, the implementation team can then focus on the best approach to achieving the goal more so in resource and time-constrained environments. By setting the timeframe of achieving the outcomes, the team must be action oriented to meet the target. S1: "We have benchmark assessments; student work is analyzed. We are always trying to figure out how students read and what they understand." S2: "We do have a very effective building data team and there are many voices on the team. We also have data teams and administration usually sits on those teams." Creating team goals is an indication of commitment for continuous improvement. To measure the outcomes of the task assigned, it is recommended to use a common approach of assessment. The use of common assessments is preferred in PLCs due to

their efficiency (shared tasks save time), fairness (promotes similar pacing, consistent standards and common goals), effective monitoring (evidence of progress), informs individual teacher practice, collective response, and team capacity**.**

Theme 3: Absence of Structure

Supportive structures refer to time management, communication procedures, adequate resources for collaboration, the proximity of teachers to one another, and staff development procedures. All the participants of this study claimed that it is indispensable to create a proper structure. SL1: "We don't have a structure in place for teachers to observe their peers and meet with school administrators." SL2: "We haven't been able to enough of that [peer observations] because coverage [of classes] is tight." T1: "We are constant group chat, and we tend to update each other via text." T4: "We don't get the opportunity to meet with administrators." T5 stated: "We don't get the opportunity to meet with school administrators." T6: "He [school leader] does not engage with teachers."

PLC leadership can provide a functioning structure for teachers to collaborate and positively effect student achievement. If the PLCs are appropriately implemented, it may become a catalyst in transforming teachers' instructional practices. Resources, knowledge sharing, and communication networks are vital components to the success of PLCs.

Theme 4: Human Capital to Support Teacher Instructional Capacity

Human capital is defined as an approach to increase teachers' content knowledge to improve student achievement. The principal of the school under study has invested in his teachers by providing them with three instructional coaches. The coaches all have

three clear distinct roles and responsibilities that will provide each teacher with strategies to improve their instructional capacity.

T1, T4, and T5 mentioned their literacy and math instructional coaches as a vital resource to support their instructional capacity. T1: “We’re lucky to have coaches in our building full-time.” S2 indicated: The coaches [instructional] are the number one resources available for teachers.” T3 and T6 stated that having technology in the classroom helped with student engagement. T3: “We had introduced Google classroom to all the teachers before the pandemic.” T6: “We use math games [on the computer] to engage students.” The goal of the principal is to increase human capital by providing time during the school day for the coaches to meet with teachers to discuss instructional strategies. Based on students’ increased outcomes this strategy has been effective for students and teachers.

Theme 5: Limited Resources to Support PLCs

The formation of PLCs is intended to increase teachers’ instructional capacity and directly to improve student achievement. Teachers have individual freedom to try new teaching strategies within their classrooms. This is often based on their continual assessment of teaching practice. With the emphasis on student achievement, teachers should be provided with an opportunity to view other teachers and classrooms and actively participate in PD. Additionally, school leaders and administrators are under pressure to build collaborative time without affecting instruction delivery time. This obstacle forces teachers to focus on their work, thus minimizing opportunities for developing shared knowledge. PLCs are built on collective inquiry, reflective discussion,

and collaboration; therefore, a lack of resources to build teachers' capacity is a recipe for failure. Therefore, providing funds for substitutes teachers to allow classroom teachers to attend targeted PD to improve their instructional capacity is imperative.

The teachers in this study indicated that there are limited funds to adequately support teachers to increase their instructional knowledge and ultimately, improve student achievement. T1: "I feel like I just kind of have to go searching for it [resources]." T2: We have to go outside of the school system to get resources." T4 continued to state that "working in an urban school district, you have very few resources." T5 stated that there are enough resources to support teachers in their professional learning. According to the teachers, administrators provided the teachers with computers, instructional coaches to support their learning. T5: "We have a lot of resources to support teachers."

Summary of Findings

According to the participants of this study, every PLC has a different structure for collaboration, so no universal guidelines are defining the time or space for collaborating and sharing of best practices. Consistent with the findings of this study, there are challenges in the current state of the PLC, which are significant barriers to true professional learning. There is minimal coherence and connection across professional learning opportunities. The priorities of school administrators are not necessarily aligned with content supervisors or instructional coaches, and official professional learning is rarely "cross-curricular," in the sense of cutting across the dimensions of teachers' needs. There is intense competition

for teacher attention and time. Data teams, content supervisors' workshops, staff meetings, and other learning times are often organized independently, without integrated themes. In many cases, there is minimal differentiation to the needs of individual teachers.

Resources, knowledge, and communication networks are vital components to the success of a formal learning community. The steps that school administrators at this study site encouraged include team engagement and clarified essential outcomes (including student outcomes), developing common assessment criteria, defining proficiency (including standards for student proficiency), establishing improvement strategies, and analyzing improvement results. In turn, the relevant teaching stakeholders harmonized their missions, objectives, values, and visions with those of PLCs, triggering cultural and organizational change to fulfill this goal. It is in this area where school administrators and the teachers' responses were different. Teachers stated they needed consistent time to meet in PLCs to improve their professional learning.

Project Deliverable

As found in this study, PD should be designed for educators at the site of study to improve the effectiveness of their PLCs. The PD could be presented and scheduled for approximately 60 minutes per session. The PD has five steps: readiness, evaluation plan, recommendations, outcomes, and on-going coaching. All the components are essential in the planning and the assessment to improve the effectiveness of PLCs.

Summary

The research methodology, data collection, and analysis were described in Section 2. A basic qualitative research design was used to depict school administrators' and teachers' accurately, including capturing their perspectives of the influence that PLCs have on instructional practices to improve student achievement. Data collection for this study used open-ended semistructured interviews to provide insight from school administrators and teachers participating in PLCs. In Section 3 the goals and rationale are discussed. Section 3 also includes the details of my project and the implication for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide the recommendations and the outcomes for PD to improve the effectiveness of PLCs at a local school site as well as providing a review of the literature concerning PD. It is important to inform the educators at the school site about how to effectively improve and sustain PLCs to improve practices focused on increasing student achievement.

Rationale

I selected to provide PD for the school site under study to improve the effectiveness of their PLCs. During the data analysis of this basic qualitative study, I found that the school desired additional training to support its effective implementation of PLCs with a focus of improving student achievement. Several aspects of the PLC require improvement including structure and collaboration. The school district's leaders seek to provide its' schools with opportunities for PD that will provide a sustained and maintainable environment that demands a high standard of teaching. Therefore, my PD will involve a workshop for the school's administrators and teachers that include how to improve and sustain a PLC. They will have the opportunity to establish expectations for the review of student work and formative assessment outcomes to determine the extent of student learning and the effectiveness of their instructional strategies.

Review of the Literature

In Section 1, the literature review included a synthesis of the literature on the influence PLCs have on instructional practices needed to improve student achievement.

Successful implementation of PLCs supports collaboration and shared visions of school administrators and teachers (Hudson et al., 2013). In this section, the purpose of this literature review was to research scholarly literature on the implementation of effective PD using PLCs. Explicitly, I aimed to examine the benefits and the shortcomings of the different PD models when conducting the literature review.

This literature review was conducted by using Walden University's online library. Databases and search tools used included Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and SAGE. Search terms included the following terms and combination of terms: *professional development*, *professional development models*, *adult learning standardized teacher professional development, self-directed professional development,* and *site-based professional development*.

Andragogy

A review of Knowles' adult learning theory is included because the participants who will engage in my PD will be adults. Part of developing effective PD programs or initiatives is to improve the effectiveness of their PLC (McGrath, 2009). Adult learning (andragogy) is a theoretical framework that is founded on several assumptions related to the way adults learn. Andragogy is described as practices or methods of teaching adults with an emphasis on collaborative and problem-based learning processes, instead of didactic approaches to learning (McGrath, 2009). Further, with an andragogical approach to adult learning, there is more equality in the learning process between the learner and the teacher (Knowles et al., 2012).

According to Knowles' (year) theory of adult learning, six learning principles or elements play a key role when teaching adult learners:

1. Adult learners tend to be internally motivated as well as self-directed
2. Adults ten bringing life experiences and knowledge
3. Adults are known to be goal-oriented
4. Adults like to know the relevance of what they are learning
5. The teacher leader should know that adults are practical
6. The teacher leader should know that adult learners like to be respected

The andragogical model is a process model which is different compared to the content model employed by most traditional approaches to learning (Knowles et al., 2012). The andragogical instructor prepares a set of procedures in advance involving the learners in the process of learning. The andragogical model also creates an atmosphere to support learning new skills (McGrath, 2009). By understanding andragogy, it is possible to develop effective learning strategies for adults.

Project Description

Resources and Existing Supports

The findings of my study were used to guide the creation of PD for educators on the topic of PLCs to support them in improving a PLC. To have success in providing educators with high-quality PD, I will need support from the school district central office which consists of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and content supervisors. All content supervisors will be requested to provide support for the PD of the school under

study. When the content supervisors provide their expertise, there is a greater chance to improve the effectiveness of PLCs.

There is dedicated time in the district calendar for the school under study to meet. There is also a dedicated calendar for interim assessment and other data review at the district level. There are also monthly meetings and meetings within 5 days after school commences and 5 days before students begin the school year. The deputy superintendent will be asked to ensure that the educators under study will have the opportunity to participate in the workshops by scheduling the PD and communicating the information regarding the PD to all educators at the local site. Financial resources for the PD will come from the school district to purchase chart paper, copies if handouts, and lunch for each participant. I will be prepared to facilitate data-driven problem solving, planning, and action by providing training and support within their PLCs.

Potential Barrier and Solutions

PD is usually a top-down approach whereby the school's principal or superintendent are the leaders (Mahlangu, 2017). It is crucial to ensure that the school's principal trusts staff members to enable teams and individuals within the district or school to develop innovative and new strategies that can improve student outcomes. Although PD is most often implemented by the school principal or another administrator, individual teachers play a major role in ensuring that it works. Furthermore, effective, and active leadership can help facilitate the process, building shared knowledge about PD and supporting the desired results (Mahlangu, 2017). Team collaboration does not only require time, but also specific goals, activities, and a clear purpose. Mahlangu (2017)

stated the steps that school under study can follow is to encourage team engagement include clarifying essential outcomes (e.g., determination of individual student outcomes), the development of a common assessment criterion, of proficiency (e.g., identify standards that determine proficient students) analyze results and establish improvement strategies. It is important to note that the role of the educators under study does not end when the implementation of a PLC is over. DuFour et al., (2005) stated schools under study should continuously review the plan including how team productivity and student mastery are monitored and how teams respond to resistance and obstacles.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The PD will occur over 4 months for the school under study (Appendix A). Educators involved in PLCs will be required to attend all sessions instead of attending other meetings. Educators under study will be introduced to PLCs at a welcome breakfast as part of the first session. The focus of the first module will be the educators understudy introducing themselves followed by a presentation of the findings of my study and the benefits of PLCs. During the second day, I will use a PowerPoint presentation to explain the first three PLC dimensions: collective learning, collaborative learning, and shared values. On the third day, I will present the topics of a shared vision, shared and supportive leadership, shared practice, and supportive conditions. Following the third presentation, educators at the school under study will provide ongoing support for each other throughout the school year. This will be accomplished through the support of the deputy superintendent who will be asked to schedule a time during the year so the school

under study can share the positives of the implementation of PLCs and their challenges. Participants in this PD will be asked to provide feedback and evaluate their activity.

During PD, educators under study will be paired by the same grade level and the school administrators will be paired to establish peer communities. These partnerships will learn how to use nonevaluative observational protocols during PD and will employ these protocols while observing their partner. Since the school under study involved in these partnerships our peers with no authoritative roles over each other, the observations are collegial sharing rather than evaluative.

Table 5 provides a timeline for the workshop for the school under study to implement PLCs

Table 5

Timetable of Professional Learning Communities Workshop

Schedule	Activities
1st week in November	Discuss and plan a Professional Learning Community workshop with the deputy superintendent of curriculum.
2nd week in November	The Deputy superintendent and I will communicate to all school administrators regarding the three-day workshop.
1st week in December	Conduct the first session of the workshop on PLCs for educators.
	Review the evaluations from educators after the first session with the deputy superintendent for possible readjustment for the next session.
2nd week in January	Conduct the second session of the workshop on PLCs for educators.
	Review the evaluations from educators after the first session with the deputy superintendent for possible readjustment for the next session.
1st week in February	Conduct the third session of the workshop on PLCs for educators.
	Review the evaluations from educators after the first session with the deputy superintendent for possible readjustment for the next session.

Roles and Responsibilities of Researcher and Others

My first objective was to meet with the deputy superintendent of curriculum to develop the informational sessions on improving the effectiveness of PLCs for the school under study. My partnership with the deputy superintendent of curriculum provides credibility to the project. Due to such involvement in the planning phase, we will also plan how to communicate the PD plan to the school under study and other central office personnel. The deputy superintendent also has the responsibility to provide school under study materials that they need to collect evidence of the implementation of PLCs, such as minutes, student data, and PLCs schedules. The content supervisors (e.g., mathematics, science, English, social studies, and so forth) will have the responsibility to provide student achievement data. The content supervisors will also provide the school under study with instructional strategies that can be used to support teachers in PLCs.

School administrators will have the responsibility to meet monthly with each other during the school year to share their observations and any other materials from their PLCs. School administrators also have the responsibility to choose a teacher leader who will facilitate PLCs at the individual sites and develop meeting agendas, establish a meeting schedule, preparing reports, and keeping records that will be sent to the deputy superintendent. The school administrators will have the responsibility to build their colleagues' instructional capacity by sharing best practices.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluation

My PD for the school under study is designed to be implemented over three sessions along with a schedule for monthly follow-up meetings. A goal of this evaluation plan is to examine the effectiveness of my proposed PD. The attainment of the goal of this PD will be measured by using data collected from evaluative surveys specifically designed to assess the goals of the PD. I will conduct the PD with support from the deputy superintendent. My evaluation plan will identify problematic areas needing improvement in the PD. The main purpose of this process is to evaluate the proficiencies and the outcomes in this case PD for the school under study (Srimarong & Achalakul, 2017).

It is evident that my evaluation plan has critical features that can help address the goals of PD, including an emphasis on engaging participants, process evaluation, and content evaluation. I will use the evaluation as a guide to improve my delivery of future workshops with the goal of meeting the needs of all participants.

The participants in the PD will evaluate this PD opportunity using an electronic questionnaire that will be distributed after each session. I will use Survey Monkey as my survey tool. Survey Monkey is a cost-effective, easy alternative to interviews and researcher-administrated questionnaires that also has a quick turnaround. The questions are a Likert scale assessment whereby participants use a four-point scale (1= strongly agree to 4= strongly disagree) to determine if they agree or disagree with statements

regarding the six dimensions. I will also provide open-ended questions at the end of the survey.

Project Implications

This three-day PD is a platform for the continuous collaboration for the school under study that will allow them to seek and share best practices and learning to improve the effectiveness of PLCs. The core mission of PD is to provide ideal and holistic learning to all school administrators. In turn, participants of PLCs will harmonize their missions, objectives, values, and visions with those of the targeted PD, triggering cultural and organizational change (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). To achieve this goal, school administrators must have a consistent willingness to learn and share information as well as collaborate with others. Essentially, because of engaging in the PD, the participants should realize that ideal instructional outcomes cannot be realized independently. Rather, these milestones are best attained by creating an atmosphere of joint responsibility and teamwork. Consequently, school leaders will help eliminate isolation among teaching staff and will create a common focus to increase the instructional capacity of educators at the school.

By fostering a PD environment, administrators at the school under study may be able to identify and rectify mediocre teaching practices that are undetected under the compartmentalized structure. Doğan et al., (2016) stated that through collaboration, educators at the school under study can collectively reflect, plan, experiment, analyze results and assist teaches in adopting instructional strategies that can translate into optimum learning outcomes for students. Notably, each of the PD educators has the

capability to strengthen their skills (Tam, 2015). Collaboration is important in an effort to identify peers who can provide the best insights and deepen their understanding of high-quality instruction.

The administrators and teachers at the local school under study may experience increased capacity to share their professional knowledge to improve PLCs at the building level because of my PD (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Further, educators' participation in my PD may lead to a realization that their ideas, knowledge, experience, and input are valued and appreciated. Educators engaged in my proposed PD will also develop trusting relationships, allowing them to critically scrutinize their knowledge of high-quality instruction.

In summary, the local school's educators may benefit from effective PD for the school under study through the creation of a culture of collaboration and learning among educators. Lastly, parents and other members of the community are ensured of improved school administrators along with the potential to improve student academic achievement.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative design study was to explore educators' perspectives about the influence of PLCs on instructional practices to improve student achievement. The emphasis of this section will be on the strength and limitations of my project, along with possible alternative approaches. In addition, I will present my reflections of my study and the scholarship that I have gained through this process. I will then conclude this section with recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

My project is designed to be implemented over time and educators will have continuous opportunities throughout the school year for growth instead of the traditional PD model, which is a 1-day workshop. This PD is not merely about the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Through this project, educators will be guided through a learner-centered PD where they are active participants in the change process. This proposed PD includes a model on how to create an environment for change. Participants in the PD will go through a process that will allow them to rethink their practices, discard previous beliefs, and learn new skills. Through participation in this continuous PD, educators at the local site will also have an opportunity to observe, evaluate, and contemplate new practices.

Limitations

To conduct the PD for the educators at the local school site, substitute teachers will be needed to cover classrooms while the educators are participating in the PD. There are limited funds in the district to pay substitutes to cover the classrooms. Due to this limitation, a 3-day PD for educators may not be feasible. Continuing the PD throughout the school year will present the same problem of finding funds to pay for substitutes. The project does not include central office staff, which is crucial in the developing and sustaining of PLCs. Lastly, another limitation to the implementation of my PD is the unwillingness of participants to accept new ideas challenge of engaging all participants in a meaningful dialogue to improve the effectiveness of PLCs.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Another approach to my research problem would be to use the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model to evaluate how well the PD addresses student achievement. CIPP is a comprehensive model for conducting summative and formative evaluations of projects, organizations, personnel, products, and evaluation systems (Aziz et al., 2018). Particularly, CIPP is configured to enable and guide systematic, comprehensive examination of education and social projects, which occur in septic, dynamic conditions. Within the education sector, CIPP has been used in evaluating various educational entities and projects.

The CIPP model involves identifying areas for improvement in problematic project features (Aziz et al., 2018). Therefore, it is well suited for the evaluation of emergent projects in the dynamic social environment. The model was designed to

improve rather than prove. Proactively applying the model can facilitate decision-making and quality assurance while retrospective application allows staff members to continually reframe and add up the worth, merit, significance, and probity of the project. There is a strong link between the features of the CIPP model and the need for a systematic comprehensive guiding framework for PLCs (Aziz et al., 2018). The model is useful for planning and assessment, implementation monitoring and feedback and judgment on the effectiveness for continuous improvement of PLCs.

To understand how the CIPP model can be applied in PLCs, it is essential to examine its components. The CIPP model has four components including context, input, process, and product (Aziz et al., 2018). All the components are essential in the planning, assessment, and implementation of PLCs. The main aim of context evaluation is to weigh the general environmental readiness of the initiative, determine whether existing priorities and goals are adjusted to needs, and determine whether proposed objectives are responsive to the assessed needs. Input evaluation is a process that PLC leaders use to make changes in the PLC. During the process of input evaluation, stakeholders, experts, and evaluators create or identify relevant strategies and then assess the approaches and formulate a responsive plan. PLC leaders use the process evaluation to periodically assess the effectiveness of the PLC.

The CIPP model has critical features that can help address the effectiveness of PLCs including an emphasis on engaging participants, process evaluation, and content evaluation. In applying the CIPP model to PLCs, the implementation team should examine the mission, professional teaching standards, literature and feedback from school

systems, curriculum, and class experiences. By going through this process, the district will be able to understand the environment as well as the readiness of the stakeholders in adopting PLCs. In summary, CIPP is a good choice in predicting the effectiveness of the PLCs in the school district under study.

Another alternative approach could be a program evaluation to explore school administrators' and teachers' perspectives of the influence that PLCs had on instructional practice. A program evaluation is a process through which stakeholders evaluate programs to determine their worth and make recommendations for programmatic refinement and success (Lodico et al., 2010). Program evaluation consists of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research method to study programs. Findings are often used for ongoing or short-term decision-making purposes and programs can be changed or improved based on the results of a single evaluation (Lodico et al., 2010). Findings from a program evaluation are communicated either through formative feedback or through summative feedback.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership Change Scholarship

Interaction with scholarly research has opened a new perspective for me as a researcher. Through this process, I was afforded the opportunity to increase my knowledge on the criteria of research and how to effectively conduct a basic qualitative interview. Interaction with my doctoral committee resulted in an enhancement of my scholarship. For example, my committee chair was valuable in assisting me in the selection of relevant and scholarly readings and databases that would offer useful information and support for my study. I have learned how to design a literature review,

create a data analysis, eliminate research bias, and present findings in a professional manner. Learning how to create a PD activity is one of the accomplishments of my doctoral study process. Based on my experience, I am now capable of developing a PD program that could be used to enhance student learning outcomes. In the district under study, I developed a PD that will provide the educators a model on how to develop cross-cultural awareness, engagement, and reflective practice to improve teaching and learning.

Project Development

As a project developer, I have learned to take a problem and use scholarly research to create a project that would improve that problem. Throughout the development of this project, I have strengthened my skills to create a program to improve the effectiveness of PLCs in a school under study. Through this process, I have learned perseverance, due to numerous revisions of my project. I had to carefully make sure I was making the proper corrections. I also learned organizational skills and was able to successfully complete multiple tasks with favorable results despite deadline pressure I had paced on myself. As part of this project, I developed an innovative structure for educators to collaborate and develop specific goals and activities to improve their effectiveness of PLCs.

Developing this project increased my understanding of the elements of PLCs along with the refinement of my skills to support the improvement of instruction. I gained an understanding of the roles all educators must play to sustain PLCs. Upon the analysis of the research and the development of the project, I noticed that my self-efficacy and confidence to design and facilitate future workshops improved.

Leadership and Change

This process has increased my leadership capabilities to facilitate adult learners in building their knowledge and help in the realization of their desired results by promoting collective learning in order to better meet their goals. I have learned through this process that when educators are directly involved in the change process, they are more likely to critically analyze their practices and improve PLCs strategies that are more aligned with what they may have learned during my PD. Further, they may be more flexible in making modifications contingent on student outcomes. For this reason, I expect that school administrators involved in a PLC to be more active and reflective of their roles in PLCs to improve student learning and achievement. As a result of to this project study, I have learned practices essential for effective school administrators including shaping a vision of success based on high academic standards and creating a conducive environment where teachers collaborate to improve each other's instructional capacity.

Reflection on the Importance of Work

The importance of my work is rooted in the potential of school leaders to improve continuing PD programs for school administrators within a local school district. A competent school administrator promotes and supports the best learning conditions for student learners. Achieving higher academic achievement requires the creation of conditions wherein the school administrators can ensure continual learning. This experience in PD has taught me to promote coherence, focus on outcomes, engage individuals in meaningful discourse, and connect to educators' previous experiences. Also, I have learned that the PD characteristics for enhancing skills and knowledge

include a focus on content, active learning, and opportunities for hands-on learning. Therefore, creating a PD program for educators that would enhance their skills is imperative. Due to this newfound knowledge and skills, I would be capable of leading similar projects based on the knowledge that I have learned from my research.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

PLCs have been identified as having a potential to increase teachers' instructional capacity. First, teachers' participation in PLCs can bring about system-wide change because teachers are engaged in collaborating and networking. Second, when teachers are engaged in PLCs, they routinely facilitate collegial conversations about pedagogical improvements. Third, opportunities for teachers to engage in an inquiry approach to drive change or to improve student achievement are increased when they form PLCs (Harris & Stamp, 2016; Levine, 2010).

Future research for my project may entail the selection of a quantitative research design, which would allow for a statistical interpretation of data. By using a quantitative method, researchers would analyze statistical evidence between two or more variables. An example of two variables could be a measurement of student achievement before and after the introduction of the PLCs and after providing the educators with PD to improve the effectiveness of the PLCs. This could yield knowledge that my study did not provide.

Potential Impact for Social Change

After reading this study, teachers might be inspired to transform their professional practices from teaching to learning, isolation to collaboration, and

intention to results. Additionally, school administrators may use this study as a platform to improve student achievement by allowing school administrators to work together to build their instructional capacity. Participants in my workshop may realize that a teachers' involvement in PLCs can be the solution to problems involved in identifying students' learning gaps. Successfully implemented PLCs are marked by a shared vision and values between administrators and teachers with a focus on student learning and decision-making based on collaborative learning efforts to improve instructional practice. A collaborative culture is one essential element of PLCs that can enable the sharing of responsibilities for student learning as educators work together to achieve a common purpose. As a result of this project, other urban school districts could bring about positive social change for their communities, using this project as a model.

Conclusion

In this section, I have written about the following concerning my project study: the strengths and limitations, alternative recommendations, implications, and the possibility for future research. Reflecting on my path to complete my doctoral study as a researcher affirms that I have the skills to be a leader of change within my school district. Further, I have been able to hone my skills as a practitioner, researcher, and scholar with the quest of developing PD that would increase educators' effectiveness in participating in PLCs.

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Appendix A: The Project

Training Day 1-PLC Training for school administrators
Professional development plan for school administrators on sustaining professional learning communities

Objective: To train school administrators how to effectively implement and sustain PLCs to improve their professional skills as well as promoting the academic achievement of all teachers.

Participants: Principals and assistant principals.

7:30-8:30 Sign-in breakfast
8:30-8:45 Superintendent address: Open discussion (Power Point)
8:45-10:00 Norms for our work (Power Point) Materials/Housekeeping: The PLC infrastructure work is what administrators bring from previous leadership meetings.

1. The Completed PLC Rubrics are what administrators should have completed. There should be one per school
2. Master schedule will assist when we start looking at scheduling for adult collaboration
3. Assessment map will assist when discussing Step 0 common assessments

The participant notebook is intended to provide larger copies of important slides, and a place for participants to write notes for some of the activities.
Participants will be placed in small working groups. In each groups participants will be assigned working group roles (note taker, timekeeper, etc.).

10:00-11:30 Process activity: Learning Scale. This is a collaborative activity in which participants will gain knowledge, skills and understanding of what is needed for PLC facilitators. The focus of this module is show coherence between PLCs and the district priories of professional growth and standards-based instruction.

11:30-12:30 LUNCH

12:30-2:20 What is a professional learning community? (Power Point)
Professional Learning Communities Preplanning (Handout)
Directly teach those terms through description, explanation, and examples; engage staff in discussions of the terms; and periodically assess levels of understanding.

Activity: Have summarizing pair work to define each key vocabulary term together. Then, give teams time to share their answers with their larger

	team. Then, ask for volunteers to share their definitions for terms. These are the definitions we will be specifically working with today. (Power Point)
2:20-2:30	Evaluation for session 1

Professional Learning Communities Preplanning

An Overview & Team Reflection

Definition

"…A Professional Learning Community is a collaboration of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, who work together to seek out best practices, test them in the classroom, continuously improve processes, and focus on results."
(DuFour, 2002)

Fundamental Assumptions

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

The ONE Thing

in a Professional Learning Community,
"learning" rather than "teaching"
is the fundamental purpose
of your school.

Three Big Ideas

Focus on Learning
Collaboration
Focus on Results

Four Corollary Questions

1. What should students know and be able to do because of this course, class, or grade level?
2. How will we know that the students are not learning?
3. How do we respond when students do not learn?
4. How do we respond when students learn more?

Six Characteristics of a Professional Learning Community

Shared mission, vision, values, goals

What distinguishes a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the staff of the school believes and that govern their actions and behaviors.

Collaborative Culture

Professionals in a learning community work in teams that share a common purpose. They learn from each other and create the momentum that drives improvement. They build within the organization the structure and vehicles that make collaborative work and learning effective and productive.

Collective Inquiry
People in a learning community relentlessly question the status quo, seek new methods of teaching and learning, test the methods, and then reflect on the results.

- o They reflect publicly on their beliefs and challenge each other's beliefs.
- o They share insights and hammer out common meanings.
- o They work jointly to plan and test actions and initiatives.
- o They coordinate their actions, so that the work of each individual contributes to the common effort.

Action Orientation / Experimentation
Members of professional learning communities constantly turn their learning and insights into action. They recognize the importance of engagement and experience in learning and in testing new ideas.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement
Members of a learning organization are not content with the status quo and continually seek ways to bring present reality closer to future ideal. They constantly ask themselves and each other:

- o What is our purpose?
- o What do we hope to achieve?
- o What are our strategies for improving?
- o How will we assess our efforts?

Results Orientation
Professionals in a learning organization recognize that no matter how well-intentioned the efforts, the only valid judgment of improvement is observable and measurable results. Assessment and re-evaluation are the keys to continued improvement. Collective inquiry, action orientation and experimentation, commitment to continuous improvement, and results orientation are the four habits of highly effective teams.

Each word of the phrase "professional learning community" has been chosen purposefully. A "professional" is someone with expertise in a specialized field, an individual who has not only pursued advanced training to enter the field, but who is also expected to remain current in its evolving knowledge base. The knowledge base of education has expanded dramatically in the past quarter century, both in terms of research and in terms of the articulation of recommended standards for the profession. Although many school personnel are unaware of or are inattentive to emerging research and standards, educators in a professional learning community make these findings the basis of their collaborative investigation of how they can better achieve their goals.

"Learning" suggests ongoing action and perpetual curiosity. In Chinese, the term "learning" is represented by two characters: the first means "to study" and the second means "to practice constantly." Many schools operate as though their personnel know

everything, they will ever need to know the day they enter the profession. The school that operates as a professional learning community recognizes that its members must engage in the ongoing study and constant practice that characterize an organization committed to continuous improvement.

Much has been written about learning organizations, but we prefer the term "community." An organization has been defined both as an "administrative and functional structure" (Webster's Dictionary) and as "a systematic arrangement for a definite purpose" (Oxford Dictionary). In each case, the emphasis is on structure and efficiency. In contrast, however, the term "community" suggests a group linked by common interests. As Corrine McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson (1994) wrote:

> Community means different things to different people. To some it is a safe haven where survival is assured through mutual cooperation. To others, it is a place of emotional support, with deep sharing and bonding with close friends. Some see community as an intense crucible for personal growth. For others, it is simply a place to pioneer their dreams.

In a professional learning community, all these characteristics are evident. Educators create an environment that fosters cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone.

-Adapted from DuFour and Eaker (1998), Professional Learning Communities at Work

PLC Team Reflection

PLC Reflection

- As a team, review the "Professional Learning Communities Overview" and reflect on the following questions.

Team Reflection Focus	Reflection Summary
In general, describe your understanding of a PLC. What are the key understandings? What needs to be clarified?	
As a team, clarify how your PLC team will demonstrate the 6 characteristics of PLCs while collaboratively working together.	
Determine your PLC team ground rules. How will your team operate and interact with one another? Come to consensus on 4-6 ground rules that your team will adhere to each time you meet together as a PLC.	

Professional Development-Feedback Survey

School administrators Training PLCs Day 1

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement using the following scale: 5=strongly agree; 4=Somewhat agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree					
1. I am satisfied with today's session.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. Handouts were engaging and useful.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. Time in the workshop was sufficient to allow learning and practicing new concepts	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. The workshop was well planned and interactive	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. The presenter was effective (clear objectives, clearly communicates ideas, checks for understanding, etc.).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. The atmosphere was enthusiastic, interesting, and conducive to a collegial professional exchange.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7. Session content and strategies will be useful for my work.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8. I would recommend this session to colleagues.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
What is the most significant thing you learned today?					
What is the next step your team has planned?					
How can we build on this training for follow-up learning?					
If you were not satisfied with any part of today's training, please explain why.					
Additional comments:					

Thank you for your feedback!

Training Day 2-PLC Training for school administrators

7:30—8:30	Sign-in/Breakfast
8:30-10:00	Discusses with participants the value of teacher team meetings that focus on the improvement of teaching and learning. In highly effective schools, the school leader takes a key leadership role in guiding, shifting, and deepening the conversation to center on the improvement of teaching and learning. (Power Point).
10:00-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Participants will learn what a PLC is and what it isn't. They will learn how to facilitate the identification of the instructional focus with staff and how to use it as the driver for all school improvement efforts. (Power Point)
12:00-12:30	LUNCH
12:30-2:30	Creating a culture of collaboration. (PowerPoint)
2:30-2:40	Evaluation for session 2

Professional Development-Feedback Survey

School administrators Training PLCs Day 2

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement using the following scale: 5=strongly agree; 4=Somewhat agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree					
1. I am satisfied with today's session.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. Handouts were engaging and useful.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. Time in the workshop was sufficient to allow learning and practicing new concepts	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. The workshop was well planned and interactive	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. The presenter was effective (clear objectives, clearly communicates ideas, checks for understanding, etc.).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. The atmosphere was enthusiastic, interesting, and conducive to a collegial professional exchange.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7. Session content and strategies will be useful for my work.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8. I would recommend this session to colleagues.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
What is the most significant thing you learned today?					
What is the next step your team has planned?					
How can we build on this training for follow-up learning?					
If you were not satisfied with any part of today's training, please explain why.					
Additional comments:					

Thank you for your feedback!

Training Day 3-PLC Training for school administrators

7:30-8:30	Sign-in/Breakfast
8:30-9:30	Review of the last two sessions. Group discussions (Power Point)
9:30-12:30	Roleplay in facilitating a PLC
12:30-1:00	LUNCH
1:00-2:00	Wrap-up/Questions and answers
2:00-2:15	Evaluation for session 3

Professional Development-Feedback Survey

School administrators Training PLCs Day 3

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement using the following scale: 5=strongly agree; 4=Somewhat agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree					
1. I am satisfied with today's session.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. Handouts were engaging and useful.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. Time in the workshop was sufficient to allow learning and practicing new concepts	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. The workshop was well planned and interactive	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. The presenter was effective (clear objectives, clearly communicates ideas, checks for understanding, etc.).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. The atmosphere was enthusiastic, interesting, and conducive to a collegial professional exchange.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7. Session content and strategies will be useful for my work.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8. I would recommend this session to colleagues.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
What is the most significant thing you learned today?					
What is the next step your team has planned?					
How can we build on this training for follow-up learning?					
If you were not satisfied with any part of today's training, please explain why.					
Additional comments:					

Welcome!
PLC Training for school leaders

Day 1
Empowering Collaborative Teams

1

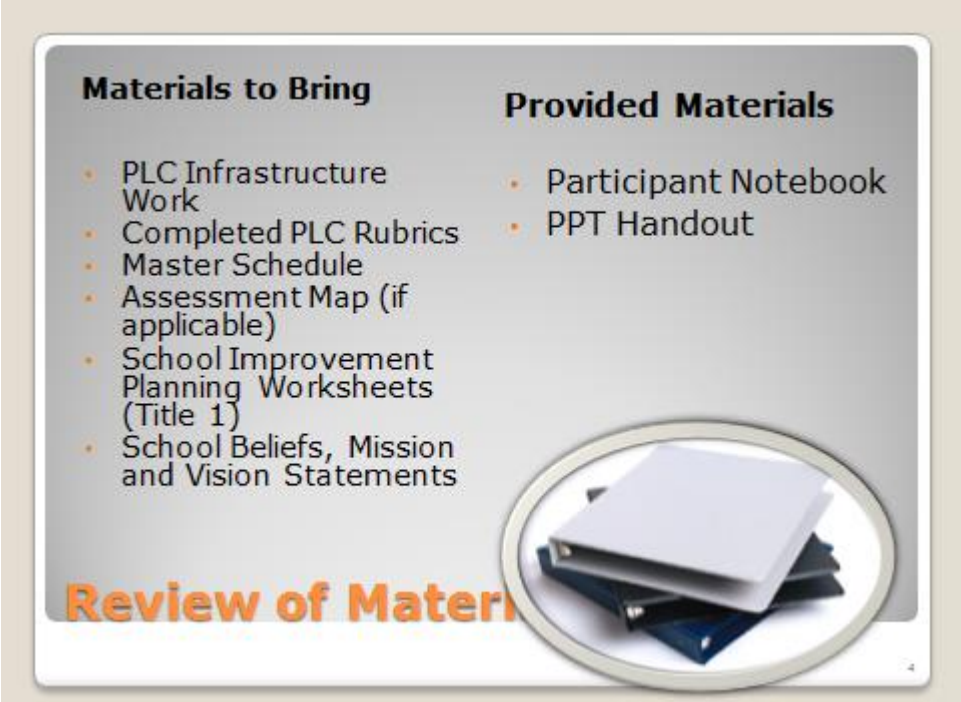
"We believe that teachers are **professionals** and engineers of teaching and learning…we need to set course on a new journey that extends our past learning. A journey that ignites empowerment and professionalism in NHPS."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFs8P_TrAVQ

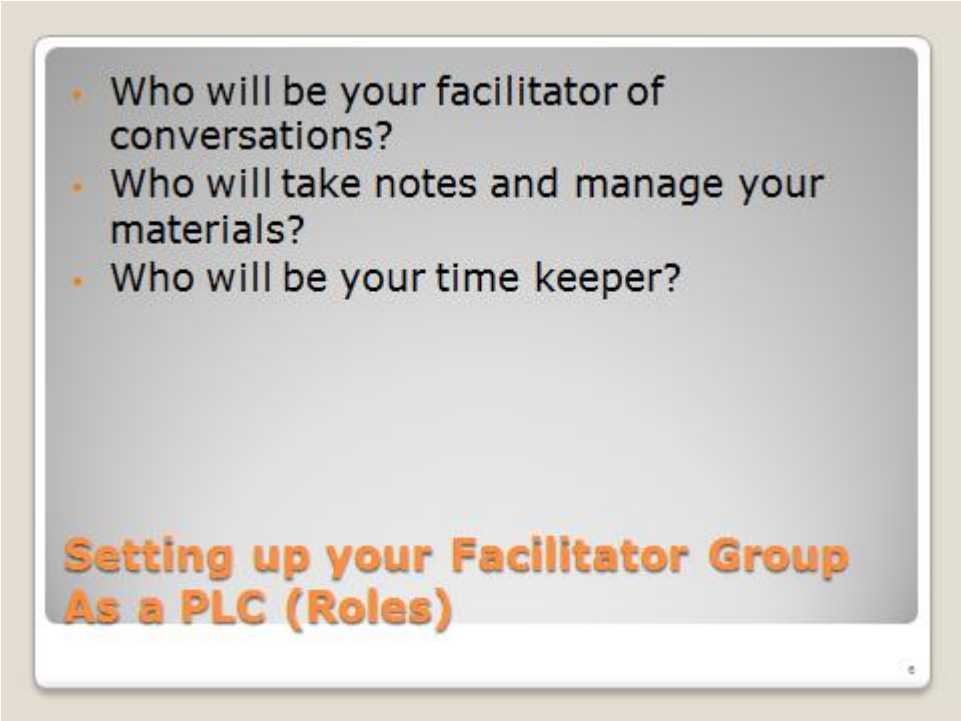
Opening Discussion

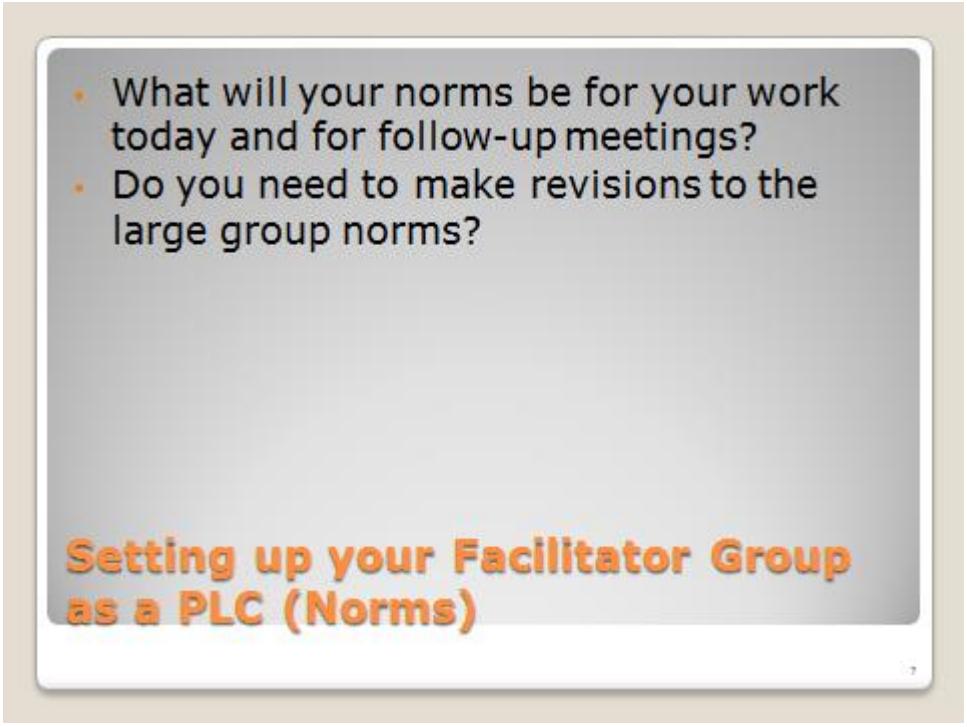
2


If you think it, say it
Ask questions
Take care of your neighbor
Take care of yourself
What is said here stays here; what is learned here leaves here
Be present
Norms for Our Work


Materials to Bring
PLC Infrastructure Work
Completed PLC Rubrics
Master Schedule
Assessment Map (if applicable)
School Improvement Planning Worksheets (Title 1)
School Beliefs, Mission and Vision Statements
Provided Materials
Participant Notebook
PPT Handout
Review of Materi


1. Take a few moments to introduce yourself to your team
Name/Role
Where did you graduate from?
Summer Plans?
2. School Introductions (1-2 minutes each)
School Name
Demographics
Any other item of interest
Setting up your Facilitator Group As a PLC (Introductions)


Who will be your facilitator of conversations?
Who will take notes and manage your materials?
Who will be your time keeper?
Setting up your Facilitator Group As a PLC (Roles)


What will your norms be for your work today and for follow-up meetings?
Do you need to make revisions to the large group norms?
Setting up your Facilitator Group as a PLC (Norms)


Find someone seated near you who will be your "summarizing" partner for this training.
Setting Up Process Partners

End In Mind

Professional Learning Community Facilitators Characteristics, Beliefs, and Skills

Key Characteristics	Beliefs
• Growth mindset • Well respected, organized, and dependable • Will support vision and mission of the school • Acts and views themself as a professional educator • Ability to be and potentially already in a faculty leadership position	• All students and staff can learn • Power of collaboration • Decisions are best made with data • Teams can learn and grow and will persevere

Skills to Be Developed at Professional Learning Community (PLC) Facilitators' Training and Connected Activities

	Know	Understand	Do
Highlighted Priority	Professional Learning Communities • Pasco County's multi-year PLC implementation plan • Definition of PLC, PLC big ideas • Step 0 for PLCs 5 questions that drive PLCs • Inquiry Cycle steps • Effective facilitation techniques • Characteristics of a professional facilitator	Professional Learning Communities • The purpose of PLC work is to collaboratively plan for and respond to learning and is aligned to our professional growth system and standards-based instruction:  • How to facilitate collaborative planning • How backwards design is embedded within collaborative planning • How PLC work supports domains 1-4 • Collaboration supports improved teaching practices and improved student achievement • How PLC work integrates all district focus areas for instruction and standards	Professional Learning Communities • Develop a PLC infrastructure, monitoring, and support plan • Practice unwrapping standards, developing/refining common learning scales and assessments, and creating lessons of instruction while using effective facilitation techniques • Develop a PLC facilitation plan for your team that includes: o Step 0 o Unwrap CCSS o Develop/Refine common learning scales and assessment linked to standards o Develop units and/or lesson of study that integrates specific intentional instructional strategies o Reflection • Facilitate courageous conversations and build consensus among teams
Connected Priorities	Standards-Based Instruction • Overview of CCSS shifts • Prioritized CCSS shifts	Standards-Based Instruction • How CCSS shifts integrate with PLC work • How CCSS prioritized shifts will be Supported in 2013-2014	Standards-Based Instruction • Unwrap CCSS • Connect instructional planning to prioritized CCSS Shifts
	Professional Growth System • Overview of and connections to a Professional Growth System	Professional Growth System • Shift to a Professional Growth System • How a Professional Growth System embeds within PLC work	Professional Growth System • Develop Lessons of instruction through intentional planning leading to intentional instructional practices (Deliberate Planning and Practices)

1. Introduction and Background
2. PLCs
3. Step 0 for PLCs
4. Effective Facilitation Techniques

Unit Learning Goal: Develop and implement PLCs to support CCSS, Professional Learning, and Professional Growth

Today's Learning Goal:
To develop/refine and communicate your PLC Infrastructure plans

Day 1: Key Content and Learning Goals

10

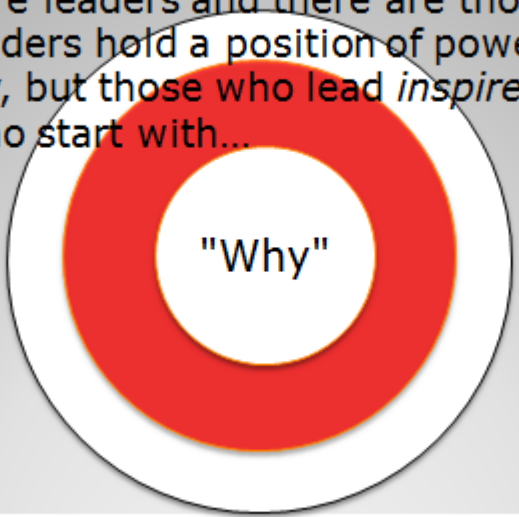
Setting the Context and Focusing our Lens

Our new journey will lead us to shared leadership, shared decision-making, and reciprocal accountability.

11

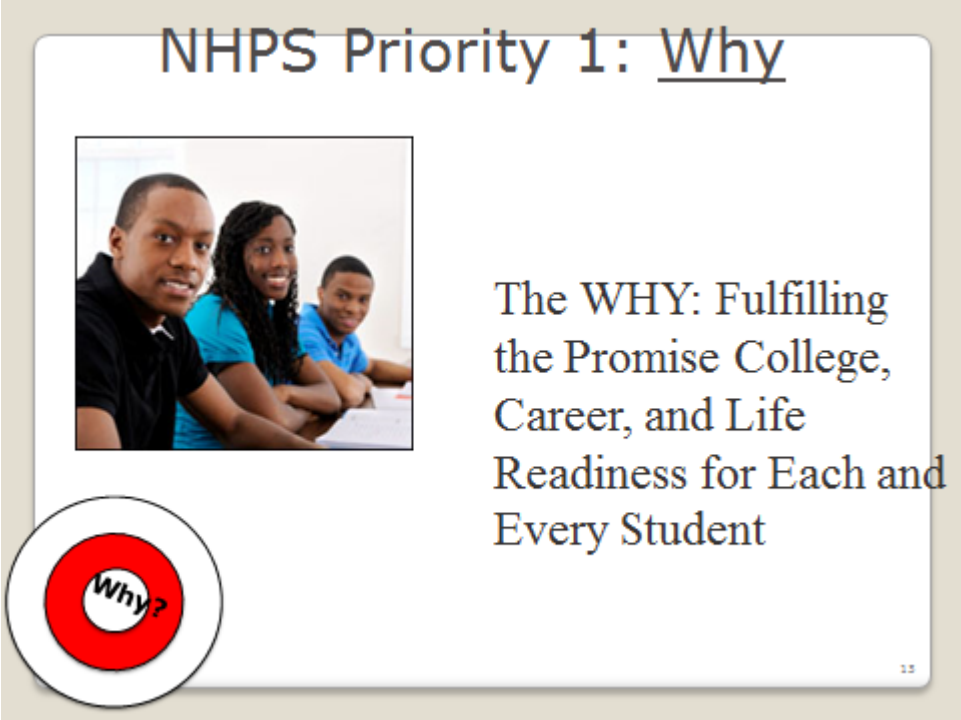
Building our "Why"

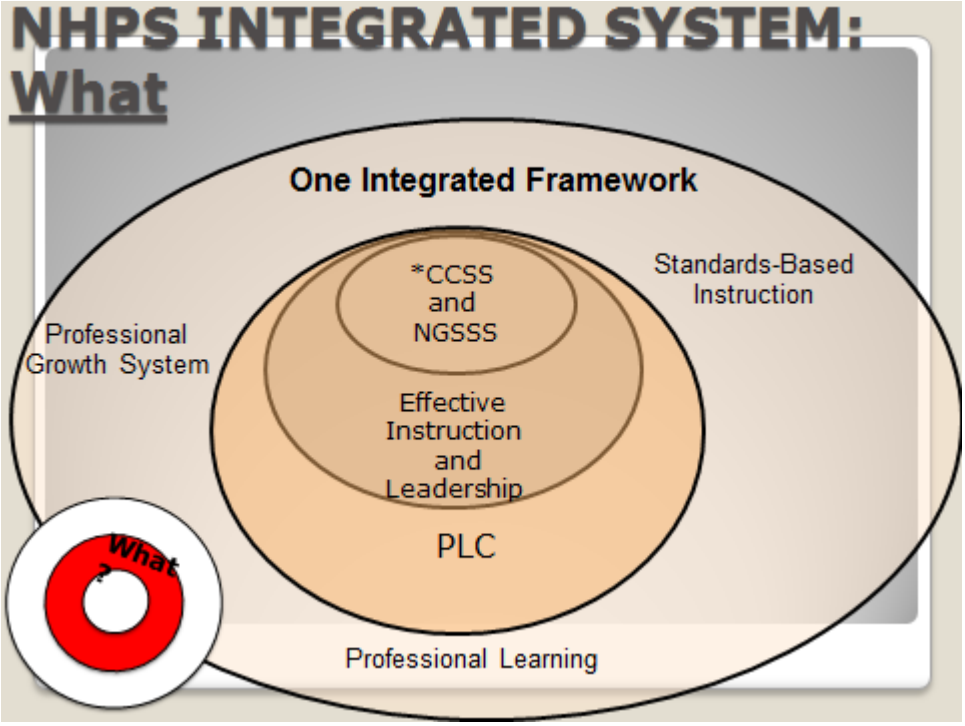
"There are leaders and there are those who lead. Leaders hold a position of power or authority, but those who lead *inspire* us. It's those who start with...

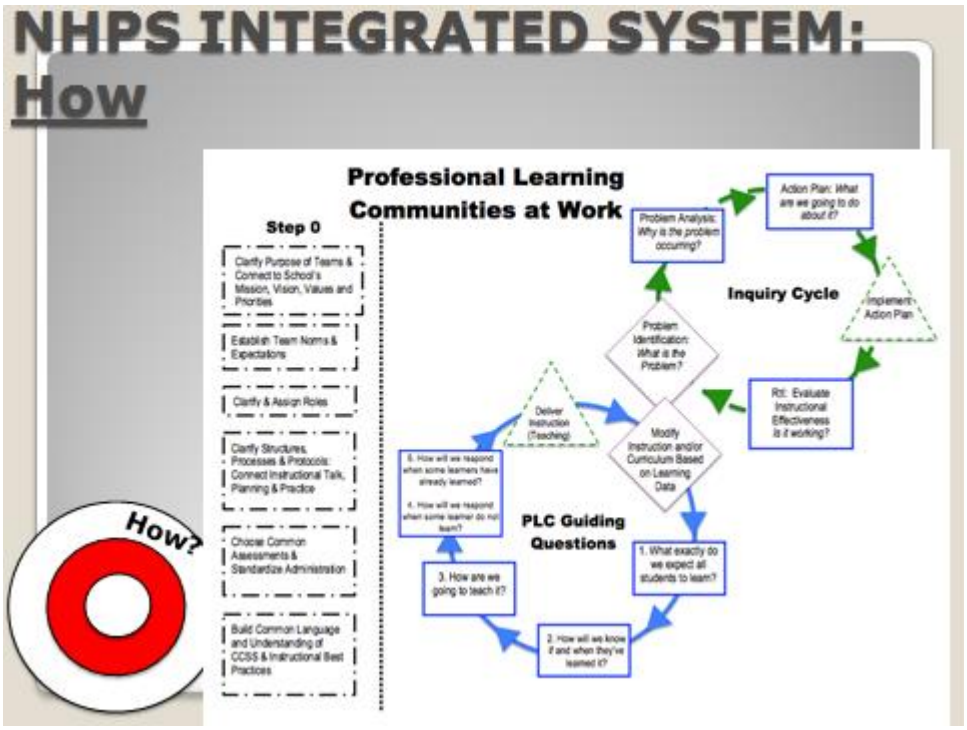


...that have the ability to inspire those around them. People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

12


NHPS Priority 1: Why
The WHY: Fulfilling the Promise College, Career, and Life Readiness for Each and Every Student
Why?


NHPS INTEGRATED SYSTEM: What
One Integrated Framework
*CCSS and NGSSS
Effective Instruction and Leadership
PLC
Standards-Based Instruction
Professional Growth System
Professional Learning
What?


NHPS INTEGRATED SYSTEM:
How
Professional Learning Communities at Work
Step 0
Clarify Purpose of Teams & Connect to School's Mission, Vision, Values and Priorities
Establish Team Norms & Expectations
Clarify & Assign Roles
Clarify Structures, Processes & Protocols: Connect Instructional Talk, Planning & Practice
Choose Common Assessments & Standardize Administration
Build Common Language and Understanding of CCSS & Instructional Best Practices
How?
Inquiry Cycle
Problem Analysis: Why is the problem occuring?
Action Plan: What are we going to do about it?
Implement Action Plan
RtI: Evaluate Instructional Effectiveness Is it working?
Modify Instruction and/or Curriculum Based on Learning Data
Deliver Instruction (Teaching)
Problem Identification: What is the Problem?
PLC Guiding Questions
1. What exactly do we expect all students to learn?
2. How will we know if and when they've learned it?
3. How are we going to teach it?
4. How will we respond when some learner do not learn?
5. How will we respond when some learners have already learned?


Next Generation Accountability Index
62.0 76.1 64.3 73.1 64.0 73.2 65.0 74.9
2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 2017-18
District State
District Performance Index (DPI), ELA
Target: 75
2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19
District State
District Performance Index (DPI), Math
Target: 75
2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19
District State
strict Performance Index (DPI), Science
Target: 75
52.0 63.8
2018-19
District State
Smarter Balanced Growth, ELA
Target: 100
63.3 63.8 53.0 55.4 58.3 60.7 55.2 59.9
2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19
District State
Smarter Balanced Growth, Math
Target: 100
63.5 65.0 52.9 61.7 53.6 61.9 53.6 62.5
2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19
District State

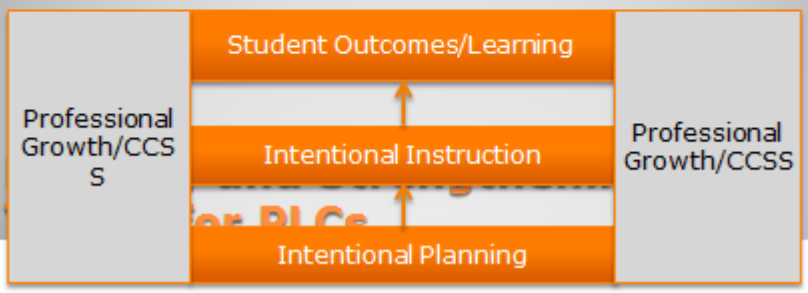
Building and Strengthening our "Why" for PLCs

"Many schools have good teachers, but lack the capacity to raise student achievement because meeting that challenge is **beyond the capacity of individual staff**"

Marzano and Dufour, Leaders of Learning (2012)

17

- PLCs are research-based
- PLCs empower teachers through collaboration and increased self-efficacy
- PLCs work together to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- PLCs promote intentionality of planning and instruction.



18

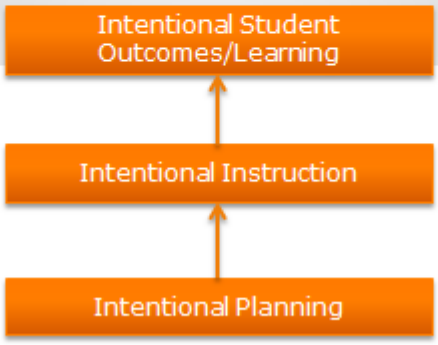
Building and Strengthening our "Why" for PLCs

1. Why should we invest our time and resources to build PLCs as a way of work?

2. What are the anticipated benefits?

3. We are all leaders in some way. How will we "inspire" those around us?

Professional Learning Communities Overview



Key Vocabulary:

1. Professional Learning Communities
2. Collaborative Planning
3. Facilitators
4. Step "0"
5. 5 Questions that drive PLC work
6. Standards-Based Instruction
7. Professional Growth System

"If an organization has shared understanding of terms, they will significantly increase the likelihood of implementing PLCs"
-Marzano and Dufour, Leaders of Learning

Building a Common Language

21

- Professional learning communities are

"Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve" – Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many (2011)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Defined

22

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-ErgtGzkhs

Three Big Ideas for PLCs

23

Professional Learning Communities: Big Ideas

- Focus on a Collaborative Culture
- Focus on Learning for All (Students and Adults)
- Focus on ***Results***

24

PLCs: A Fundamental Shift

Shift Happens

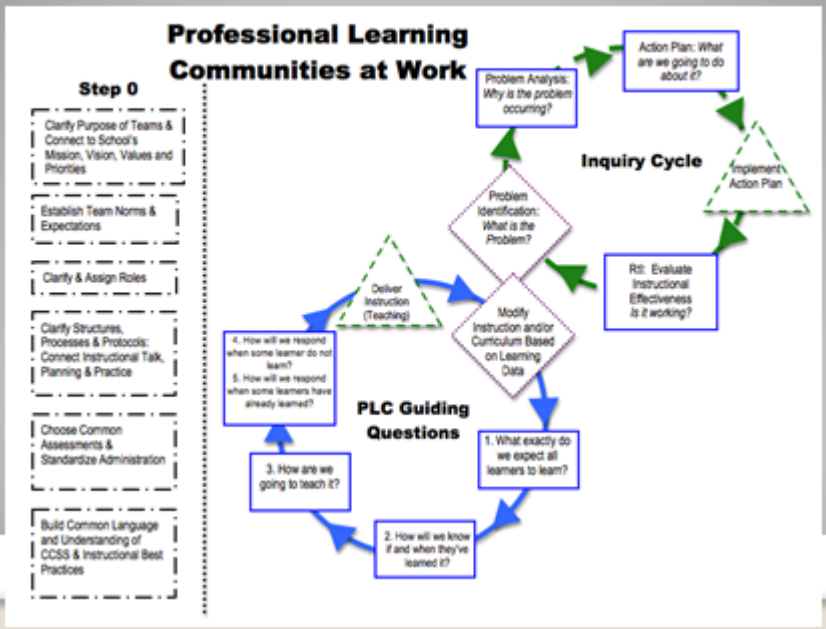
- In the 80's, as a results of "A Nation At-Risk", decision-making was decentralized, decisions were all up to the LEA and schools, but with no structure to support this change.
- In the 90's-00's, as a result of NCLB, decision-making was centralized, the DOE and the FDOE made decisions, but with no structure to support this change.
- Now: Lets create the structure to support what we want…respect, empowerment and student achievement.

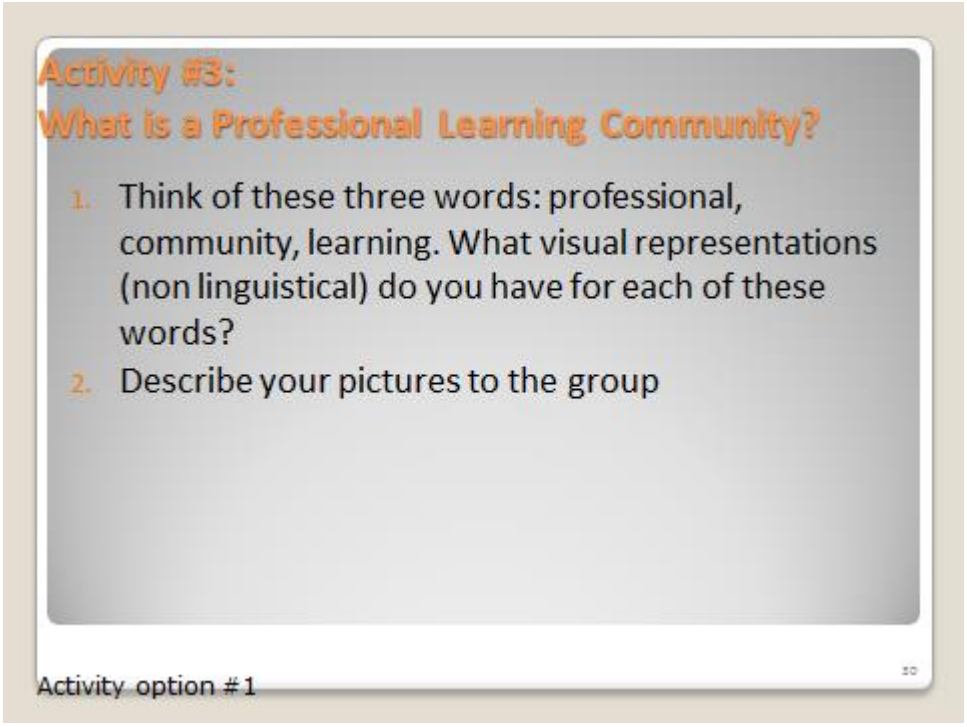
Understanding our Past

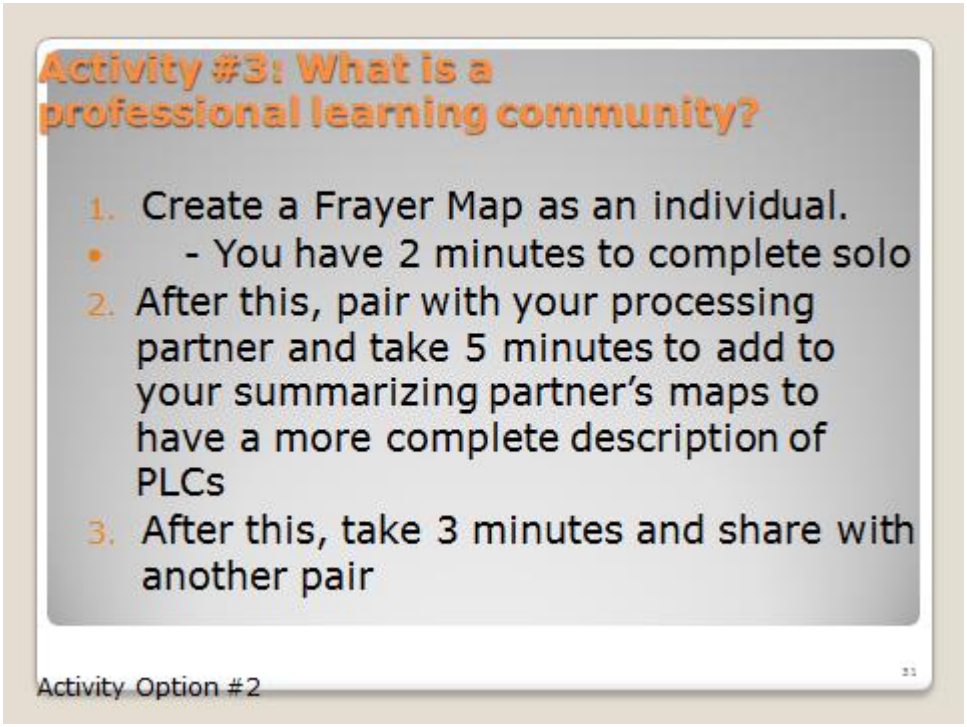
Activity #2: PLC Shifts

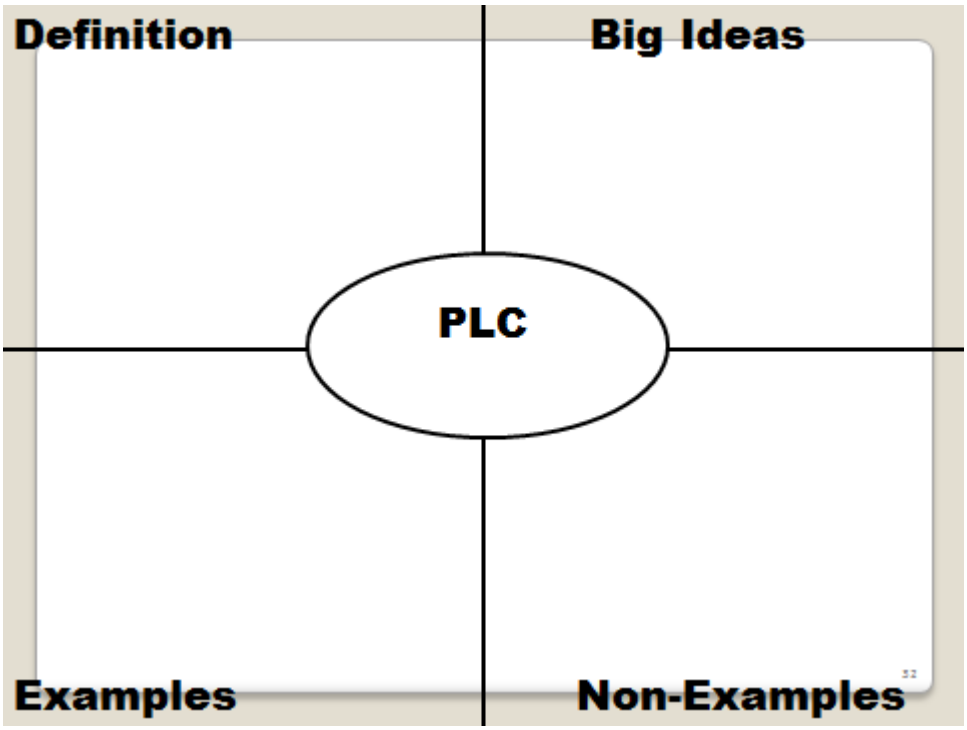
1. Review the Handout "Cultural Shifts in a PLC".
2. Divide your team into 3-4 person groups. Each group should review and process one of the following Cultural Shifts
   - - Shift in Fundamental Purpose
   - - Shift in the Work of Teachers
   - - Shift in School Culture
   - - Shift in Professional Development
3. Prepare to share with your facilitator team
   - - What is the key understanding of this shift?
   - - How would your shift impact collaboration for teams?
4. Select and Share:
   - - Which is the most important shift for your school?

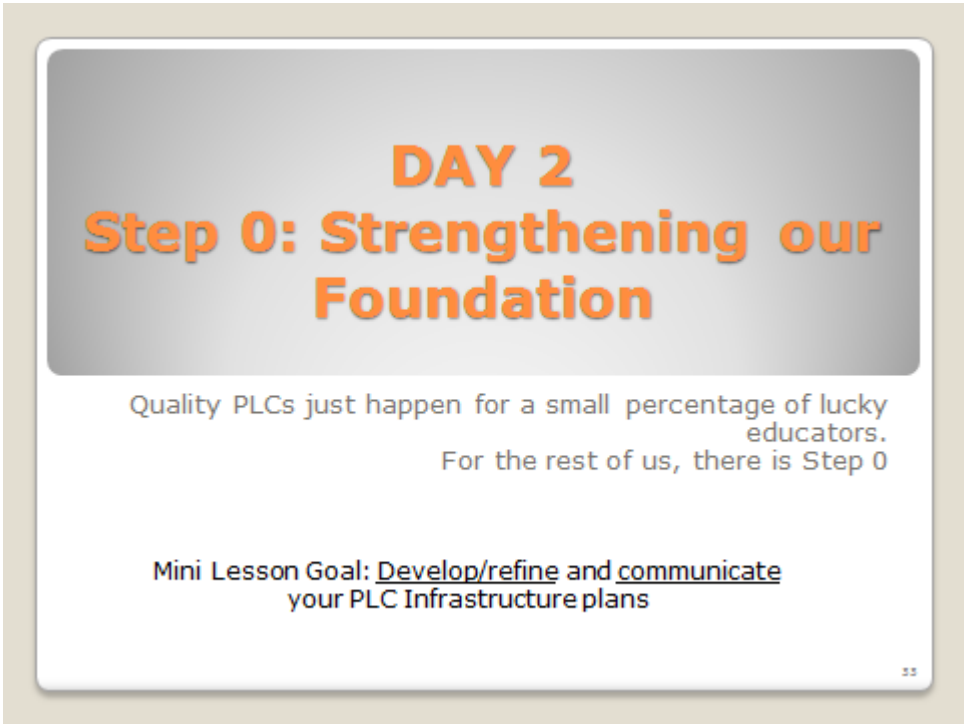
What is the "Right" Work

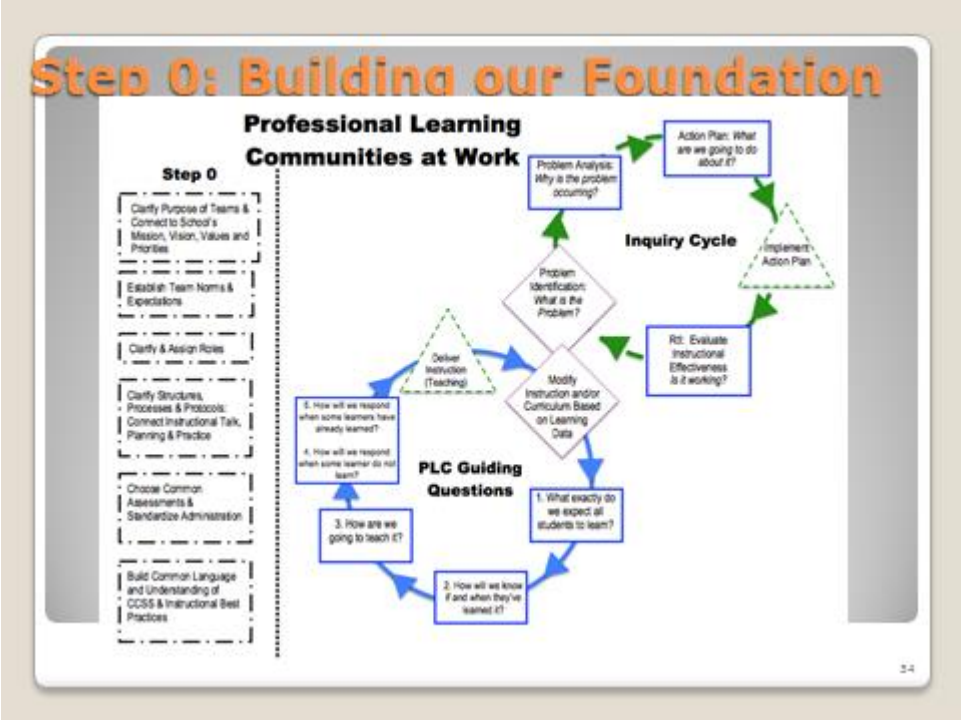



Activity #3:
What is a Professional Learning Community?
1. Think of these three words: professional, community, learning. What visual representations (non linguistical) do you have for each of these words?
2. Describe your pictures to the group
Activity option #1


Activity #3: What is a professional learning community?
1. Create a Frayer Map as an individual.
- You have 2 minutes to complete solo
2. After this, pair with your processing partner and take 5 minutes to add to your summarizing partner's maps to have a more complete description of PLCs
3. After this, take 3 minutes and share with another pair
Activity Option #2


Definition
Big Ideas
PLC
Examples
Non-Examples


DAY 2
Step 0: Strengthening our Foundation
Quality PLCs just happen for a small percentage of lucky educators.
For the rest of us, there is Step 0
Mini Lesson Goal: Develop/refine and communicate your PLC Infrastructure plans


Step 0: Building our Foundation
Professional Learning Communities at Work
Step 0
Clarify Purpose of Teams & Connect to School's Mission, Vision, Values and Priorities
Establish Team Norms & Expectations
Clarify & Assign Roles
Clarify Structures, Processes & Protocols: Connect Instructional Talk, Planning & Practice
Choose Common Assessments & Standardize Administration
Build Common Language and Understanding of CCSS & Instructional Best Practices
Inquiry Cycle
Problem Analysis: Why is the problem occurring?
Action Plan: What are we going to do about it?
Implement Action Plan
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Modify Instruction and/or Curriculum Based on Learning Data
Problem Identification: What is the Problem?
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1. What exactly do we expect all students to learn?
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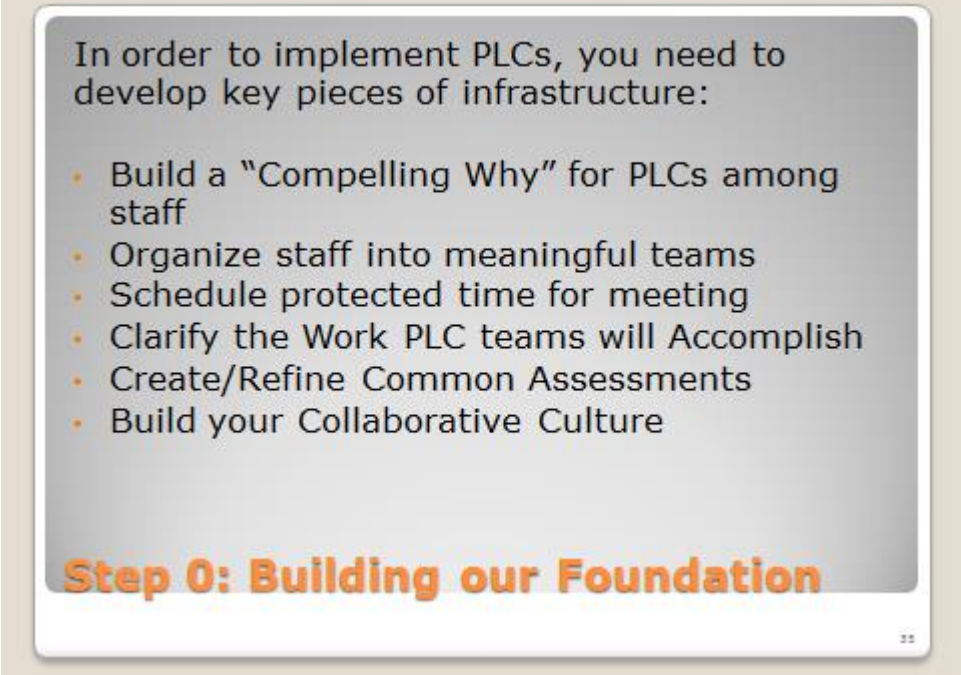
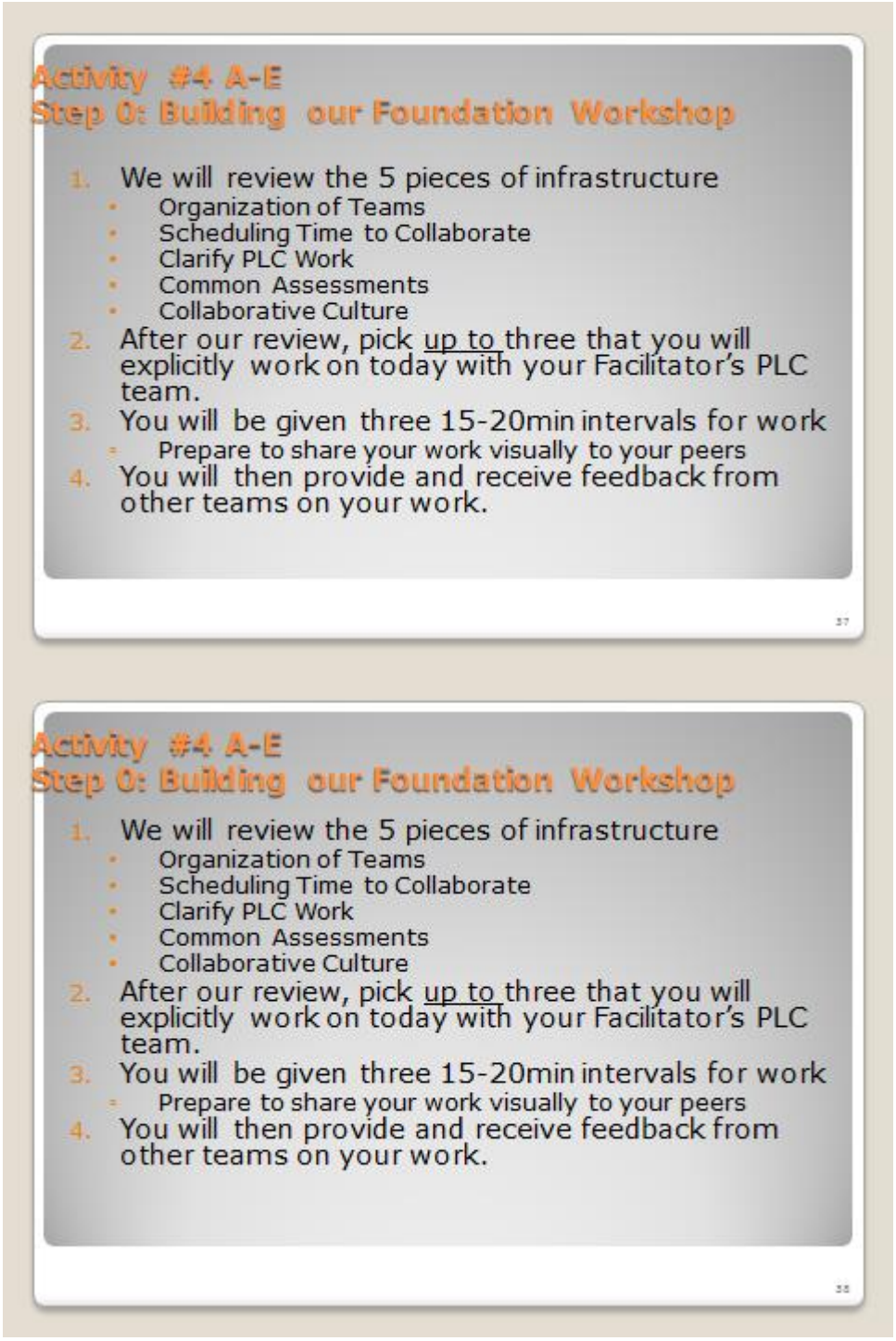

In order to implement PLCs, you need to develop key pieces of infrastructure:
Build a "Compelling Why" for PLCs among staff
Organize staff into meaningful teams
Schedule protected time for meeting
Clarify the Work PLC teams will Accomplish
Create/Refine Common Assessments
Build your Collaborative Culture
Step 0: Building our Foundation


Activity #4 A-E
Step 0: Building our Foundation Workshop
1. We will review the 5 pieces of infrastructure
• Organization of Teams
• Scheduling Time to Collaborate
• Clarify PLC Work
• Common Assessments
• Collaborative Culture
2. After our review, pick up to three that you will explicitly work on today with your Facilitator's PLC team.
3. You will be given three 15-20min intervals for work
• Prepare to share your work visually to your peers
4. You will then provide and receive feedback from other teams on your work.
37
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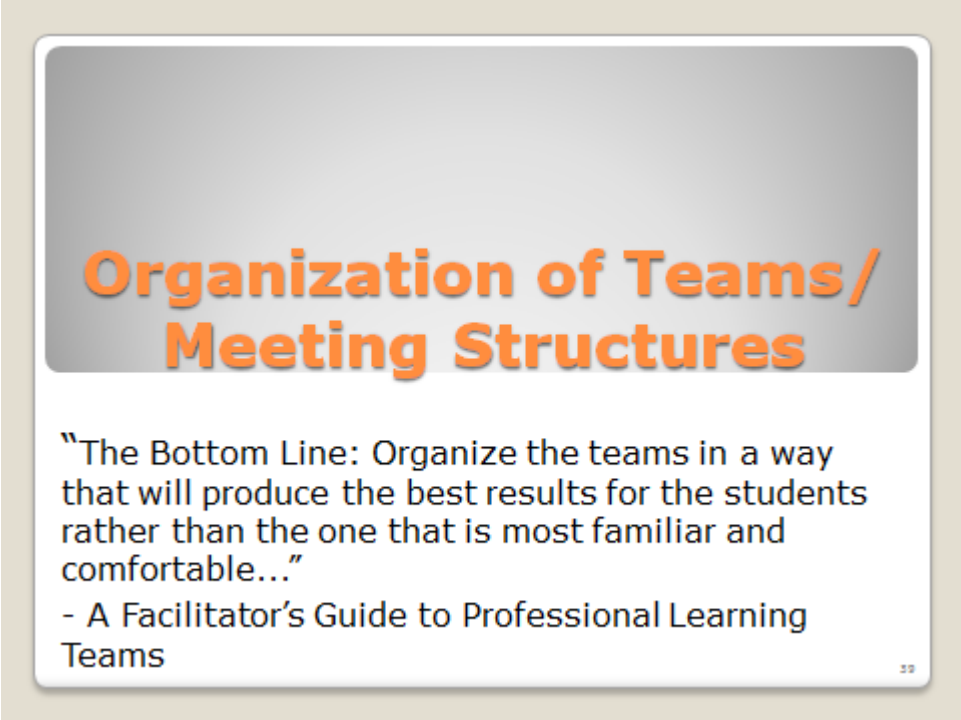
38



Team Structure Overview

Team Structures	Description
Same course/content or grade level teams	Teams share similar standards and content. Examples: 4th Grade; 6th Grade Math; Geometry Team
Vertical Teams	Teachers who teach content above and below their students
Electronic Teams	Utilize technology to collaborate and share ideas
Interdisciplinary Teams	Teams that work together for over-arching school-wide goals. Ex: Teams focusing on Writing across Content Areas/Courses
Logical Links	Teams that work together on common professional development goals. Teams may or may not teach similar content.

Adapted from
Leaders of Learning 2012, Marzano and Dufour

Discussion: What is the intended benefit or outcome organizing our staff into meaningful learning teams?
Decision: Are you creating, refining, and/or communicating your PLC team organization?
Action:

1. Review examples of PLC team organization
2. If you are creating:
   - What organization of teams will best serve for PLCs as a vehicle for CCSS implementation and Professional Growth?
3. If you are refining:
   - Will your team organization plan lead you to your intended benefit?
   - What changes, if any, are needed?

Activity 4a: Organization of Teams

41

Discussion Points to Consider as you collaboratively plan how to schedule time for adult learning:

•What groups (adult and student) need to meet and for what amounts of time? What would be their purpose for meeting? -Are there strong connections to our district priorities?

•How can we build in time for you to support the development of your PLC facilitators?

•How can we build in time to PLAN for and DEBRIEF with our PLC facilitators? - To monitor and reflect the Action Plans of the PLC work?

•How will all the work be connected and shared from group to group?

42

Scheduling Protected Time

	M	T	W	T	F
1	2:30 Facilitators				9:00 Responding to learning Debrief 3:30
2	2:30 Faculty PLC				9:00 Committee LLT
3	2:30 Facilitators				9:00 Responding to learning Debrief 3:30
4	2:30 Faculty PLC				9:00 Committee LLT

44

Discussion: What is the intended benefit or outcome of scheduling protected time?

Decision: Are you creating, refining, and/or communicating your scheduled protected time?

Action:

1. Review resources for scheduling
2. If you are creating:
   - What schedule will allow us to authentically collaborate?
3. If you are refining:
   - Will your scheduled protected time plan lead you to your intended benefit?
   - What changes, if any, are needed?

Activity 4b: Scheduling Protected Time

45

Step 0: Clarifying Expectations for PLC Work

The critical question in a PLC is not, **"Do we collaborate"** but rather, "What do we collaborate about?" You must not settle for "Collaboration Light."

-Dufour and Dufour, 2010

46

Activity 4c: Clarifying Expectations for PLC Work

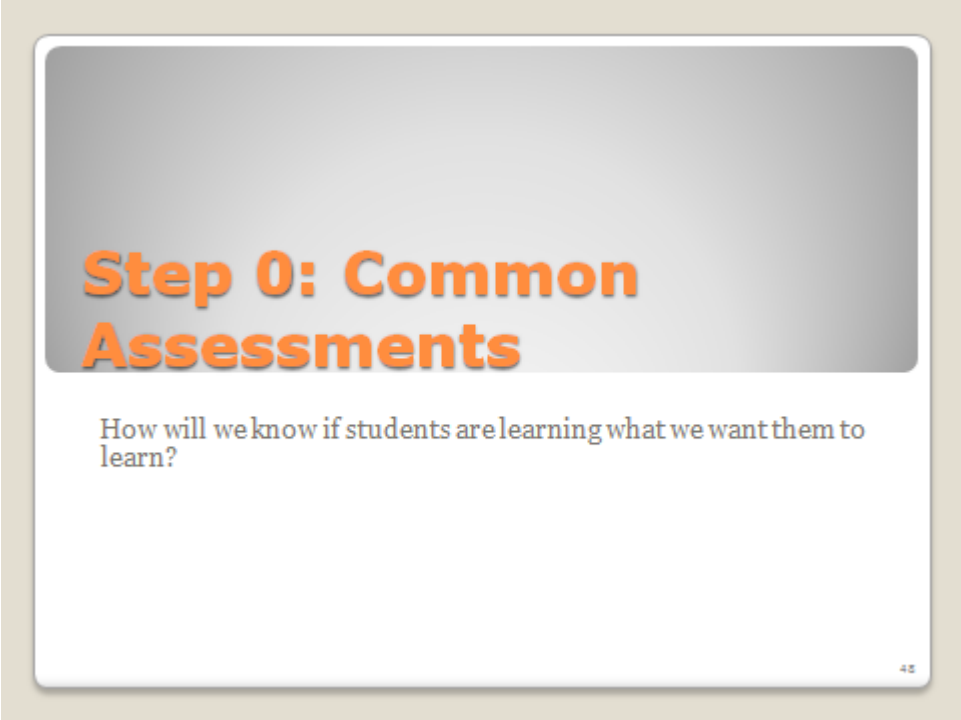
Discussion: What is the intended benefit of clarifying expectations for PLC work?

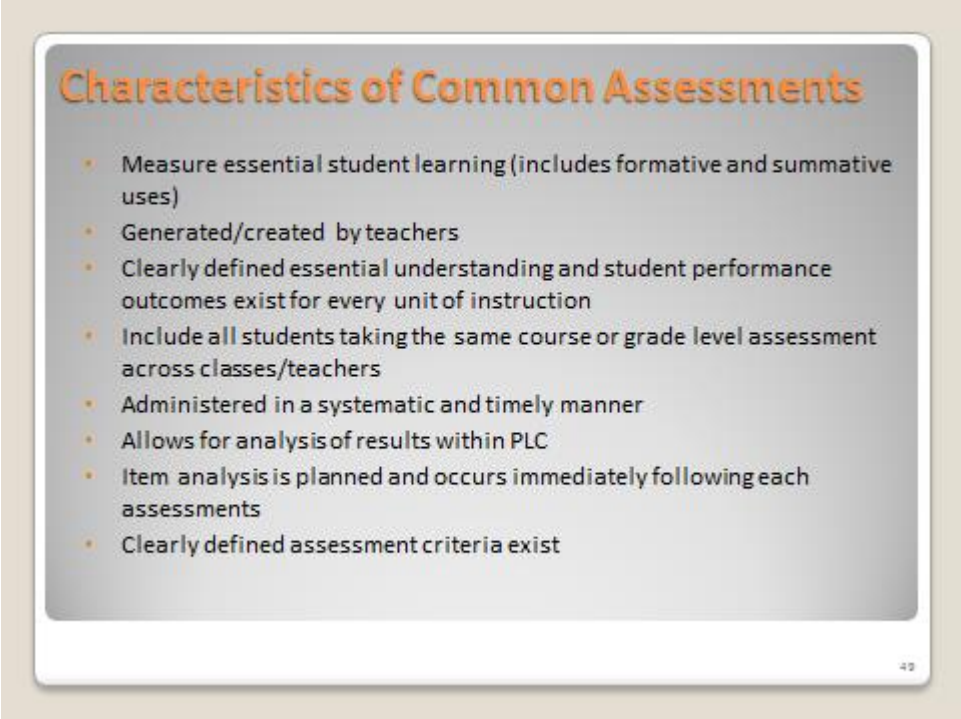
Decision: Are you creating, refining, and/or communicating your expectations for PLC work?

Action:

1. Review examples of PLC work expectations
2. If you are creating:
   - What do you want PLCs to really look like?
   - What would it sound like? What are examples? And what are non-examples?
3. If you are refining:
   - Will your clarifying expectations plan lead you to your intended benefit?

47


Step 0: Common Assessments
How will we know if students are learning what we want them to learn?


Characteristics of Common Assessments
Measure essential student learning (includes formative and summative uses)
Generated/created by teachers
Clearly defined essential understanding and student performance outcomes exist for every unit of instruction
Include all students taking the same course or grade level assessment across classes/teachers
Administered in a systematic and timely manner
Allows for analysis of results within PLC
Item analysis is planned and occurs immediately following each assessments
Clearly defined assessment criteria exist

Characteristics of Embedding Common Assessments

- Assessment for Learning/Common Assessment Prompts
- How can student demonstrate proficiency as the lesson is being taught?
- Rubrics and Scales (Marzano)
- How can we utilize common student friendly scales to assess essential student learning?

- Map out your Tier I assessments
- What assessments?
- When given?
- How data is organized for decision-making?
- Given to who?
- How is it used?

Mapping Assessments Activity

Assessment	When Given	Given to Whom	Admin Procedures
Reading Pre/Post Assessments	10/1-10/7 11/14-11/19 12/10-12/15 1/30-2/5 3/1-3/6 4/14-4/19	All Students	Computer-Based
Formative Reading Assessments - Prompts, - Work Sample - Performance Tasks	TBD based upon PLC discussions	All Students	Embedded within instruction
Math Pre Post Assessments	Every 5 weeks	All Students	Students take pre tests during third week or prior chapter test. Test is given whole group

Activity 4d: Common Assessments

Discussion: What is the intended benefit of common assessments?

Decision: Are you creating, refining, and/or communicating your common assessments?

Action:

1. Review examples of Common Assessments Maps
2. If you are creating:
   - Make a plan to complete a common assessment map
   - Consider what stakeholders you will need at the table
   - Consider this work for your PLCs
3. If you are refining:
   - Will your common assessments plan lead you to your intended benefit?

Step 0: Creating a Collaborative Culture

PLCs are more than just schedules and meetings.
Do people actually want to participate?

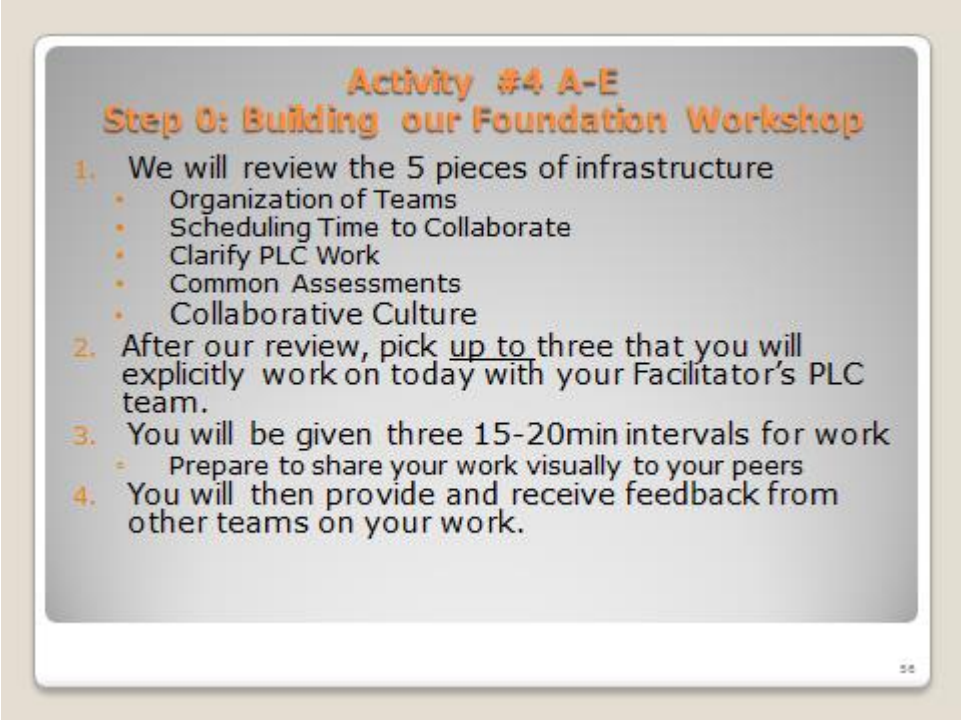
54

Activity 4e: Creating a Collaborative Culture

Discussion: What is the intended benefit of creating a collaborative culture?
Decision: Are you creating, refining, and/or communicating your collaborative culture?
Action:

1. Review your School-Wide Culture Items #26-31
2. Read "A Shift in School Culture" (3 pages), and Review the "Shifts" handout
3. If you are creating:
   - How will you make your PLCs something that people want to attend because it helps them?
   - What factors are holding your teams back for creating a collaborative culture?
4. If you are refining:
   - Will your collaborative culture plan lead you to your intended benefit?
   - What changes, if any, need to be made?

55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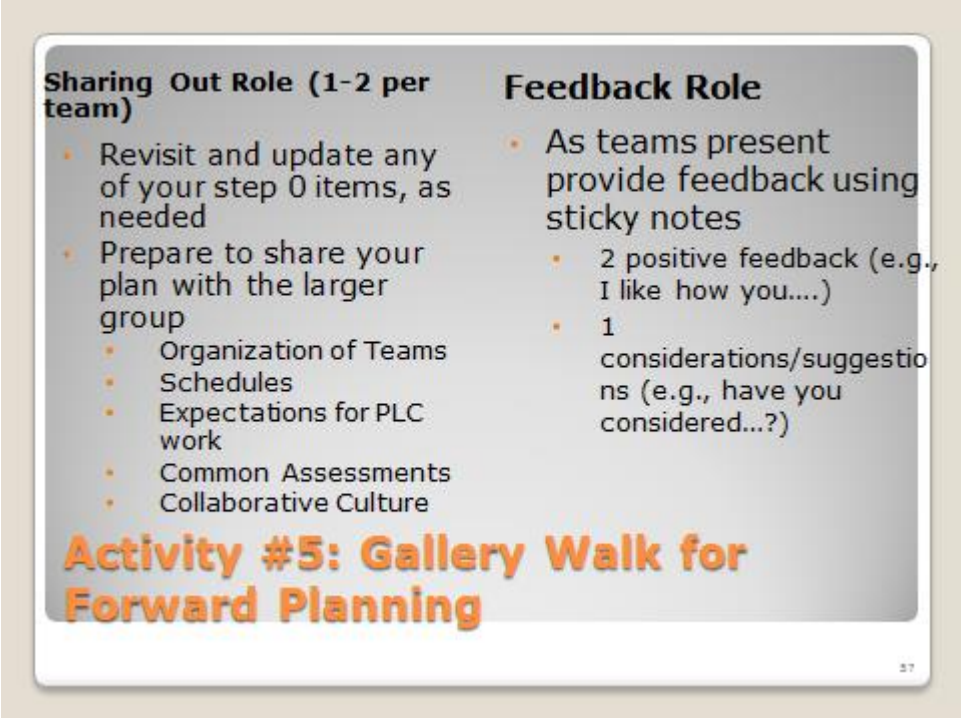
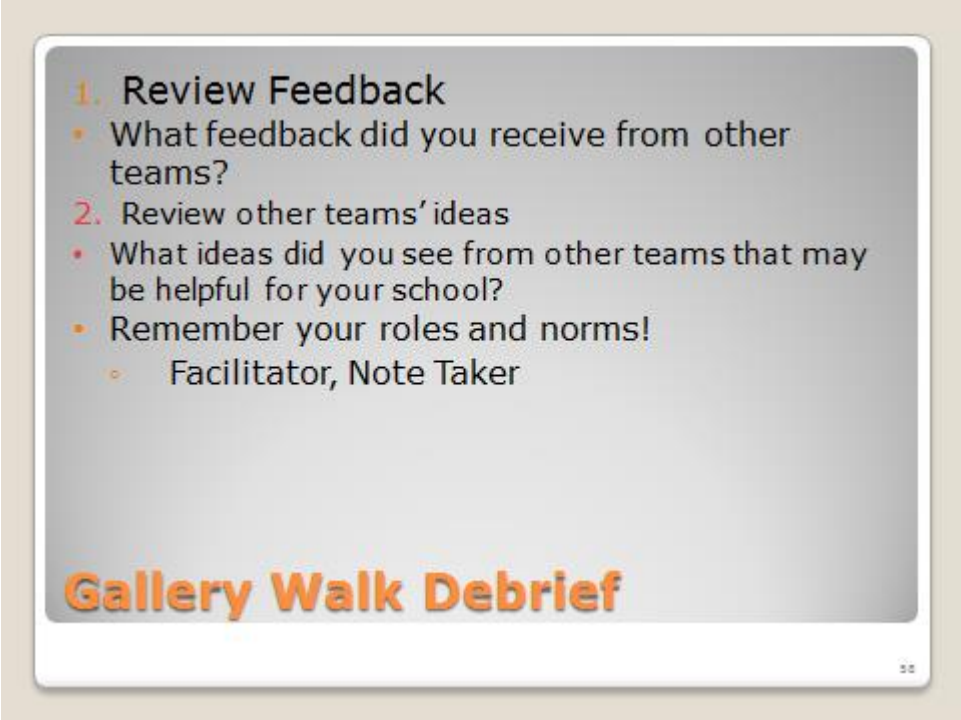
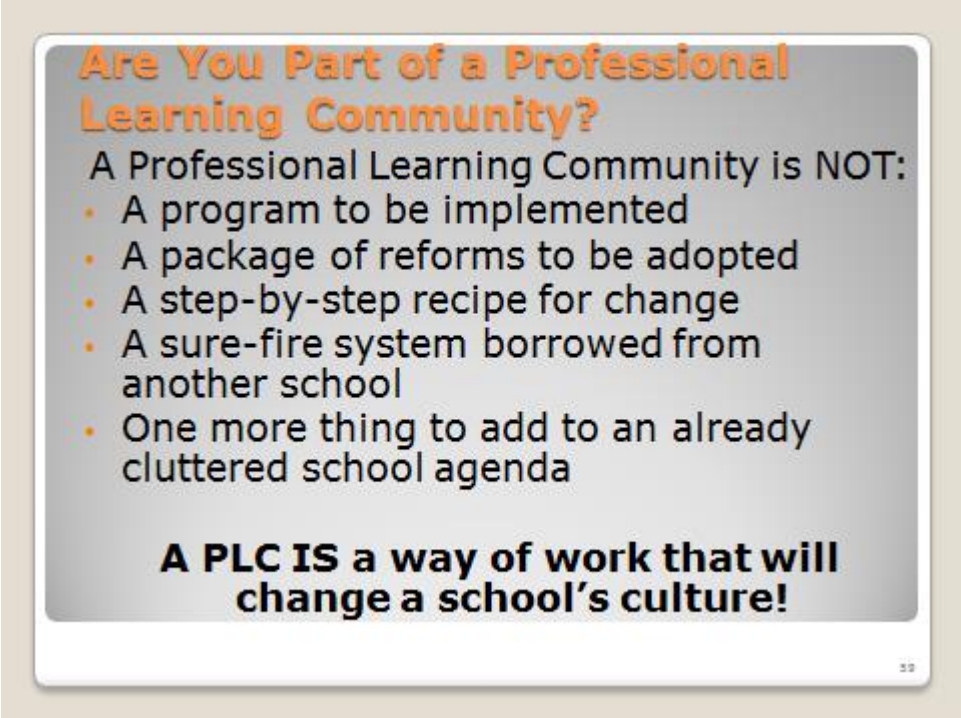
Prepare to share your work visually to your peers
4. You will then provide and receive feedback from other teams on your work.


Sharing Out Role (1-2 per team)
Revisit and update any of your step 0 items, as needed
Prepare to share your plan with the larger group
Organization of Teams
Schedules
Expectations for PLC work
Common Assessments
Collaborative Culture
Feedback Role
As teams present provide feedback using sticky notes
2 positive feedback (e.g., I like how you....)
1 considerations/suggestions (e.g., have you considered...?)
Activity #5: Gallery Walk for Forward Planning


1. Review Feedback
• What feedback did you receive from other teams?
2. Review other teams' ideas
• What ideas did you see from other teams that may be helpful for your school?
• Remember your roles and norms!
◦ Facilitator, Note Taker
Gallery Walk Debrief


Are You Part of a Professional Learning Community?
A Professional Learning Community is NOT:
• A program to be implemented
• A package of reforms to be adopted
• A step-by-step recipe for change
• A sure-fire system borrowed from another school
• One more thing to add to an already cluttered school agenda
A PLC IS a way of work that will change a school's culture!

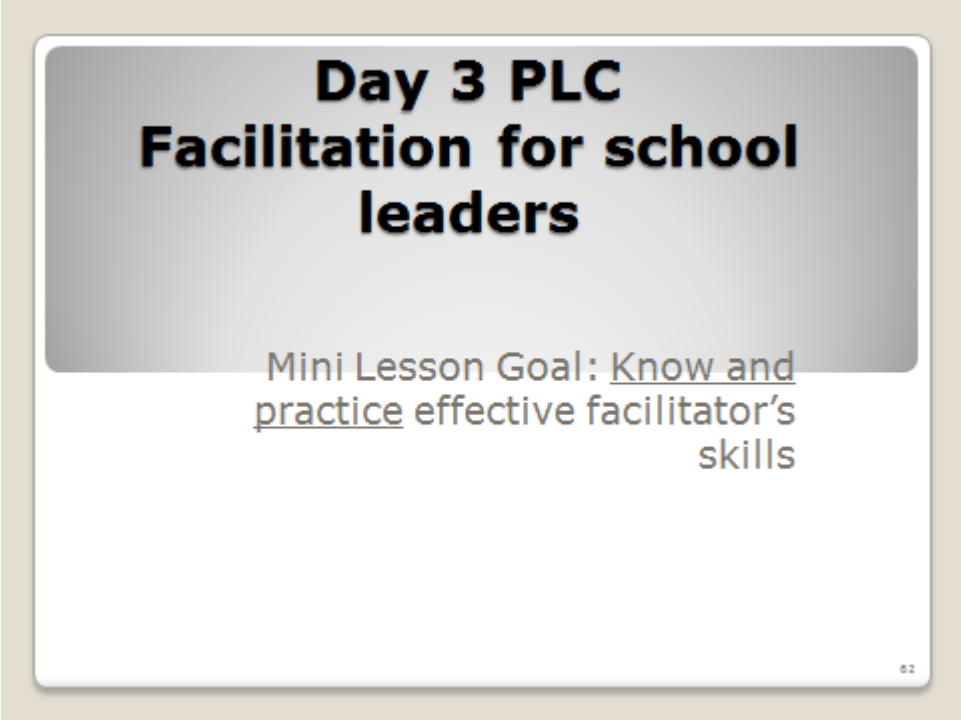
Why have past initiatives failed?

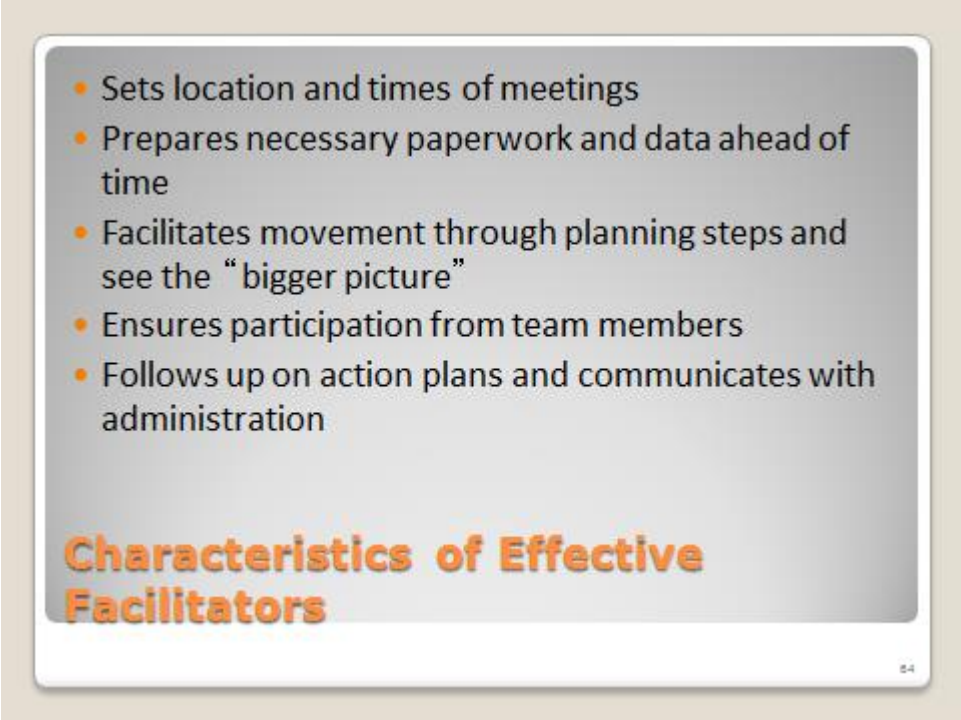
- Failure to achieve consensus
- School culture is ignored
- Purpose unclear
- Lack of ongoing communication
- Unrealistic expectations of initial success
- Failure to measure and analyze progress
- Participants not involved in planning…

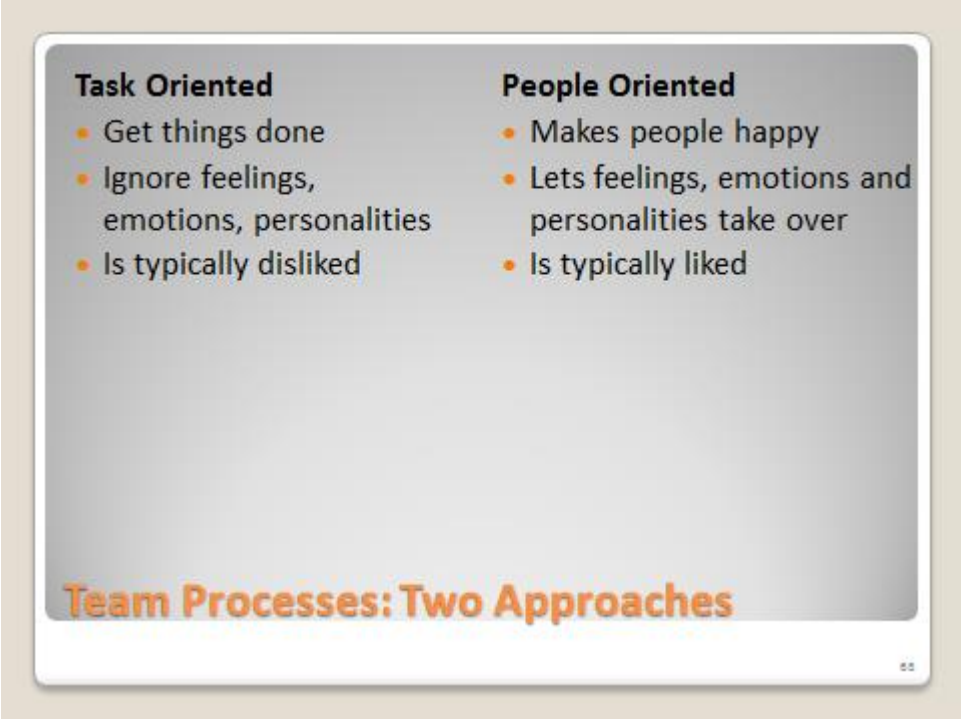
Activity #6: Team Reflection, Anticipating Barriers

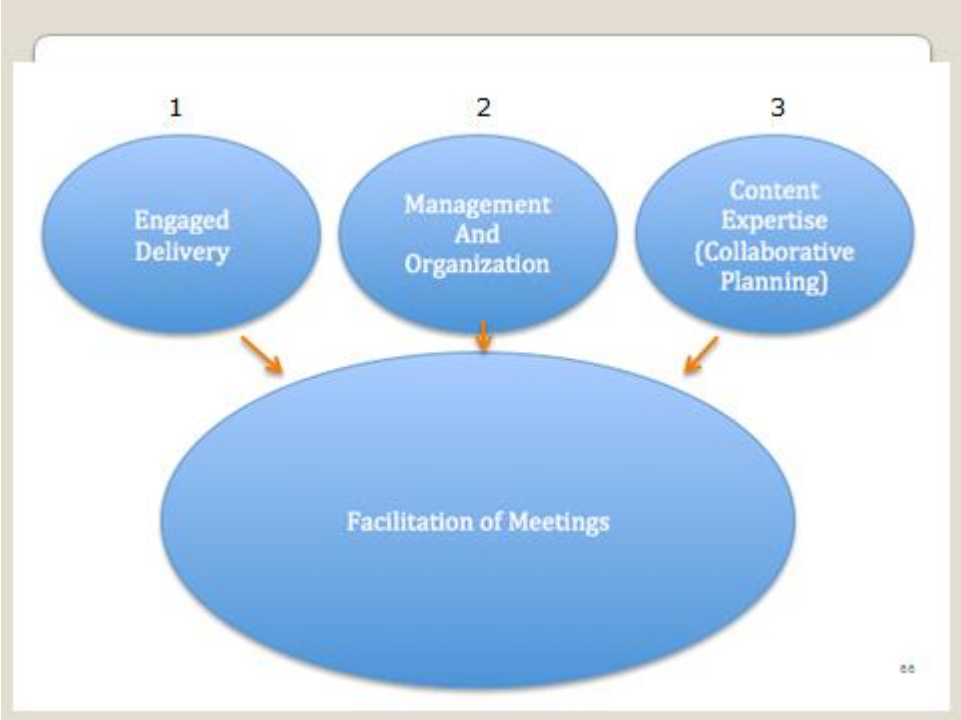
1. What are some potential barriers to implementing PLCs in your school?
2. Rate those barriers using a scale from 1-10
3. Select top 3 barriers

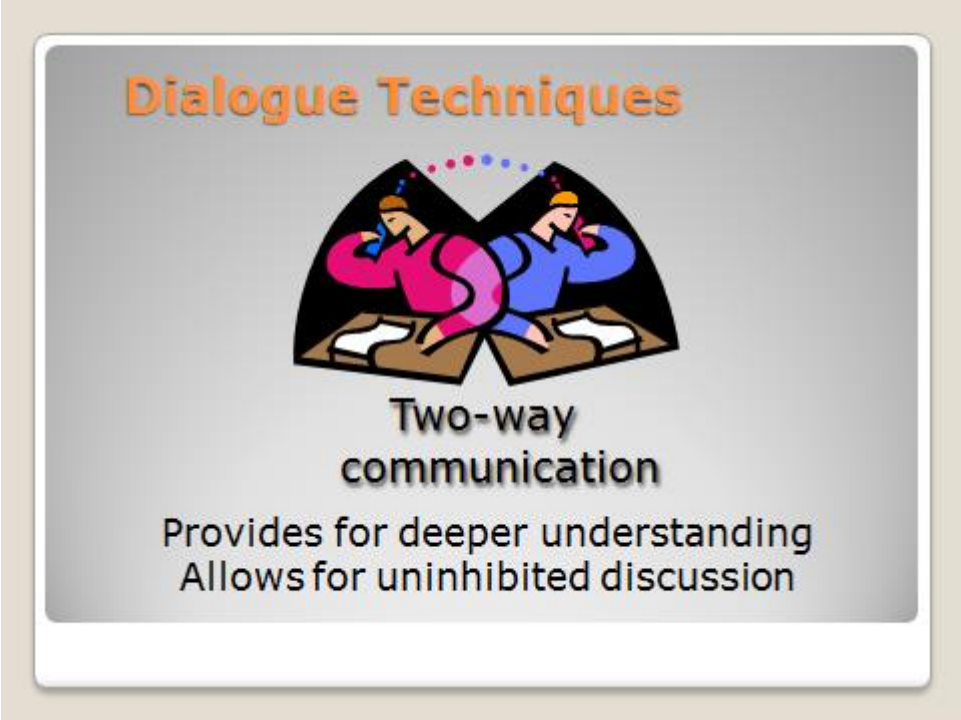
- Discuss what would be likely causes for each barrier
- Discuss ways you can overcome these barriers (preventative actions)
- Record your team's action steps/plan to address your top 1-3 barriers on your Participant Notebook


Day 3 PLC
Facilitation for school leaders
Mini Lesson Goal: Know and practice effective facilitator's skills
62


Sets location and times of meetings
Prepares necessary paperwork and data ahead of time
Facilitates movement through planning steps and see the "bigger picture"
Ensures participation from team members
Follows up on action plans and communicates with administration
Characteristics of Effective Facilitators


Task Oriented
Get things done
Ignore feelings, emotions, personalities
Is typically disliked
People Oriented
Makes people happy
Lets feelings, emotions and personalities take over
Is typically liked
Team Processes: Two Approaches


1
2
3
Engaged Delivery
Management And Organization
Content Expertise (Collaborative Planning)
Facilitation of Meetings


Dialogue Techniques
Two-way communication
Provides for deeper understanding
Allows for uninhibited discussion

Substitute "and" for "but"

Substitute "and" for "but" to encourage open dialogue

- Keeps discussion value neutral
- Allows for both parties thoughts to be heard
- Using "but"
  - Stifles open dialogue; shuts down communication
  - makes value judgment
  - may be interpreted as "I don't care."
- Examples
  - "Your intervention design is innovative **and** I have a few suggestions…"

Effective Interpersonal Strategies

- Use "I" messages
- Seek consensus-not disagreement
- Redirect (e.g., "I think that is important and perhaps we can wait…..")
- Ask others for suggested strategies
- Reinforce desired contributions
- Data feedback to demonstrate effectiveness

Ask a Question

Ask questions to increase levels of understanding

- Use questions that focus on the objective
  - Value neutral
  - Phrase open-ended questions; a full answer provides a full story
- Examples
  - "What are some reasons you think this happened?"
  - "How did you reach that conclusion…?"
  - "Why do you think that would be a good approach?"
  - "Yes, that is one way. Can you think of another approach?"
  - "How can we explain differences in what we planned and what occurred?

70

Reflective Listening

Use Reflective Listening to cut through communication barriers and filters

- Restate
  - "I think I understand your points. You believe…"
- Paraphrase
  - "So in other words, you are not certain we are all following the standards we said we would."
- Summarize
  - "Let' s recap…You can do…I can do…"
  - At this point, you are planning to…what?
  - What "a-ha(s)" have you had?
  - What do you plan to try again? What will you do differently?
  - So your next steps will be….what?
  - Let's see- you plan to…What other support is needed?

71

Dialogue Techniques for Conflict Resolution

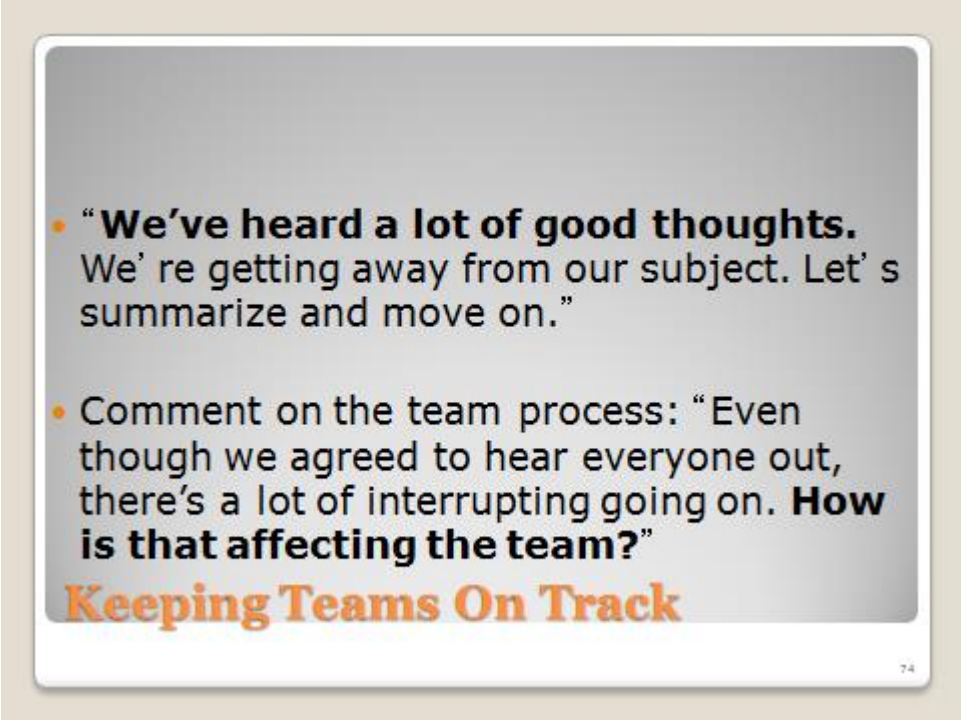
- Acknowledge the speaker and be attentive - Don't defend
- **Conference prior to a meeting**
- **Seek first to understand then to be understood**
- **Separate the person from the problem**
- Practice reflective listening
- Invite criticism and advice
- Stay in a position of curiosity not judgment
- **Use statements to elicit cooperation**
  - Use 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements.
  - Make appropriate eye contact
  - Avoid assumptions
  - Indicate that the other party has a good point when point has good merit
  - Identify areas of agreement with others

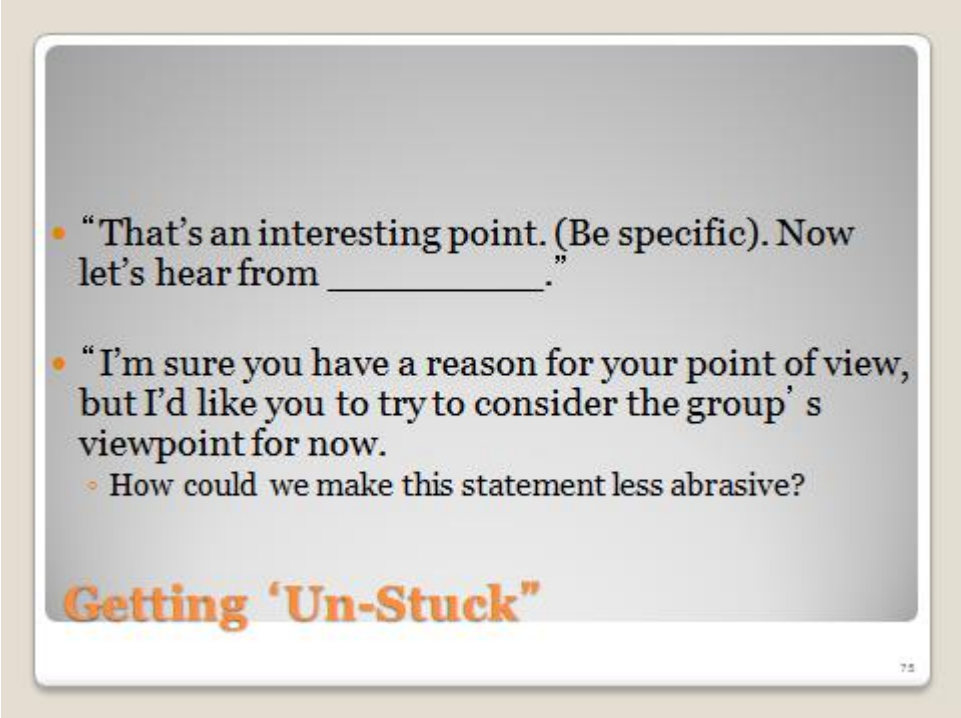
72

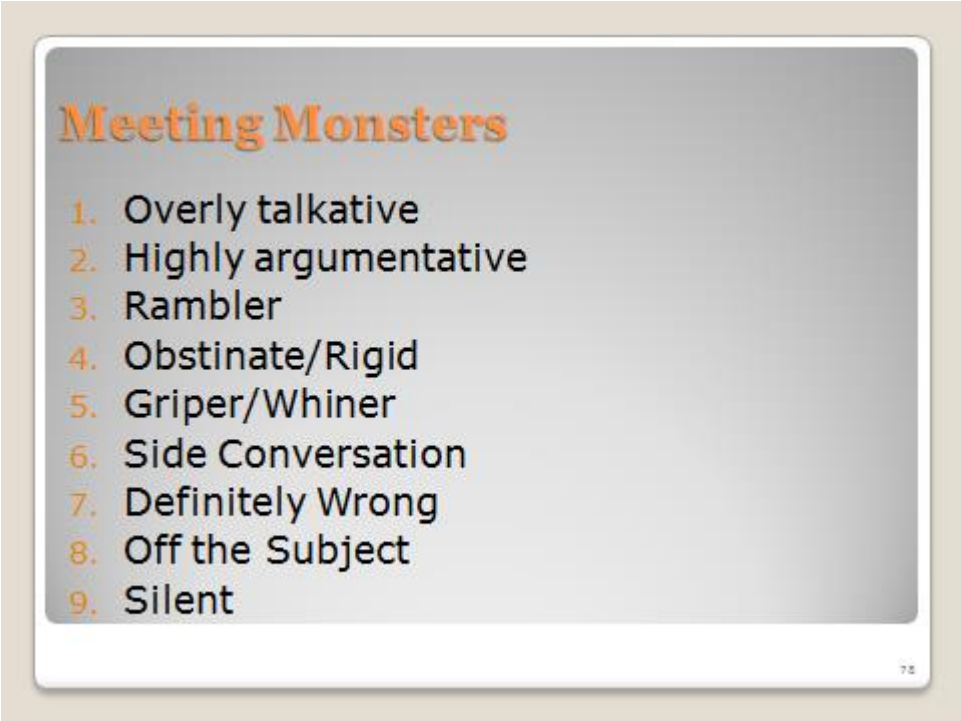
- Stick to the facts
- When describing their behavior, don't exaggerate, label, or judge
- Use "I messages"
  - "I'd like it if we could look at this graph again."
    Not: "You missed a key point in the data."
  - "I'd feel a lot better about our time here if we stayed on topic."
    Not: "We're off topic again." or, "We're wasting time."
- Don't make assumptions about others' motives
- Look for ways of compromising

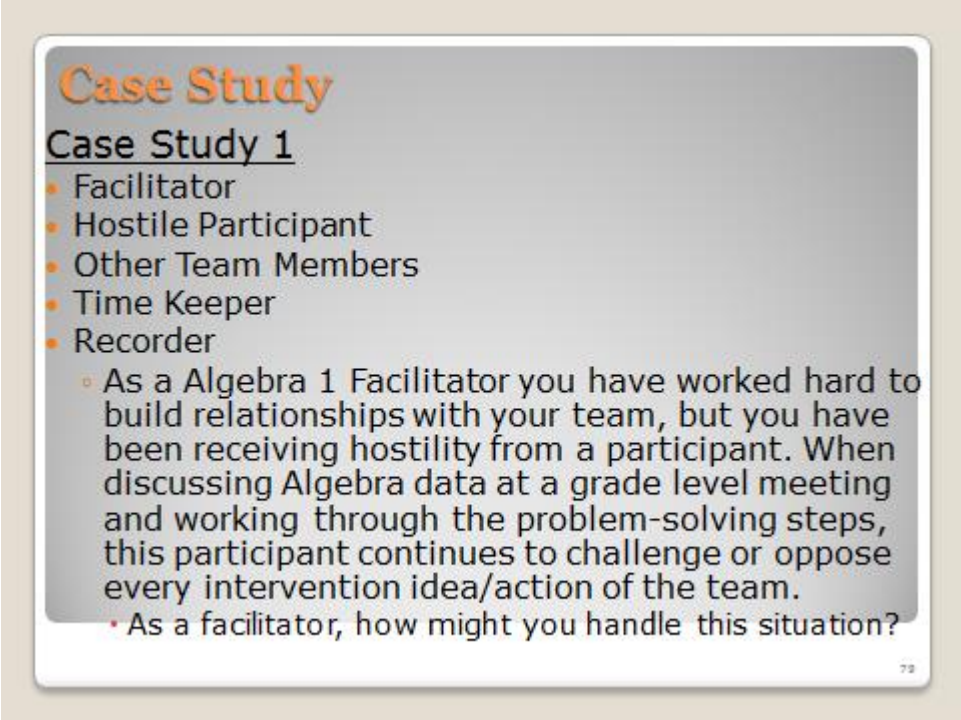
Assertive Speaking

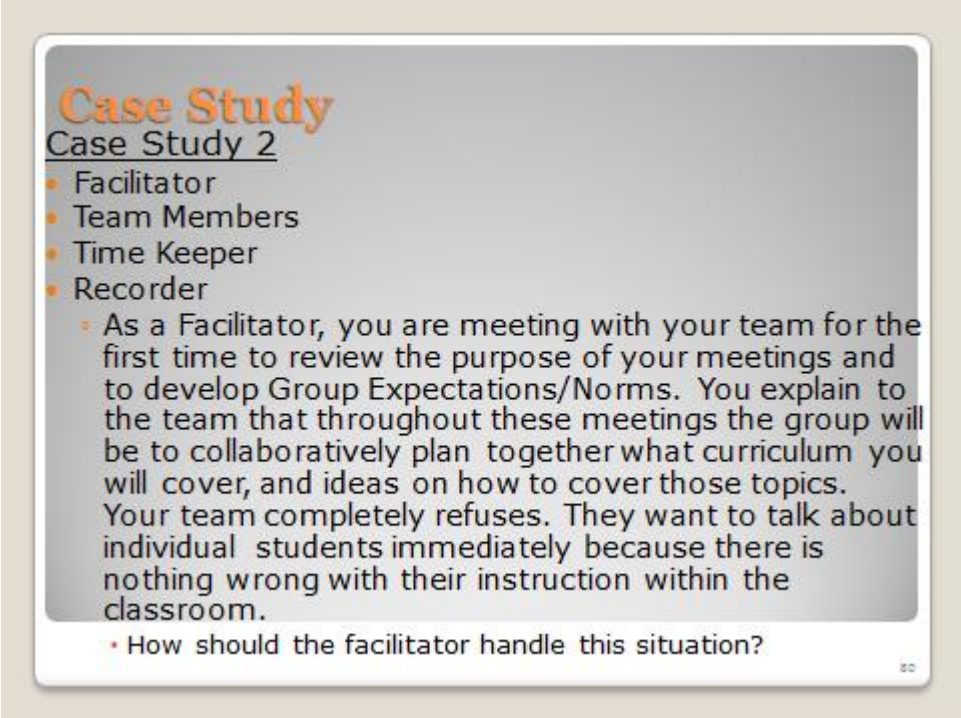
73

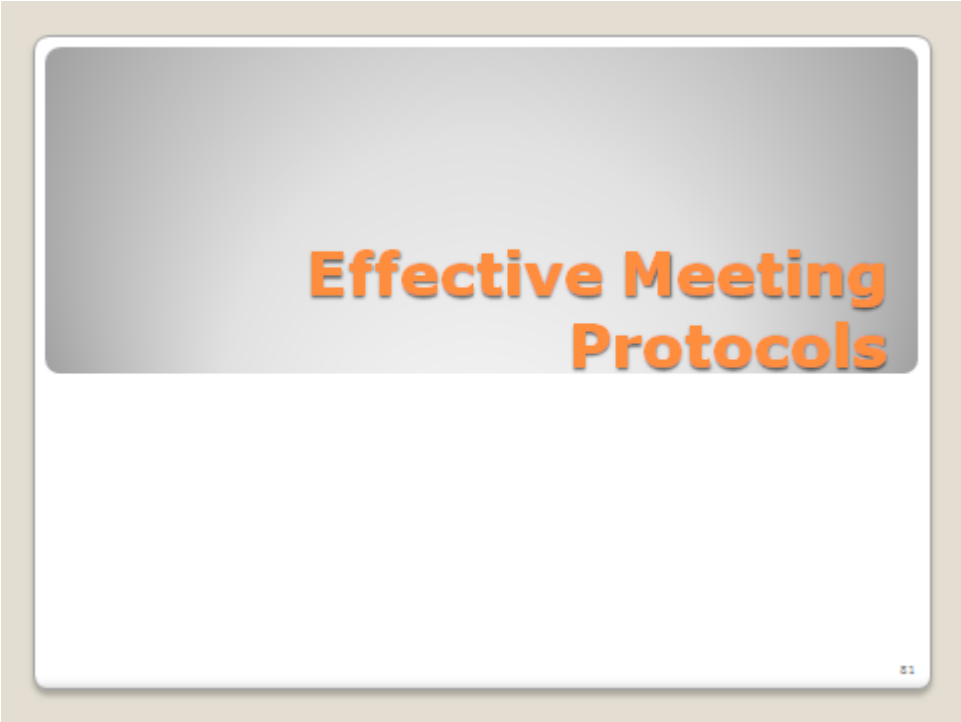

"We've heard a lot of good thoughts. We're getting away from our subject. Let's summarize and move on."
Comment on the team process: "Even though we agreed to hear everyone out, there's a lot of interrupting going on. How is that affecting the team?"
Keeping Teams On Track
74

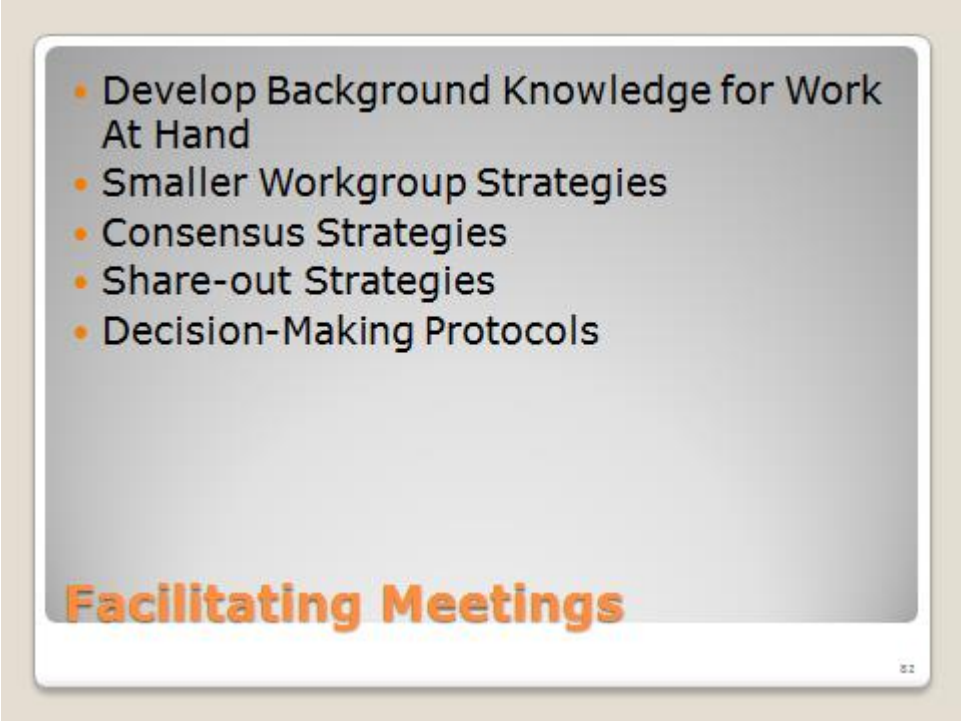

"That's an interesting point. (Be specific). Now let's hear from _____."
"I'm sure you have a reason for your point of view, but I'd like you to try to consider the group's viewpoint for now.
How could we make this statement less abrasive?
Getting 'Un-Stuck"
75


Meeting Monsters
1. Overly talkative
2. Highly argumentative
3. Rambler
4. Obstinate/Rigid
5. Griper/Whiner
6. Side Conversation
7. Definitely Wrong
8. Off the Subject
9. Silent


Case Study
Case Study 1
Facilitator
Hostile Participant
Other Team Members
Time Keeper
Recorder
As a Algebra 1 Facilitator you have worked hard to build relationships with your team, but you have been receiving hostility from a participant. When discussing Algebra data at a grade level meeting and working through the problem-solving steps, this participant continues to challenge or oppose every intervention idea/action of the team.
As a facilitator, how might you handle this situation?


Case Study
Case Study 2
Facilitator
Team Members
Time Keeper
Recorder
As a Facilitator, you are meeting with your team for the first time to review the purpose of your meetings and to develop Group Expectations/Norms. You explain to the team that throughout these meetings the group will be to collaboratively plan together what curriculum you will cover, and ideas on how to cover those topics. Your team completely refuses. They want to talk about individual students immediately because there is nothing wrong with their instruction within the classroom.
How should the facilitator handle this situation?


Effective Meeting Protocols


Develop Background Knowledge for Work At Hand
Smaller Workgroup Strategies
Consensus Strategies
Share-out Strategies
Decision-Making Protocols
Facilitating Meetings

Second Body of Knowledge of Facilitation Skills

Managing and Organizing

83

- Understand and Implement Strategies to Organize and Manage Teams Efforts
- Examples:
  - Design and Share an Effective Agenda
  - Manage Time
  - Develop Norms and Roles
  - Understand and Organize Assessments
  - Prepare and Manage Evidence of PLC Work
  - Understand the Direction of the Team

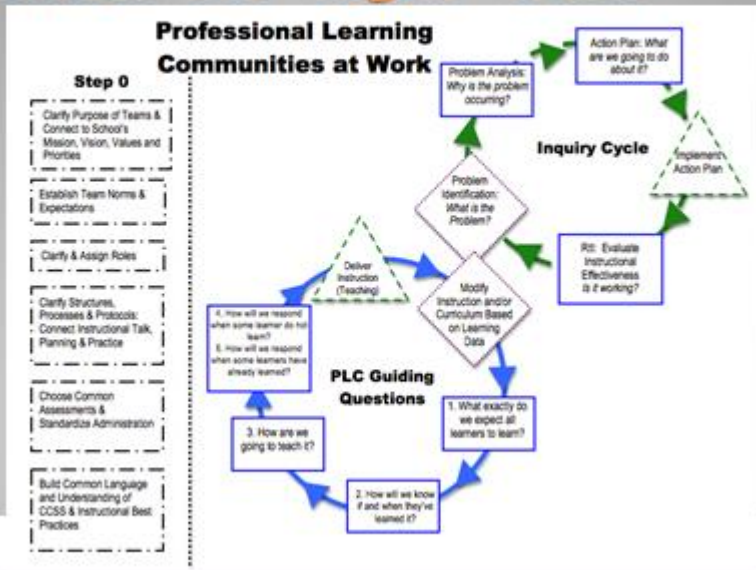
Managing and Organization Skills

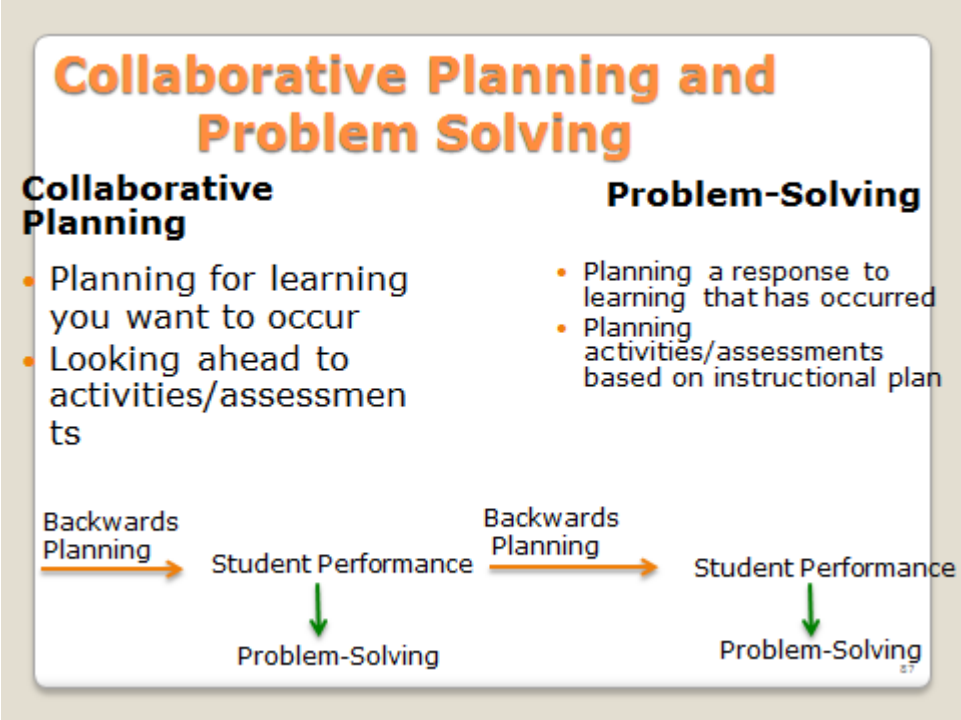
84

Third Body of Knowledge: Content Expertise

Problem-Solving and Collaborative Planning Models

What is the "Right" Work




Collaborative Planning and Problem Solving
Collaborative Planning
Planning for learning you want to occur
Looking ahead to activities/assessments
Problem-Solving
Planning a response to learning that has occurred
Planning activities/assessments based on instructional plan
Backwards Planning
Student Performance
Problem-Solving
Backwards Planning
Student Performance
Problem-Solving

Appendix B: School Administrators Interview Protocol

1. Introductions
2. Clarify the purpose of my study
3. Ask if participants have questions about the consent form
4. Ask permission to record the interview
5. Record the time, place, and date of the interview
6. Conduct the interview
7. Identify the participant with a code while conducting the interview
8. Turn off recording at the end of the interview
9. Thank the participant for being part of my study

School administrators Interview Questions

I. Shared and Supportive Leadership

i) As a school leader what are the opportunities that you provide for teachers to initiate change to improve instructional practices?

II. Shared Values and Vision

i) How does your school try to improve student achievement beyond just looking at the state criterion referenced test?

ii) What is the process for developing for creating a shared vision for the Professional Learning Communities?

III. Collective Learning and Application

i) How do teachers in their Professional Learning Communities seek to improve their instructional practices?

ii) What are the teachers' actions to meet the needs of all students?

IV. Shared Personal Practice

i) Describe how teachers share their instructional practices.

ii) What is the structure for teachers to observe their peers?

V. Supportive Conditions-Relationship

i) What evidence exists that there is a positive relationship among staff as they try to increase student achievement and their instructional capacity?

VI. Supportive Conditions-Structures

i) What fiscal resources are available to provide support to teachers to improve their instructional practices? What are the fiscal resources available for professional development?

Sample Probes

Tell me more about that…

Please give an example.

Explain what you mean by…

How did … work for you?

Appendix C: Teachers' Interview Protocol

1. Introductions
2. Clarify the purpose of my study
3. Ask if participants have questions about the consent form
4. Ask permission to record the interview
5. Record the time, place, and date of the interview
6. Conduct the interview
7. Identify the participant with a code while conducting the interview
8. Turn off recording at the end of the interview
9. Thank the participant for being part of my study

Teachers Interview Questions

1. Shared and Supportive Leadership

i. As a classroom teacher, how have you initiated and made changes in the instructional practices at your school?

ii. How do you make decisions amongst fellow teachers in your professional learning communities (PLCs) to improve instruction?

2. Shared Values and Vision

i. How has the implementation of a shared vision between administrators and teachers affected the sharing and implementation of instructional ideas?

ii. In what ways are you implementing and meeting the requirements of the shared visions?

3. Collective Learning and Application

i. How does your PLC team work together to seek knowledge about new instructional skills and strategies to improve your instructional practices?

ii. How does your PLC team plan and work together to address diverse student needs? What strategies/activities have you used to improve your instructional practices to meet diverse student needs?

4. Shared Personal Practice

i. How does your PLC team use reviewed student work to influence instructional practices to improve student achievement?

5. Supportive Conditions – Relationships

i. How does your PLC team use data to improve instructional practices?

6. Supportive Conditions-Structures

i. How do you use existing resources to improve instructional practices?

7. Sample Probes

8. Tell me more about that…

9. Please give an example.

10. Explain what you mean by…

11. How did … work for you?