A Focus on the Three Big Ideas of a PLC at the Early Elementary Level

Barb Cirigliano
PLC: A Focus on the Three Big Ideas at the Early Elementary Level

Barb Cirigliano
bcirigliano@kcsd96.org
Kildeer Countryside School District 96
Buffalo Grove, Illinois

Today’s Targets

- **Big Idea 1: Focus on Learning**
  - Do we share a common purpose?
- **Big Idea 2: Collaborative Culture**
  - Highly effective teams
- **Big Idea 3: Results Orientation**
  - Using assessments to make a difference

Handout

PLC Defined

“A PLC is an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.”

Implementation of PLCs

“The reason professional learning communities increase student learning is that they produce more good teaching by more teachers more of the time. Put simply, PLCs improve teaching, which improves student results, especially for the least advantaged students.”

—Saphier, 2005, p. 23

Key Concepts of a PLC

Focus on Student Learning — Collaborative Culture

Results Orientation

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
District Average: Reading, Math, and Science

District AVERAGE Score 1999-2010
(Average through 2009)

Overall Reading

ISAT District READING Scores 1999-2010
(Average through 2009)

Overall Math

ISAT District MATH Scores 1999-2010
(Average through 2009)
Can We All Agree?

- We must focus on making sure that children **learn**.
- No **one** person can meet the needs of every single child.
- Hoping children learn is **not** a strategy that’s good enough.
One Critical Purpose

We make learning rather than teaching the fundamental purpose of our schools.

“The very essence of a professional learning community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student.”


Shifts in Fundamental Purpose

From a focus on teaching
From emphasis on what was taught
From a coverage of content
To a focus on learning
To a fixation on what students learned
To demonstration of proficiency
### Shift in the Work of Teachers and in School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From private practice</th>
<th>To open sharing of practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From these are <em>my kids</em>, those are <em>your kids</em></td>
<td>To these are <em>our kids</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From each teacher assigning priority to different learning standards</td>
<td>To collaborative teams establishing the priority of standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### One Critical Purpose

By making **learning** rather than **teaching** the fundamental purpose of our schools, **we** ensure that each child can and will reach his or her maximum potential.

Until it’s been learned, it hasn’t been taught.
Identify a current practice in your system that points to a focus on teaching rather than on learning. Identify evidence of a focus on learning.

Key Concepts of a PLC

Focus on Student Learning

Collaborative Culture

Results Orientation

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
Collaboration Defined

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

—DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2010, p. 120

Rick DuFour
Groups Versus Teams

"Interdependence is what organizations are about. Productivity, performance, and innovation result from joint action, not just individual efforts and behavior."

—Pfeffer &utton, 2000

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
The Power of Collaboration

Teacher collaboration in strong PLCs:
- Improves the quality and equity of student learning
- Promotes discussions that are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion
- Fosters collective responsibility for student success

(McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006)

From the Researchers

“There is broad, even remarkable, concurrence among members of the research community on the effects of carefully structured learning teams on the improvement of instruction.”

—Schmoker, 2004, p. 430

The Focus of Collaboration

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

—Fullan, 2007, p. 67

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
What Are the Right Things?

- Clarify essential outcomes by grade or course.
- Establish targets and benchmarks.
- Develop common assessments.
- Analyze results.
- Plan for instruction and improvement strategies.

Collaborative Teams

Therefore, collaborative teams’ conversations center on certain critical questions.

The Four Critical Questions

- What do students need to know and be able to do?
- How will we know when they have learned it?
- What will we do when they have not learned it?
- What will we do when they already know it?

Handout
“The fact that teachers collaborate will do nothing to improve a school.... The purpose of collaboration ... can only be accomplished if the professionals engaged in collaboration are focused on the right work.” —DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 119

Keys to Effective Teams

- Collaboration is embedded into routine practices.
- Time for collaboration is built into school day and school calendar.
- Teams focus on key questions.
- Products of collaboration are made explicit.
- Team norms guide collaboration.
- Teams pursue specific and measurable performance goals.

Tools for Teams
Team Tools That Support Collaboration in a PLC

- Teams agree to norms.
- Agendas are outcome driven.
- Teams build shared knowledge and reach consensus.

Norms Help Establish Trust

The standards of behaviors by which we agree to operate while we are in this group.

Norms ...

- Clarify expectations.
- Promote open dialogue.
- Serve as a powerful tool for holding members accountable.

(Lencioni, 2005)
Norms ...

- Revisit norms often.
- Use norms to monitor and manage behavior.

Willow Grove Norms 2010–2011

1. Come prepared to meetings that begin and end on time.
2. Listen and speak with respect, attentiveness, and an open mind.
3. Respect all conversations and understand what needs to be kept confidential.
4. Use decision-making processes that are appropriate to the issue and keep the best interests of the students in mind.
5. It is each member’s responsibility to actively participate.
6. It is the expectation that all will focus on the task at hand and all will be held accountable.

Handout

Norms Violations

What will we do when someone violates a norm?

You may need a norm checker!
Creating Norms

1. Take five minutes to brainstorm specific things you need to be successful when working with a team.
2. Record each idea on a separate Post-It™.
3. Share your ideas with your group.
4. Create group categories (save Post-Its™ to record later).

Team Tools That Support Collaboration in a PLC

- Teams agree to norms.
- **Agendas are outcome driven.**
- Teams build shared knowledge and reach consensus.

Meeting Agenda Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>I/D/A</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Adapted from original work by Delahant, 2007)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>*I/D/A</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Adapted from original work by Delehant, 2007)
### MEETING AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>*I/D/A</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Adapted from original work by Delehant, 2007)

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
Three Important Roles to Establish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timekeeper</td>
<td>- Attend to the meeting and time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tactfully work with the group to resolve time issues when discussions exceed the allotted time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorder or minutes taker</td>
<td>- Attend to the meeting and record minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Summarize major ideas without identifying every detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>- Communicate with speaker (e.g., &quot;Did I capture what you meant?&quot;).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Put Your Heads Together
Table Talk

List two things you could do to take the next step toward embedding a collaborative culture in your school and on your team.

Key Concepts of a PLC

Focus on Student Learning  Collaborative Culture

Results Orientation

Key Concepts of a PLC

Focus on Student Learning  Collaborative Culture

Results Orientation
Teams are committed to achieving desired results. They are hungry for evidence that their efforts are producing the intended outcomes.

“Research consistently shows that regular, high-quality formative assessments increase student achievement.”

—Black & William, 1998

From “Measuring” to “Diagnosing” ...
From “Measuring” to “Diagnosing”…

my name is

BENJAMIN
and I want to learn...

A10T0FART.

Rules of Data

1. Easily accessible
   - Improve accessibility of data.
2. Purposefully arranged
   - Data are presented in a complete, accurate, and straight-forward manner.
3. Publicly discussed
   - Teachers benefit from the collective wisdom of their team.
   - Sharpen their pedagogy and deepen their content knowledge.

How Would You Measure …

We can measure things that impact student achievement beyond just test scores, especially at the early elementary level.
**Common Assessments ... More Formative**

**Common Formative Assessment**

Students are asked periodically to participate in assessments that are:

1. Common at each grade level at each building
2. Linked to power standards or targets
3. Used to guide instruction
4. Used to initiate interventions
5. Used to measure, monitor, and report student progress
6. Created by teams of teachers through a collaborative process

---

**Classroom Assessments ... Most Formative**

**Daily Classroom Assessment**

- Ticket out the door (exit slips)
- Numbered heads together
- Think, pair, share
- Conferencing with students
- Checklists
- Slate assessment
- Use of clicker system

---

**Naomi’s Progress**

**Early Ltr Improvement Report for 2008-2009 School Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Ttr</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How would you measure?

Remember we can measure things that impact student achievement beyond just “test scores.”

Create a list.
Key Concepts of a PLC

Focus on Student Learning

Collaborative Culture

Results Orientation

“What we know today does not make yesterday wrong; it makes tomorrow better.”
—Carol Commodore

Thank You!
To schedule professional development at your site, contact Solution Tree at 800.733.6786.

Barb Cirigliano
bcirigliano@kcsd96.org

© Cirigliano 2012. solution-tree.com
Do not duplicate.
DuFour and Eaker (1998, pp. xi–xii) introduce Professional Learning Communities at Work™ by noting that “careful examination and constant probing of context and detail” are key aspects:

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) write:

> 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 of these characteristics are evident. Educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone.
Three Big Ideas That Drive the Work of a PLC

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010, p. 14) note, “The essence of the PLC process is captured in three big ideas”:

1. The purpose of our school is to ensure all students learn at high levels.

2. Helping all students learn requires a collaborative and collective effort.

3. To assess our effectiveness in helping all students learn, we must focus on results—evidence of student learning results—and use the results to inform and improve our professional practice and respond to students who need intervention or enrichment.

Notes

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
The Key Questions

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010, p. 119) describe the four critical questions of a PLC:

1. What is it we want our students to learn?

2. How will we know if each student has learned it?

3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?

4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

Notes
Willow Grove Kindergarten and Early Childhood Norms

1. Come prepared to meetings that begin and end on time.

2. Listen and speak with respect, attentiveness, and an open mind.

3. Respect all conversations and understand what needs to be kept confidential.

4. Use decision-making processes that are appropriate to the issue, and keep the best interests of the students in mind.

5. It is each member’s responsibility to actively participate.

6. It is the expectation that all will focus on the task at hand and all will be held accountable.

Notes
# Agenda Template

Group name ____________________________________________________

Date ___________ Time________ Location _____________________

Meeting purpose _________________________________________________

Meeting nonpurpose __________________ Meeting adjourns at ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>*I/D/A</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*I: Information, D: Discussion, A: Action–decision point

(Source: This table is excerpted from Delehant, 2007.)
Three Rules of Data

Easy Access
• It is timely.
• It is the most efficient way to get data to teachers.
• It has a turn-around time of less than 48 hours.

Purposeful Arrangement
• Data are organized in a format that is complete, accurate, and straight-forward.
• They are organized in a simple—not simplistic—way.
• Format is conducive to discussion.

Public Discussion
• Teacher teams engage in public discussions of data.
• They are used to make decisions and adjust instruction.

(Many, 2009)

Notes
References and Resources


