
Update on Professional Learning Communities at Blind Brook

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What is a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?

- A PLC is a team of educators who work together on the following critical questions:
 - *What do we expect students to learn?*
 - *How will we know if they've learned it?*
 - *How will we respond if they already know it?*
 - *How will we respond if they don't learn it?*

Why should we implement PLCs in Blind Brook?

- Supporting research on raising student achievement through PLCs:
 - The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities. Milbrey McLaughlin, 1995
 - Effective schools require more than competent individual teachers. The task for schools is to organize human resources into an effective collective effort. Newman and Wehlage, 1995

How are PLC's organized?

- PLC's are organized by subject area and/or grade level. For example:
 - *If you were a third (or seventh or tenth) grade teacher:*
 - *Sometimes you would meet with other teachers at your grade level*
 - *Other times you would meet with other teachers in your department*
- Either way, your focus is on the four questions

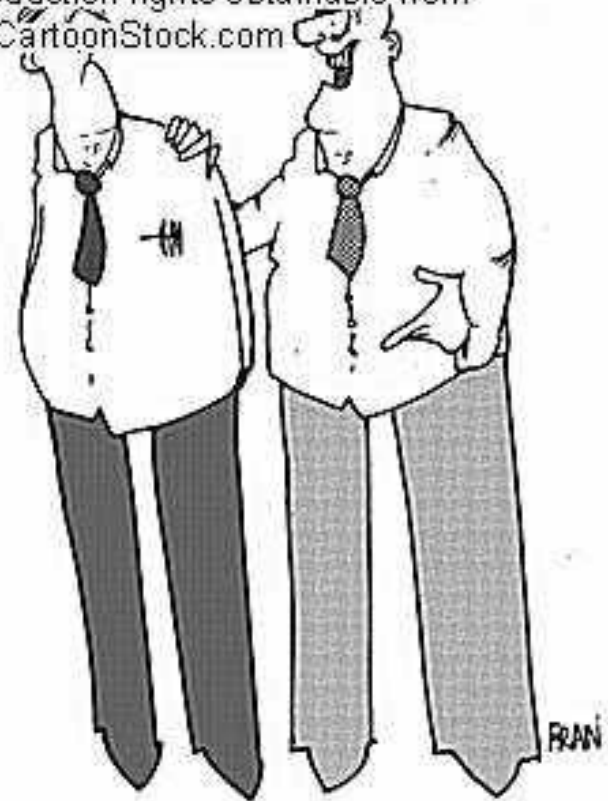
Who leads the PLC?

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"Individually we could do nothing. So we formed a committee which determined nothing could be done."

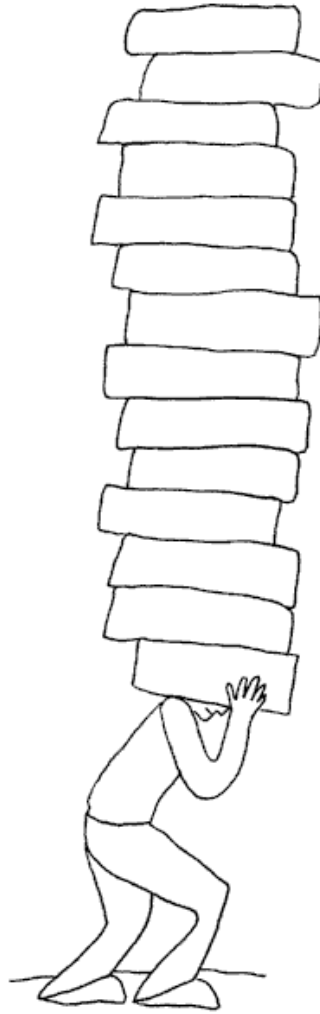
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LEADERS NEED TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE SACRIFICES, AND YOU'RE MINE!

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I FEEL AS IF I HAVE THE
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UPON MY SHOULDERS



THE FACT THAT I HAVE
TO CARRY ALL THESE BOXES
DOES NOT HELP

What gets done in a PLC?

- Members of a PLC do things like
 - Identify the essential learning in their course or at grade level
 - Create common assessments which reflect state *and district* standards
 - Examine data and establish proficiency standards
 - Agree upon criteria to evaluate student work
 - Determine ways of supporting and challenging all students

What's the difference between a PLC and a grade level or dept. meeting?

- There are several differences:
 - A PLC sets group norms and establishes SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, Time-bound) Goals
 - A PLC functions as an interdependent team



When do schools have PLC's?

- Schools use common planning time available in the schedule, including SCD's and team meeting time
- Some schools “bank” time or determine ways to schedule certain activities (student workshops, assemblies, etc.) which can be supervised by non instructional staff

What about our district goals (Character Ed, Writing, Technology)?

- Each PLC (grade level, subject area) would study and determine how these goals would be reflected and promoted in their core competencies

How will we know if our PLC is successful?

- PLC's are successful when:
 - Learning is the fundamental purpose of our school and we are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.
 - We seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement and assess our effectiveness based upon results.
 - We clarify what each student is expected to learn in each course at each grade level.
 - We develop common assessments to ensure all students in each course at each grade level are meeting academic and social goals based upon proficiency targets and SMART goals.
 - We provide a systemic response to students who are not learning.
 - Teachers are working collaboratively rather than in isolation
 - All teachers practice the most powerful and effective strategies.
 - All students are learning at higher levels than ever before.

What's next?

- Some things we can start doing now using existing time include:
 - Identifying core curriculum at grade level and in courses
 - Creating and implementing more common assessments at grade level or in courses
 - Helping one another examine and interpret student achievement data
 - Engaging in more collaborative experiences (classroom visitations, for example)
 - Establishing group norms at grade level and dept. meetings

Professional Organization Endorsements of PLC's

- American Federation of Teachers
- Annenberg Institute for School Reform
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Council of Chief State School Officials
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching
- National Council of Teachers of English
- National Council of Teachers of Math
- National Education Association
- National Middle School Association
- National Science Education Leadership Association
- National Science Teachers Association
- National Staff Development Council
- Research For Better Teaching, Inc.