

RESOURCE 7.2

Benefits of a Learning Community

Shirley Hord's (1997) research on professional learning communities (PLCs) found the following **results for staff**:

- Reduction of isolation of educators;
- Increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigor in working to strengthen the mission;
- Shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success;
- Powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice and that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners;
- Increased meaning and understanding of the content that educators teach and the roles they play in helping all students achieve expectations;
- Higher likelihood that educators will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students;
- More satisfaction, higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism;
- Significant advances in adapting teaching to the students, accomplished more quickly than in traditional schools;
- Commitment to making significant and lasting changes; and
- Higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental, systemic change.

Shirley Hord's (1997) research also validated the benefit of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for students. She found the following **effects for students**:

- Decreased dropout rate and fewer classes "cut";
- Lower rates of absenteeism;
- Increased learning that is distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools;
- Larger academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools; and
- Smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.¹

Hord, S. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available from www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/

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