

## RESOURCE 2.10

### PLC Agendas and Activities

## ESSENTIALS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY (PLC) AGENDAS

### At Their First Meeting, PLCs Should

- Establish norms (including a norm about what to do when norms are broken)
- Determine purpose of the PLC and related goals (based on school goals)
- Set dates, time, and place for meeting well in advance (at least a semester)
- Establish procedures (facilitator rotations, for example)
- Determine ways to be accountable (i.e., sharing results of learning with the entire faculty; keeping a PLC journal or portfolio; publishing what happens)

### At All Meetings, PLCs Should

- Provide a way to check-in (ranging from a simple “How are you today?” to a variety of techniques, such as comparing self to an object or choosing a number from 1–10)
- Remind each other of norms and agree to follow them at the beginning of the meeting
- Remind participants of the date, time and place of the next meeting
- Decide on who will facilitate the next meeting
- Determine specifics related to the learning activities for the next meeting
- Check on how well the group met the norms during the current meeting

### A Developmental Approach to PLCs

- The first few PLC meetings might focus on more objective activities, such as book or article study
- More subjective activities, such as looking at student work, can be woven into PLCs as the group matures

### Some Sample Agendas

#1

- Check-In
- Review of Norms
- **Socratic Seminar (Dialogue) Related to an Article**
- Details About Next Meeting (when where)
- Decision About Activity for Next Meeting
- Decision About Who Will Facilitate Next Meeting
- Decision About Sharing What Was Learned at This PLC Meeting With Others
- Group Evaluation of How Norms Were Kept

#2

- Check-In
- Review of Norms
- **Tuning Protocol on Student Work Sample**
- **Dialogue on a Relevant Article**
- Details About Next Meeting (when and where)
- Decision About Activity for Next Meeting
- Decision About Who Will Facilitate Next Meeting
- Decision About Sharing What Was Learned at This PLC Meeting With Others
- Group Evaluation of How Norms Were Kept

## **SOME PLC ACTIVITIES**

\***Accessing Student Voices**—Focus groups and interviews with students on what the PLC is studying/any aspect of the school/school improvement

\***Action Research**—Based on data, a change that is made in teaching and learning, classroom and school environments, etc., that is studied closely, with ending data about the effectiveness of change

\***Assessment as Professional Development**—Developing common assessments, classroom assessments, and other assessments as a team; developing rubrics and using scoring procedures on developed assessments; learning from engaging in this process

\***Case Discussions**—Using published case studies or developing case studies and then engaging in dialogue on them according to key questions that arise from them

\***Classroom Walkthroughs With Reflective Inquiry**—Faculty visiting each other's classrooms for 3–5 minutes to observe what is present in the classroom, generally or specifically (related to some aspect of teaching and learning that is being studied); reporting observations and designing inquiry questions that help the whole group learn

\***Curriculum Design**—Engaging in a review of current curriculum and revision of that curriculum from a backwards planning point of view (backwards from a final outcome); mapping the curriculum or part of the curriculum to look for design flaws (omissions or redundancy) and revising it

\***Data Analysis**—Engaging in data-driven discussions on the basis of a variety of data (from test scores to student portfolios); focusing on demographics, perceptions, what the school is doing to help learners, as well as achievement.

\***Dialogue**—Dialogue is an important tool for PLCs because it helps people deepen their understanding before they discuss/debate an issue leading to a decision.

Practicing dialogue with articles and chapters from books can help a PLC learn how to use dialogue rather than discussion or debate when looking at what educators do in classrooms (their practice), student work, and problems and issues.

**\*\*Dialogue Protocols**—Dialogue protocols help PLC participants use dialogue rather than discussion to probe an idea or a topic. Some are text-based (based on an article, a chapter, a book, a video, etc.); some are not. Text-based protocols include Three Levels of Text Protocol and the Four As Protocol. Non-text-based protocols include the Last Word Protocol and the Chalk-Talk Protocol.

**Error Analysis**—Participants in a PLC can bring student work that puzzles them. The PLC group can use a protocol for examining student work (below) to help them determine why the student is making the error and how to help the student correct his/her misunderstanding. Error analysis is based on a belief that students do not randomly make errors, that errors are a window into their understanding (or misunderstanding).

**\*\*Examining Student Work**—A variety of protocols can help make this activity protective of the teacher who brings student work to be shared; these protocols also deepen the dialogue: the Tuning Protocol, Rounds (the Descriptive Review), the Vertical Slice, and the Collaborative Assessment Conference).

**\*\*Examining Teacher Practice**—A variety of protocols can help make this activity protective of the teacher who brings some aspect of classroom practice to be shared; these protocols also deepen the dialogue: the Consultancy, Standards in Practice, the Success Analysis Protocol, the Triad Protocol. The Tuning Protocol also works well for examining teacher practice.

**\*Immersing Teachers in Practice**—Deepening the learning of content area teachers by having them BE mathematicians, BE writers, BE historians, etc., and then apply what they have learned to teaching these subjects (see the National Writing Project <http://www.nwp.org/>).

**\*Journaling**—An individual activity that is enriched when journal writers (who may or may not be focusing on the same topic) share their journal entries with each other and reflect aloud with each other. May be focused on studying a particular student or a particular aspect of teaching and learning that all are trying.

**\*Lesson Study**—A year-long focus on a content area (such as mathematics) and an aspect of student behavior (such as collaborative problem solving) that begins with given/published lessons in that content area. Participants first refine a lesson and then teach it to students, with all but the teacher participant collecting data about what happens as the lesson is taught. Participants meet in colloquium either to further revise the lesson (for another teaching episode) or take the learning from that lesson to the next lesson).

**\*Portfolios for Educators**—Usually an individual activity (though it can be an accountability activity of an entire PLC), participants bring their portfolios to their

PLC to share what they've collected and what the contents of the portfolio mean in terms of their learning.

**\*\*Problem Solving**—Individuals or groups of educators in a PLC bring a classroom or school problem to the PLC to discuss. A variety of protocols can help the PLC address the problem: the Probing Protocol, the Inside/Outside (Jigsaw) Protocol, the Peeling the Onion Protocol, and the SWOT Protocol.

**\*Shadowing**—Members of a PLC shadow students within their own school or at other schools, either generally or looking for specific aspects of teaching and learning (such as student collaboration). During debriefing, participants share what they've noticed and learned and how they can apply their learning to their own work.

**\*Standards in Practice (Assignment Analysis)**—Analyzing assignments according to a variety of questions, ranging from what students actually need to know and be able to do to succeed on the assignment to what level of thinking ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Bloom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Bloom)) the assignment requires to how rigorous it is. Student work related to the assignment might also be studied.

**\*Tuning Protocol**—This is one of the protocols that can be used to examine student work or teacher professional practice. It is a formal process for dialogue that alternates who is talking and who is listening. It is a way to probe and deepen discussion.

**\*Using Video to Change Practice**—Purchased videos can be used for this PLC activity although school-made videos (very difficult to make) can also be used, with permission of the videotaped teacher. Videos can be viewed generally or specifically, related to something the PLC is studying.

**\*Visual Dialogue**—A process of dialogue that requires participants to work on a large (3 by 5 feet) template on the wall (or several of them simultaneously) to address conditions in the environment (such as the number of reforms a school is trying to implement) or problems (such as stakeholders' differing points of view). Work on the templates is usually followed by a Gallery Tour so participants get to learn from all of the work done on the template.

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\* These are strategies from Easton, L. B. (2008). *Powerful designs for professional learning*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

\*\*These are strategies from Easton, L. B. (2009). *Protocols for professional learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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