

Professional Learning Communities: Shifting Professional Culture in Catholic Schools

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STANDARD

8

An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.



8.5

Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to monitor individual and class-wide student learning through methods such as common assessments and rubrics.



**NATIONAL STANDARDS
AND BENCHMARKS
FOR EFFECTIVE
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY
AND SECONDARY
SCHOOLS**

Our Doctoral Research

Supported the implementation of PLCs in 3 Catholic schools in Chicago

Asked the questions:

- How will the professional culture shift within the schools?
- What structures support effective implementation within the context of a small Catholic school?



Outcomes



Develop a common understanding for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), including their value, purpose, and essential elements, in an effort to:

- validate the good work that you are doing
- provide direction for next steps

Topics Addressed Throughout the Conference

Assessment Practices

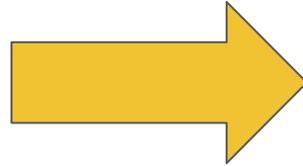
Backward Design

Instructional Practices/Student Engagement

Utilizing Data

The Goal

Bring new ideas back
to your school



Lasting Change

The Goal

Lasting Change



Improved student
experience



Improved teacher
experience

The Teacher Experience

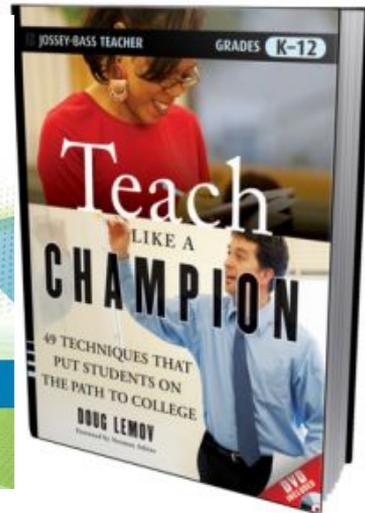
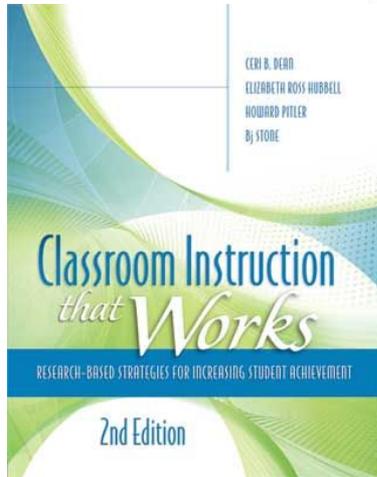
When I die, I hope it is at a faculty meeting or teacher inservice because the transition from life to death would be so subtle



someecards
user card

The Teacher Experience

One-shot PD “Train & Hope”



The Teacher Experience



Isolation can be an adaptive work strategy but “the long-term effects of isolation undermine the very instructional quality that this work strategy is intended to protect” (Flinders, 1988, p. 26)

Can lead to burnout and feelings of helplessness (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992)

The Teacher Experience



The Teacher Experience

Describe the professional culture that you desire in your school.

Development of the Whole Person

Intellectually



Socially



Spiritually



**Learn
Together**

Professional Learning Communities

Learn Faster

DEEPER Learning

Turn & Talk

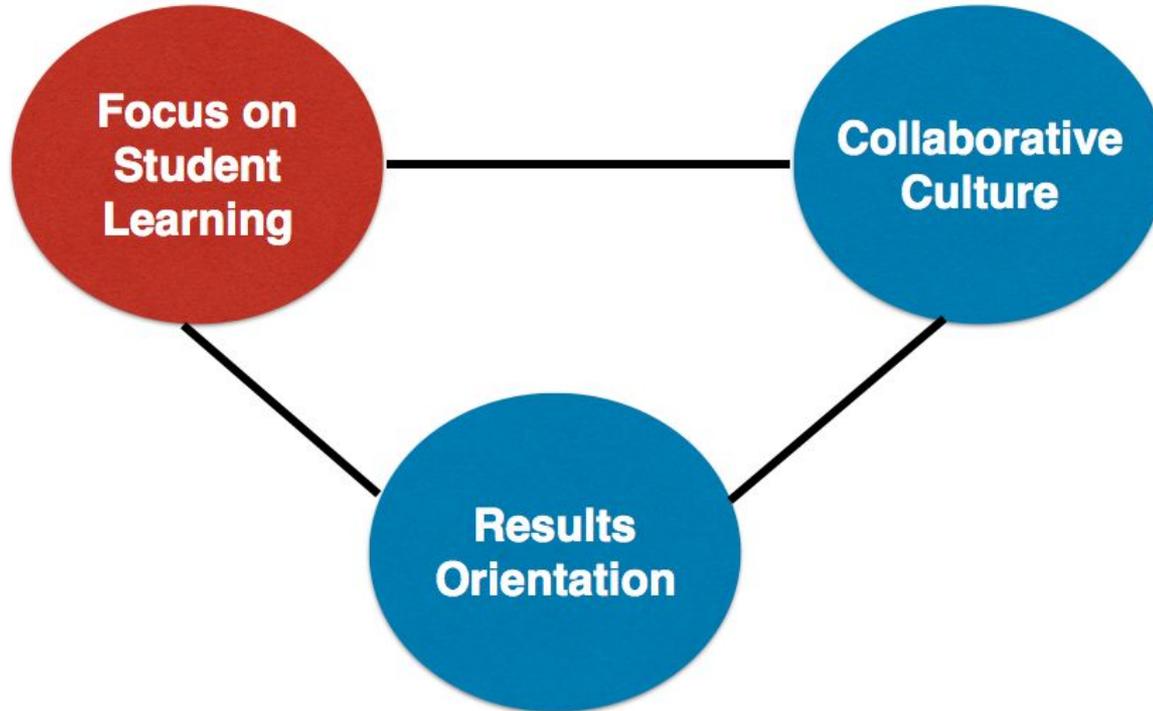
*What teams do your teachers work in at your school?
(department, grade-level, interest)*

Do you have any experience with the PLC model?



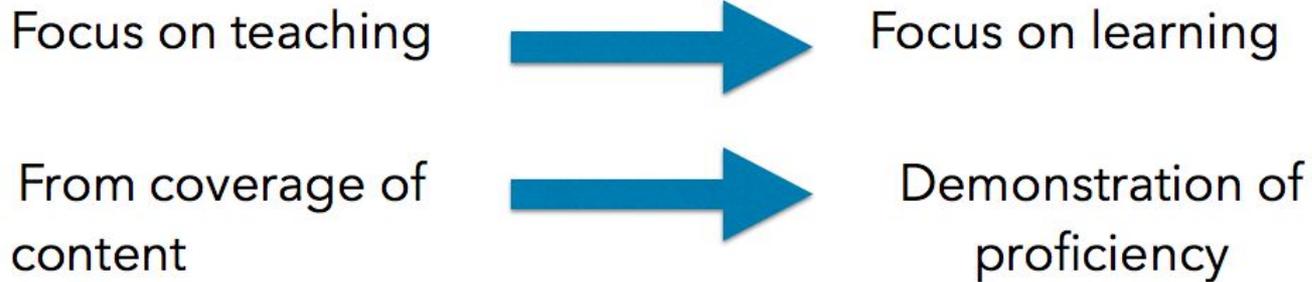
Benefits?
Challenges?
Surprises?

Professional Culture of PLCs



“The very essence of a Professional Learning Community is the focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student.”

- *Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2010, p. 23*



Only if we ensure that children learn (and not only that we teach), can we ensure that they reach their maximum potential.

"The very essence of a Professional Learning Community is the focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student."

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Focus on teaching



Focus on learning

From coverage of
content

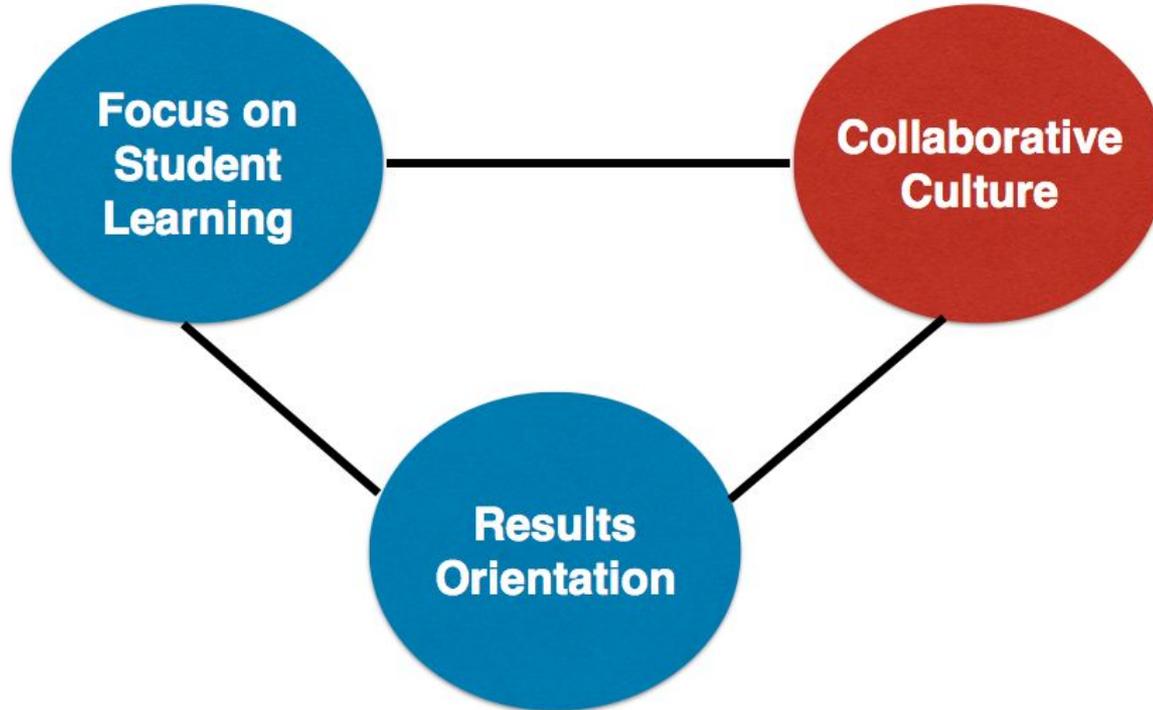


Demonstration of
proficiency

Turn & Talk

What evidence do you have of your school's focus on student learning? Where are the opportunities for growth?

Professional Culture of PLCs



Collaboration is...

"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

- Improves quality and equity of student learning
- Discussions are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion
- Fosters collective responsibility for student outcomes



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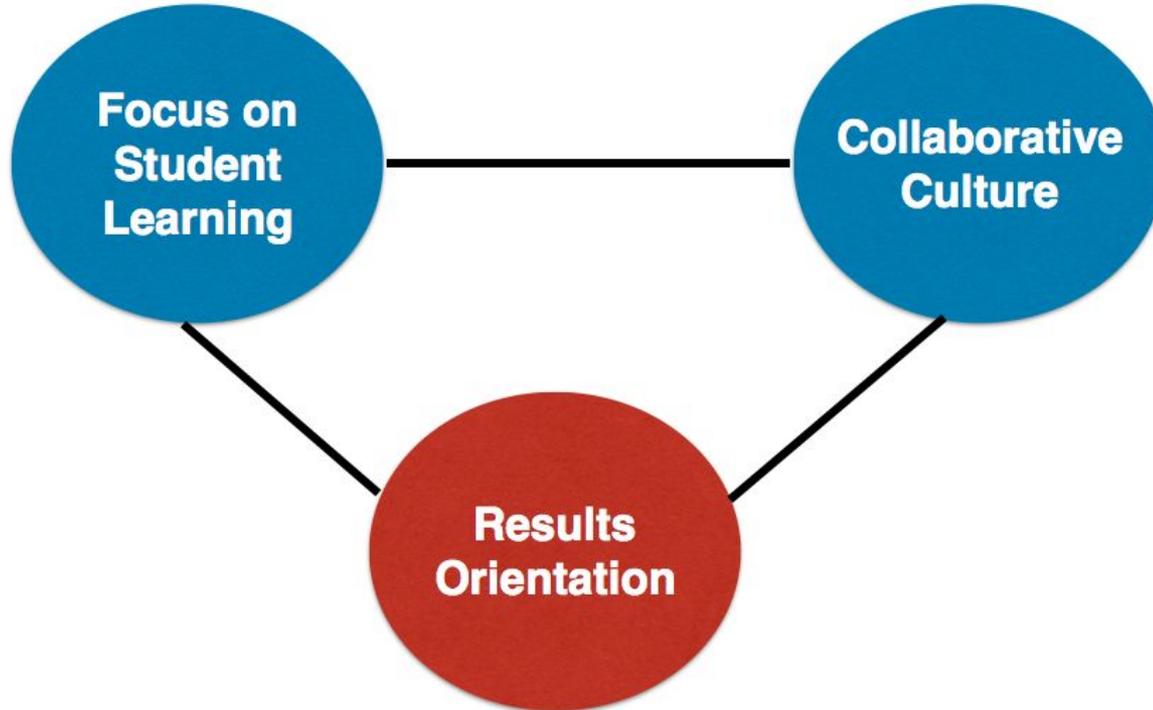
- Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2010, p. 120

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Turn & Talk

What evidence do you have of your school's collaborative culture? Where are the opportunities for growth?

Professional Culture of PLCs



“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. 120*



4 Critical Questions for PLCs

The Work of the PLC

What do students need to know
and be able to do?

- Clarify essential outcomes
- Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment

How will we know when they have
learned it?

- Develop common assessments
- Analyze results

What will we do when they have
not learned it?

What will we do when they
already know it?

- Plan for instruction and improvement strategies

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Turn & Talk

What is the highest priority work for your school/department?

Structural Elements of Highly-effective PLCs

- Protected Time
- Norms and Protocol
- Collective learning and its application
(SMART Goals)
- Shared Personal Practice & Ownership
- Celebrating the Work

Protected Time

Meetings are reserved for work directly related to your goal.

- Data Analysis
- Collaboratively developing curriculum or common assessments
- Reporting progress and brainstorming next steps
- Researching interventions

PLCs must have time to meet within the teacher's work day.

- Frequent enough to make progress on goal
- Long enough to work with substantial depth during each meeting

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Turn & Talk:
How often do your departments meet?

How do you use your time?

Team Norms

- **Norms are our collective, public promises to keep one another safe while working collaboratively.**
- Ensures high-performing teams
- Will stick only if the group puts them into practice over and over again.
- Produce a positive experience

Begin and end meeting on time.

Eliminate distractions. (No cell phone use/emails)

Assume positive intentions.



"I think these face-to-face meetings are so important, don't you?"

Post-it Note Activity

1. **Take a stack of post-its** On each post-it list a negative meeting behavior that frustrates you. List as many as you would like on separate post-its.

-Example: *Being late*

2. **Have one person read the post-its one at a time.** Sort the behaviors into categories:

Violations of:

Time

Listening

Confidentiality

Decision-making

Participation

Expectations



Post-it Note Activity

3. For each category, develop positively stated norms that would address the violations.

TIPS:

- *A few key norms better than a laundry list*
- *One norm requires team to assess effectiveness every 6 months*
- *Violations of norms must be addressed*



Protocol

- Rules of operation for the meeting
- Useful to guide the work

Agenda

- outlines objectives for meeting
- tracks notes
- details expectations of work between the meetings
- electronically accessible



PLC – Department

- 1) Be Efficient
- 2) Be Punctual and Prepared
- 3) Be Respectful
- 4) Be Honest and Confidential
- 5) Be an Active Participant

Meeting Wise Agenda Template

MEETING AGENDA

Date, Time

**TOPIC: Improvement on
Literary Analysis**

**Attendees:
Facilitator:
Note Keeper:
Timekeeper:**

MEETING OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze rubric data from September prompt
- Establish instructional strategies relative to weak areas

Schedule 90 mins

TIME	MINUTES	ACTIVITY
3:05 – 3:15	10	Check-in, prayer, and review objectives of this meeting and how they connect to the objectives for our remaining team meetings this year
3:15 – 3:50	x	OBJECTIVE 1 – Analyze rubric data from September prompt NOTES: 40% of students scored below proficient on analysis. Within this section, 70% of students scored below proficient in identifying relevant evidence in the text. 30% of students score below proficient in writing. Within this section, 60% of students scored below proficient in varied sentence structure.

3:50 – 4:20	x	<p>OBJECTIVE 2 – Establish instructional strategies relative to weak areas.</p> <p>NOTES: All teachers will include a weekly mini-lesson/writing activity on utilizing text-based evidence to support argument with current novel. Writing will be formatively scored.</p>						
4:20 – 4:25	x	Review next steps from this meeting						
4:25 – 4:30	x	<p>Assess what worked well about this meeting and what we would have liked to change</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>+ Plus</th> <th>▲ Delta</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>•</td> <td>•</td> </tr> <tr> <td>•</td> <td>•</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	+ Plus	▲ Delta	•	•	•	•
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TO DO BEFORE NEXT MEETING:

- Implement weekly mini-lesson on text-based evidence and bring formative assessment data
- Bring ideas for teaching varied sentence structure

NEXT MEETING's OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze the results from the week's formative assessment on text-based evidence
- Share strategies for teaching varied sentence structure and decide on one to implement as an intervention.

Protocol

- Conversation Guides

Unit Planning Protocol

1. **Presenter – Unit Overview (3 mins)**
The presenter distributes copies of the Unit Planner and shares about his/her efforts on the unit to date. The presenter may highlight particular questions that he/she would like addressed.
2. **Unit Review - (3 mins)**
Reviewers will silently read the unit, making notes of clarifying questions and ideas to address the presenter's questions or otherwise strengthen the unit
3. **Clarifying Questions – (3 mins)**
Reviewers will ask presenter clarifying questions.
4. **Share and Respond – (10 mins)**
Collaborative discussion among reviewers and presenter sharing ideas for the unit.

Collective Learning & Application

1. Set SMART Goal
 - Identify a problem and validate with evidence (or collect evidence to validate a hunch)
 - Establish a goal that fits SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused and Time-bound)
2. Develop a plan/intervention to meet goal
 - Use research/best-practices to determine strategy/intervention
3. Implement plan/intervention
 - Use PLC time to share implementation successes & challenges, formative data, make adjustments

Shared Personal Practice

Develop Routines for Collective Accountability

- Teachers implement strategies/intervention in their own classrooms
- Bring samples of work to meetings
- Bring data from progress monitoring
- Share best practices

Gallery Walks

- Routine school-wide sharing throughout the school year
- Presentations by PLCs to demonstrate progress



Celebrating the Work

- Celebrate student progress as teacher success
- Share work and successes across departments
- Set milestones for curricular development and celebrate achievement
- Shout it from the rooftops!
 - Board, Parents, Students



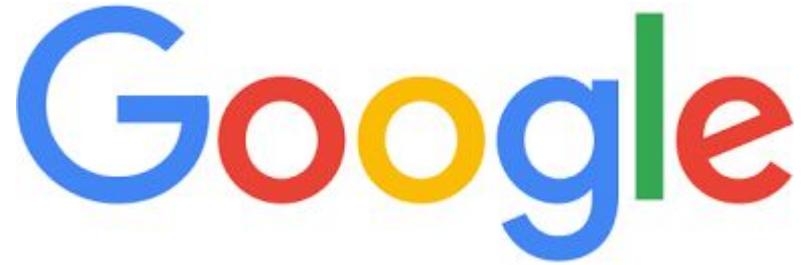
PLCs In Action

Elements of a PLC

- Protected Time
- Norms and Protocol
- Collective learning and its application
(SMART Goals)
- Shared Personal Practice & Ownership
- Celebrating the Work

Goal of PLC

Increase student
achievement.



Project Aristotle

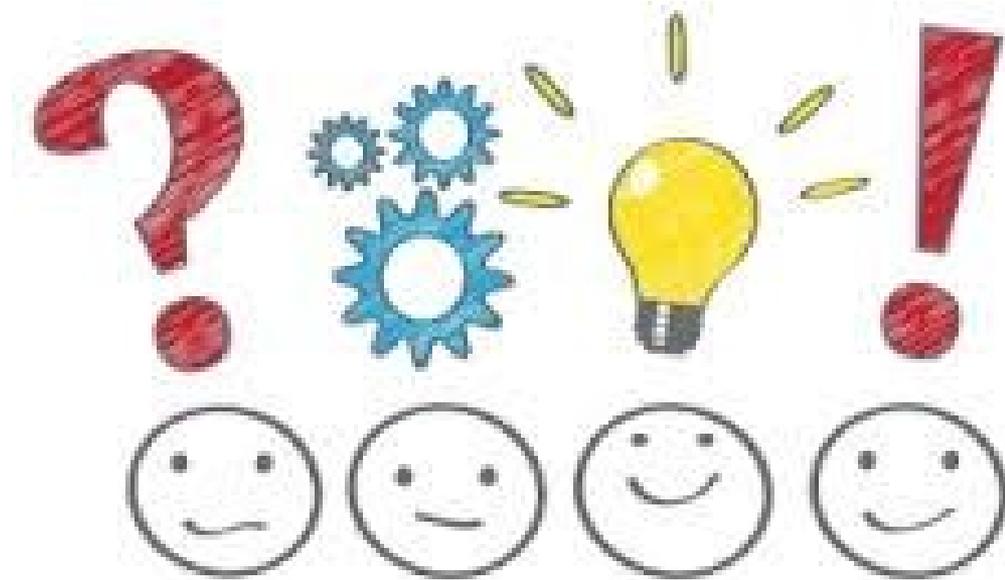
What makes teams work?

Psychological Safety



**Catholic Schools are
fertile ground
for this work!**

Questions? Comments?



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