

Improving Instruction Through PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

What are Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)?

PLCs are a form of professional development in which small groups of educators with shared goals work together to expand their knowledge and improve their craft. Typically, a PLC consists of a facilitator leading a team of teachers that meets regularly to learn new topics, share ideas, and problem solve.

Possible PLC topics:

- Literacy
- English Learners
- STEM
- Classroom Management



Benefits of PLCs

- Adds coherence and continuous learning to professional development ¹
- Fosters teacher learning ²
- Improves the professional culture of a school ¹

Common PLC Activities



Read and discuss articles or books



Attend trainings or conferences



Use professional development resources to build content knowledge



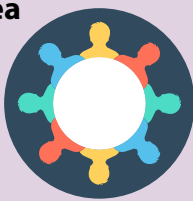
Facilitate learning on a new topic



Forming PLCs

PLCs may be formed around:

- Grade level
- Content area
- Instructors from different schools



PLC Facilitators

The PLC Facilitator organizes the team, coordinates the selection of professional development materials, and ensures goals are met. Common characteristics of effective facilitators include:

- Strong content-area background
- Good communication skills
- School leadership experience
- Ability to relate well to adult learners ^{3, 4}



Five-Step Process for PLC Sessions

Adapted from Wald and Castleberry's five stages of work for teams, or groups, engaging in a collaborative learning cycle.⁵



Debrief classroom practice



Define session goals



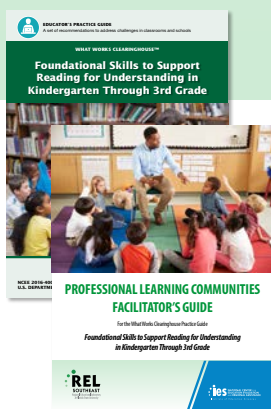
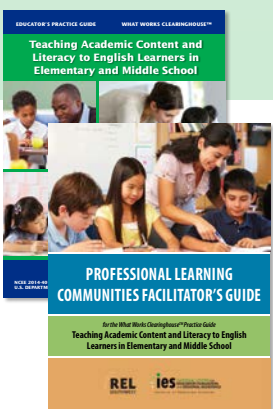
Explore new practices and compare them to current practices



Experiment with newly learned strategies



Reflect and implement



Check out current PLC Facilitator's Guides and Practice Guides at ies.ed.gov.



Information and materials for this presentation are supported by IES/NCEE's Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast at Florida State University (Contract ED-IES-17-C-0011) as resources and examples for the viewer's convenience. Their inclusion is not intended as an endorsement by the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast or its funding source, the Institute of Education Sciences.

In addition, the instructional practices and assessments discussed or shown in this presentation are not intended to mandate, direct, or control a State's, local educational agency's, or school's specific instructional content, academic achievement system and assessments, curriculum, or program of instruction. State and local programs may use any instructional content, achievement system and assessments, curriculum, or program of instruction they wish.

¹Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24(1), 80-91.

²Englert, C. S., & Tarrant, K. L. (1995). Creating collaborative cultures for educational change. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16(6), 325-336, 353.

³Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American educational research journal*, 38(4), 915-945.

⁴Leithwood, K. A., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

⁵Wald, P., & Castleberry, M. (2000). *Educators as learners: Creating a professional learning community in your school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.