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
- Fosters teacher learning
- Improves the professional culture of a school

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

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.

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

Improving Instruction Through Professional Learning Communities