Educator Effectiveness Webinar Series
Educator Effectiveness and Creating and Sustaining Professional Learning Communities
Welcome

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– REL-MA Professional Learning Research Alliance
– Superintendent, Monroe Township School District, New Jersey
Poll: About the Audience

Who is joining the webinar today?
Presenter Biography

Executive Director, Learning Forward

Author or co-author on several reports and publications focused on professional learning communities including:

• Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning – Learning Communities foundation for all our work.

Advocate for professional learning communities in federal law and guidance, standards for professional learning, and improved practice in schools.
Biography, Michael Kozak

Superintendent of Schools, Monroe Township School District, New Jersey

Representative from the REL Mid-Atlantic Professional Learning Research Alliance

Received Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Rowan University.
Setting the Stage
Webinar Objectives

During this webinar, we will:

1. Review the research foundation for professional learning communities (PLCs) and their connections to student outcomes.

2. Consider the critical components of effective PLCs.

3. Detail actions for launching and/or supporting PLCs.
Learning Forward

**Vision:**
Excellent teaching and learning every day.

**Mission:**
Learning Forward builds the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning.

(Learning Forward, 2015)
Assumptions About PLCs

1. PLCs are focused on learning for both its members and students.

2. For all students to learn, the adults in the organization also learn together during their routine work day.

3. PLC team members are intentional about setting their own learning goals based on what they need to know and do to ensure that students meet their goals.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
Assumptions About PLCs (cont.)

4. PLC teams work interdependently to improve their practices and realize student, team, and school learning goals.

5. PLC teams collect and analyze data, study, apply, observe, measure, reflect, and adjust their practices in continuous cycles of improvement.

6. PLC teams focus on measurable outcomes.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
The Research Base
This research review articulates requirements for effective professional learning communities:

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Collective creativity
- Shared values and vision
- Supportive conditions (physical and personal) shared practice
- Peer support

(Hord, 1997)
What We Know About PLCs

A research-based framework through which to consider the literature and practices of teachers’ professional communities.

Contributing practitioners draw on their experiences to show how teachers and students benefit from new expectations and practices developed by members of professional communities.

(Lieberman & Miller, 2008)
PLCs Improve Student Outcomes

Longitudinal study in a large district examined effects of facilitated, grade-level PLCs on student learning.

Teachers and principals in the intervention group conducted multiple, grade-level meetings each month focused on specific curriculum/instruction.

Student test scores of teachers in the intervention group showed gains over those of the comparison group.

(Saunders, Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2009)
PLCs were included in UK plans for raising standards in teaching and learning.

A multi-method research project encompassing a literature review and framework: survey of 1,300 schools, 16 case studies, and workshops to verify case study findings.

Overall finding was that the idea of a PLC is worth pursuing as a means of promoting school and system-wide capacity building for sustainable improvement and pupil learning.

(Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas & Wallace, 2005)
PLCs Increase Teacher Retention


• Teachers in schools with higher levels of collaborative activities are more likely than others to have high levels of career satisfaction (68% vs. 54% very satisfied).

(The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher, 2009)
Open-ended Question: What are successes and challenges you have experienced with PLCs?

What are some successes and challenges you have experienced with PLCs?
Current Theory
Essential Conditions of Learning Communities

1. Supportive and shared leadership
2. Shared values and vision
3. Collective learning and application of learning
4. Supportive conditions including structural and relational
5. Shared practice

(Hord, 2004)
Learning Communities Standard

Key Elements of Understanding:

- Engage in continuous improvement.
- Create alignment and accountability.
- Develop collective responsibility.

(Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, 2011)
Let’s Review Characteristics Of PLCs

Read the following seven statements and determine whether the statement is **true** or **false** in a high-performing PLC.

**True**

**or**

**False**
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

**Statement 1:**
As the person responsible for the school, the principal provides leadership by consistently directing the community throughout all of its work.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 1 Answer: False

The school leader creates a supportive, collaborative culture in the following ways:

- Emphasizing that teachers can succeed by learning and working together.
- Allocating time for collaboration during the school day.
- Guiding PLCs toward self-governance.
- Making data accessible.

(Hord & Hirsh, 2009)
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 2:
The PLC team could be found meeting monthly in a section of the cafeteria during the lunch period to share instructional strategies and “neat” activities for students.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 2 Answer: False

- Ongoing, job-embedded, and scheduled during the work day.
- Focus on student results and improvement.
- Individual and collaborative professional study, analysis, application, and reflection relevant to ongoing improvements in professional practice and student achievement.

(Killion, 2014)
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 3:
The team is provided a location conducive to serious interaction, resources including data in readily understood formats from multiple sources, and time to meet daily (or weekly at a minimum) are identified for community meetings.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 3 Answer: True

- Environment in which teachers learn is an integral part of what is learned.

- Community members learn in settings in which they can be active, reflective, collaborative, learning-oriented, and improvement-focused.

- Logistical decisions support community learning (e.g. regular time allocation).

(InPraxis Group, Inc., 2006)
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 4:
PLC community members are careful about being too open with their ideas and strategies for fear of offending their less capable colleagues.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 4 Answer: False

• Community collaboratively considers ideas based on analysis/interpretation of data—not just a great idea.

• Members conduct open, improvement-focused conversations.

• Community has accountability to and responsibility for learning of all members.

(Patterson & Rolhieser, 2004)
Statement 5:
To address identified educator learning needs, the members share solutions, as well as solicit assistance from other communities, experts, or research so they learn more effective practices to use with their students.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 5 Answer: True

• School-based communities also receive outside support (e.g. district, university) to promote their development.

• Communities can broker members’ engagement within and outside the system such as professional networks.

True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 6:
Community members’ respect and regard for each other, their interactions, and how they confront conflict, contribute to trust and to a smoothly functioning community.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 6 Answer: True

• Changes in school culture and practice happen when teachers and administrators focus on building trust within collaborative contexts.

• In an effective learning community, members bond around a commitment to shared ideals, ideas, and norms.

• Regular, open communications build trust.

(Sergiovanni, 1994)
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 7:
Community members are given opportunities to develop skills and take on leadership roles so they are enabled to share in power, authority, and decision making.
True or False: Is this characteristic of a high-performing PLC?

Statement 7 Answer: True

- PLCs build capacity for leadership, learning, and growth.
- Professional Learning Standards call for development of leadership capacity to lead PLCs.
- Teacher leaders are the right persons to lead PLCs.

(Smylie & Hart, 1999)
Topic in Local Practice
Professional Learning Community Cycle

- **Examine data**
  - Analyze student and educator learning challenges

- **Set goals**
  - Identify shared goals for student and educator learning

- **Monitor, assess, and adjust practice**
  - Use evidence to assess and refine implementation and impact

- **Apply new learning**
  - Implement new lessons and assessments with local support in the classroom

- **Learn individually and collaboratively**
  - Gain new knowledge and skills (e.g. content and content-specific pedagogy); examine assumptions, aspirations, and beliefs

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
Examine Data: Analyze Student and Educator Learning Challenges

PLC teams analyze available data to identify and understand highest learning needs.

PLC team members prepare a number of data summary statements to guide goal development.

Caveat: Team members need specific knowledge, skills, and supports to analyze, interpret, and use data effectively.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
Set Goals: Identify Shared Goals for Students’ and Educators’ Learning

PLC teams may align goal setting with district or school improvement goals.

Teams set goals based on what students need to know and what they need to know to ensure student success.

Team members consider KASAB (knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations, and behaviors) to determine all appropriate learning goals.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
PLC teams choose learning design options based on the outcomes.

Team members build opportunities for learning, demonstration, and practice into the learning agenda.

Teams develop lesson plans including assessments toward the end of the learning agenda.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
PLC teams recognize that implementation is central.

Teams schedule use of new practices or lessons and take advantage of job-embedded support.

Teams use feedback and other data to inform continued implementation.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
PLC teams develop and implement a monitoring plan, document impact, and communicate results.

PLC teams review impact of learning and practices on their theory of action.

Teams observe, assess, reflect on data, and adjust practice to achieve outcomes.

(Hirsh & Crow, in press)
The Tale of Two PLCs:

Murray Hill Academy – New York City, NY

- Cycle of inquiry
- Time
- Administrative support

George Sanchez Collaborative Community Center – Albuquerque, NM

- Role of instructional coaches and teacher leaders
- Collaborative learning cycle
- Evidence of impact
The Bottom Line: Improving Teaching and Learning for All Students

PLCs improve conditions of teaching and learning

- EL students
- Students with disabilities
- Specialists on faculty for these students
- Families and caregivers of these students

(Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Goldberg, 2012; Rentfro, 2007)
Recognize powerful impact of culture of professional learning on improvement efforts

Examine and improve the overall system at three levels

1. Schools, communities develop professional learning cultures
2. Districts, regions build infrastructure for such development
3. States, provinces set policies addressing systemic evolution of professional learning cultures

(Fullan, M., 2005)
School District Leaders/ Principals

Develop own knowledge and skills about the PLC cycle.

Model the application of PLC cycle with own team.

Provide leadership development and support for PLC facilitators.

Create the conditions necessary for success.

(Learning Forward, 2012)
Teachers

Develop own knowledge and skills about the PLC cycle.

Invest deeply in the process and its outcomes.

Apply the learning.

Document and report the results.

(Learning Forward, 2012)
Spotlight on the REL Mid-Atlantic Professional Learning Research Alliance
Spotlight on the REL Mid-Atlantic Professional Learning Research Alliance (PLRA)

• Focuses on data-driven approaches to help SEAs, LEAs, and institutions of higher education increase their knowledge of achieving an effective professional learning environment.

• Provides a wide range of technical assistance to partners to ensure that schools are cultivating professional education to improve student achievement.

• Stakeholders in the REL Mid-Atlantic region collaborate to identify common challenges to and opportunities for professional learning, share and exchange perspectives and experiences, and engage in evidence-based inquiry to develop, implement, and evaluate professional development programs that meet their needs and circumstances.

(Professional Learning Research Alliance, 2016)
PLRA Goals:

• To collaborate to identify common challenges emerging from expanding responsibilities and standards for accountability.

• To engage in opportunities for high-quality professional learning that best suits local needs and circumstance.

• To share perspectives and experiences to gain practical knowledge.

• To implement and evaluate evidence-based professional learning programs.

(Professional Learning Research Alliance, 2016)
Current PLRA Research Topics

Research projects completed, underway, or in review by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) include the following:

• Professional learning data inventory.

• Can online learning communities achieve the goals of traditional professional learning communities? What the literature says.

• Measurement instruments for assessing the effectiveness of PLCs.

• Process evaluation of a district-wide PLC initiative.

• Comparing the effectiveness of different approaches to principal professional development: a review of the literature.

(Professional Learning Research Alliance, 2016)
How to Become Involved in PLC Alliances

For more information regarding the REL-MA PLRA please refer to the REL MA website at: https://www.relmidatlantic.org/plra-page
Action Steps
Launching PLCs

• Study the literature
• Observe effective PLCs
• Join a national or regional PLC
• Identify interested partners
• Seek administrative support
Implementing PLCs

• Adopt a learning cycle
• Protect time and locations
• Examine data and goals for first cycle
• Enlist support from a coach
• Invite feedback
Assessing Impact

- Identify evidence of student learning
- Identify evidence of change in teacher practice
- Collect and document evidence
- Report impact
- Invite external researchers
Standards for Professional Learning

The foundation for effective practice

(Learning Forward, 2011)
Synthesis

• Research demonstrates that more students attain academic achievement when educators assume collective responsibility for student learning.

• Effective PLC teams engage in cycles of continuous improvement developing collective responsibility and aligning work to goals.

• Effective PLCs have critical components including shared and supportive leadership, shared values/vision, and intentional collaborative learning.
1. What are your key takeaways from today’s presentation?

2. As a result of today’s webinar, what action steps do you plan to take?
Questions & Answers
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2016 Educator Effectiveness Webinar Series
Upcoming Webinars

## Enhancing the Instructional Program with Creative Arts

Susan Riley (EducationCloset.com)

**September 22, 2016 @ 3:00 PM EST**

## Overcoming the Achievement Gap

Naomi DeVeaux (DC Public Charter School Board)

**October 20, 2016 @ 3:00 PM EST**
Please take a minute to complete our participant satisfaction feedback survey!
Thank you for your participation!