



SUMMER EDUCATION EVENT

# “Professional Learning Communities: Getting Started”

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# Today's Session

- Excellence for All – Shared Vision
- What Are Professional Learning Communities?
- Six Essential Elements of Professional Learning Communities
- PLC Process
- Resources
- OSDE Contact Information

# Excellence for All



To have a mission of learning for all

- You must believe all students can learn at high levels
- You must take responsibility to ensure that all students learn.

# Excellence for All



What is the mission statement for *your* school?

- Does your staff believe **all** students can learn at a high levels?
- Does you staff accept responsibility to ensure that all students learn?

# Benefits of Shared Vision

1. Motivation
2. Proactive
3. Direction
4. Standard of Excellence
5. Agenda for Action



\*Rick DuFour on the importance of [PLC's](#) (2011)

# What are Professional Learning Communities? (PLC's)

*...An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.*

*Solution Tree*

*<http://www.allthingsplc.info/about>*

# A Professional Learning Community is NOT:

- A program to be implemented
- A package of reforms to be adopted
- A step-by-step recipe for change
- A sure-fire system borrowed from another school
- One more thing to add to an already cluttered school agenda

A PLC IS A PROCESS THAT WILL CHANGE A SCHOOL'S CULTURE!

# In traditional schools...



- The focus is on teaching
- Teaching is done in isolation
- Teachers think of themselves as autonomous, independent contractors
- Most teachers have little input into the school's vision and mission statements
- The school's mission statement is generic and peripheral to classroom work

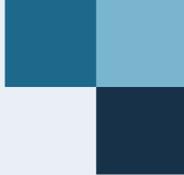
# In traditional schools...



- The principal makes the decisions and teachers do what they are told to do.
- The curriculum and the textbook are one and the same.
- Assessments are norm-based.
- Test results are used for grading purposes only.
- Students who do not learn are given the opportunity to catch up. The rest is up to them.

# In professional learning communities...

1. A PLC is a **collaborative venture**.
2. A PLC is always focused on **student learning**.
3. A PLC distributes **leadership responsibilities**.
4. A PLC **narrows the curriculum** to its essence.
5. A PLC **shares best practices** as a means of improving instruction.
6. A PLC uses “**assessment for learning**” in addition to the usual “assessment of learning.”



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# Collaborative venture

“Isolation is the enemy of learning. Principals who support the learning of adults in their school organize teachers schedules to provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and think together.”

NAESP, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*

1. Collaborative venture
2. Focus on student learning
3. Distribute leadership
4. Narrow the curriculum
5. Share best practices of instruction
6. Use assessments *for* learning

# Collaborative venture



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# Collaborative venture

Handout



## Stages of Team Development

1. Filling the time
2. Sharing Personal Practices
3. Planning, Planning, Planning
4. Developing Common Assessments
5. Analyzing Student Learning
6. Differentiating Follow-up
7. Reflecting on Instruction



Parry Graham & Bill Ferriter

[www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org)

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Collaborative venture     | 4. Narrow the curriculum               |
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| 3. Distribute leadership     | 6. Use assessments <i>for</i> learning |

# Collaborative venture

## 5 Keys to a Successful Meeting

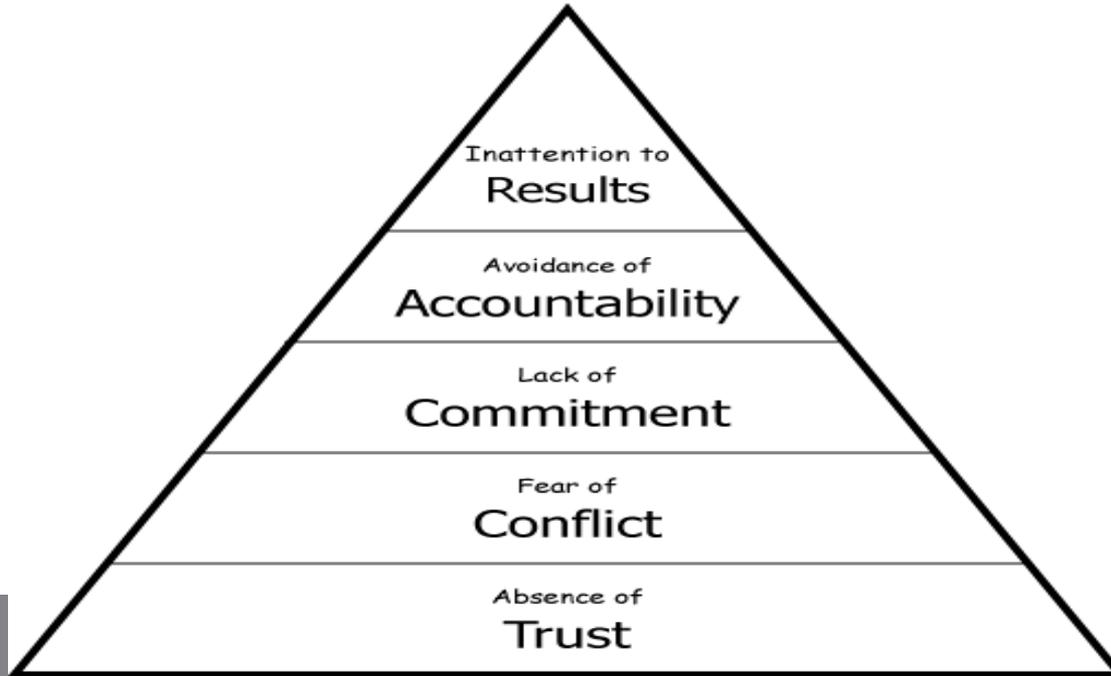
- Behaviors and Relationships
- Focus
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Structure
- Process



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# Collaborative venture

## Five Dysfunctions of a Team



# Collaborative venture

## How do our teams function?

Handout



### Rating Scale

**4 - Sustaining Stage**

**3 - Developing Stage**

**2 - Initiation Stage**

**1 - Pre-Initiation Stage**

# Focus on student learning



“In a professional learning community...attempts at school improvement are judged on the basis of how student learning is affected.”

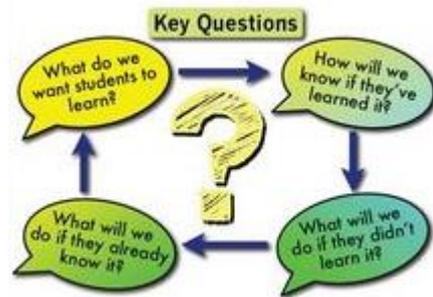
Robert Eaker, Richard DuFour, and Rebecca DuFour, *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*

“...ultimately, a learning organization is judged by results.”

Peter Senge, *Schools that Learn*

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# PLC 4 Questions



1. What do we want all students to learn, know and be able to do?
2. How will we know they have learned? What evidence do we have of the learning?
3. How will we respond when students struggle or don't learn?
4. How will we respond when students have already learned?

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Collaborative venture     | 4. Narrow the curriculum               |
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# Focus on student learning

Each of the DuFour books identifies the same three questions as critical to the PLC work.

1. Exactly what is it that we want all students to learn?
2. How will we know when each has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
- 3. What happens in our school when students do not learn?**

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| 1. Collaborative venture     | 4. Narrow the curriculum               |
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# Focus on student learning

“Our objective in writing this book is not to help schools raise test scores and avoid sanctions. We should...promote high levels of learning for every child entrusted to us, not because of legislation or fear of sanctions, but because we have a moral and ethical imperative to do so...test scores will take care of themselves if educators commit to ensuring that each student masters essential skills and concepts in every unit of instruction...”

*Whatever It Takes, page 27*

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# Distributes leadership responsibilities

“In professional learning communities, administrators are viewed as leaders of leaders. Teachers are viewed as transformational leaders.”

*Getting Started, page 22*

“The norms of behavior for any organization are shaped by what the leaders tolerate.”

*Whatever It Takes, page 145*

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# Narrow the curriculum

“In a professional learning community, time is viewed as a precious resource, so attempts are made to focus our efforts on less, but more meaningful content. The time that is saved allows the teaching of more meaningful content at a greater depth.”

Getting Started, page 19

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# Share best practices to improve instruction

“The PLC concept is specifically designed to develop the collective capacity of a staff to work together to achieve the fundamental purpose of the school: high levels of learning for all students. Leaders of the process purposefully set out to create the conditions that enable teachers to learn from one another as part of their routine work practices. Continuous learning becomes school based and job-embedded.”

*On Common Ground, page 18*

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# “Assessments for learning”

The traditional approach of using classroom assessments solely as a grading tool fails to utilize the enormous potential of such assessments to identify students who need additional support and to inform the teacher regarding effective and ineffective elements of his/her practice.

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# “Assessments for learning”

“...I have used the analogy of physicals and autopsies. Without putting too fine a point on the metaphor, physicals at a certain point in life can be an uncomfortable ordeal but, on the whole, they are preferable to and less intrusive than autopsies. The wise physician does not use the annual physical only to evaluate the patient, but also to recommend improvements in lifestyle. From the best of our family doctors, we receive not the hieroglyphics of lab results, but also candid advice to replace candy with carrots and the television with a treadmill. The keys to assessment for learning – the physical rather than the autopsy – are [consistency](#), [timeliness](#), and [differentiation](#).

Douglas Reeves as quoted in *On Common Ground*, page 53

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# “Assessments for learning”

Research reveals that significant improvement occurs in student learning when the following classroom assessment practices are in place.

- Sharing clear and appropriate learning targets with students from the beginning of learning.
- Increasing the accuracy of classroom assessments of the stated targets
- Making sure that students have continuous access to descriptive feedback
- Involving students continuously in classroom assessments, record keeping, and communication processes.

Rick Stiggins as quoted in *On Common Ground*, page 67

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# “Assessments for learning”

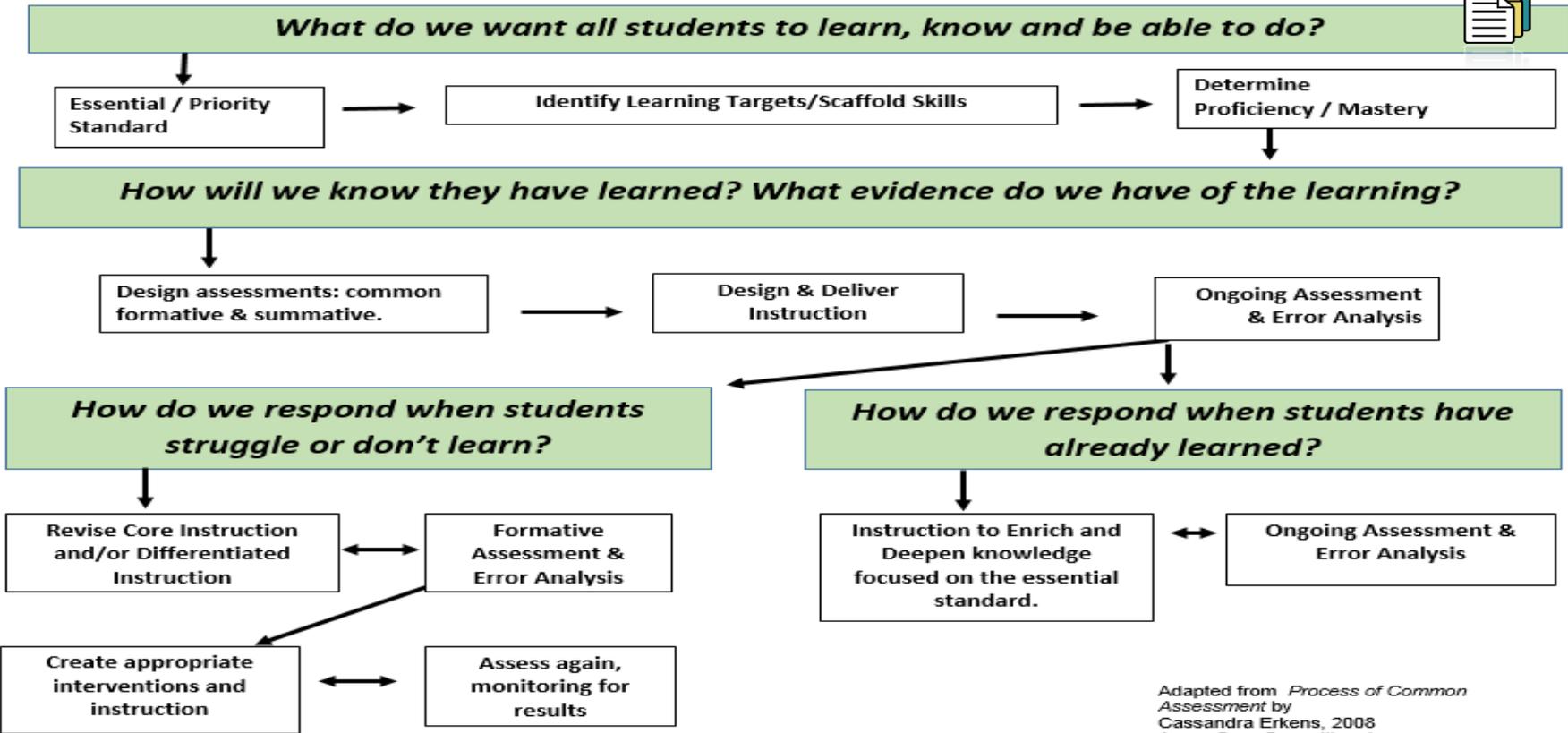
Working as a team, PLCs typically:

- Develop common assessments.
- Develop a common rubric.
- Examine student work.
- Strategize common interventions.
- Provide objective feedback to one another.
- Use student results to revise assessment instrument.

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## PLC Process



Adapted from *Process of Common Assessment* by Cassandra Erkens, 2008  
 Anam Cara Consulting, Inc  
<http://www.anamcaraconsulting.com>

# What about small schools and singletons?

## Possible Solutions

- \*Skill-Based Teams
- \*Interdisciplinary Teams
- \*Vertical Teams
- \*Singletons Who Support
- \*Digital/Electronic Teams

# Resources for small schools and singletons?

## PLCs for Singletons and Teachers in Small Schools Slideshow

<http://www.slideshare.net/wferriter/plcs-for-singletons-and-teachers-in-small-schools>

## National Rural Education Association

<http://www.nrea.net>

## Center for the Study of Rural Small Schools

<http://csrss.ou.edu/>

# Twitter Tutorials

## The Twitter Homepage

<http://screenr.com/FJq>

## Posting Messages to Twitter

<http://screenr.com/oJq>

## Finding Peers to Learn With

<http://screenr.com/sQq>

## Using Hashtags to Find Peers

<http://screenr.com/0Qq>

## Tools for Developing Teams

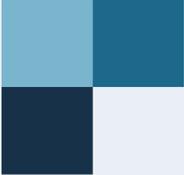
<http://bit.ly/hYv1ZP>

## William M. Ferriter

<http://wferriter.posterous.com>

## Extended Conversations in Digital

<http://screenr.com/qQq>



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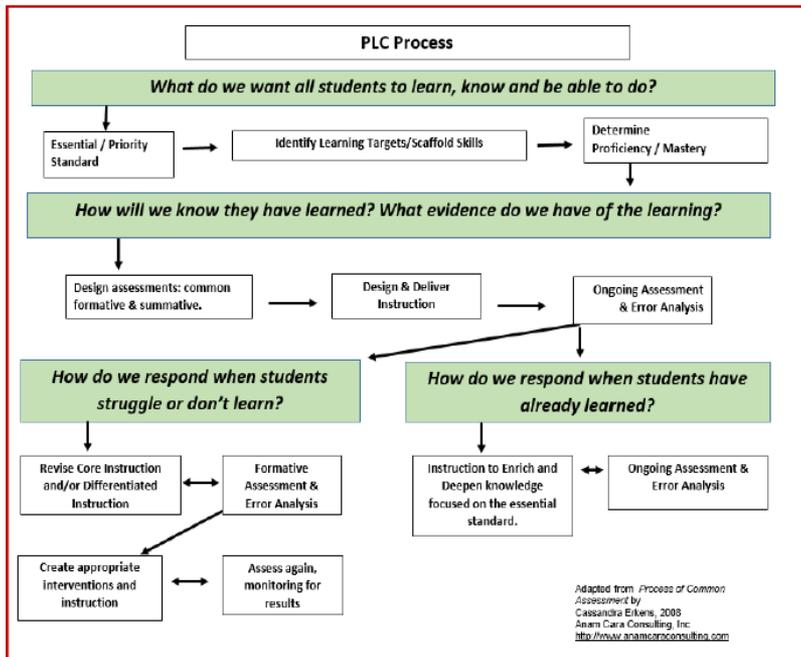
# PLC Resources Websites

- ❑ All Things PLC <http://www.allthingsplc.info/>
- ❑ Education World  
[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/virtualwkshp/virtualwkshp005.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/virtualwkshp/virtualwkshp005.shtml)
- ❑ SEDL Advancing Research Improving Education  
<http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html>

# Professional Learning Communities Books

- *Failure is Not an Option: Six Principles that Guide Student Achievement in High Performing Schools*, Alan Blankstein, 2005
- *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*, Robert Eaker, Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, 2002
- *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, NAESP, 2002
- *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*, Richard DuFour, Robert Eaker, Rebecca DuFour (Editors), 2005
- *Professional Learning Communities At Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*, Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker
- *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Gayle Karhanek, 2004

# Electronic Handouts



## PLC 3 Year Vision

Year 1 (2015-16) Define the Vision/Build Capacity	Year 2 (2016-17) Build Capacity/Implement	Year 3 (2017-18) Implement/Review Refine
<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the meaning of PLC and establish common understanding and vocabulary</li> <li>Collaboratively build consensus on the 3 year PLC vision</li> <li>Build Capacity for PLC Implementation with: Principals, Instructional Coaches, SLE Team, Grade Level Team's, ARDT, BLT's, Learning Support team</li> <li>Create/Revise Student Learning Expectations "What do are students to know or be able to do?"</li> <li>Introduce formative assessment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build capacity for PLC implementation by developing PLC leaders at all levels</li> <li>Begin implementing PLCs throughout the K-12 system</li> <li>Revise Student Learning Expectations</li> <li>Communicate SLE's and "I Can " statements</li> <li>Develop formative assessments for learning expectations – address the PLC question: "How will we know if students have learned it?" "What evidence do we have of the learning?"</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement systemic schedule changes to create "time" for PLCs to meet K-12,</li> <li>Refine the PLC model and provide opportunities for PLC teams to share best practices</li> <li>Address the PLC question: "What will we do when students don't learn?"</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Red – District Initiated Blue – Building Focused Green – Classroom focused</p> </div>
<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a core team to develop materials, PPT for groups to use to communicate the vision and common understanding and model PLC process-(to include formative assessment and data analysis information)</li> <li>Utilize expertise of Continuous Improvement Department to build capacity for PLC</li> <li>introduce formative assessment, Learning Council, (secondary) Secondary District In-service focus is formative assessment [ETS workshop &amp; key leaders in buildings]</li> <li>PLC book study with Building Principals, instructional Coaches MS &amp; HS PLC/BLT teams</li> <li>Sharing PLC information with various groups (Learning Council, Principals,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a detailed DISTRICT PLC implementation action plan with input from stakeholders</li> <li>Create a SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT PLC implementation plan with input and consensus from the school/department (Secondary PLC leaders)</li> <li>SIP planning for 2017-18 to reflect PLC &amp; formative assessment initiatives</li> <li>Continue planning for systemic schedule changes to allow "time" for PLCs</li> <li>Implementation of consistent GLT format at the elementary level --Formulate common GLT template</li> <li>District Building leadership team meetings focus on PLC/Formative Assessment issues</li> <li>Learning Supports team develop presentation/core materials to support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement District and School PLC systemic schedule changes to allow "time" for PLCs,</li> <li>Continue book studies and literature review of PLCs, Principals, Instructional Coaches, School teams, PLC leaders, Continuous Improvement</li> <li>Evaluate/revise a detailed DISTRICT PLC implementation action plan with input from stakeholders</li> <li>Evaluate/revise SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT PLC implementation plan with input and consensus from the school/department</li> <li>SIP planning for 2017-18 to reflect PLC &amp; formative assessments in action planning steps</li> <li>Learning Supports team introduce/implement the framework to address Barriers to Learning speaking to</li> </ul>

# Electronic Handouts

## Stages of Team Development

While the process of developing a professional learning team may feel uniquely personal, there are certain stages of development common across teams. By understanding that these stages exist—and by describing both the challenges and opportunities inherent in each stage—school leaders can improve the chances of success for every learning team. Use the following quick reference guide to evaluate the stages of team development in your building and to identify practical strategies for offering support.

Characteristics of Stage	Strategies for Offering Support
<b>Stage: Filling the Time</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams ask, "What is it exactly that we're supposed to do together?"</li> <li>Meetings can ramble.</li> <li>Frustration levels can be high.</li> <li>Activities are simple and scattered rather than a part of a coherent plan for improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set clear work expectations.</li> <li>Define specific tasks for teams to complete (for example, identifying essential objectives or developing common assessments).</li> <li>Provide sample agendas and sets of norms to help define work.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage: Sharing Personal Practices</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teamwork focuses on sharing instructional practices or resources.</li> <li>A self-imposed standardization of instruction appears.</li> <li>Less-experienced colleagues benefit from the planning acumen of colleagues.</li> <li>Teams delegate planning responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require teams to come to consensus around issues related to curriculum, assessment, or instruction.</li> <li>Require teams to develop shared minilessons delivered by all teachers.</li> <li>Structure efforts to use student learning data in the planning process.</li> <li>Ask questions that require data analysis to answer.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage: Developing Common Assessments</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers begin to wrestle with the question, "What does mastery look like?"</li> <li>Emotional conversations around the characteristics of quality instruction and the importance of individual objectives emerge.</li> <li>Pedagogical controversy is common.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide teams with additional training in interpersonal skills and conflict management.</li> <li>Moderate or mediate initial conversations around common assessments to model strategies for joint decision making.</li> <li>Ensure that teams have had training in how to best develop effective common assessments.</li> <li>Create a library of sample assessments from which teams can draw.</li> </ul>

1 of 2

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<b>Stage: Analyzing Student Learning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams begin to ask, "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?"</li> <li>Teams shift attention from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning.</li> <li>Teams need technical and emotional support.</li> <li>Teachers publically face student learning results.</li> <li>Teachers can be defensive in the face of unyielding evidence.</li> <li>Teachers can grow competitive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide tools and structures for effective data analysis.</li> <li>Repurpose positions to hire teachers trained in data analysis to support teams new to working with assessment results.</li> <li>Emphasize a separation of "person" from "practice."</li> <li>Model a data-oriented approach by sharing results that reflect on the work of practitioners beyond the classroom (for example, by principals, counselors, and instructional resource teachers).</li> </ul>
<b>Stage: Differentiating Follow-Up</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers begin responding instructionally to student data.</li> <li>Teams take collective action, rather than responding to results as individuals.</li> <li>Principals no longer direct team development. Instead, they serve as collaborative partners in conversations about learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask provocative questions about instructional practices and levels of student mastery.</li> <li>Demonstrate flexibility as teams pursue novel approaches to enrichment and remediation.</li> <li>Provide concrete ways to support differentiation.</li> <li>Identify relevant professional development opportunities, allocate funds to after-school tutoring programs.</li> <li>Redesign positions to focus additional human resources on struggling students.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage: Reflecting on Instruction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams begin to ask, "What instructional practices are most effective with our students?"</li> <li>Learning is connected back to teaching.</li> <li>Practitioners engage in deep reflection about instruction.</li> <li>Action research and lesson study are used to document the most effective instructional strategies for a school's student population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate a team's efforts to study the teaching-learning connection.</li> <li>Create opportunities for teachers to observe one another teaching.</li> <li>Provide release time for teams to complete independent projects.</li> <li>Facilitate opportunities for cross-team conversations to spread practices and perspectives across an entire school.</li> <li>Celebrate and publicize the findings of team studies.</li> </ul>

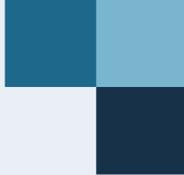
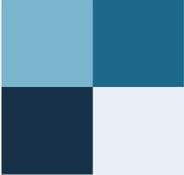
## How do our teams function?

Rating Scale

- 4 - Sustaining Stage
- 3 - Developing Stage
- 2 - Initiation Stage
- 1 - Pre-Initiation Stage

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Clarify purpose and goal at the start of each meeting
2. \_\_\_\_\_ State the priority/focus learning outcome of the meeting
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Review norms at the start of every meeting
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Hold colleagues accountable to group norms
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Fill and use important roles: facilitator, recorder, time keeper, etc.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Have and use an agenda to stay focused on the task
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Use process to gather information
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Use process to discuss topics
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Use process to analyze student work and other data
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Use process to make decisions
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Use charts and visuals so all members can see, participate, and contribute to the discussion
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Listen and learn from diverse points of view
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Praise and congratulate one another
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Do the work in the room, during the meeting
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Tackle tough issues
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Leave knowing what is expected to prepare for the next meeting
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate your results and team time

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