

Professional Learning Communities



Solution Tree

Roxbury Township Public Schools
October 10, 2011

Alan Addley

Systems' Thinking

"It's just one damn thing after another."

—Michael Fullan

Workshop Objective

PLC 101

Introduce the big ideas of PLC and begin to
develop a common understanding
vocabulary and knowledge about the work

High- Reliability Organizations

Create schools with higher reliability

Tim Waters, McRel

HROs seek an ideal of perfection but never expect to
achieve it...they deliverer reliability but never take it for
granted

New Challenge to Understanding Organizations, 1993 Roberts

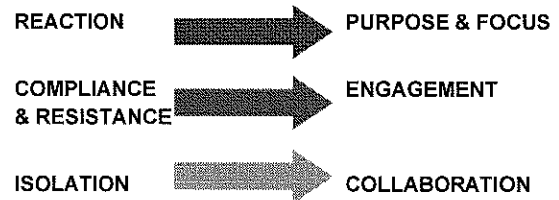
High(er) Reliability Schools

.....focus relentlessly on ensuring high instructional quality while reducing variability in the quality of instruction for every student

Andrew Schleicher, OECD 2008

The Core Tasks of Leading for Change

Creating the Momentum & Energy for Change



Change leadership, Harvard

Fundamental Assumptions

- We can make a difference: Our schools can be more effective.
- People improvement is the key to school improvement.
- Significant school improvement will impact teaching and learning.

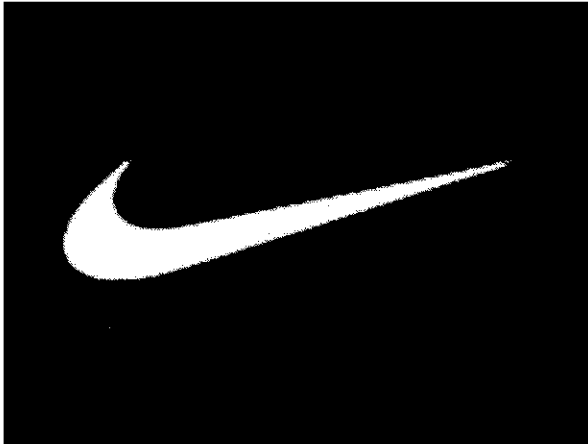
—DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker

Good to Great

"If you are engaged in work that you love and care about, for whatever reason, then the question needs no answer."

"The question is not why, but how. If you have to ask the question, 'Why should I be trying to make it great? Isn't success enough?', then you are probably engaged in the wrong line of work."

—Jim Collins



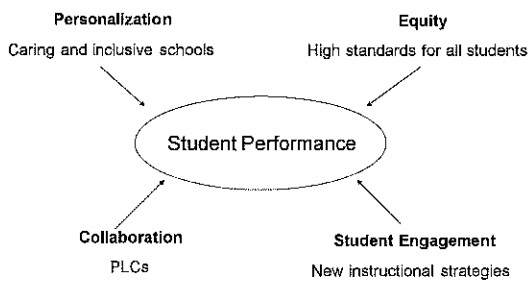
The Power of PLCs

"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community."

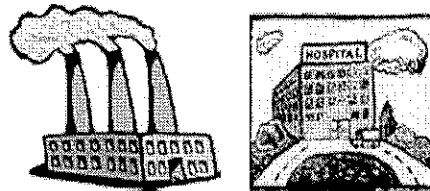
- DuFour & Eaker

—DuFour & Eaker

PLC, Accreditation, Teaching Standards



What Is a PLC? Metaphors for Schools



What is a PLC?
What type of school is it?

Professional Learning Community	Picture
Description	
Related Terms	

PLC
“A collaboration of teachers, administrators, parents, and students who work together to seek out best practices, test them in the classroom, continuously improve processes, and focus on results.”
—Richard Dufour

PLC
Practices
Learning
Culture

What challenges prevent schools from functioning as PLCs?



What are some of the challenges (detours) along the way?

PLC Journey

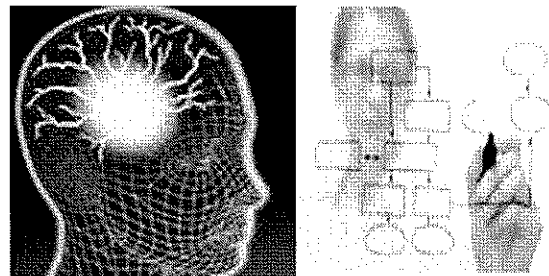
Knowing

Doing

Being

The challenge to create a PLC is like ...

Requires a New Mental Model



Learning is a by-product of reasoning.

—Markham & Genter, 2001

Learn by Doing

Change behaviors, practices,
and the environment.
Attitudes will follow.

Hand-in-Hand, We All Learn

I have yet to see a school where the learning curves of the adults were stepped upward and those of the students were not. Teachers and students go hand-in-hand as learners...or they don't go at all.

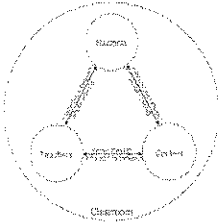
-Roland Barth (2001)

There is no silver bullet, instruction manual, or step-by-step recipe to become a PLC.

But there are some
“big ideas,” main things
and
best practices!

Providing a through line to the instructional core

The actions that need to happen to improve teaching and learning



The failure of school reform is that it has not focused on teaching and learning in the classroom.
Seymour Sarason, 1994

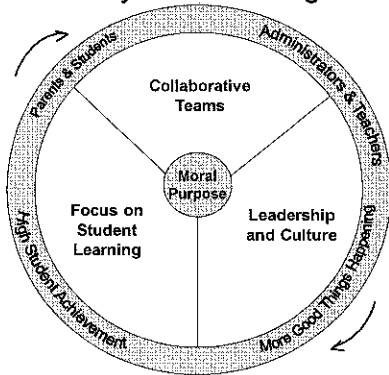
Since instruction occurs in the interactions between teachers and students around the education materials (content), capacity for change lies in these interactions
Cohen & Ball, 1999

Everything that's not in the instructional core can only affect student learning and performance by, in some way, influencing what goes on inside the core. Schools don't improve through political and managerial incantation; they improve through the complex and demanding work of teaching and learning
Elmore, 2008

If you want great people to do their best work, the logic goes, then you've got to create the right working conditions the moment they walk through the door.

-Taylor & LaBarre (2006)

PLC Flywheel and Big Ideas



Teams vs. Groups

Collaborative Teams

“You cannot have students as continuous learners and effective collaborators, without teachers having the same characteristics.”

—Michael Fullan

What is Collaboration?

A systematic process in which we work together, interdependently to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results.

- Dufour, DuFour & Eaker (2002)

Group IQ

There is such a thing as group IQ. While a group can be no smarter than the sum total of the knowledge and the skills of its members, it can be much “dumber” if its internal workings don’t allow people to share their talents.

-Robert Sternberg (1988)

The Focus of Collaboration

Collaborative culture, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things they may end up being powerfully wrong.

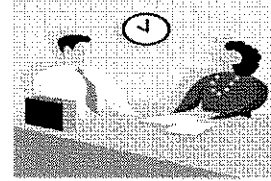
- Dufour, DuFour & Eaker (2002)

PLC Focus

All Kids Can Learn

- What do we expect students to learn?
- How do we know that they have learned it?
- What do we do when they don't learn?
- How will we respond when they do?

Challenge



Provide planning time for teachers.

2012-2013 (SCHOOL YEAR)				
MOON	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
PLC001 10:00-11:00	PLC002 10:00-11:00	PLC003 10:00-11:00	PLC004 10:00-11:00 PLC Team Time	PLC005 10:00-11:00
PLC006 11:00-12:00	PLC007 11:00-12:00	PLC008 11:00-12:00	PLC009 11:00-12:00	PLC010 11:00-12:00
PLC011 12:00-1:00	PLC012 12:00-1:00	PLC013 12:00-1:00	PLC014 12:00-1:00	PLC015 12:00-1:00
PLC016 1:00-2:00	PLC017 1:00-2:00	PLC018 1:00-2:00	PLC019 1:00-2:00	PLC020 1:00-2:00
PLC021 2:00-3:00	PLC022 2:00-3:00	PLC023 2:00-3:00	PLC024 2:00-3:00	PLC025 2:00-3:00
PLC026 3:00-4:00	PLC027 3:00-4:00	PLC028 3:00-4:00	PLC029 3:00-4:00	PLC030 3:00-4:00
PLC031 4:00-5:00	PLC032 4:00-5:00	PLC033 4:00-5:00	PLC034 4:00-5:00	PLC035 4:00-5:00
PLC036 5:00-6:00	PLC037 5:00-6:00	PLC038 5:00-6:00	PLC039 5:00-6:00	PLC040 5:00-6:00
PLC041 6:00-7:00	PLC042 6:00-7:00	PLC043 6:00-7:00	PLC044 6:00-7:00	PLC045 6:00-7:00

What Do Teams Do?



Collaboration:

Collaborative Teams



Create collaborative teams.

Collaborative Teams

- Teachers working interdependently toward a common goal
- Department, subject-area, shared courses, shared students, grade-level, across grade levels
- Involves all teachers, not by invitation



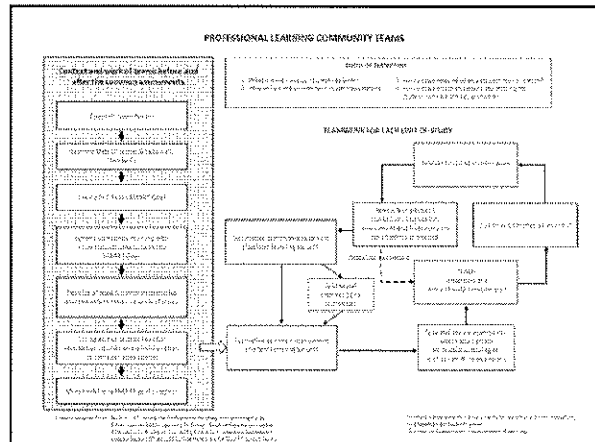
Levels of Curriculum

Intended
Implemented
Attained

To impact the attained curriculum in the most powerful way, make certain the implemented curriculum is guaranteed and viable – (Robert Marzano)

Keys to Effective Teams

- Build time into the school day.
- Focus on four key questions.
- Guide collaboration through team norms.
- Pursue specific and measurable performance goals (SMART goals).
- Clarify common outcomes by course or grade level.
- Develop and administer common formative assessments.
- Have access to relevant information.
- Share products of collaboration.
- Modify curriculum and instruction.
- Identify intervention strategies for students.



Example Timeline for Team Products

By the end of the

- 2nd week – Team Norms
- 4th week – Team SMART GOAL
- 6th week – First Common Assessment
- 10th week – Analysis of Student Performance on First Common Assessment

What do you find frustrating about meetings?

Norms

- Are we clear on the commitments we made to each other regarding how we will work together as a team?
- Have we stated our commitments as explicit behaviors?
- Have we discussed how to address the issue if we feel someone is not honoring our norms?

Norms of high performing teams

- Willingness to consider matter from another's perspective
- Communicating positive regard, caring and respect
- Willingness and ability to evaluate the team's own effectiveness
- Seeks feedback from internal and external sources
- Proactive problem solving
- Awareness of how the group contributes to the purpose and goals of the larger organization
- Willingness by the group to confront a team member who violates norms

- Daniel Goleman

Norms

- Stated as individual and collective commitments
- Reviewed regularly at meetings
- Less is more – few better than a laundry list

SMART Goals?

Strategically aligned with the school-wide goal of improving student performances in language arts, by the end of the 20010-2011 school year we will...

1. Create and administer 4 common assessments in writing.
2. Increase the use of cooperative learning activities in our language arts lessons by 25%.
3. Increase the number of students achieving the target score (80% or higher) on the district reading assessment from 81% to 90%.

What to Include in the SMART Goal

- Essential Outcomes (with timelines)
- Common Assessments (approx. dates)
- Discussion of Common Assessment Results
- Pacing calendar
- Discussion of instructional practices & student work
- Student Interventions

Assessments

Common

Formative

Summative

Common Assessments

Powerful, proven structures for improved results already exist.

"They begin when a group of teachers meet regularly as a team to identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative assessments, analyze current levels of achievement, set achievement goals, and share and create lessons and strategies to improve upon those levels."

—Schmoker

Insist on Common Assessments

Teachers of the same course or grade level should have absolute common agreement on what they expect all their students to know and be able to do. Therefore, they should have common, collaboratively scored assessments at least once each quarter. The classroom activities leading up to those same assessments might differ. The need to administer the same assessment should not differ.

-Doug Reeves (2002)

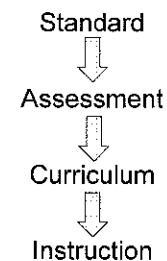
What happens when teachers don't use common formative assessments?

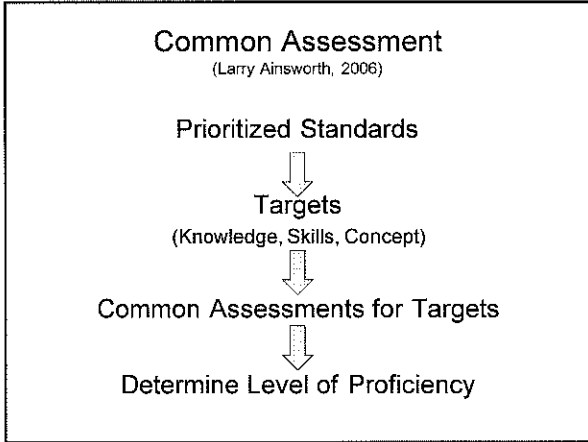
The more you teach without finding out who understand the information and who doesn't, the greater the likelihood that only already proficient students will succeed.

-Wiggins (April 2006)

Backwards Design

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)





Common Assessments

The ideal number of standards is 8-10 (Rebecca DuFour)

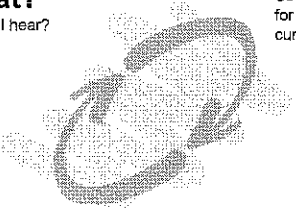
Four to five questions per essential learning (knowledge, skill, concept) within a prioritized standard
-Larry Ainsworth (2006)

Bigger is not better... more often is better

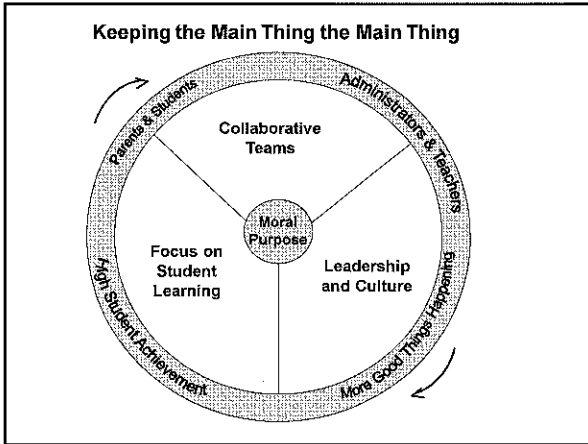
The entire assessment does not need to be common

What?
What did I hear?

So What?
So what does this mean for my work in my current role?



Now What?
Now what should we be doing as a leadership team to make that happen?
("Bold Strokes" and Short-Term Wins)



Focus on Student Learning

The core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. The simple shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, has profound implications for schools

Rick DuFour

To truly reform American Education we must abandon the long-standing assumption that the central activity is teaching and reorient all policy making and activities around a new benchmark: student learning.

Edward Fiske

Is it more than semantics?




The shift from *teachers' teaching* to *students' learning*

Self-Regulation to the Task

Teaching vs. Learning

Aligning School Practices with the Fundamental Purpose of Learning

Identify one practice in your school that you feel is not consistent with the purpose of learning for all.



The Hedgehog Concept

A Hedgehog, standing on a globe, holds a lit lightbulb. The globe is labeled 'What you are deeply passionate about', the hedgehog 'What you can be the best in the world at', and the lightbulb 'What drives your economic engine?'.

Not a plan, strategy, or intention to be the best.
It's an understanding.

Traditional Responses

The fundamental purpose of our school is to provide students with the opportunity to learn.

We fulfill our responsibilities when we provide students with clear lessons and opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

If students fail to take advantage of the opportunities they are provided, they must suffer the consequences of their decisions.

Focus on Learning Response

Learning is required.
You can and will be successful here.
You may not choose to fail.
We want to connect with you through people who care about you.
We want you to feel connected, get involved and be successful.

PLC Focus

All Kids Can Learn

- What do we expect students to learn?
- How do we know that they have learned it?
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Aligning School Practices with the Fundamental Purpose of Learning

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Grading

Student's Grades

Assignment 1	80%
Assignment 2	0% (late/missing)
Assignment 3	80%
Assignment 4	85%
Assignment 5	90%

Interventions

“Don't tell me you believe 'all kids can learn'. Tell me what you're doing about the kids who aren't learning.”

—Richard DuFour

“Traditional” Interventions

- Up to each teacher
- Most inexperienced teacher teaches the “at risk” students
- Summer school
- Remedial classes
- “Alternative” education
- Retention
- Nothing

**Intervention by invitation
does not work for the vast
majority of students!**

CPR: Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation

- Urgent, life-saving process
- Directive
- Timely
- Systematic
- Targeted
- Administered by trained professionals

Through New Eyes

- How does the school respond when it becomes apparent that the student is not learning?
- What message is the school sending to Johnny?
- How would you describe the school's culture? What are the beliefs and values that drive the day-to-day work?

Creating Powerful Responses

**For students who are not
learning**

Goal

To create a systemic process that ensures every child receives the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels

What is RtI?

Response to Intervention

aka

Response to Instruction

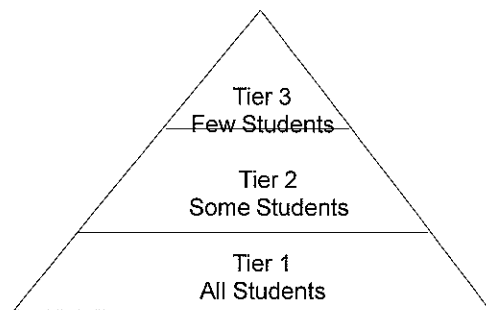
Essential Characteristics of RTI

Collective responsibility

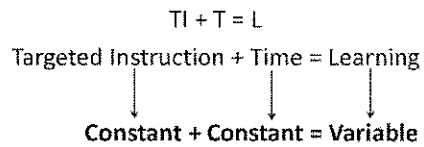
High Quality Instruction

Progress Monitoring

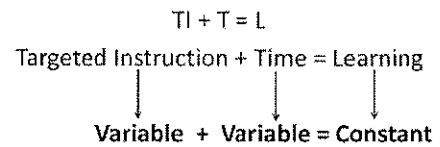
Response to Interventions



Traditional Schools



Highly Effective Schools

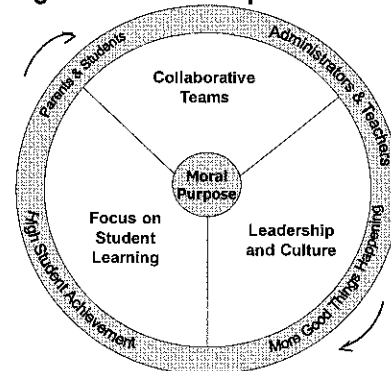


Building Your Own Pyramid

It is important that faculties realize, however, that eventually they are called upon to create their own systems of interventions within the context of their own schools

- Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many (2006)

Big Idea: Leadership and Culture



Leadership: 3 Ps

Passion

Persistence

Professional will

Empowered teachers and strong principals are not mutually exclusive goals. Schools that operate as learning communities will have both.

- *PLC at Work*

School Culture

School culture is the heart and soul of the school organization.

—Hargreaves

Superficial PLCs

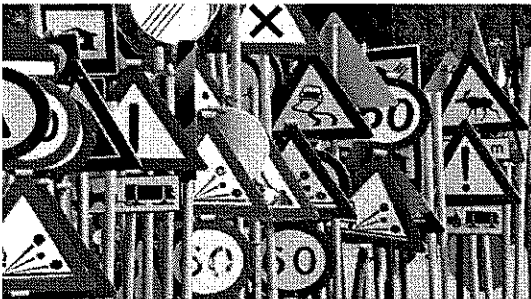
—Michael Fullan

"Structural changes do not guarantee the deeper cultural changes necessary to develop a staff's ability to function as a PLC."

—Richard DuFour

"To put it as succinctly as possible, if you want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated."

—Seymour Sarason



Managing Change

Name some of the issues that you might encounter in implementing a PLC.

What will it take to manage such a change?

Changing Culture

How do you change it?

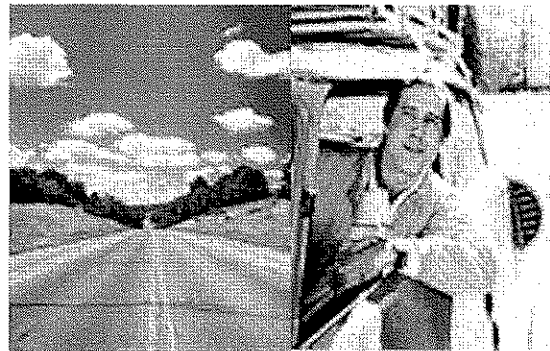
Dealing With Naysayers

- Assume good intentions.
- Consistent communication.
- Access standards and research.
- Focus on behaviors, not attitude.
- Role-play scenarios.
- Provide professional development (learning).
- Learn best practices and success stories from others.
- Reason, research, and resonate.

Gardner's Seven Factors for Changing People's Thinking

1. Reason
2. Research
3. Resonance
4. Represented Redescriptions
5. Resources and Reward
6. Real World Events
7. Confrontation

Celebrate



Coherent and Aligned Systems

- District school improvement
- Professional development
- Teacher evaluation
- Professional learning
- Through line to the instructional core

Best Practices for Administrators

Are we doing what we say we are doing?

- Promote adult learning.
- Seek out the brutal facts.
- Multiple focused classroom visits .
- Monitor teams and common assessments.
- Meetings with teachers that focus on units of curriculum/instruction.

Reflections

Insights



Unanswered Questions



Next Steps



Central to solving an adaptive problem is the construction of a culture that can create new knowledge in the course of doing its work.

Don't waste time waiting for inspiration.
Begin, and inspiration will find you.

- H Jackson Brown Jr.

"When you improve a little each day, eventually
big things occur . . . Not tomorrow, not the next
day, but eventually a big gain is made.

Don't look for the big, quick improvement. Seek
the small improvement one day at a time. That's
the only way it happens—and when it happens, it
lasts."

—John Wooden