


School Boards and Professional Learning Communities

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Workshop Agenda/Outcomes

- Your desires
- Define "Professional Learning Community"?
- What are PLCs intended to accomplish?
- What's the board's relationship to them?
- What kind of support is needed?
- Why is this important?


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What do you want to learn?




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What is a Professional Learning Community?

- **Continuous job-embedded learning for educators**
- **An ongoing process to re-culture school reform**
 - Collaborative inquiry – Action research
- **Composed primarily of teachers**
- **A means to an end**


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What a PLC is not

- **A prescription**
 - Just having groups called PLCs won't fix what ails you.
- **A program, model or innovation to be implemented**
 - We have PLCs in our schools isn't that enough?
- **A group of teachers working together**
 - Goes beyond sharing stories, materials and advice
- **A committee**
- **A grade-level team**
- **A planning session**
 - even if making decisions based on data

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Teachers' Workday in the United States



93%

Percentage of the work day US teachers spend in isolation from their colleagues

Source: Met Life Survey of the American Teacher (2009)

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Only **40%** of educators get to co-plan with colleagues more than once a month.

Co-planning is the professional learning experience survey respondents value most.

54% of educators get less than one hour during the school week to work with team members.

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Average Hours of Professional Learning

Average Hours of Professional Learning

Category	Average Hours
Veteran Teachers	~25
New Teachers	~30
Administrators	~25
Instructional...	~50

Education Market Research, February 2010.


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Threshold for Effectiveness of Professional Learning

< 14 hours No effect on teachers effectiveness

> 49 hours Significant gains

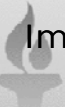
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Intended Accomplishments?

- **Improved student learning**
- Change in school culture
- Enhance/improve teacher effectiveness
- Recognize and capitalize on the collective strengths and talents of the staff


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Improved Student Learning Outcomes

- **Supported by research – this kind of adult learning leads to POWERFUL changes in student learning**
- **Internationally schools with consistent improvement have properly functioning PLCs/Collaborative Inquiry Teams in place**
- **Stanford review reports linking collaboration to gains in student achievement**


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Change school culture

- Shift from just structuring the workday differently to creating a new culture
- Focus is on learning (for adults as well as children)
- Removes the isolation of teaching common in the US (93%)
- Rigorous examination and critical reflection of practice with others


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Enhance/Improve Teacher Effectiveness

- Collaboration for collective inquiry and action research
- De-privatize and critically reflect on their practice
- Learn new and better approaches
- Support each other
- Develop shared agreements

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Capitalizing on strengths & talents

- Develops leadership
- Allows for shared decision making
- Spreads the belief that schools have the ability to increase student learning
- Freedom to try new things without fear
- Improves morale


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“Routine” collaboration is correlated with higher levels of trust and faster spread of effective practices.




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 **Board's relationship to PLCs**

- Learn about PLCs and reason for their use (become a PLC yourself)
- Set clear expectations for outcomes as a result of having PLCs
- Provide the necessary support for PLCs to succeed
- Monitor movement toward outcomes and solve any problems along the way
- Engage public support for their use

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 Collaborative inquiry needs systemic support.

FRAMEWORK FOR CAPACITY BUILDING


SHARED AGREEMENTS

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE EMPOWERING PRACTICE

INQUIRY STANCE USING EVIDENCE


SYSTEMIC SUPPORT

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 **What kind of support?**

- Administrator support
- Training to do PLC work the right way
 - In models of collaboration
 - In protocols to support reflective dialogue
 - In Action Research
- Dedicated time
 - Protected from other demands
 - Embedded in the regular working day
- Celebration for the learning that comes from collaboration


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What IS Action Research?

- ◆ **Seeking to understand and acting on the best we know**
- ◆ **Continual Disciplined Inquiry**
 - ◆ To inform and improve educator practice
 - ◆ To explore research for ideas
 - ◆ To compare those to current practice
- ◆ **Professional development to support needed changes**
- ◆ **A way to study the effects of the changes**

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- ◆ <http://www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/>
- ◆ **Access to 30+ stakeholder organizations**
- ◆ **National network**
- ◆ **Teams, schools & organizations learning with and from one another**

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Why is this important?

- ◆ **Our children deserve our best efforts**
- ◆ **Our teachers need this to be most effective**
- ◆ **It just may be the 'missing link' to the school reform effort**



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