

The Professional Learning Community Continuum

| Element of a PLC | Pre-Initiation Stage | Initiation Stage | Developing Stage | Sustaining Stage |
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| Clarity Regarding What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do | <p>There has been little effort to establish a common curriculum for students. Teachers are free to determine what they will teach and how long they will teach it.</p> | <p>District leaders have established curriculum guides that attempt to align the district curriculum with state standards. Representative teachers may have assisted in developing the curriculum guides. The materials have been distributed to each school, but there is no process to determine whether the designated curriculum is actually being taught.</p> | <p>Teachers have worked with colleagues to review state standards and district curriculum guides. They have attempted to clarify the meaning of the standards, establish pacing guides, and identify strategies for teaching the content effectively.</p> | <p>Teachers have worked in collaborative teams to build shared knowledge regarding state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement, and expectations of the next course or grade level. As a result of this collective inquiry, teachers have established the essential learning for each unit of instruction and are committed to instruct their students in the essential learning according to the team's agreed-upon pacing guide. They know the criteria they will use in judging the quality of student work, and they practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. They demonstrate a high level of commitment to the essential curriculum, to their students, and to their teammates.</p> |



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| Assessing Whether Students Have Learned the Essential Curriculum | Each teacher creates the assessments he or she will use to monitor student learning. Assessments may vary widely in format and rigor from one teacher to another. The assessments are used primarily to assign grades rather than to inform teacher and student practice. State or provincial tests are administered in the school, but teachers pay little attention to the results. | District officials analyze the results of state and provincial tests and report the results to each school. Principals are expected to work with staff to improve upon the results. The district may also administer district-level assessments in core curricular areas. These assessments have been created by key central office personnel, by representative teachers serving on district committees, or by testing companies who have sold their services to the district. Classroom teachers typically feel little commitment to the assessments and pay little attention to the results. | Teachers have worked together to analyze results from state and district tests and to develop improvement strategies to apply in their classrooms. They have discussed how to assess student learning on a consistent and equitable basis. Parameters are established for assessments, and individual teachers are asked to honor those parameters as they create tests for their students. Teachers of the same course or grade level may create a common final exam to help identify strengths and weaknesses in their program. | Every teacher has worked with colleagues to develop a series of common, formative assessments that are aligned with state or provincial standards and district curriculum guides. The teams have established the specific proficiency standards each student must achieve on each skill. The team administers common assessments multiple times throughout the school year and analyzes the results together. Team members then use the results to inform and improve their individual and collective practice, to identify students who need additional time and support for learning, and to help students monitor their own progress toward agreed-upon standards. |

Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet Clearly Defined Outcomes

| Describe one or more aspects of a professional learning community that you would like to see in place in your school. | What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school? | Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities? | What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity? | What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative? |
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| <p>Teachers in the school have worked together to clarify and focus on the essential outcomes for each course, each grade level, and each unit of instruction.</p> <p>These common essential outcomes reflect the teachers' efforts to build shared knowledge regarding best practice.</p> | | | | |



Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet Monitoring Each Student's Learning

| Describe one or more aspects of a professional learning community that you would like to see in place in your school. | What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school? | Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities? | What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity? | What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative? |
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| <p>Teachers in the school have worked together to clarify the criteria they use in judging the quality of student work and they apply the criteria consistently.</p> <p>Teachers in the school have worked together to monitor student learning through frequent, team-developed common formative assessments that are aligned to state and local standards.</p> | | | | |

Where Do We Go From Here? Worksheet

How Individuals and Teams Use Assessment Information to Improve Their Professional Practice

| Describe one or more aspects of a professional learning community that you would like to see in place in your school. | What steps or activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school? | Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining these steps or activities? | What is a realistic timeline for each step or phase of the activity? | What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative? |
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| <p>Each teacher and team receives relevant feedback. Information is provided regarding the extent to which students meet agreed upon standards of mastery on a valid test in comparison to all the students in the school attempting to meet the same standard. The teams utilize formative tests throughout the year to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify students who need additional time and support. ■ Help individual teachers identify areas of strength and weakness in their instruction. ■ Help the team measure progress towards its goals and identify areas in need of attention. | | | | |

Part Six Questions to Guide the Work of Your Professional Learning Community

To Clarify Essential Learning, Ask:

1. What is it we want all students to know and be able to do as a result of this course, grade level, or unit of instruction?

2. How can we be sure each student has access to the same knowledge and skills regardless of who is teaching the course?

3. What knowledge and which skills in our curriculum pass the three-part test: endurance, leverage, and necessity for success at the next level?

4. What material can we eliminate from our curriculum?

5. Is our curriculum preparing students for success on high-stakes tests?

6. Is our curriculum preparing students for success at the next level?

7. How should we pace the curriculum to ensure that all students have the opportunity to master the essential learning?



To Monitor Student Learning, Ask:

1. How will we monitor the learning of each student, on each essential skill, on a timely basis?

2. What are the criteria we will use in judging the quality of student work?

3. What evidence do we have that we apply the criteria consistently?

4. What evidence do we have that we use the results of common assessments to identify students who require additional time and support for learning?

5. What evidence do we have that we are using the results from common assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses in our individual teaching?

6. What evidence do we have that we are using the results of common assessments as part of a continuous improvement process that is helping our team get better results?

7. Does student performance on our team assessments correlate with their achievement on other assessments at the district, state, provincial, or national level?

- Does student performance on our assessments correlate with the grades they are earning in my course or grade level?
- Do our assessment practices encourage or discourage learning on the part of our students?

