

Foci for professional learning communities

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- PLCs can be focused on almost anything, including
 - Curriculum design and planning
 - New initiatives
 - Instructional data teams
 - Improving teacher classroom formative assessment

Uses of school-based PLCs

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- PLCs are likely to be effective for
 - Situations in which team-work is likely to be more effective than individual activity
 - Data-driven decision-making
 - Lesson study
 - Changes that require changing habits
 - Classroom formative assessment
- PLCs are likely to be less effective for
 - Changes that require acquisition of knowledge
 - Changes that are relevant to a small number of people

Complementary processes

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Instructional data teams

- Quality control
- Common assessments
- Improvement through better team work and systems
- Focus on individual outcomes for students
- Regular meetings focused on data
- 16 points on PISA (in two to three years)

Classroom FA TLCs

- Quality assurance
- Highly structured meetings
- Improvement through increased teacher capacity
- Focus on teachers' individual accountability for change
- Regular meetings focused on teacher change
- 30 points on PISA (in two to three years)

Teacher learning communities

Teacher learning communities

- Plan that the TLC will run for two years.
- Identify 10 to 12 interested colleagues:
 - Composition:
 - Similar assignments (e.g., early years, math/science)
 - Mixed subject/mixed phase
 - Hybrid
- Secure institutional support for:
 - Monthly meetings (75–120 minutes each, inside or outside school time)
 - Time between meetings (two hours per month in school time):
 - Collaborative planning
 - Peer observation
 - Any necessary waivers from school policies

A “signature pedagogy” for teacher learning

- Every monthly TLC meeting should follow the same structure and sequence of activities:
 - Activity 1: Introduction (5 minutes)
 - Activity 2: Starter activity (5 minutes)
 - Activity 3: Feedback (25–50 minutes)
 - Activity 4: New learning about formative assessment (20–40 minutes)
 - Activity 5: Personal action planning (15 minutes)
 - Activity 6: Review of learning (5 minutes)

Activities 1, 2, 3, 5, 6: “Bookends”

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- For each of these five activities, the process is exactly the same at each TLC meeting
- This provides a familiar structure for teachers to get better together
 - As the structure fades into the background,
 - The learning comes into the foreground
- Teachers come to the meeting knowing what is expected of them

Ground-rules for TLCs

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- Norms of collaboration (Garmston & Wellman, 1999)
- Seven powerful Ps
 - Pausing
 - Paraphrasing
 - Probing
 - Putting ideas on the table (and pulling them off!)
 - Paying attention to self and others
 - Presuming positive intentions
 - Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry

Activity 1: Introduction

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- Sharing learning intentions for the meeting

Activity 2: Starter

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- A variety of warm-up activities to get participants' minds to the meeting:
 - Think of something you are looking forward to this year
 - 30-seconds to get “things off your chest” about what infuriates you about your job
 - 30 seconds to tell the group about something that happened within the last month and made you feel good
 - Think of something that happened in a lesson this year that made you smile
 - Think of something that one of your colleagues did last term that supported you
 - Go back to the TLC ‘ground rules’

Activity 3: Feedback

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- Routines need to be established, expectations shared, and structure maintained.
- Similar expectations regarding preparation and engagement.
 - Coming to the meeting knowing they will be sharing their own formative assessment experiences.
 - Being prepared to offer constructive, thoughtfully conceived feedback to colleagues.
 - Being prepared to challenge ideas that may be good classroom practice but are not necessarily tightly related to formative assessment.

Activity 4: New learning

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- Drip-feed’ of new ideas, to increase knowledge, and to produce variety
 - Watch videos of classroom practice
 - Book study (one chapter each month)
 - New formative assessment techniques

Activity 5: Personal action planning

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- Each teacher updates his or her personal action plan
- Makes a specific commitment about what they will do over the coming month
- Arranges any support needed from colleagues
 - Specific date and time for peer observation

Activity 6: Wrap

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- Did the meeting meet its intended objectives
 - If yes, great
 - If no, time to plan what to do about it

Every TLC needs a leader

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- The job of the TLC leader(s):
 - To ensure that all necessary resources (including refreshments!) are available at meetings
 - To ensure that the agenda is followed
 - To maintain a collegial and supportive environment
- But most important of all:
 - It is not to be the formative assessment “expert.”