Creating and Sustaining a Professional Learning Community

“The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability for school personnel to function as Professional Learning Communities”

-DuFour & Eaker, 1988, “PLC at Work”
What are Professional Learning Communities?

Professional Learning Communities are teacher teams who meet regularly to:

- analyze current levels of student achievement;
- create learning targets;
- identify essential knowledge to be taught;
- develop common formative and summative assessments;
- share strategies and research.

Why collaborate with Professional Learning Communities??

The purpose of the PLC/PLT is for teachers to develop new understanding and apply it to their classroom to raise student achievement. Below, Ken Blanchard (2007) describes the invaluable role teams play in an organization:

“A team can make better decisions, solve more complex problems, and do more to enhance creativity and build skills than individuals working alone...They have become the vehicle for moving organizations into the future...Teams are not just nice to have. They are hard-core units of the production.”

Increased student achievement is the indicator of a successful PLC.
Four Key Questions for A PLC

In order to achieve the goal of increased student achievement, members of the PLC need to define and answer the following key questions:

- **What do we want students to learn?**
- **How will we know if they’ve learned it?**
- **What will we do if they already know it?**
- **What will we do if they didn’t learn it?**

If teachers are NOT focused on these questions, it is NOT a PLC/PLT!
The Teaching and Learning Progression

To answer the four questions in a manageable way, the PLC/PLT should begin with a small focus. For example, the PLC/PLT will look at its KAP data and decide it will improve achievement on a particular standard. This may seem like a small focus, but there are many parts that make up a standard and increasing students’ understanding of it. By narrowing the focus to a single standard, or a single subject in the case of elementary schools, the PLC/PLT will be able to manage its work and see student results faster.

This handbook was created to show the work that Professional Learning Communities could do. It was not created to overwhelm, but to be used as a resource and point of reference.
Question 1: What do we want all students to learn?

This is the district focus and expectation for 2019-20.

Elementary schools will work with the Kansas Standards in core areas and specials; elementary specials and grades 6-12 will work on the Kansas state standards in their content area.

What should happen first?

The PLT should review the Kansas State Standards, Year-at-a-Glance, the curriculum maps, and any other curriculum documents.

Through discussing these documents, the PLT will build shared knowledge and understanding of what all students should learn.

As the PLC determines its focus, it is important to answer Question 1 based on their area of greatest need.

What does a high-functioning PLT look like during Question 1?

Teachers collaborate to review state standards for grade level/content area.

Teachers create Learning Targets for each standard and share work via District Google Shared drive. (see following page for instructions)

Teachers demonstrate high levels of commitment to the curriculum, to students, and to their PLT members.

After determining total days of instruction, the team agrees on an appropriate pacing guide and YAGs.

All teachers systematically share evidence-based effective instructional strategies and utilize newly-learned strategies in their own classrooms.
PLC Google Shared Drives named “Learning Targets” have been set up to be used across the district. You can find it under the “Shared Drive” icon in your Google Drive. It is called **Curriculum-PLC-Elementary** (for example). See appendix for specific instructions for elementary, middle school and high schools.

### Learning Targets

In order to be more efficient in creating and using Learning Targets, this drive has been created to house each team’s completed learning targets. This drive will house the work year-to-year.

As your PLT works through the standards, the expectation is that **one person on the team will post a PDF of your team’s work** in the appropriate file on the shared drive. There is a subfolder for each school in each grade’s folder. Put your work there. Your work will be available to everyone in the elementary grades across the district, just as you can view theirs.

In order to make it easy to identify the standards without having to open each attachment, please follow these naming conventions for each learning target document you upload into the Shared Drive:

**FIRST AND FOREMOST**, START YOUR FILE’S NAME WITH YOUR BUILDING’S INITIALS (this is to keep files from being kicked out by another one with the same name)

For Example:
Content Area-ELA
Standard- RI.4.12 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
PLC drive notation- **PCESRI.4.12**
Question 2: How will we know if all students have learned it?

**This is the district focus for 2020-21.**

The PLC/PLT collectively creates and aligns common assessments to measure student progress toward meeting the team goal. Both formative and summative assessments should be used.

What does a high-functioning PLC/PLT look like during Question 2?

- The PLT has collaborated to develop a series of common formative and summative assessments.
- Every teacher agrees to administer the assessments created.
- Assessments created are stored on the appropriate PLC Google Shared Drive.
- Common assessments are entirely aligned with state standards.
- All assessments administered are consistent in format and rigor within the PTC/PLT.
- Collaboratively create a common scoring system and consistently use it to measure proficiency.
- Every teacher uses the assessment results to guide real-time instruction.
- Teachers use the results from the assessments to make decisions for further changes in content, instruction, and assessment.
Question 3: What will we do if students don’t learn it?

This is the district focus for 2021-22.

The PLC/PLT uses the results of the common assessments to determine which students need additional time and support in learning essential skills. Collectively, the team develops a plan to support those students who are not making progress toward the goal.

What does a high-functioning PLC/PLT look like during Question 3?

- The PLC has a highly-coordinated system of interventions in place.
- The PLC identifies and makes plans for students to receive extra support even before they fail.
- Student Achievement is monitored on a daily basis.
- Students who experience difficulty are required, rather than invited, to put in extra time and utilize extra support.
- If the current level of support is not sufficient, there is an increased amount of time and support provided.
- All students are guaranteed access to this systemic intervention regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.
- Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.

TEACHERS, not programs, should lead the intervention process.
Question 4: What will we do if they already know it?

This is the district focus for 2022-23.

Just as important as providing additional time and support for those not learning the material, the PLC needs to engage the advanced students as well.

What does a high-functioning PLC/PLT look like during Question 4?

- The PLC has developed rigorous enrichment activities in their lesson planning using appropriate supplementary material.
- The PLC has aligned activities with vertically aligned courses.
- All students are guaranteed access to this enrichment regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.
- Teachers consistently differentiate curriculum components within each unit of study.
Appendix
Appendix A

USD 230 PLC Google Shared Drives: Elementary

PLC Google Shared Drives named “Learning Targets” have been set up to be used across the district. You can find it under the “Shared Drive” icon in your Google Drive. It is called Curriculum-PLC-Elementary

Learning Targets

In order to be more efficient in creating and using Learning Targets, this drive has been created to house each team’s completed learning targets. This drive will house the work year-to-year.

As your PLT works through the standards, the expectation is that one person on the team will post a PDF of your team’s work in the appropriate file on the shared drive. There is a subfolder for each school in each grade’s folder. Put your work there. Your work will be available to everyone in the elementary grades across the district, just as you can view theirs.

In order to make it easy to identify the standards without having to open each attachment, please follow these naming conventions for each learning target document you upload into the Shared Drive:

FIRST AND FOREMOST, START YOUR FILE’S NAME WITH YOUR BUILDING’S INITIALS (this is to keep files from being kicked out by another one with the same name).

See Appendix D for sample chart.
Appendix B

USD 230 PLC Google Shared Drives: MS

PLC Google Shared Drives named “Learning Targets” have been set up to be used across the district. You can find it under the “Shared Drive” icon in your Google Drive. It is called Curriculum-PLC-MS.

Learning Targets

In order to be more efficient in creating and using Learning Targets, this drive has been created to house each team’s completed learning targets. This drive will house the work year-to-year.

As your PLT works through the standards, the expectation is that one person on the team will post a PDF of your team’s work in the appropriate file on the shared drive. There is a subfolder for each school in each folder. Put your work there. Your work will be available to everyone in the middle schools across the district, just as you can view theirs.

In order to make it easy to identify the standards without having to open each attachment, please follow these naming conventions for each learning target document you upload into the Shared Drive:

FIRST AND FOREMOST, START YOUR FILE’S NAME WITH YOUR BUILDING’S INITIALS (this is to keep files from being kicked out by another one with the same name)

See Appendix D for sample chart.
Appendix C

USD 230 PLC Google Shared Drives: HS

PLC Google Shared Drives named “Learning Targets” have been set up to be used across the district. You can find it under the “Shared Drive” icon in your Google Drive. It is called *Curriculum-PLC-HS*.

Learning Targets

In order to be more efficient in creating and using Learning Targets, this drive has been created to house each team’s completed learning targets. This drive will house the work year-to-year.

As your PLT works through the standards, the expectation is that **one person on the team will post a PDF of your team’s work** in the appropriate file on the shared drive. There is a subfolder for each school in each folder. Put your work there. Your work will be available to everyone in the high school, just as you can view theirs.

In order to make it easy to identify the standards without having to open each attachment, please follow these naming conventions for each learning target document you upload into the Shared Drive:

**FIRST AND FOREMOST**, **START YOUR FILE’S NAME WITH YOUR BUILDING’S INITIALS** (this is to keep files from being kicked out by another one with the same name)

*See Appendix D for sample chart.*
## Appendix D

### Shared Drive Sample Notations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>PLC Shared Drive Notation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELA</strong></td>
<td>RL.4.12 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</td>
<td>PCESRL.4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td>Understand that the two digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones. 1.NBT.2a. 10 can be thought of as a grouping of ten ones—called a “ten”.</td>
<td>WCES1.NBT.2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>HS-PS1-2. Construct and revise an explanation for the outcome of a simple chemical reaction based on the outermost electron states of atoms, trends in the periodic table, and knowledge of the patterns of chemical properties.</td>
<td>HS-PS-1-2</td>
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<td><strong>History, Government, and Social Studies</strong></td>
<td>Explain the difference between supply and demand</td>
<td>WCES4Econ</td>
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<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Pr2: Analyze-This work and context of varied musical works and their implication for performance.</td>
<td>SHES2.Pr.2</td>
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<td><strong>PE</strong></td>
<td>Balances and/or transfers weight on apparatus or with a partner</td>
<td>TSES1.B:3-5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Collaboratively shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art and design.</td>
<td>SHMSCr1.2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example: this is for a third grade reading standard from SHES teachers; note the name of the document: **SHESRL3.3.9**
Appendix E

Creating Learning Targets Template

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17-HxfPhCWq2Dn4hftZRCrC8BTNBIx_M8ey6kTcNw4nI/copy

This template was designed to facilitate the creation of Learning Targets. The link above should allow you to make a copy of the template. As your PLT works on creating the Learning Targets, ONE COPY SHOULD BE POSTED TO THE APPROPRIATE GOOGLE SHARED DRIVE.

### Developing Learning Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will students do? (verbs)</th>
<th>With what key concept or knowledge? (nouns)</th>
<th>Type/Level of Learning/ (DOK) Knowledge/Reasoning/ Skills/Product</th>
<th>Key Academic Vocabulary For Explicit Instruction</th>
<th>Securely Held Content [Includes prior knowledge/must master and hold for next grade]</th>
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Learning Targets in Student-Friendly Language: