TOOLS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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GROUP NORMS OR…
CODE OF COOPERATION

Investing time in creating group norms or a code of cooperation will ensure that everyone’s voice is heard and that meetings are productive.

You will want to develop your own group norms to guide the work of your PLC; however, we offer the following suggestions.

- Keep the discussion focused on student learning (student work, data, standards, objectives, curriculum, instructional resources, assessments, strategies, etc.).
- Utilize an agenda and designate a note-taker.
- Listen actively and for understanding.
- Build on what others say.
- Do not step on other’s talk. Silences and pauses are okay and necessary.
- Ask questions for clarification and amplification.
- Watch your airtime—both in terms of how often you speak, and in terms of how much you say when you speak.
- Limit side conversations.
- Start on time, end on time.
- Put cell phones on vibrate—take calls in the halls.
TIPS FROM EXPERIENCED SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

- Ask to be on the agenda even if it is only for you to gather information on what is going on.
- Read the agendas and meeting minutes for each team.
- Listen for ways that you can collaborate with the teachers. They may not be accustomed to the school librarian being so willing to work on lessons and projects.
- Prepare for PLC meetings by familiarizing yourself with the curriculum objectives.
- Be efficient and respectful of the teachers' time.
- Ask to be included on emails that address the collaborative project and the topic students will be studying.
- Be flexible and adapt to the needs of the teachers.
- Stay focused on student learning.
- Keep the communication open so that you are not only aware of ways to stay involved but to be a part of the PLC.
- Celebrate successes.

After successful projects with strong collaboration between the school librarian and teachers, word gets out. As your relationships within the school community grow, demand for your time may be surprising. That is a grand problem to be faced with but one which should be discussed when working with multiple PLCs.
PLC MEETING AGENDA

Utilize an agenda every time you meet.
It will keep the meeting focused and productive.

Team Name _________________________________
Meeting Date _______________________________
Meeting Facilitator ___________________________
Note Taker _________________________________

I. Step(s) in the PLC process that are the focus of this meeting:

|☐| Study |☐| Implement |
|---|---|---|
|☐| Select |☐| Analyze |
|☐| Plan |☐| Adjust |

II. Progress on Action Items from previous meeting

III. Topic(s) for today’s meeting

IV. Goal(s) for today’s meeting
PLC MEETING MINUTES

*Take minutes every time you meet. It will keep the meeting focused and productive.*

Name of Team: ________________________________

Meeting Date: ________________________________

Team Members Present:                        Team Members Absent:
__________________________________________ (List reasons for each absence)
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Step(s) in the PTLC process that were the focus of this meeting:

- [ ] Study
- [ ] Implement
- [ ] Select
- [ ] Analyze
- [ ] Plan
- [ ] Adjust

Meeting Goal(s):

Meeting Outcome(s):
### Action Item(s):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Team Member Responsible</th>
<th>Date to Be Completed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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### Unresolved Goal(s):  

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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Carry Forward Yes — No</th>
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Individual Monthly Action Plan (I-MAP)

One of the key goals of PLCs is to facilitate reflective practice. Journal writing is one way of engaging in reflective practice, but may be too time consuming for some. The I-MAP offers a less-time consuming way for school librarians to set goals for themselves and to reflect on how well they are attaining their goals.

My professional goal for the month:

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<tr>
<th>Questions to Guide my Work</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Why am I planning to do this? What do I hope will happen because of this change in my practice?</td>
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<td>How will I initiate this change? What am I going to do? What steps will I take and when will I take them?</td>
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<td>What supports do I need to be successful? Who can help me and what do I need from them?</td>
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<td>How will I know if I have made progress? What evidence will I review? How will I document my own growth and improvements in students learning?</td>
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PROTOCOLS: TOOLS TO GUIDE PLC DISCUSSIONS

PLCs often function as Critical Friends Groups (CFG; that is reflective teacher groups that help educators “look seriously at their own classroom practice and make changes to it” (http://www.cesnorthwest.org/cfg.php). In CFGs school librarians and teachers bring tough issues to the table in a nonjudgmental and positive way. Protocols—agreed upon guidelines for a conversation—“create a structure that makes it safe to ask challenging questions of each other,” ensure that everyone’s voice is heard in the discussion, “build in a space for listening,” and allow PLCS to make the most of the time they have available (www.lasw.org/protocols/html).

We believe the following protocols are especially useful for school librarians who want to reflect on their own practice or to introduce topics for discussion within PLC meetings.

1. **Chalk Talk:** Chalk talks are a silent way for PLCs to reflect, generate ideas, develop projects, or solve problems. Because a chalk talk is done completely in silence, it encourages PLC members to engage in thoughtful contemplation (www.nsrfrharmoney.org/protocol/doc/chalk_talk.pdf).

   A chalk talk focuses on a key question. For example, the school librarian PLC might use a chalk talk to explore a question such as “How can we embrace our leadership role?” Alternatively, the school librarian might suggest that the school improvement team use a chalk talk to explore a question such as “How can our school embrace the out-of-school learning of our students?”

2. **Consultancy Protocol:** A consultancy allows the PLC to think more extensively about a particular, concrete dilemma (www.nsrfrharmoney.org/protocol/doc/consultancy.pdf).

   A sample dilemma might be: *Even though we understand the need to focus on learning outcomes, we seem to continue to be doing projects with our students. The projects are fun, the kids seem to enjoy them, but the projects never seem to connect to one another and have minimal connection to the standards. Question: How do we move to deep learning about important concepts while staying connected to hands-on learning?*

3. **Goal Setting Protocol:** This protocol is designed to help groups set agendas for their year of work together. This would be a good protocol for a school librarian PLC to use at the beginning of the school year or at their last meeting of the previous year. It will allow the PLC to develop an overall picture of what they hope to accomplish over the course of the year and provide a shared sense of ownership for future meetings (http://www.nsrfrharmoney.org/protocol/doc/goal_setting.pdf).

4. **Text-Based Discussion and Text Rendering:** In a text-based discussion the PLC examines an issue in a short article or excerpt from a book that is related to teaching and
learning. The purpose of the discussion is to clarify, build upon, and enhance the group’s understanding of the text (www.centerforcsri.org/files//Marchnewsletter_07_insert.doc).

Like the text-based discussion, a text rendering provides an opportunity for the PLC members to collaboratively explore a text or document. The focus is on constructing meaning and clarifying or expanding the group’s thinking about the text (www.nsfharmonynorg/protocol/doc/text_rendering.pdf).

For example: In examining the reading test scores for the last three years, the language arts PLC notices that the reading scores of many of their African American students begin to decline in the second grade. The school librarian and the school’s reading specialist gather several research articles that might help the team understand this phenomenon. The PLC uses a text-based discussion to guide their study of these articles.

5. **Tuning Protocols:** Using a tuning protocol allows the members of PLC to get feedback on a unit design or plan for teaching. The aim is to ‘fine tune’ the work to higher standards. The process involves presenting and discussing actual work such as collections of student products that resulted from a unit, lesson plans, or videotapes of students working (www.pds-hrd.wikispaces.next/file/view/Tuning+Protocol.pdf).

   For example, a 7th grade science teacher and the school librarian just completed a unit on clouds. They bring their lesson plan and some sample student products to the 7th grade PLC to get their feedback and to see if there are ways the unit could be expanded to a multi-disciplinary effort.
School Culture Audit

*Understanding the culture of the school—how it works and how it can be shaped—is important to understanding the roles the school librarian can play in PLCs and the steps he/she will need to take to be included.*

Conducting a school culture audit involves talking to students, teachers and school administrators, observing patterns of behavior and considering your own behavior.

1. Walk the halls of the school. What do you see? What artifacts convey messages about student success? About the value of rigorous work? About the value of collaboration? About a focus on authentic assessment? About commitment to diversity? About respect for students, families, and the school staff?

2. Talk with a cross section of teachers or students. What gets them excited about their work or learning? What do they find joy in?

3. Think about your school’s rituals and ceremonies. What kinds of routines or rituals does your school have that demonstrate a commitment to the success of every student? What ways does the school identify and celebrate the people who make exceptional efforts to improve student learning? How does your school celebrate student learning?

4. What are the stories you tell about your school, its students, and its staff members? What stories do you encourage others to tell?

5. Consider the last three months. What have you done to show enthusiasm for learning and student success?