

DO YOU NEED MORE ASSISTANCE?



You can scan this QR code with your device to read the DBE guideline: Professional Learning Communities: A guideline for South African Schools.



You can scan this QR code to view video clips on PLCs, based on the experiences of South African educators.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PLC!

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES OF SCHOOL LEADERS

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SCHOOL LEADERS

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED, 2011 – 2025) seeks to improve the quality and alignment of all teacher education efforts in South Africa. The strategy wants to encourage all educators, including school leaders, to take responsibility for their own professional development.

The strategy acknowledges a variety of methods that you can use in your professional development, including learning with and from peers in professional learning communities, often called 'PLCs'.

WHAT IS A PLC?

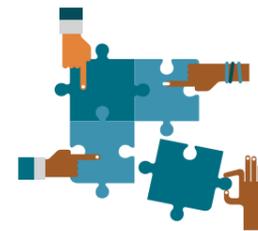
A PLC is a group of professionals who decide, voluntarily, to come together regularly to learn with and from each other on needs they have identified themselves. PLCs can be within a school or between schools and are all about learning. Members of a PLC take control of their own professional development.



WHY START OR PARTICIPATE IN A PLC?

Being part of a PLC can help you as a school leader to strengthen your professional practice. By starting or joining a PLC, you can set an example to others in the school. It can help your school on its journey to becoming a learning organisation.

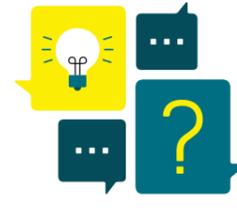
Current professional development is usually offered in the format of workshops or training sessions. Such professional development can help you to develop awareness and build professional knowledge, but don't allow you to practice this new knowledge in your daily work. PLCs, on the contrary, create opportunities for trying out new skills and approaches in a safe environment. You can also reflect on current and new approaches and their impact on your work. As the topics for learning were decided by you, the learning in a PLC is authentic, 'real', and immediately useful.



Collective responsibility for student learning.



Mutual trust and respect.



Challenge each other with ideas and questions.



We reflect on our practice, together.



We come together regularly - and keep in touch inbetween.

THE TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A PLC



Shared vision to ensure learning by all learners.



Inclusive membership. Diversity is an asset that builds our practice.



We apply what we learn and reflect on it the next time we meet.



Shared leadership in the PLC.



Systematic and rigorous. We use data to help in reflection.

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN YOU ASK YOURSELVES WHEN STARTING A PLC?

- What will our focus be?
- Who will work with us?
- What do we want to achieve as soon as possible and what can wait?
- What do we need to invest?
- How will we monitor our progress?
- How will we communicate our progress to others?
- Who will be the facilitator and what are his/ her tasks?
- How will we make decisions?
- How will we encourage participation?
- How and when will we know if we have achieved our objectives?
- What do we expect from each member?
- Does the project have the support of all stakeholders?
- When and how frequently do we meet?
- Is there support for scheduling ongoing meetings?

(Gather-Thurler, 2000; Koffi et al., 2000)

YOUR SCHOOL, A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Your leadership can motivate teachers to follow on your footsteps and participate in PLCs as well. Peer learning and collaboration amongst teachers is amongst the highest indicators of effectiveness in teachers' development. It allows teachers to learn from colleagues, transfer that knowledge to their classroom practice, and be reflective about what they've learnt. As school leader, you can create a culture of collaborative learning in your school. You can give teachers encouragement and your practical support to establish and engage in PLCs, either within the school, or with teachers from other schools. For example, you can provide space and time for a PLC to meet; you can celebrate successes by giving a PLC opportunities to share their learning and progress with others.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is participation in PLCs compulsory?

No. But all educators are expected to engage in professional development. If you engage with your PLC regularly, you can claim Teacher Development points in the SACE CPTD Management System. A PLC at school level is recorded as a type 2 activity; a PLC between schools as a type 1 activity.

Should PLCs replace workshops and trainings inside or outside the school?

No. But your PLC can help you to put knowledge gained from workshops into practice.

Can PLCs replace existing committees or structures?

PLCs are all about learning. They cannot replace committees or structures that engage in a mandatory task (e.g. Subject Committees, etc.). However, existing structures can work as PLCs if they go beyond what the structure must do and engage in learning. For example, a School Based Support Team can function as a PLC if the participants engage in learning beyond what the SBST must do. When members decide to engage in investigating how they can turn their teaching into teaching for diversity, the team becomes a PLC.

How often should we come together?

There is no set timing, but regularity is necessary for learning to take place.

Are PLCs only for new school leaders?

No. They offer a wonderful way of integrating expertise of more experienced leaders with insights and skills of newly appointed school leaders.