

DO YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?



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.

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SCHOOL LEADERS ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES OF TEACHERS

MY SCHOOL – A LEARNING ORGANISATION

OCTOBER 2019

SCHOOL LEADERS

WHAT IS A PLC?

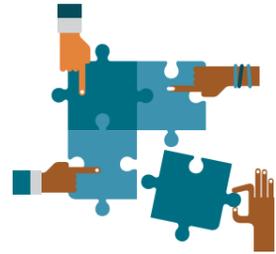
Professional learning communities (PLCs) are groups of professionals who decide to come together regularly to learn with and from each other on needs they have identified themselves. The Department of Basic Education considers PLCs to be an effective way to do professional development as explained in the Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED 2011-2025): PLCs allow teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development with the support and encouragement of the school's leadership and district officials.

PLCs are a strategy for professional development which allows all steps in the learning process (shown below) to take place. Currently, professional development is usually offered in the format of workshops or training sessions. Such professional development can help teachers to develop awareness and build professional knowledge, but doesn't allow teachers to practice this new knowledge in their daily work. PLCs, on the contrary, create opportunities for trying out new skills and approaches in a safe environment. Teachers can reflect on current and new approaches and the impact on their work.



HOW DOES A PLC HELP TEACHERS?

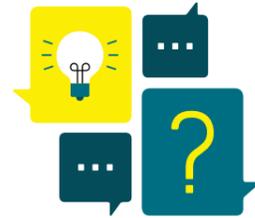
PLCs are a cost-effective and needs-based approach for professional development. Research has shown that teachers who participate in PLCs have improved student learning outcomes, change their teaching practices and are more confident. A PLC offers teachers their own space to address their needs and priorities. It focusses on classroom issues and develops leadership skills among the teachers. For new teachers, participation in a PLC can be an important part of their induction. Participating in a PLC earns teachers CPTD points which can be recorded in the SACE CPTD Management System.



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.



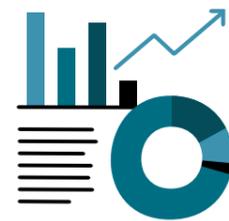
Inclusive membership. Diversity is an asset that builds our practice.



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.

“OUR PLC HELPED US A LOT, IT GAVE US CONFIDENCE, IT GAVE US HOPE. BY HELPING EACH OTHER WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WE CAN HELP OUR LEARNERS.”

WHAT ARE KEY ELEMENTS THAT MAKE PLCs EFFECTIVE?

- PLCs are a bottom-up, teacher-driven strategy.
- They are needs-based and therefore authentic, relevant and immediately useful.
- They need active nurturing. To sustain them, support is crucial.
- The support needs to be tailored and cannot be cast in stone.

HOW CAN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ENCOURAGE PLCs?

Your school is not only a learning institution for the learners but also for the teachers. Successful implementation of PLCs requires autonomy of teachers, but also your instructional leadership and practical support.

As a school leader, you can provide instructional leadership by motivating and encouraging teachers to participate in collaborative learning. You can guide or suggest the establishment of PLCs based on:

- The vision and mission of the school. For example, the vision of the school stipulates ‘quality learning for all’ and this requires that the teaching team is supported to apply curriculum differentiation in the classroom.
- The identified priority competencies through QMS process. For example, you could encourage a group of teachers to work together to strengthen skills to teach poetry.
- Priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan. For example, positive discipline.
- Your understanding of the challenges experienced at the school. For example, poor performance of girls in mathematics;

You can actively contribute and participate in relevant PLCs, depending on the topic. And, you can lead by example by participating in your own PLCs. You can ensure that successes of PLCs are celebrated, and well-functioning PLCs are acknowledged. For example, you can take the lessons learned in the PLC into account in decision making; you can ask PLC members to present their learnings and progress at staff meetings.

You can offer practical support to create conducive conditions for teachers to engage in PLCs, by, for example:

- Adjusting timetables in such way that teachers can meet.
- Providing a space for a PLC to meet.
- Providing, where possible, necessary resources and logistics (for example access to internet for research purposes; paper and flipcharts, transport to meet with teachers of other schools).
- Following up on loading of CPTD points in the SACE system.

