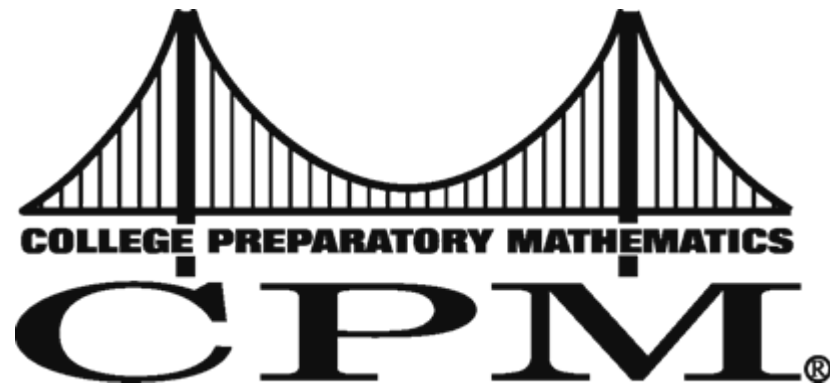


# Building Professional Learning Communities



Michael Miller

July 2008 CPM Teacher/Leader Conference

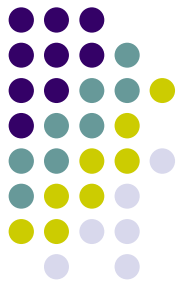
# Good Morning



Please take some time and find the poster that most closely describes your (or your school's) belief concerning student achievement.

Please sign your name on the belief that you agree with.





# **Belief 1 -- We believe all kids can learn.**

What students learn and how much they learn is fundamentally predicated on their inherent ability.



When setting goals for student achievement, we acknowledge the inevitability of the bell curve.

We do not expect every student will pass (the first time). However, we expect students to do their best. Some students have (or don't have) the math gene.



# Belief 2 -- We believe all kids can learn.



What students learn and how much they learn depends in large part upon whether they participate (show effort) toward their learning.



We will provide a rich and engaging curriculum, and the best environment for learning, but a student too must do their part by participating in their education.





# Belief 3 -- We believe all kids can learn.

What students learn and how much they learn results from a mixture of a student's innate ability and the amount of effort the student puts forth.

.....

It is our responsibility to create an environment where students can maximize their potential.

All students will progress and learn (something) as a result of their experience with us.



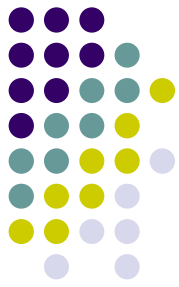
# Belief 4 -- We believe all kids can learn.



What students learn and how much they learn will be determined before they enter our rooms.

.....  
We will establish the standards for student achievement and use frequent assessments to measure a student's progress. We will continue to work with students until every student learns what we've determine as essential.





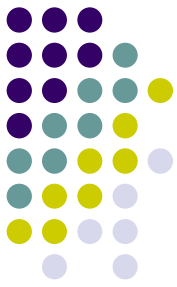
## -- and the correct answer is “Belief 4”.

PLCs determine what students will/must learn before they enter our rooms.

- .....
- PLCs establish the essential outcomes for students.
  - PLCs create common assessments to measure when learning occurs.
  - PLCs do whatever it takes until all students learn the essential outcomes.

It's nice to have students who have innate ability and who put forth effort, but those qualities are not a consideration when establishing essential outcomes and setting student achievement levels.





# A Rhetorical Question

Would you . . .

- ↪ . . . place your mom in a hospital that claims a 80% success rate?
- ↪ . . . ask your son to fly with an airline that claims a 75% safety rate?
- ↪ . . . trust your car to a dealership that promises 70% satisfaction?
- ↪ . . . enroll your child in a school that has a 65% graduation rate?

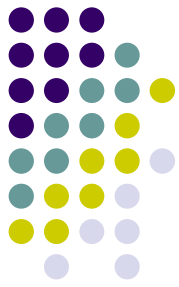
# The Inconvenient Truth.



**“Public education regards itself as different and separate from other service organizations. . . We begin each year already resigned to the fact that many in our care will fail to meet minimum expectations.**

**. . . As a profession, education accepts the failure of a consequential number of students as an insurmountable corollary to our efforts.”**

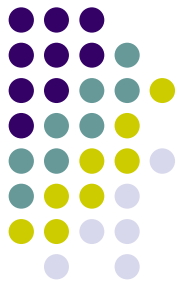
# Building Professional Learning Communities



PLCs are:

Teams pledged to a clear and compelling vision of what students should learn, and are prepared to do whatever it takes to achieve that goal. (Teams are subject, grade, department, school, or district.)

# Building Professional Learning Communities



PLCs are:

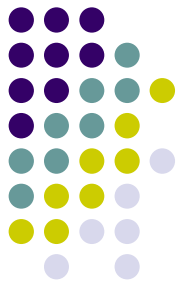
The best, least expensive, and most professionally rewarding way for improving schools.

# Building Professional Learning Communities



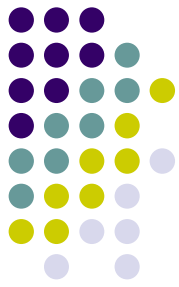
The 3 critical questions for PLCs

# The 3 critical questions for PLCs



1. **Exactly** what are the essential outcomes we want all students to learn?
2. How will we know when a student **acquires** the essential knowledge?
3. How will the **PLC** react when a student does not learn?

# The 3 critical questions for PLCs

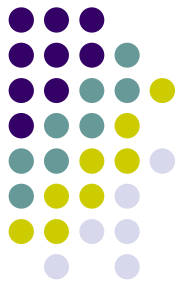


## 1. **Exactly** what is it we want all students to learn.

- ⊕ What does "next year's" PLC state is important?
- ⊕ What does the CST say is important?
- ⊕ What do the members of the PLC say is important?
- ⊕ PLC's ensure that the --

adopted curriculum = taught curriculum = learned curriculum

# The 3 critical questions for PLCs



2. How **exactly** will we know when a student has acquired the essential knowledge?

- ⊕ Assessments are timely and **ongoing**.
- ⊕ Assessments are **more formative** and less summative.
- ⊕ Assessments are used to **diagnose and prescribe** the appropriate interventions.

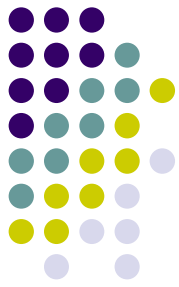
# The 3 critical questions for PLCs



## 3. What happens when a student does not learn?

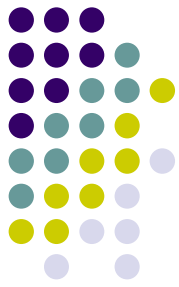
- ⊕ PLC's recognize that some students will require **additional time and support.**
- ⊕ PLC's provide support in a **timely manner.**
- ⊕ Time and support is **systematic and mandated.**
- ⊕ Time and support is allotted **within the school day.**

# The 3 critical questions for PLCs



- ⊕ What happens in your class?
- ⊕ What happens in your school?
- ⊕ What would change if you were in charge?

# The 3 Critical Questions for PLC's



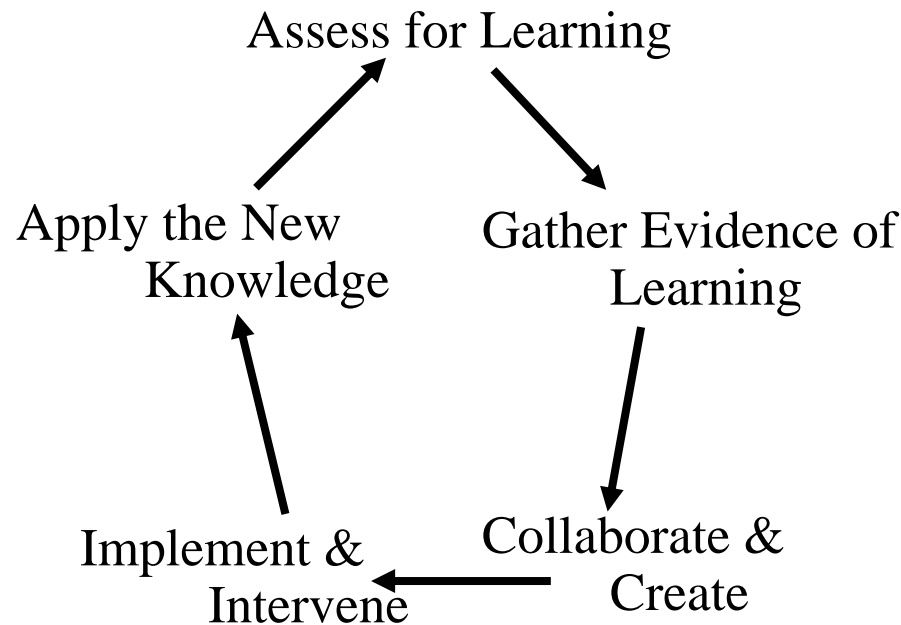
## Traditionally . . .

- ⊕ What happens is determined **by the teacher**.
- ⊕ What a teacher provides depends on the **practices adopted**, available resources, time allotted by the teacher.
- ⊕ What happens is students receive “**random**” or “**uneven**” support.

# Building Professional Learning Communities



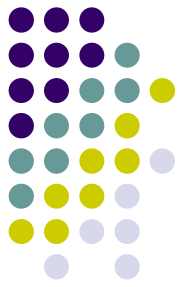
– How do they do it?





# PLCs – How do they do it?

1. Focused on, and committed to, student learning.
2. Collaborative culture where PLCs members have common goals.
3. Action Oriented where effectiveness is based upon results.
4. Committed to overcoming challenges and continual improvement.



# 1. PLCs ensure students learn

- ∞ PLCs adopt a clear, compelling, and collective vision.
  - This commitment supersedes personal preferences.
- ∞ Result-oriented goals determine a PLC's success.
  - How do you know when a student learns?
- ∞ PLCs focus their efforts measuring what is learned.
  - If it is not learned then it was not taught.
- ∞ PLC have a "plan B" for students requiring extra time and support.
  - What to do when a student does not learn?



## 2. PLCs work collaboratively

**Collaboration** (consensus) sets the team's direction.

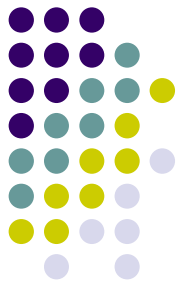
-- adopted curriculum = taught curriculum = learned curriculum.

PLCs use **common** formative assessments.

-- Results identify the strengths and weaknesses of the students and teachers.

PLCs do not delay when implementing new strategies.

-- Teachers engage in "collective inquiry", observe each other, bring new research into the conversation, etc. . . .



### 3. Action and results oriented

PLCs recognized that until you do something differently, there is no reason to expect change.

-- The right curriculum, the best training, and the easiest schedule are nice, but PLCs focus on what students learn.

PLCs immediately place in to practice the ideas that gain consensus.

-- "Learning by Doing" creates a deeper understanding of the idea.

PLCs look for evidence that verifies this new practice improves student achievement.

-- If PLCs cannot measure results, then it is not an effective practice.



## 4. Overcoming challenges = continual improvement.

### ✘ *Leaning for All vs. Teaching for All.*

-- Changing the way PLCs approach the profession requires accepting new definitions for teaching, assessment and collaboration.

### ✘ *Developing and Applying Shared Knowledge.*

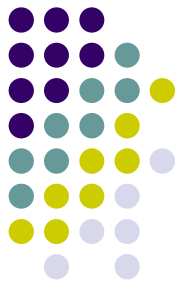
-- PLCs share the "lessons learned" from their efforts.

### ✘ *Transforming a School's Culture.*

-- Answering the question: "What will the PLC do when a student does not learn", transforms the priorities and culture of a school.

### ✘ *Sustaining focus on the goal.*

-- PLCs do not allow distracters to sway the PLCs momentum.



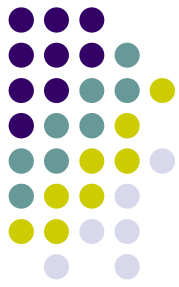
# PLCs in a nutshell

PLCs focus on one thing – **student learning.**

There is no hedging or ambiguity regarding this commitment. All kids will learn, pass, and graduate

**Do whatever it takes.**

# PLCs in a nutshell



- Determine the **essential outcomes**
- Use **results** to verify when students have acquired those essential outcomes.
- Have a **systematic, mandated, school-wide plan** when a student does not learn.
- PLCs pledge to **collaborate** and do **whatever it takes** to ensure all students learn.



# PLCs in a nutshell

**PLCs are committed to face objections, adversity, and anxiety.**

**Collaboration -- Decisions and actions must yield verifiable & improved learning to continue as a PLC priority.**

**Approach each day, each lesson and each student with the same philosophy.**

**– Do whatever it takes.**

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