Frequently asked questions

Q1. How do I start a PLC?

Use data to identify a particular issue or problem for a group of learners. Establish a group of participants to enquire into ways of overcoming this issue or problem. Identify a group facilitator. Agree a set of enquiry or research activities.

Q2. What is the role of the PLC facilitator?

 The PLC facilitator is critical to the success and sustainability of the PLC. They should: • provide appropriate levels of support and challenge for the PLC • ensure pace, momentum and enthusiasm are maintained • keep the PLC focused and on track • broker resources • manage links and networking.

Q3. What kind of data can I use?

Without using data you cannot gauge the impact of your PLC on learner outcomes. The type of data you should use to focus your school improvement can be found in the following: • State assessment reports, School improvement documents, Results from district assessments and classroom assessments. These include family of schools and comparative performance data for class/year group, subject and key indicators.

 Q4. Where do I access this data?

It is available in every school and is accessed via your administrators or School Leadership Team.

Q5. How large should a PLC group be?

Ideally there should be no more than six to eight participants in a PLC as this ensures effective contribution from all participants. Any less than three to four staff means there might not be sufficient depth and challenge within the team. Grade Level meetings can be used as a time to inquiry and plan as a part of a PLC.

Q6. Who leads/facilitates the PLC?

Any participant of the PLC could be the facilitator. It is not dependent on existing roles or structures within the school.

Q7. How do I measure impact?

The impact measures will relate directly to the particular focus or question for enquiry that the PLC is addressing. Initially, the impact will be in terms of changes in teaching/classroom practices. Subsequently, these changes in teaching classroom practices should lead to improved learning outcomes which can be measured. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected.

Q8. How long should a PLC last?

The life cycle of a PLC is determined by the depth of enquiry that the team is expected to undertake but usually lasts no more than a year as each year the cohort of students change and by association the issue/focus relating to those learners will also change.

Q9. What happens in PLC meetings? The facilitator keeps the meeting to task. Each participant reports to the PLC on progress made. Opportunities are provided to discuss specific issues or difficulties. Agreement is reached on what needs to be done prior to the next meeting. GLM can be places where planning and inquiry supports the plan of the PLC.

Q10. How do you share outcomes?

This can take a variety of formats, including reporting to administrators, school leadership team, district leadership and written reports.

Q11. What if the PLC goes off at a tangent?

This is where the role of the facilitator is crucial to ensure that the PLC team remains focused and enthused.

Q12. What if the question for enquiry is too broad?

If the focus is too broad then the group has to continually refine at Phase 2 until it is precise enough for the group to address. So, for example, improving literacy is too broad and presents too big a task for a PLC.