

A group of four people (three men and one woman) are sitting around a light-colored wooden table in a meeting room. They are engaged in a discussion. The man on the left is wearing a blue sweater. The man in the center is wearing a patterned sweater and glasses, gesturing with his hands. The man on the right is wearing a red and black plaid shirt, resting his chin on his hand. The woman on the far right is wearing a grey sweater and has a pink flower in her hair. The table has papers, a water bottle, and a glass on it. The background shows a computer monitor and a window with blinds.

The PLC + Activator Guide

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Content Purpose/Learning Intention

Today I will....

receive an introduction to the PLC+ Activator's Guide and what it means to be an activator.

So I can....

determine the actions and behaviors that are critical to guiding my PLC+Team.

Success Criteria

I know I have it when I am able to answer three key questions about the role of an activator in a PLC+ Team.

- What does my role as an activator look like while doing the work of PLC?
- What professional learning do I need to step into that role?
- How will I use this role and my own professional learning as catalysts for accelerating my colleagues

Synthesis Task

- When you think of an effective PLC, what comes to your mind? Think about your past experiences with being a part of a PLC.
- When you are done, share your thoughts with the group.



PLC+ Self- Assessment



As an activator, you will engage in a self-assessment about your current PLC.



Rate your team from 1 to 4 for each of the six characteristics that describe an effective PLC.

Six Characteristics of an Effective PLC

- **Structural Condition:** Our PLC has established times that we are able to meet. Schedules are in place that support collaboration and diminish isolation and resources are available if needed
- **Supportive Relational Conditions:** There is trust and respect in place within our PLC that provides the basis for giving and accepting feedback in order to work toward improvement.

Current Rating

4 3 2 1



Six Characteristics of an Effective PLC

- **Shared Values and Vision:** Members of the team have the same goal. They have shared beliefs about student learning and the ability of team members to impact student learning.
- **Intentional Collective Learning:** Our PLC engages in discourse and reflection around sharing practices, knowledge, and skills to impact the growth and achievement of our students. We find ways to learn from each other or learn together

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Six Characteristics of an Effective PLC

- **Peers Supporting Peers:** Our PLC supports lifting each other up? We celebrate individual and group successes. We observe one another while engaged in practice to help others strengthen their practice.
- **Shared and Supportive Leadership:** Power, authority, and decision making are shared and encouraged between teachers and building leaders. There is a positive relationship among administrators and teachers in the school, where all staff members grow professionally as they work toward the same goal.

Current Rating

4 3 2 1



A NOT So Effective Use of PLC Time

-
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv3WlaA7Uko>



PLC Time!

PLC's are:

- A time where all perspectives, questions, and anxieties are valued.
- For problem-solving with a solutions-based focus.
- For some venting, without lamenting!
- For collective teacher efficacy.
- Student-centered.
- Data and action-based.

PLC's are NOT:

- Defensive
- For avoidance of decisions.
- For individual efficacy.
- Teacher-centered.
- For lamenting

The Link between Learning and Teaching

Student Learning

- What is it that we want students to learn?
- How will we know if each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
- How can we enrich or extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

Teacher Practice

- What are the desired outcomes?
- What worked in our delivery of instruction?
- What didn't work?
- Why?
- Were the decisions that led to a learning plan correct or flawed?

“

Imagine a hospital that analyzed only patient outcomes and never queried the medical procedure used. There is a link between learning and teaching, and to examine only one side of the equation limits our ability as educators to take action. ”

D. Nagel, J. Almoarode, D. Fisher, N. Fisher & K. Flories (2020).

PLC + Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design

The Five Guiding Questions of the PLC +

1. Where are we going?



2. Where are we now?



3. How do we move learning forward?



4. What did we learn today?



5. Who benefited and who did not benefit?

The Four Crosscutting Values



Equity

Equity of access and opportunity for learning at every meeting.



Activation

Ensure that activation of the dialogue is provoked by the five questions leading to PLC acceleration are not hindered.



High Expectations

Develop learning experiences that make our expectations for learning clear to all students.



Individual and Collective Efficacy

Leverage our individual efficacy into collective teacher efficacy.

Challenges!

*Depends on how
the team...*



Develops and utilizes norms and protocols



Determine foci for its meetings (and what to do when these do not fit with all team members' desires)

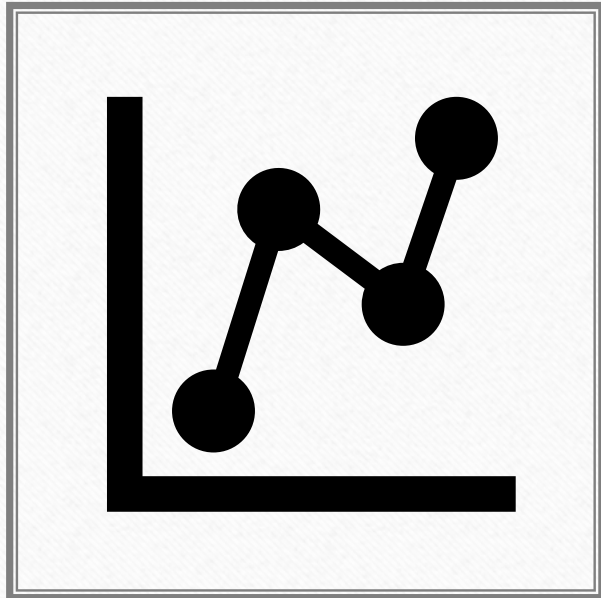


Engages in some of the **hard conversations** on topics such as race, equity, and other issues of justice and conscience.

The Activator Role

- The team leader... With an understanding that everyone on the team can serve as the activator at certain times to ensure learning is moving forward for both the adults and the students.
- Keep the group focused on what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do as articulated by state standards.
- Ensure classroom strategies used are evidence-based and appropriate for students.

The Activator Role cont...



- Lead the team to look at data for **IMPACT!**
- Lead the team to collaboratively look at **Growth** versus **Achievement**. Which learners are not benefiting from the instruction?

What Effective Activators DO!

Effective PLC Activators:

1. Have high credibility with their colleagues and their students
2. Can lead adults in their learning process
3. Have the ability to effectively challenge the team members, their colleagues, and themselves.
4. Truly believe that all students and all teachers can learn at high levels.
5. Demonstrate resilience in time of challenge.

What Effective Activators DO, cont...

Effective PLC Activators:

Activate collaborative maturity

Ensure fidelity to (but not rigidity of) the PLC+ process



9 Ways to Build Collective Maturity

- Be prepared
- Provide time for people to let it out!
- Establish routines and authentically stick to them
- Share leadership and ownership of meetings
- Be the catalyst!
- Being businesslike does not mean bring stuffy
- Be comfortable with wait time
- Be a servant leader
- Take your job, not yourself, seriously!

Facilitation v. *Activation*

"All activators are great collaborators, but not all collaborators are activators by default!"

The 5 Qualities of a Good Activator



CLARITY



CONSCIOUSNESS



COMPETENCE



CONFIDENCE



CREDIBILITY

Establishing Roles and Developing Team Cohesion

Thriving organizations share the following:

- They have an identified and agreed upon set of core values
- They leverage those core values in the direction of a noble cause
- They identify clear outcomes that will have a significant impact
- They recognize and acknowledge assets within the organization
- They map out a plan for "what to do"

Support Team Cohesion

SUPPORTING TEAM COHESION

As we pointed out at the beginning of this part of the guide, research on cohesive teams suggests the need for five different things. Recall them and fill in the missing information here using terminology linked to PLC+.

1. They have an identified and agreed upon _____.
2. They leverage those _____ in the direction of a _____ cause.
3. They identify clear _____ that will have a significant impact.
4. They recognize and acknowledge _____.
5. They map out a _____.

Possible Team Roles



Team Activator



Engaged Participant/s



Note-Taker



Data Technician



Instructional Researcher



Timekeeper



Data Wall Curator

PLC Norms and Protocols

- **Operating Norms**: Nonnegotiable norms outlining the **HOW** for all PLC members.
- **Process Norms**: Behaviors developed for consistent practice by team members as they work through the 5 guiding questions.
- Display the agreed upon basics of **HOW** the PLC+ will carry out the **WHY**.
- Create a list of Process Norms during your first meeting. Start them with "We will..." Statements.

Utilizing Authentic Instructional Protocols



These are the **WHAT** of the PLC+. The **WHAT** is driven by the how and why.



It is about finding the entry point and applicable tools that will work most effectively with your team.



Examples: What will you say in your script? How will your room be setup for PLC meetings?

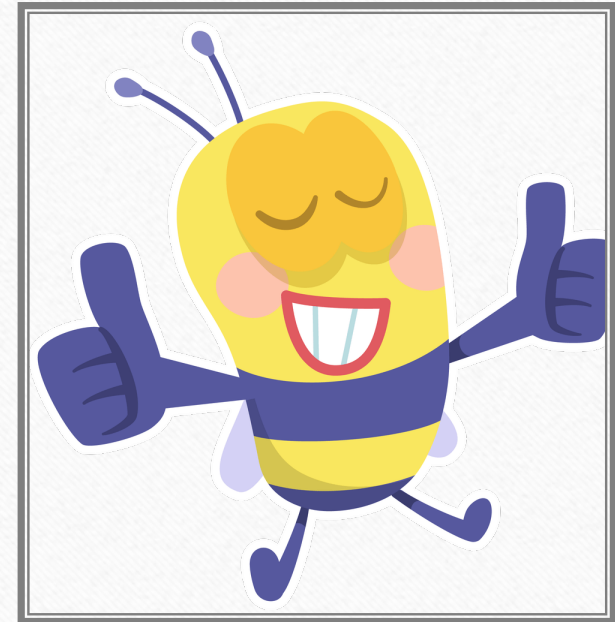
Social & Emotional Check-Ins

- PLC teams consist of human beings!
- Have a quick formal or informal routine that allows for check-ins and resets.

Example: One person asks the person next to him/her:

How are you feeling today? What is your goal for today's meeting? Who can help you with that?

Ask if they need a check-in after the meeting and let them know you care, and you are here when needed.



Activating the 5 Essential Questions and 4 Crosscutting values of the PLC+

Credibility of the Activator requires that he/she:

- Demonstrate competence by having a strong understanding of the PLC Framework and the four crosscutting values
- Embody trust, exercise discretion, and respect confidentiality
- Be accessible and relatable
- Exude dynamism and communicate enthusiasm!



#1 Where are we going?

This question is the launching point for every PLC. **It focuses on the intentions for learning!**

As a team, clearly define your school's learning intentions, success criteria, and learning progressions.

Reflect as a group: List potential challenges, possible reasons for the challenges, ways to address/overcome the challenges, and sentence starters and questions

#2 Where are we now?

PLC teams now begin to engage in initial assessment of student learning through work samples, student interviews, and pre-assessments.

Avoid bias and focus on what students do not know.

Reflect as a group: List potential challenges, possible reasons for the challenges, ways to address/overcome the challenges, and sentence starters and questions

#3 How do we move learning forward?



Based on the data, which evidence-based strategies/practices will you use to instruct the student?



Be intentional about what will work best to move learning forward.



Will it require that you need more professional development?



Reflect as a group: List potential challenges, possible reasons for the challenges, ways to address/overcome the challenges, and sentence starters and questions

#4 What did we learn today?



Collaborative teams look at evidence of learning, reflect on that aggregated and disaggregated evidence of learning, and then move forward with the evidence.



Answer this question: Who did and did not benefit from instruction?



Reflect as a group: List potential challenges, possible reasons for the challenges, ways to address/overcome the challenges, and sentence starters and questions

#5 Who benefited and who did not benefit?



Truthfully look at the learning intentions, success criteria, and learning progressions. Who benefited.



Now confront the evidence that suggests those who did not benefit from the instruction. What are the commonalities? Was the instruction of the same quality?



Reflect as a group: List potential challenges, possible reasons for the challenges, ways to address/overcome the challenges, and sentence starters and questions.

The Nuts and Bolts of the PLC+



Scheduling meetings- know what question the team is emphasizing and stay focused.



Consider how much time is allotted for the meeting and plan accordingly.



Note the desired outcomes and products for that time segment.



Adapt the framework to work within your limitations.



Allow time for reflection.



Using the PLC+ Playbook Modules your PD facilitator will create a focus guide for professional development throughout the year.

Develop and Assessment Calendar

- Assessment **of** learning: Common formative assessments, standardized assessments
- Assessments **as** learning: Think-pair-share, reciprocal teaching.
- Assessment **for** learning: exit tickets, three-minute writing samples.

Activators can be involved in this schoolwide decision.

Develop and Assessment Calendar Continued...

- Map out external or high-stakes assessment: FSA, EOC
- Map our local/district assessments
- Identify windows for assessments
- List dates for assessment evidence to be returned to PLC groups
- Identify PLC determined assessments- curricular, unit, chapter

Activate a High-Impact & High-Functioning PLC+

Effective teams value the following:

- Collaboration
- Shared leadership
- Goal setting and attainment
- Rigorous discourse
- Continuous improvement



What if...
Members
Do Not
Get
Along?



Approach the PLC members
individually



Refocus the purpose



Clear the air!!

What if...We
Are Grouped
Together but
Work
Independently
on Teaching &
Learning?



Capitalize on successes



Discuss the WHAT and WHY
of interdependence



Model

What
if...No One
Steps Up
to Activate
the Work
of the
PLC?



Solicit a friend



Define Expectations



Reduce outside committment

What
if...the
PLC is
Ineffective
at
Activating
Dialogue?

Gradual Release

Rotate responsibility
strategically

Build capacity

What if...the
Focus is on
"Getting it
Done" and
Professional
Learning is
Not Valued?



Shift the focus to the students



Don't focus on teacher
dilemmas



Be curious and courageous-
keep it research-based

What if...the
PLC
Members
Believe They
Have No
Authority to
Make
Needed
Decisions?



Seek the Go-Ahead



Keep brainstorming ideas



Recognize, re-strategize, and
re-power

What if...the
PLC Does
Not Agree
on the
Professional
Learning in
the
Framework?



Toss the jargon, pose the questions- sometimes word choice matters



Unpack the meaning of the terminology



Take the paperwork pledge- keep it minimal

What if...the
PLC Focuses
on Teaching
and Learning
Approaches
That Will
Result in
Minimal
Impact on
Learning?



START WITH
DATA



DETERMINE
URGENCY



PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

What
if...the PLC
has
Members
Who Do
Not Want
to Change?



Scrap consensus



Connect goals with real work



Think big, start small

What if...the
PLC is
Skeptical of
Assessments
and Their
Data?



Assessment of, for , and as Learning! Assessment can be used in many ways.



Professional Development



Time Management- assess without losing too much instructional time

What if...the
PLC
Engages in
Dialogue
That is
Superficial
or Focuses
on Blame or
Excuses?



Paraphrase and question



Validate and verify



Clear focus on the outcome

What if...
the PLC
Meetings
are
Mandatory,
not
Voluntary?



Distinguish the act of resistance from the person- they may feel threatened, but remember, it is not about you as the Activator.



Acknowledge and diffuse



Discover a solution, don't defend one.

What if... the
PLC has a
Misalignment
Between
Intentions
and Actions?



Create and actionable plan



Codesign a lesson



Model and debrief

What if... PLC
Members Work in
Isolation and
Have Troubles
Establishing
Interdependence?

- Search for Commonalities versus Differences-
some members present their challenges, while
others act as consultants

Activating Conversations Focused on Equity

Glenn Singleton (2014) provides a protocol with four guiding considerations:

- Stay engaged-don't check out when conversations get difficult
- Experience discomfort
- Speak your truth- feel safe being honest
- Expect and accept non-closure



The End.

Click to add text



Write

References:

D. Nagel, J. Almoarode, D. Fisher, N. Fisher & K. Flories (2020).
The PLC+ Activator's Guide. Corwin. Thousand Oaks, C.A.

A Not So Effective Use of PLC

Time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv3WlaA7Uko>
