Professional Learning Communities

Practical Suggestions

Adapted from Changing Classroom Practice by Dylan Wiliam

* Plan for your professional learning community (PLC) to run for at least two years.
* Meet monthly for at least 75 minutes- ideally two hours. Monthly meetings allow instructors enough time to try out new ideas in courses without losing momentum.
* Make detailed, modest, individual action plans at the first PLC meeting and revise action plans based on evidence collected and input from colleagues.
  + Be careful about trying to change too many things at once. Instructors who concentrate on making a small number of changes and on really integrating them into their practice make more progress.
* Choose a facilitator for each meeting and rotate the job regularly. The facilitator ensures the meetings happen, there’s a time and place to meet, and that the agenda or protocol is followed.
* Use a meeting agenda or protocol that includes the following elements:
  + Introduction: Instructors agree on the aims of the meeting and get ready to focus on the agenda. Each instructor is allowed time to shift gears from the school day.
  + How’s It Going: Each instructor gives a summary of what he or she has tried to achieve in the previous month and receives support from the group in taking his or her plans forward. It is crucial that *everyone* reports back at *every* meeting; this practice gives all participants an incentive to work on their plans so they will have something to talk about.
  + New Learning OR Looking at Student Work OR Writing Assessment Tasks: This segment of the meeting is intended to provide a stimulus for work for the upcoming month. Possible activities for this segment:

1. Read an article to better understand some aspect of formative assessment or research student misconceptions about an upcoming concept in a course.
2. Look at student work collected by an instructor to better understand student thinking about a targeted idea.
3. Collaboratively write diagnostic questions and provide feedback to one another about the quality of the questions.

* Personal Action Planning: Each instructor revises action plan based on new learning and/ or input from PLC members and shares revised plan with PLC.
* Review of Meeting: PLC members review meeting to ensure goals of meeting were met and make plans for the following month.