PLC’s: How to Sustain Over the Years

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What is a PLC?

“A Professional Learning Community is a group of educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLC’s operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators."

-Richard DuFour
Why We Started PLCs

• Invited by our Principal to investigate PLCs
• Statewide Initiatives Starting
• School Climate
• Accountability
• Wasn’t forced by Administration, but they were on the team
• Increase collaboration of our staff
Leadership Team

- Team has remained constant (with only a few changes) over the 7 years
- Good open communication
- Supportive
- Meet during the summer
  - Set goals and plan for the year
- Meet twice a month
  - Prepare PLC agendas, discuss significant student and staff topics
Group Composition

- Jr High/High School:
  - 5 to 6 groups
  - Leader in each group
  - 4 to 6 staff members in each group
  - Not departmentalized
  - Changes yearly
  - Goal focused
Examples of Goals & Incentives in HS

- **Year 1 Goals (2011-12):** Understand student data, Research “No Zero policy,” Assessments, Positive parent involvement, Evaluate curriculum
- **Year 2 Goals (2012-13):** Curriculum, School Learning Community
- **Year 3 Goals (2013-14):** Best practices, School culture
- **Year 4 Goals (2014-15):** Student/staff Incentives/School Moral, Instructional Goals
- **Year 5 Goals (2015-2016):** Technology, Digital Citizenship
- **Year 6 Goals (2016-2017):** Book study *What Great Teachers Do Differently* (Todd Whitaker)
- **Year 7 Goals (2017-2018):** Helping You, Help Yourself
Outcomes of PLCs

- Increased Student Learning
  - Caution List
  - Hawk Plans
  - Honor Roll Rewards
  - Hawk Time
  - Homework Lunch
  - Technology Integration
  - Incentives

- Staff Cohesiveness
  - Invested, involved
  - Incentives, morale

- Report Card
  - Checkmarks
Sustaining Positive PLC’s

• Starts with our leadership team being excited and invested
  o Summer workshops- FIRST Conference
    • Motivational speakers
    • Practical and tangible initiatives
    • Opportunity to collaborate as a team and set goals for upcoming year

• Manny Scott
Setting Goals

• Goals based on needs and wants of our staff and students
  o New staff- revisit purpose of our PLC’s
  o Student devices- technology updates
  o Rejuvenate entire staff
• Mix of some new and some prior goals
Groups

• Important to change up groups
  o Get to know all staff members well
  o Based on strengths and weaknesses of our staff to create differentiated groups
  o Not departmentalized so staff can share expertise
  o Support each other in shared experiences
  o ALL on the same page

  • Example: GRIT discussions and building positive relationships with students
Staff Input

• Leadership team values staff input and ideas
  o End of year survey
  o Incorporate new ideas- Career Fair

• Groups take ownership of presenting lessons/ideas to entire staff
  o One group per month- plan activity/lesson based on our theme for the year and then present during PLC
CELEBRATIONS!!!

- Focused on student and staff success
  - Student
    - Honor Roll
    - Community Service Day
    - Incentives
      - Pay It Forward, Paid Day Off, Donut Days, Vocabulary/Trivia Super Bowl
  - Staff
    - P.O.P. (Power of Positivity) Moments to start every PLC
    - Staff breakfast
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