

BATAVIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
*Educating students today to meet
the challenges of tomorrow* **District 101**

To: Board of Education
From: Batavia High School Staff
Date: February 9, 2010
Subject: Professional Learning Communities Update

Policy Reference: 6:60 Curriculum Content
6:282 Articulation

Agenda Item: Professional Learning Community Update

Item Type: Consent Action **Information** Discussion

Recommendation:

Background Information:

On April 14th, 2009, the Board of Education voted to support a Batavia High School proposal to adopt a Professional Learning Community (PLC) school improvement model. The proposal included a late start Thursday in which the teachers would meet to clarify essential outcomes, develop common assessments, establish targets and benchmarks, analyze assessment results, and plan interventions for the students in their courses. It was also proposed that during this late start time, students would be given the opportunity to participate in a variety of supervised activities. The following report has been prepared with the purpose of updating the Board and the community on the progress of the PLC initiative.

Three years ago, the staff of Batavia High School began looking at the professional learning community (PLC) model as a result of the district's strategic plan. Once this model was identified as a means of continuous improvement that would improve student achievement, the staff studied the model and the processes involved in forming and sustaining productive learning communities, obtained staff buy-in, and provided staff with the key skills they would need to actively participate in a professional learning community.

With the start of the 2009-2010 school year, Batavia High School began another phase of the PLC process, implementation. The purpose of this report is to update the members of the Board of Education and the community on the progress of the PLC initiative.

Student Resource Time

While teachers are working in their PLCs each Thursday during the late start, about 40% (average of 742 students each week) of the student body takes advantage of the time and resources of the high school in the following resource areas:

- Cafeteria for breakfast, socializing, and group study
- LRC/Computer Labs for individual and collaborative study
- Gym for basket ball and PE make-ups
- Tutoring by peer tutors and NHS students
- Test Make-up
- Social work groups
- Counseling and Advising programs for students and parents
- Key Train practice for the Work Keys test (PSAE)
- Student-led Groups
 - Math Club
 - Student Council
 - Club Leaders Meetings
 - Student Athletic Board

In October 2009, 64 students were surveyed about their use and understanding of Late Start Thursday Resource Time. Students from three different grade levels were asked a variety of questions to gauge students' attitudes regarding PLCs.

The students surveyed were unanimously pleased with the opportunities offered by the adjusted schedule. Many students report coming to school early on Thursdays to take advantage of the resource time: students are attending workshops provided by the Counseling and Advising Office, meeting friends for breakfast, and using the resource time for working in the library or catching up on homework. More students are eating breakfast on Thursdays than on other days of the week. Students feel more rested and alert on Thursdays and more relaxed on Wednesday evenings.

Some students had suggestions for additional resource time offerings, including weight room access, and junior/senior privileges such as the ability to move among resource offerings.

Professional Learning Communities

According to a January 2010 survey of high school staff, 97% of staff report that the PLC time will produce a product or service that will be of benefit to student achievement; similarly, 94% of staff report that the PLC model is working for them.

SMART Goals

The faculty at Batavia High School has developed goals within their respective PLC teams. At the outset, they have been using a SMART Goal Tree format. This format is designed to guide their thinking toward achievement-centered goals and to ensure that all the components of a clear goal are included.

Some training early in the semester helped the staff begin the crucial goal-writing process. Since that time, the school improvement team have offered workshops during flexible institute hours and provided individual coaching during PLC time for teams who need support. This coaching model will continue through the school year and until all our PLC goal statements reflect a focus on student achievement.

Below, please find a sampling of some of the goals submitted by various PLC teams.

Team	Goal
Freshman Science	<p>Results Goal: Improve the overall performance on the Long Range Weather Watch Report</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper interpretations of data • Follows all graphing rules • Displays high level of critical thinking skills <p>Measures: Student Performance and Overall Evaluation on the Rubric</p> <p>Target: 80% average for all sections of Freshman Science on Weather Watch Reports.</p>
Applied Learning - Business	<p>Results Goal: Students will improve their knowledge of the stock market</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a stock market table • calculate gain/loss of a stock • calculate stockbroker commission <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stock market IQ test/ SMG pretest • record data for SMG • record data for your own stock purchases • activity 2-gain/loss activity sheet • activity 3- % change in stock price • activity 4- investment group data • activity 1 worksheet-making and losing \$\$ in the stock market <p>Targets: 100% Students will earn a grade 70% on the Ch. 18 Stock test</p>
Geometry	<p>Results Goal: Students will gain and improve their knowledge of 3-D figures</p> <p>Indicators: Calculations of lateral area, surface area, and volume for 3-D figures</p> <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Unit 1, Unit 2, and Final Exams • Chapter tests and quizzes • Informal assessments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past PSAE scores <p>Targets: 85% of students will score 70% or better on geometry score for PSAE</p>
English - Reading	<p>SMART goal: All students will improve reading inferential skills in fiction and non-fiction texts after receiving explicit instruction of basic inferential skills and will be assessed using the EXPLORE test, unit tests and quizzes, and formative assessments to be determined at a later date and time; students will show improvement of 15-17% on the teacher administered EXPLORE test</p> <p>Results Goal: Improve student inferential skills in fiction and non-fiction texts</p> <p>Indicators: All students will infer meaning through fiction and non-fiction using explicit instruction of basic inferential skills.</p> <p>Measures: EXPLORE, tests, quizzes, formative assessments (TBD)</p> <p>Targets: Students will score 15-17% higher on the inferential questions from the teacher-administered (PLC specific) EXPLORE test</p>
Foreign-Language	<p>Results Goal Students will improve their ability to communicate spontaneously.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respond to impromptu questions and situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal assessments (Speaking and Writing) • Formal and informal observations in the language lab • Formal and informal observations in the classroom Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of students will pass the final speaking and writing exam. • Students will be able to convey a complete idea 70% of the time in spontaneous informal conversation. (lab and classroom) • Students will be able to correctly use learned grammar 70% of the time in formal speaking observations/ activities and 75% of the time in writing. (Lab and classroom) 2. Utilize appropriate/learned vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal assessments (Speaking and Writing) • Informal Teacher observations • Classroom/ Language lab Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of the students will be able to pass the vocabulary and writing sections of the final exam. • 95% of students will be able to incorporate learned vocabulary to pass the speaking section of the final exam. • Students will be able to correctly use learned vocabulary 70% of the time in informal speaking observations/activities and 75% of the time in writing. (lab and classroom) 3. Increase comfort level while communicating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student survey • Informal teacher observations (Classroom/ Language Lab) Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of students respond at adequate or high level of comfort at communicating by the end of the course. • 90% of students will project an adequate or high level of comfort in writing. (teacher observation and lab) • 85% of students will project an adequate or high level of comfort in speaking. (teacher observation and lab)

Applied Learning-Foods and Nutrition	Results Goals: Improve scores on the Nutrition portion of the midterm exam. Indicators: Identify food groups associated with MyPyramid. Determine the amount of food recommended by MyPyramid. Analyze individual eating habits and physical activity levels. Measures: Food Record Food Recommendation Worksheet Unit Test Term Exam Targets: 100 percent of students will achieve 75 percent or higher on the midterm exam
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We acknowledge that our work in this area is in its infancy. In a recent survey, several teams requested more support in goal writing and in data analysis. Professional development in these areas will continue to be available for teachers as we learn and improve through the PLC model.

PLC Continuum

One of the main internal measures of the health and growth of PLC processes is the PLC Continuum. The seven characteristics of successful PLCs were measured by each department at the end of the 2008-2009 school year as baseline data. A subsequent rating was taken in January 2010 and is based on department consensus. Significant growth was noted in the first semester of PLC implementation.

The largest areas of growth focused on building a collaborative culture: collaborative teams of teachers focus on issues that directly impact student learning and responding to conflict in a PLC.

Areas for future focus: assessing whether students have learned the essential curriculum and systematic interventions ensure students receive additional time and support for learning.

Since the school and staff are in the first stages of implementation, the growth in the collaborative culture is a strong indicator of building a strong foundation for continued growth in the other key areas of effective PLCs.

(See attached for more information, including the descriptors, baseline and current data)

Other Considerations and Measures

In making the change to the late start, two concerns were expressed by staff, the effect on attendance and the reductions in class time.

Attendance patterns have not changed as a result of the late start. The attendance rate for M-W and F was 96% when examined from August to December and the Thursday attendance rate was 96.5%.

To preserve class time, the following activities, which were traditionally held during class time were moved to the late start to preserve instructional time:

- **Freshmen Orientation**
- **Student Athletic Board meetings**
- **Student Council Meetings**
- **Counseling presentations**
- **Senior picture**
- **Student Photos**

The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Clarity Regarding What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do</p>	<p>There has been little effort to establish a common curriculum for students. Teachers are free to determine what they will teach and how long they will teach it.</p>	<p>District leaders have established curriculum guides that attempt to align the district curriculum with state standards. Representative teachers may have assisted in developing the curriculum guides. The materials have been distributed to each school, but there is no process to determine whether the designated curriculum is actually being taught.</p>	<p>Teachers have worked with colleagues to review state standards and district curriculum guides. They have attempted to clarify the meaning of the standards, establish pacing guides, and identify strategies for teaching the content effectively.</p>	<p>Teachers have worked in collaborative teams to build shared knowledge regarding state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement, and expectations of the next course or grade level. As a result of this collective inquiry, teachers have established the essential learning for each unit of instruction and are committed to instruct their students in the essential learning according to the team's agreed-upon pacing guide. They know the criteria they will use in judging the quality of student work, and they practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. They demonstrate a high level of commitment to the essential curriculum, to their students, and to their teammates.</p>



Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Assessing Whether Students Have Learned the Essential Curriculum</p>	<p>Each teacher creates the assessments he or she will use to monitor student learning. Assessments may vary widely in format and rigor from one teacher to another. The assessments are used primarily to assign grades rather than to inform teacher and student practice. State or provincial tests are administered in the school, but teachers pay little attention to the results.</p>	<p>District officials analyze the results of state and provincial tests and report the results to each school. Principals are expected to work with staff to improve upon the results. The district may also administer district-level assessments in core curricular areas. These assessments have been created by key central office personnel, by representative teachers serving on district committees, or by testing companies who have sold their services to the district. Classroom teachers typically feel little commitment to the assessments and pay little attention to the results.</p>	<p>Teachers have worked together to analyze results from state and district tests and to develop improvement strategies to apply in their classrooms. They have discussed how to assess student learning on a consistent and equitable basis. Parameters are established for assessments, and individual teachers are asked to honor those parameters as they create tests for their students. Teachers of the same course or grade level may create a common final exam to help identify strengths and weaknesses in their program.</p>	<p>Every teacher has worked with colleagues to develop a series of common, formative assessments that are aligned with state or provincial standards and district curriculum guides. The teams have established the specific proficiency standards each student must achieve on each skill. The team administers common assessments multiple times throughout the school year and analyzes the results together. Team members then use the results to inform and improve their individual and collective practice, to identify students who need additional time and support for learning, and to help students monitor their own progress toward agreed-upon standards.</p>



The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Systematic Interventions Ensure Students Receive Additional Time and Support for Learning</p>	<p>There is no systematic plan either to monitor student achievement on a timely basis or to respond to students who are not learning with additional time and support. What happens when students experience difficulty in learning will depend entirely upon the teacher to whom they are assigned.</p>	<p>The school has created opportunities for students to receive additional time and support for learning before and after school. Students are invited rather than required to get this support. Many of the students who are most in need of help choose not to pursue it.</p>	<p>The school has begun a program of providing time and support for learning within the school day, but unwillingness to deviate from the traditional schedule is limiting the effectiveness of the program. The staff has retained its traditional 9-week grading periods, and it is difficult to determine which students need additional time and support until the end of the first quarter. Additional support is only offered at a specific time of the day or week (for example, over the lunch period or only on Wednesdays) and the school is experiencing difficulty in serving all the students who need help during the limited time allotted.</p>	<p>The school has a highly coordinated, sequential system in place. The system is proactive: it identifies and makes plans for students to receive extra support even before they enroll. The achievement of each student is monitored on a timely basis. Students who experience difficulty are required, rather than invited, to put in extra time and utilize extra support. The plan is multi-layered. If the current level of support is not sufficient, there are additional levels of increased time and support. Most importantly, all students are guaranteed access to this systematic intervention regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.</p>



The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>A Focus on Results</p>	<p>There are no processes to use results as a tool for improvement. Teachers fall into a predictable pattern: They teach, they test, they hope for the best, and then they move on to the next unit.</p>	<p>District leaders analyze results from high-stakes summative tests such as state and provincial examinations. Data are shared with each school, and principals and teachers are encouraged to review the results and address weaknesses as part of their school improvement plan.</p>	<p>The school has created a specific process to bring together collaborative teams of teachers several times throughout the year to analyze results from common formative assessments. Teams identify areas of concern and discuss strategies for improving the collective results. Assessments are also used to identify students who are experiencing difficulty, and the school creates systems to provide those students with additional time and support for learning.</p>	<p>Collaborative teams of teachers regard ongoing analysis of results as a critical element in the teaching and learning process. They are hungry for information on student learning and gather and analyze evidence from a variety of sources. Results from their common formative assessments are compared to results from state and provincial assessments to validate the effectiveness of their local assessments. Teachers use results to identify strengths and weaknesses in their individual practice, to help each other address areas of concern, and to improve their effectiveness in helping all students learn. Strategically linked SMART goals drive the work of each collaborative team. Analysis of the performance of individual students enables the team and school to create efficient and timely interventions. Improved results and achievement of goals are the basis for a culture of celebration within classrooms, the school, and the district.</p>



The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Collaborative Teams of Teachers Focus on Issues That Directly Impact Student Learning</p>	<p>There is no systematic plan in place to assign staff members to teams or provide them with time to collaborate. Teachers work in isolation with little awareness of the strategies, methods, or materials used by their colleagues.</p>	<p>Some structures have been put into place for teachers who may be interested in collaborating. Teachers are encouraged but not required to participate. Topics tend to focus on matters other than classroom instruction and student learning.</p>	<p>Time has been provided during the contractual day for teachers to work together in teams on a regular basis (at least once a week). Guidelines have been established in an effort to ensure staff members use collaborative time to address topics that will impact instruction. Teams are attempting to develop positive relationships and implement specific procedures, but they may not be convinced the collaborative team process is beneficial. Leaders of the school are seeking ways to monitor the effectiveness of the teams.</p>	<p>Self-directed teams represent the primary engine of continuous improvement in the school. Team members are skillful in advocacy and inquiry, hold each other accountable for honoring the commitments they have made to one another, consistently focus on the issues that are most significant in improving student achievement, and set specific measurable goals to monitor improvement. The collaborative team process serves as a powerful form of job-embedded staff development, helping both individual members and the team in general become more effective in helping students learn at high levels. Staff members consider their collaborative culture vital to the effectiveness of their school.</p>



The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Creating a Focus on Results That Impacts Schools, Teams, and Teachers</p>	<p>There is no effort to establish specific district goals intended to impact the direction of each school. The district reacts to problems as they arise and does little to either focus on the future or promote continuous improvement.</p>	<p>The district establishes multiple long-range goals as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process. Schools may create annual school improvement plans in response to district requirements, but those plans have little impact upon classroom practices.</p>	<p>The district has identified a few key goals. Every school then adopts goals designed to help the district achieve its targets. Every collaborative team in every school adopts SMART goals specifically aligned with its school goals. A process is in place to monitor each team's progress throughout the year.</p>	<p>Educators throughout the district have a results orientation. Collaborative teams of teachers establish both annual goals and a series of short-term goals to monitor their progress. They create specific action plans to achieve goals and clarify the evidence they will gather to assess the impact of their plans. This tangible evidence of results guides the work of teams as part of a continuous improvement process. Each member understands the goals of the team, how those goals relate to school and district goals, and how he or she can contribute to achieving the goals.</p>



The Professional Learning Community Continuum

Element of a PLC	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
<p>Responding to Conflict in a PLC</p>	<p>People react to conflict with classic flight or fight responses. Most staff members withdraw from interactions in order to avoid those they find disagreeable. Others are perpetually at war in acrimonious, unproductive arguments that never seem to get resolved. People seem more interested in winning arguments than in resolving differences. Groups tend to regard each other as adversaries.</p>	<p>School and district leaders take steps to resolve conflict as quickly as possible. Addressing conflict is viewed as an administrative responsibility. The primary objective of administrators in addressing disputes is to restore the peace.</p>	<p>Staff members have created norms or protocols to help them identify and address the underlying issues causing conflict. Members are encouraged to explore their positions and the fundamental assumptions that have led them to their positions. They attempt to use a few key, guiding principles to assist them in coming to closure.</p>	<p>Staff members view conflict as a source of creative energy and an opportunity for building shared knowledge. They create specific strategies for exploring one another's thinking, and they make a conscious effort to understand as well as to be understood. They seek ways to test competing assumptions through action research and are willing to re-think their position when research, data, and information contradict their suppositions. Because they have found common ground on their purpose and priorities, they are able to approach disagreements with high levels of trust and an assumption of good intentions on the part of all members.</p>



	English	PE	ApLearn	Math	Science	SocSt	For Lang	SpEd	C&A	Music	Average
Clarity Regarding What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.27
Assessing Whether Students Have Learned the Essential	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	1	1.55
Systematic Interventions Ensure Students Receive Additional Time and Support for Learning	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1.82
Collaborative Teams of Teachers Focus on Issues That Directly Impact Student Learning	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1.45
Creating a Focus on Results That Impacts Schools, Teams, and Teachers	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1.82
A Focus on Results	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1.36
Responding to Conflict in a PLC	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1.45
Dept Av.	1.86	1.29	1.29	2.00	1.57	2.43	1.86	1.43	1.57	1.29	1.68

	English	PE	ApLearn	Math	Science	Soc St	For Lang	SpEd	C&A	Music	Averages	Gain/Loss
Clarity Regarding What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do	3	2	2	3	2.5	3	3	2	3	3	2.61	0.34
Assessing Whether Students Have Learned the Essential	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	1		
Systematic Interventions Ensure Students Receive Additional Time and Support for Learning	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	2.04	0.49
Collaborative Teams of Teachers Focus on Issues That Directly Impact Student Learning	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.07	0.25
Creating a Focus on Results That Impacts Schools, Teams, and Teachers	3	2	2	3	2.5	3	3	3	3	2	2.85	1.4
A Focus on Results Responding to Conflict in a PLC	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	1	2.57	0.75
	4	3	3	2	2.5	3	3	3	3	4	1.85	0.49
Dept Av	2.60	2.03	2.28	2.75	2.00	2.55	2.48	2.43	2.70	2.04	2.32	
2008-2009	1.86	1.29	1.29	2	1.57	2.43	1.86	1.43	1.57	1.29	1.68	
Gain/Loss	0.74	0.74	0.99	0.75	0.43	0.12	0.62	1	1.13	0.75	0.73	