

Hello PLC Friends,

The main purpose of this memo is to outline a very important pre-PLC task that we need each of you to carry out prior to our next meeting.

By the conclusion of the school year, each participant will:

*Understand the significance of professional learning communities in improving student learning.

*Understand the need to focus on issues of equity as we work to increase student achievement.

*Know about and practice several strategies for engaging in reflective discourse based on ideas contained in different kinds of "texts".

*Understand and practice how to give and receive productive feedback on professional practice.

*Understand and practice using several methods for increasing learning by examining student and adult work collaboratively—know when to use which methods.

How should I prepare?

Please try to rearrange personal commitments so you are able to get to the meetings on time, can stay until the end of the day, and have time for the forty-five minutes or so of reading/preparation each session.

So, what is the pre-PLC task?

In order to have sessions that are centered on learning from students' work, we will need student work to examine. Your task is to consider one piece of student work that you would be willing to share in a small group. **Please submit your reflective guide by Tuesday of next week** so that we can begin to plan the year. There is also an article that we would like for you to read before our meeting Saturday. (See attached.)

The collaborative work we will be learning about is centered first and foremost on student learning. Thus, the work students do and the ways in which educators guide students' learning is essential. The same is true of those who are not in the classroom, since your practice does ultimately affect student achievement. So, it will be important that we spend time learning about a variety of methods—or protocols—that have been developed for examining student work collaboratively.

"What kind of student work?" you might ask. The attached documents entitled Suggestions for Bringing Student Work and the Reflective Guide hopefully will give you some ways to think about what to consider. Here are a few main points.

1. The work can be from any grade level, any subject matter area, carried out in class or at home . . . In short, anything that students have done or created is fine.
2. The work should be something that raises a genuine question or puzzle for you, and it should relate to your practice in some way (even if you are an administrator). Keep in mind the focus of our work - raising the achievement of ALL students and narrowing the achievement gap as you consider whose work to bring.

For example:

"Why did the student choose to tackle this assignment in this way? What does she seem to understand? How might that inform our work with her and other students like her?"

"I'm not sure what to make of this student's work. What would other educators see in it? How would what they see influence my practice?"

"There are always a handful of students who never seem to get really engaged in this particular assignment. How could I improve the assignment so that it works for all of the students?"

"Students all completed this final exam, but their performance was spotty, and now I am not sure their work really tells me what I need to know about their learning. How might I revise this assessment?"

"I have been working on this task with my students - some seem to get it, but others still are not performing at the level I want them to. How should I revise my work?"

3. The work should not be a "show piece" effort. It can be wonderful to share our students' outstanding achievements; but often there is more to be learned from sharing what didn't work, what fell flat, or what stumps us.

If you are not a classroom teacher, you can bring professional work—for instance, a staff development plan or a project you have designed, or a dilemma you are facing—although we ask that you first consider bringing student work. Sometimes it helps to think about the students to whom you are connected in some way. Then think about a question you have about your practice, and imagine what kind of student work would inform you about that question.

During our PLC meetings throughout the year, we will examine everyone's work (whether you bring student work, some other type of work, or a dilemma) in depth, and everyone will also have the opportunity to facilitate someone else's session, with feedback on his or her facilitation.

That's it! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to send one of us an e-mail message:

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