PLC End-of-Year Report 2011 - 2012

Background

Learning as Our Fundamental Purpose

We in the Red Clay Consolidated School District acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our schools is to help all students achieve high levels of learning, and, therefore, we are willing to examine our practices in light of their impact on learning. We will develop and employ highly effective Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to ensure the highest quality of instruction is afforded to every student. In addition, students will receive timely, research-based instruction. Instruction will be monitored and adjusted, as needed, using a regular cycle of data analysis by each PLC team.

Building a Collaborative Culture Through High Performing Teams

We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We will cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.

Focusing on Results

We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams, and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.

End-of-Year Report

Teacher collaboration, cycles of inquiry, data analysis, and research-based decision making in our PLC teams continually improved throughout the school year. The Office of Research and Evaluation continues to provide supports to our School PLC Leads and State Data Coaches as they work with teachers in the PLC teams. State Data Coaches and School PLC Leads reported growth in our PLC teams in regards to the Taking Action with Data model. We have grown from 14% of the Direct Facilitation PLC teams reported as "On-Track" in September 2011 to 73% of PLC teams "On-Track" in May 2012.

Supports provided by the Office of Research and Evaluation include:

- Collection of PLC resources on the district intranet
  https://rcweb.redclay.k12.de.us/Intranet/RNE/PLC/RNEPLCindex.htm
- Recommendations for PLC implementation
- PLC visitations
- Coordination of PLC Institute
- Review of PLC minutes (over 4500 PLC minutes reviewed)
- Guidance to Data Coaches and School PLC Leads on next steps for PLC teams and increasing teacher ownership of PLC (based on conversations with teacher teams and principals, PLC observations, and review of PLC minutes).
- Professional development resources including articles related to specific PLC teams' interest and goals

- Monthly Coach-the-Coach meetings with School PLC Leads and State Data Coaches
- Videotaping exemplary PLC meetings to be edited and posted for all PLC teams to review
- Monthly meetings with State Data Coaches including district staff from various departments such as Curriculum and Instruction
- Collaboration with stakeholders to determine areas of focus

Maturity of PLC Structures End-of-Year

Red, 4, 3%
Blue, 28, 22%
Yellow, 30, 24%
Green, 63, 51%
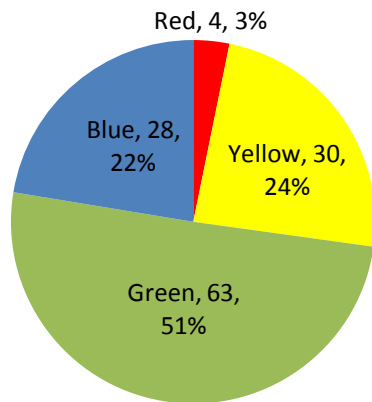
PLC Status (Maturity) contributes to success:

- Blue = 28 (22%)
- Green = 63(51%)
- Yellow = 30(24%)
- Red = 4 (3%)

All PLCs: Direction Facilitation and Coach-the-Coach

Maturity of PLC Structures	Basic (Red) Coach directed and/or inconsistent evidence of accountability on norms and protocols; shared vision of learning; data focus; create action plans	Emerging (Yellow) Significant coach support and consistent accountability on norms and protocols; shared vision of learning; data focus; create action plans	Developed (Green) Accountability on norms and protocols; shared vision of learning; data focus; create action plans…with minimal coach support	Independent (Blue) Self-facilitating

Next Steps

As our PLC teams reflect on the past year and begin preparing for PLC meetings next year, the following suggestions for "next steps" will be a priority next year:

1. ***Translating data into Action:***
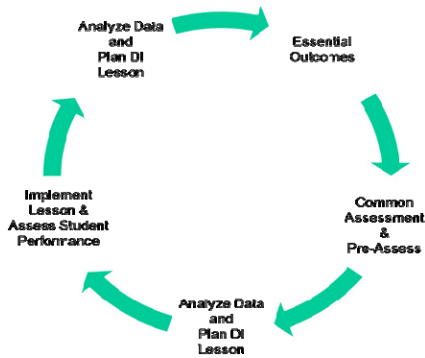
Over the past year, the PLC teams had thoughtful conversations around student data. Teams in the district began to take the data and translate it into action such as creating differentiated lesson plans. As we begin next year, it is vital that there are "takeaways" from PLC meetings that enable teachers to implement the plans and/or strategies in their classrooms. While implementing the lesson, it is also important to collect formative data that teachers can bring back to a future PLC meeting to use and refine their lessons and/or strategies. In addition, the focus of PLCs and embedded professional development help support teachers' efforts to translate their data into action. The graphical representation included here is the PLC Flow Chart provided in the District's PLC Overview and Guidelines.

2. ***Focusing on Learning, Results, and Collaboration:***

PLCs provide an extraordinary opportunity for teachers to work together and support each other with improving instructional practices to improve student achievement. Since opportunities for teachers to collaborate are vital to improving student achievement, it is imperative that the work they do during the PLC meetings are focused on the most important things they want the students to learn and be able to do. Identifying the "essential outcomes" helps teams to provide the focus for which all of their work in PLC should be based. In addition, effective use of "backwards planning" will assist teams in scheduling and coordinating their efforts to ensure appropriate time allotments are provided to accomplish the essential outcomes. Furthermore, the focus of the PLC and backwards planning will assist teams in coordinating resources, such as professional development activities, to help them grow with their content and pedagogical knowledge and translate their data into action to better serve their students.

3. *Embedding Professional Development during PLC meetings:*

After reviewing student data to determine students' strengths, weaknesses, gaps in learning, etc., PLC team members identify research-based strategies that may be used to help accelerate student learning. Identifying research-based strategies may include the need to review professional literature (articles, books, videos, etc.) and to reach out to a district curriculum specialist. Through this vetting process, teams are able to identify research-based strategies that they believe will be most beneficial to use with their students; helping students and teachers grow alike. These strategies are then embedded within the lessons, implemented, and then reviewed during a future PLC meeting to assess the effectiveness of the strategies on student performance.

4. *Engaging Leadership in PLCs:*

Academic deans and assistant principals played a significant role this year in supporting PLC team members and the overall progress of the PLC implementation. Although academic deans and assistant principals were actively engaged in the day-to-day functioning and facilitation of PLCs, principal engagement with PLCs is crucial for the overall success and sustainability of the PLCs. In some schools throughout the district, principals participated in PLCs by alternating the meetings with their academic deans or assistant principals. Additional ways principals support PLCs is by meeting monthly with their PLC teams to review student data, team's progress towards their SMART goals, discuss the team's reflection on their practice and their plan to further improve student achievement, celebrate the team's progress, and provide support where necessary for successful implementation of instructional strategies. Principals also monitor the change in instructional practices during walk-throughs and observations.

5. *Connecting Supports to PLCs:*

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) assists with connecting PLC teams to the overall school and district mission, vision, and strategic goals. The BLT helps connect and align the PLC practices through a review of PLC minutes, data, artifacts, and professional development requests. BLT decisions based on this information provide a great opportunity for schools to ensure close alignment of their professional development needs with the needs of their teachers and students. In addition, it is vital for the success of all students to have our teachers of diverse populations (i.e. special education and ELL) participate in PLC team meetings with their grade-level peers. Furthermore, the Instructional Support Team (IST) is another support to help individual teachers meet the needs of their students. Please refer to the PLC Overview and Guidelines for more specific information on connecting IST and PLC.

The Office of Research and Evaluation will continue to reflect on our progress this year with PLCs and explore professional development opportunities to provide continued support in developing highly effective PLC teams.