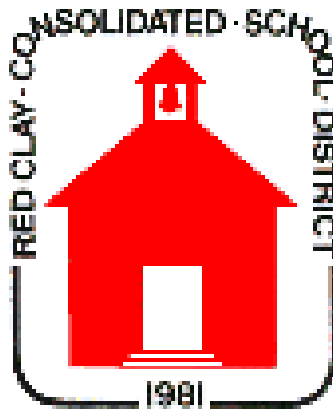


Red Clay Consolidated School District Building Leadership Guidelines



Improving Student Achievement for All Students

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Building Leadership Team's (BLT) role is to help lead the school's effort in reaching the Red Clay Consolidated School District's "Academic Success for All" vision. In addition, the BLT supports the improvement of teaching and learning with an explicit goal of raising student achievement for each student and narrowing achievement gaps. The BLT makes decisions about the school's instructional program, and then leads professional development and collaborative time.

"Academic Success for All" Vision

All members of the Red Clay community will demonstrate the ***belief and expectation*** that every student be given equal opportunity and equal access to a high quality inclusive education with the ultimate goal of being college and/or career ready.

All Red Clay schools will develop a greater ***capacity*** to teach all learners. The Red Clay Consolidated School District is committed to continuous improvement through examining and realigning appropriate ***structures, supports, and resources*** for the instruction of all students in all schools.

Goals of the Leadership Team:

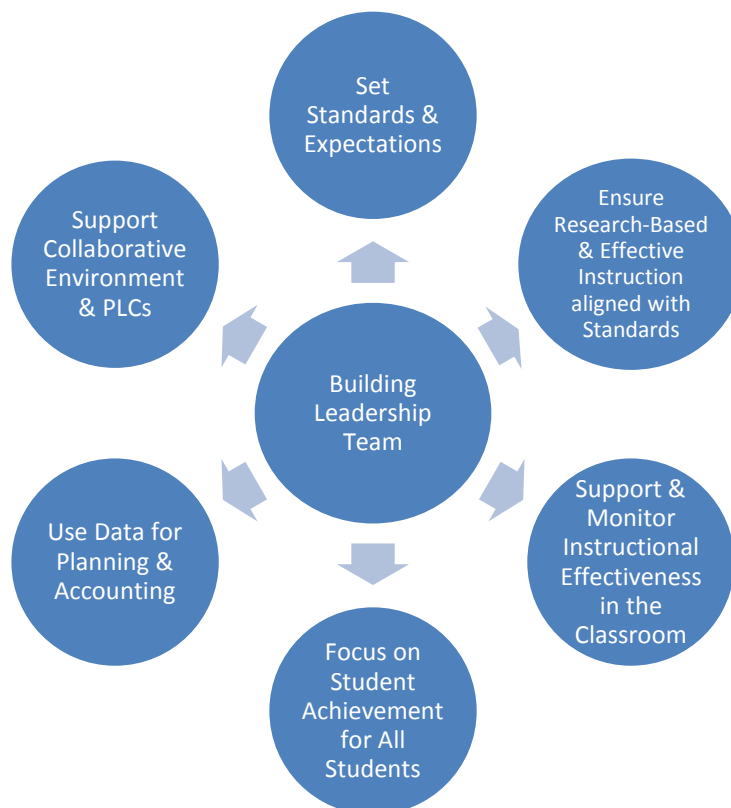
- Provide leadership necessary to improve teaching and learning and help achieve the "Academic Success for All" vision.
- Assist the school in improving student achievement for each student and narrow achievement gaps
- Develop a collaborative environment with the goal of building capacity in others to meet the specific needs of each student
- Ensure focus and alignment with RCCSD Strategic Plan
- Establish shared purpose, mission, commitments, and goals
- Model effective characteristics of learning communities
- Support effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school's CCSS implementation plan

Functions of the Building Leadership Team

- Set standards and expectations within school and develop school culture
- Facilitates the involvement of the school community in the development of the School Success Plan
- Aligns School Success Plan with the RCCSD Strategic Plan
- Monitor, implement, and support Campus Inclusion Plan
- Focuses on student achievement for each student
- Develops professional development plan for the school

- Coordinates professional development initiatives and resources between the school and district office (see Professional Development Flow Chart)
- Allocates and manages the school's resources – people, time, funds, and materials – to address the school priorities and students' needs
- Supports the overall operation of Professional Learning Communities
- Ensure research-based and effective instruction aligned with standards is used throughout all classrooms
- Support instruction in classrooms and implementation of CCSS
- Monitors the effectiveness of the School Success Plans, professional development, instructional strategies, key initiatives, Professional Learning Communities, and intervention programs
- Reports out monthly on School Success Plan progress, professional development, instructional strategies, key initiatives, CCSS Implementation, Professional Learning Communities, and intervention programs
- Empowers staff and holds them accountable for results, developing a plan for leadership succession
- Data-driven decision making

Building Leadership Team Major Functions



Characteristics of the Building Leadership Team Members

To help ensure the BLT operates effectively and fulfills the functions listed above, it is critical that team members are knowledgeable about instructional best practices and research, organizational change, adult learning theory, data analysis, and distributive leadership. DuFour and Marzano (2001) list several factors to consider when selecting team leaders and/or BLT members:

1. Their influence with colleagues
2. Their willingness to be a champion of the PLC process and continuous school improvement model
3. Their sense of self-efficacy and willingness to persist
4. Their ability to think systematically

Checklist for Identifying Potential Teacher Leaders

Guiding Questions	Yes	No
1. Is the potential teacher leader familiar with the characteristics of adult learners?		
2. Does the potential teacher leader understand how to apply the collective knowledge of their colleagues in order to improve teaching and learning in the school?		
3. Does the potential teacher leader understand educational research and use that knowledge to model and coach colleagues in the selection and use of research-based strategies?		
4. Does the potential teacher leader understand that teaching and learning is rapidly changing and uses that knowledge to support and lead relevant professional learning?		
5. Does the potential teacher leader have a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process?		
6. Does the potential teacher leader model the practices of continuous learning, reflection upon teaching practices, and collaboration with colleagues?		
7. Is the potential teacher leader familiar with current research on assessment (formative and summative) methods?		
8. Does the potential teacher leader use knowledge of formative and summative assessments to focus on continuous improvement of instruction?		
9. Is the potential teacher leader familiar with the cultural backgrounds and languages spoken by the school's families and in the community?		
10. Does the potential teacher leader use knowledge of the school's		

and community's diversity to reach out to and work collaboratively with family and community members?		
From College of William and Mary School of Education <i>Strategies for Creating Effective School Leadership Teams</i>		

Leadership Team and the Change Process

Since leading school improvement efforts means that the team will be involved with school change initiatives, team members should become familiar with the change process. Kotter (1996) identified essential steps for successfully negotiating change. Steps and corresponding actions for school leadership team members to consider are presented below.

Steps	Possible Actions
1. Develop a vision and a strategy.	Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) define vision as "what the school community will look like when its core beliefs truly inform practice (p.18)." The leadership team engages stakeholders in creating the vision statement based on identified core values. The leadership team can also propose a means for achieving the vision (e.g., implement a school-wide literacy approach, improve inclusive practices).
2. Communicate the vision.	Leadership team members use formal and informal opportunities to generate dialogue about the vision and strategy for achieving the vision. Continued conversation and information sharing with all members of the school community will help ensure that there is a school-wide commitment to the vision and related strategy.
3. Empower broad-based action with a well-designed plan.	The leadership team develops and monitors an action plan that outlines specific activities or tasks that need to take place to effectively implement the changes needed to move the school closer to its vision.
4. Generate short-term wins.	Fullan (2010) notes "do not load up on vision, evidence, and a sense of urgency. Rather give people new experiences in relatively nonthreatening circumstances, and build on it" (p.24). Leadership teams should be mindful of the pace of activities supporting the improvement process. The leadership team can build short-term, achievable

	goals into the action plan and celebrate completion along the way so that all members of the school community feel a sense of accomplishment and maintain momentum.
5. Consolidate gains and produce more change.	The leadership team focuses on continuous improvement as a way to ensure that school improvement efforts continue. Moody, Russo, and Casey (2005) note that the “improvement cycle curves back on itself” (p.175). The leadership team is continuously looking at student data, examining instruction, developing an action plan, and assessing its effectiveness to ensure that improvement efforts move forward.
6. Anchor new approaches in the culture.	The leadership team helps ensure that effective changes implemented as a result of the improvement process become part of the school’s practices and culture. The leadership team may need to examine building practices and structures to make sure they are not hindering institutionalization of the new strategy.
From College of William and Mary School of Education <i>Strategies for Creating Effective School Leadership Teams</i>	

Group Norms

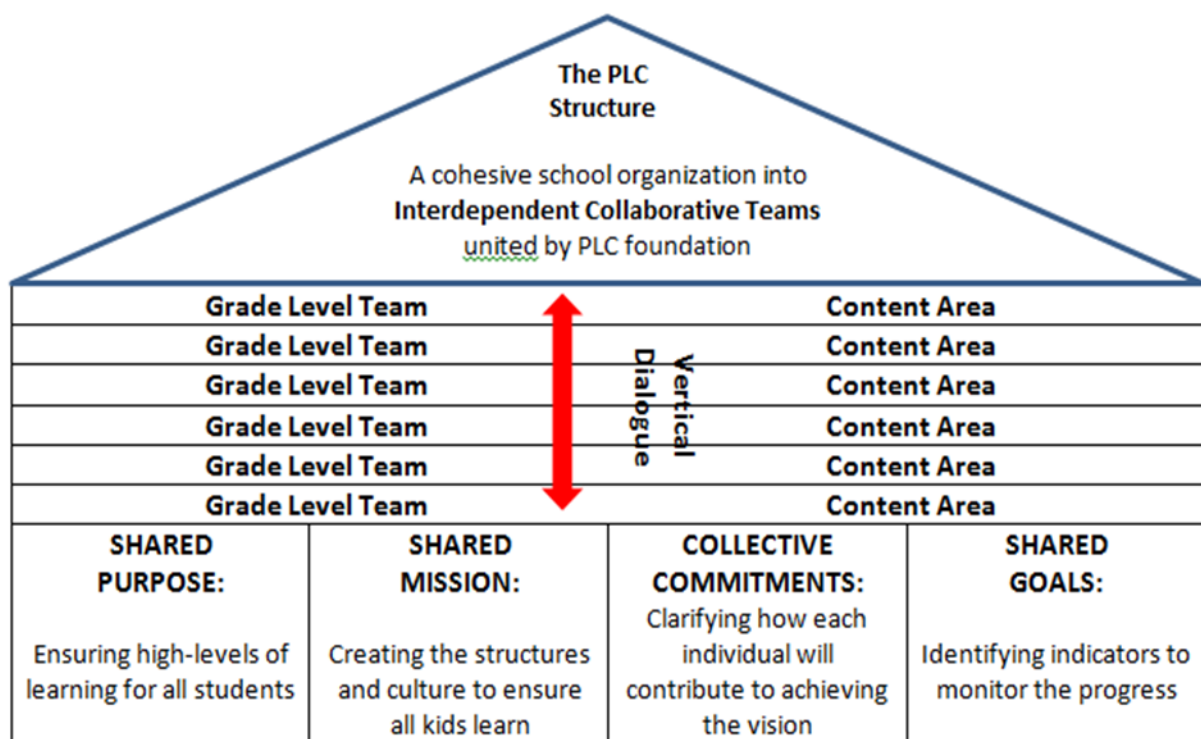
One of the first steps for the BLT is to create meeting protocols to guide its work. Establishing group norms or guiding principles is a foundational operation that enables the BLT to function at a high level.

Group Norm Considerations (example)

Areas	Questions to Consider
Logistics	How often do we need to meet in order to do our work? Where and when will we meet? How long should our meetings be?
Timeliness	When should we start and end meetings? Will we start on time or wait for all members to be present? What are our expectations for attendance?
Courtesy	How will we show respect for one another?
Decision-making process	How will we make decisions and reach agreements? How do we reach consensus?
Workload assignment	How can we ensure that the work of the leadership team is being shared? How can we help one another

	balance the work of the leadership team with our other responsibilities?
Setting priorities	How will we make sure that tasks are completed on time and in a logical manner?
Enforcement of norms	What is our plan if the norms are not being followed? Will we revise the norms if needed? Can we add norms?
From College of William and Mary School of Education <i>Strategies for Creating Effective School Leadership Teams</i>	

BLT Builds the Foundation



The BLT helps build the foundation for an effective school culture and structure to support PLCs. BLTs help establish a Shared Purpose, Shared Mission, Collective Commitments, and Shared Goals with all stakeholders.

BLT Meetings

BLT meetings will occur at least once a month. The BLT will monitor each PLC team's essential outcomes, progress towards achieving SMART goals, professional development needs, PLC/Collaborative Team Action Plans, and any additional resources needed to achieve their goals. In addition, the BLT will monitor, assess, and amend their School Success Plan and CCSS Implementation Plan monthly and report on their progress.

The BLT Monthly Review report will be completed and submitted via SchoolStream.

District Liaisons

District Liaisons will support schools and BLTs through constant communication and ongoing visits. In addition, District Liaisons will help provide two-way communication between schools and District Office to assist in coordinating resources and supports needed for the schools to be successful. District Liaisons will also review the “BLT Monthly Review” reports to ensure schools receive appropriate and timely supports from District Office.

District Liaisons will meet monthly with their schools to review the schools’ progress (data) towards their School Success Plan goals and CCSS implementation, during the BLT meetings or a mutually agreeable time with the building administration.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

CSSS Building Implementation Plan

The BLT will work collaboratively to **develop, implement, and evaluate** a **CCSS Building Implementation Plan** for their school to effectively support their teachers and the phases of implementation for the CCSS. The plan will align with the District’s implementation plan and should support the characteristics of effective professional development.

Quarterly Data Collaborative Meetings

- Quarterly (3-4 times per year), Principals will present during collaborative administrative meetings, the steps they have taken to move the PLC, CCSS Building Implementation Plan, and continuous school improvement model forward.
- Principals will be called upon to present evidence regarding how their school has addressed specific conditions (i.e. supported collaborative efforts in their school, monitored the work of the teams, how the results of common formative assessments are being used by teams, data analysis of student achievement, and how the school is providing for systematic intervention and enrichment).
- Principals will be asked to provide artifacts that demonstrate the effectiveness of their teams.
- Principals will meet with their respective Director for an in-depth discussion of their school’s progress to achieving the goals in their School Success Plans, CCSS

Building Implementation Plan, and PLCs. In addition, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction may attend these meetings to ensure ongoing support is provided to schools.

Simultaneous Loose-Tight Leadership and Culture

Simultaneous loose *and* tight cultures establish clear parameters and priorities that enable individuals to work within established boundaries in a creative and autonomous way. PLCs are characterized by '**directed empowerment**' or what Marzano and Waters refer to as '**defined autonomy**' – *freedom to act and lead within clearly articulated boundaries.*"

- DuFour & DuFour (2012); Marzano & Waters (2009)

The articulated boundaries, as mentioned above, are the PLC Overview and Guidelines, District Strategic Plan, School Success Plan, and determined by the Building Leadership Team. For learning teams to reach their full potential it is critical that they have ample opportunities to act and lead within those boundaries with minimal interruptions by activities that do not align with the instructional goals outlined the District Strategic Plan and School Success Plan. It is expected that PLC meeting times not be considered a repository of time where time can be taken from for other activities. School districts that have made great gains in student achievement ensured that PLC is "sacred" time for teachers to work together as professionals.

Empowerment:

Effective empowerment does not mean encouraging people to go off and do whatever they want. It means creating the conditions that help people succeed. Those conditions include:

1. Establishing clear purpose, priorities, and parameters that allow people to be creative and autonomous within clearly established boundaries.
2. Providing people with access to the resources that enable them to make informed decisions rather than pooling opinions.
3. Engaging them in establishing clear, unambiguous benchmarks so they can monitor their own progress.
4. Ensuring they have relevant and timely data that informs their practice and allows them to make adjustments.
5. Building the capacity of people to be successful in what they are attempting to do by providing them with training, support, and resources that lead to success.

Empowerment means establishing a culture in which people are hungry for evidence and are willing to face the brutal facts when things don't go as hoped.

(DuFour & Marzano, 2011)

Monitoring Instruction and Student Progress

The BLT develops processes for collecting data on an ongoing basis to monitor instruction and student progress. The BLT uses the data to inform their decisions to make adjustments to help the school best meet the needs of their students.

Common Assessments

- a. What are the best indicators of whether our students have mastered the essential outcome (summative)? How will we know when the students know?
- b. What are the best indicators of whether the students are appropriately progressing towards the essential outcome (formative)?
- c. Assessments may be any format; however, they are agreed upon and used by every member of the team to determine student progress. Formats include but not limited to teacher observation, student presentations, student responses, paper-pencil, etc. Common assessments do not need to be lengthy to be effective.
- d. Common assessment data will be collected and recorded before PLC meetings.
- e. Analyze common assessment data during PLC meetings to determine appropriate instructional strategies and/or adjustments to ensure all students improve.

Walkthroughs

Walkthroughs allow administrators to become more familiar with the school's curriculum and instructional practices, they can gauge the climate of the schools (are students engaged? are instructional practices changing based on professional development?), and a team atmosphere develops as teachers and administrators examine instruction and student achievement (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002).

Key Elements for Walkthroughs

- a. Identify the focus of the walkthrough observations with the BLT
- b. Make walkthroughs routine (develop a schedule and block-out time to ensure they are done routinely)
- c. Walkthroughs should typically be around 5 minutes and no longer than 15 minutes
- d. Reflect on walkthroughs by sharing the data with BLT

- e. Involve others – develop a collaborative culture and have teachers do peer observations

Goals

Key Priorities and Essential Outcomes

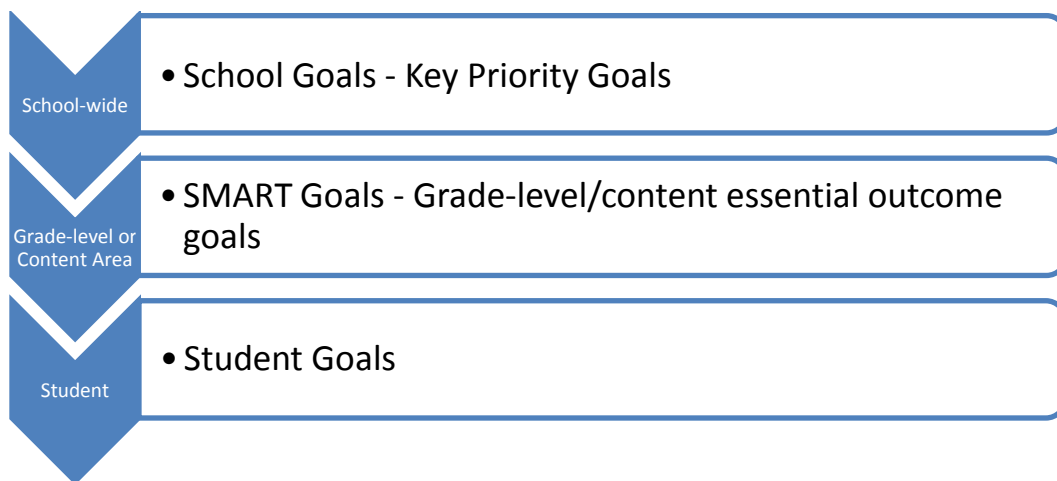
Key Priorities (school-wide goals/initiatives) are set by the BLT and are aligned with school level data and the District’s Strategic Plan. **Essential Outcomes** are grade-level/content specific and set by the PLC team (Note: there may be overlap between the school’s Key Priorities and PLC team’s Essential Outcomes since both are based on student data; however, PLC teams will have additional Essential Outcomes that are grade-level specific).

Goal Setting

School goals (**Key Priority Goals**) are the overarching goals for the school and align with the school improvement plan (District Strategic Plan, School Success Plan and Key Priorities). Some of the Grade-level Essential Outcomes (and grade-level s goals will align with Key Priority Goals; however, grade-level only specific goals will align with Grade-level Essential Outcomes that only apply to that particular grade level.

Grade-level Essential Outcomes will be the basis for grade-level **SMART Goals**. Note: Grade-levels or content areas may have additional goals that are specific only to their area and not the entire school.

Student Goals may align with Grade-Level Essential Outcome SMART Goals.



Professional Development

Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance. In addition, the following principles support the district's core belief that continuous professional learning is paramount to success. District professional development will be:

- driven by student learning needs as determined by analyzing data,
- research-based and reflect best practices,
- effective, and
- assessed.

The District Plan for Professional Learning is based upon the *Standards for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2012) as stated below.

1. **LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
2. **LEADERSHIP:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
3. **RESOURCES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
4. **DATA:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
5. **LEARNING DESIGNS:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
6. **IMPLEMENTATION:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

7. OUTCOMES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Strategies

Adults carry with them accumulated knowledge and experiences that may help or hinder their learning. Adult learning should occur in a variety of settings, be problem-solution oriented, and allow the adults to play an active role in their learning (Smylie, 1995). The strategies listed below respect our staff as adult learners and engage them in meaningful learning opportunities.

- *Professional Learning Communities* provide the opportunity for the teachers in a school and its administrators to continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn so that students benefit. This collaboration time provides professional development where teachers work together on research-based practices and instructional procedures (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).
- *Job Embedded PD Opportunities* provide professional development opportunities for teachers during the regular school day in order to support instructional programs and teaching (Speck & Knipe, 2001).
- *Classroom-Based Coaching* and Modeling provides professional development for teachers through additional support by a lead teacher, curriculum specialist, literacy coach or educational expert when needed to implement instructional programs and practices (Speck & Knipe, 2001).
- *Study Groups* allow teachers to meet regularly to study a topic(s) relevant to their teaching to gain a deeper understanding (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).
- *Lesson Study* allows teachers to design student-focused lessons, conduct the lessons while other teachers observe, discuss the lessons, and gather evidence to improve the lesson and reteach it (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009).

- *Conferences/Workshops* provide professional development opportunities for teachers that are not available in the school or district (Speck & Knipe, 2001).
- *Mentoring* supports new teachers and increases their skills to better prepare them for the transition from preparation to practice (SEDL, 2000).
- *Curriculum Development*- provide professional development which supports curriculum development in all content areas. This work includes the alignment of curricular materials to the Common Core State Standards, pedagogy supportive of students' developmental characteristics, and training for educators to effectively deliver and evaluate the content (Roberts, 2007).
- *Grade Level Meetings* - provide professional development through grade level meetings
- *Horizontal and Vertical Team Meetings* - provide professional development through focused meetings of all content areas in one grade level or through multiple grade levels.

Delivery Methods

The delivery of professional learning is systemic, flexible, and continuous in order to meet the needs of adult learners. Red Clay Consolidated School District will provide professional learning through a variety of methods that include direct teaching, peer coaching, and team collaboration. In addition to the traditional methods of delivery, the district will also utilize the methods listed below.

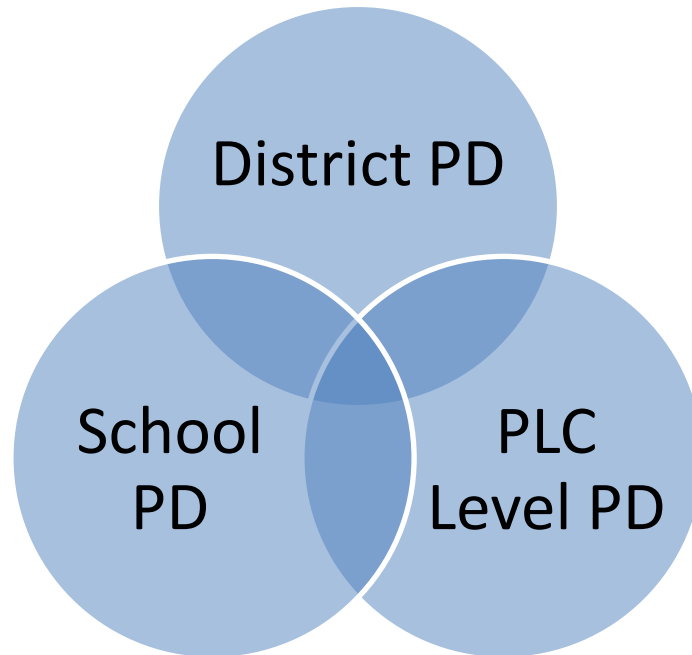
- Professional Learning Communities
- Online videos
- Online tutorials
- Technology-based interactions (webinars, blogs, wikis, Skype)
- Book studies
- Podcasts

A thoughtful process should be considered before doing professional development:

1. How does the PD support students' needs? What data substantiates the need?

2. Are strategies gained from the PD research-based? The evidence to support the research must be considered as well. Are the research studies rigorous? Have the studies behind the PD been examined thoroughly?
3. How will the teachers use these strategies to improve student achievement?
4. What changes are we expecting to see in the teachers' practices in the classroom? How will we evaluate these changes and their effectiveness?
5. How will any new knowledge from the PD be shared with others?
6. Cost-benefit analysis?
7. How will we ensure that this PD becomes sustainable?
8. Who will provide the PD?
 - a. Are we able to provide the PD from within the school using internal experts?
 - b. Are we able to provide the PD from within the district using experts in other schools?
 - c. Are we able to provide the PD from within the district using district office cadre?
 - d. Are we able to provide the PD by using technology-based methods (i.e. webinars, blogs, podcasts, etc.)?
 - e. Are we able to provide the PD by using external experts or conferences (i.e. consultants, UD, DRWP)?
9. How much of the school budget will be needed to support our PD efforts?
- 10. Also, please refer to the Professional Development Flow Chart when requesting PD. A PLC Instructional Plan Form (example) is provided at the end of this manual.**

The school's Key Priorities will help guide school-wide professional development (occur during faculty meetings, some PLC meetings due to alignment, teachers attend conferences, schools contract with external experts, etc.) Grade-level specific essential outcomes are grade-level professional development (occur during PLC meetings, book studies, action research, lesson study, review of research and literature, etc.).



Outcomes

The desired outcome of professional development is increased student achievement as a result of changes in staff attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Changes such as these create a positive school culture, increase knowledge of content and instructional strategies, advance participation in professional learning communities, and develop leadership capacity.

Creating Professional Develop Plans

To focus professional development on key school-wide goals, BLTs should consider developing annual school-wide professional development plans. Professional development plans typically provide an overview of the focus of professional development and of how professional development will be implemented on a school-wide basis over the course of a school year. Such plans tend to center on specific professional learning themes and school-wide goals.

Professional development plans should:

- Align the focus of school-wide professional development with school, district and state goals;
- Prioritize and allow for a variety of learning opportunities;

- Emphasize classroom follow-through and implementation;
- Support ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development; and
- Identify and address the needs of the staff as a whole and also allow for individuals to seek out opportunities to address personal professional learning needs.

A. Plan Development Considerations

To develop a professional development plan, a BLT should address the following considerations.

- *Who will create the professional development plan?*
Typically, a team of several staff members and/or administrators may work collectively to develop the plan. This can be accomplished through professional development committees comprising administrators and instructional staff. This option helps ensure that the concerns of both the leadership team and the instructional staff are considered. Another option is that the administrative team may create the plan.
- *How will staff input be solicited and incorporated into the plan?*
When developing a plan, it is important to ensure that all administrative, instructional and support staff members are provided an opportunity to comment or offer input. Staff input can be solicited through surveys and by discussion of instructor observations and evaluations.
- *How will the plan be shared with faculty and staff?*
After the plan is created, it should be shared with faculty and staff. Typically, this can be done at an in-service or faculty meeting. PLC guest speaker Sandra Himes, executive director of Upper Bucks County Technical School, emphasized the importance of providing faculty and staff with the context for the plan's goals and action steps. To do this, she provides her staff with an overview of new or changing state, district and school policies. She reviews relevant initiatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and goals set forth by the Bureau of CTE as well as federal requirements and goals.

B. Plan Template

As outlined in Figure A below, there are four key components of professional development plans:

- Goals (SMART Goal),
- Action steps (PD Activities),
- Application and follow-through (PD Activities), and
- Evaluation and assessment (Teacher Learning Outcomes, Teacher Practice Outcomes, Student Learning Outcomes)

These four components will be discussed in more detail later on in this section.

It is important to note that this list of components is not intended to be an exhaustive one, nor should the plan template be considered as a one-size-fits-all model for how BLTs approach professional development. The components themselves and the template are intended to be flexible and scalable in nature so that BLTs may adopt, implement and customize them to best meet their specific needs and goals.

Figure A. Professional Development Plan Template

Professional Development Plan Template

I. Goals

- Professional development goals should align with state, district and school performance goals
- Short-term and long-term goals identify strategic and measureable targets for BLTs to achieve. (SMART Goals)
- Address both individual needs and school-wide needs.

II. Action Steps

- What steps will be taken to help achieve goals? (Prioritize learning opportunities based on goals and resources.)
- Determine type and delivery style of professional development (Focus, Format/Type).
- Who is responsible for each action step?
- What is the timeline for each action step?
- What are the resources and costs?

III. Application and Follow-Through

- After professional development is provided, what measures will be taken to help ensure the learned strategies are implemented?

IV. Evaluation and Assessment

- How and when will progress made toward goals be measured? (Teacher Learning Outcomes, Teacher Practice Outcomes, Student Learning Outcomes)

Professional Development Plan Component I: Goals

- **Professional development goals should align with state, district and school performance goals.**

The most effective professional development plans are centered on specific and measureable targets that align and support the school and student improvement goals set at the school, district, state and federal levels. In addition, the plans take into account factors such as:

- Student performance data that indicates areas in need of growth,
- The suggestions and professional learning needs of instructional staff, and
- State and federal policies and initiatives.

Ultimately, each goal set forth in the plan should address how to enhance professional skills, the programs, and/or student achievement.

- **Short-term and long-term goals identify strategic and measureable target for CTCs to achieve.**

To ensure that plans are actionable and achievable, BSTs should target approximately three to five goals per year (Key Priorities). The goals should include those that target short-term gains as well as those focused on long-term achievements. Short-term goals may cover a time period of several months, while long-term goals typically cover a year or longer.

- **Goals should address both individual needs and school-wide needs.**

School-wide professional development plans should include goals that address the needs of individual instructors based on their professional experience as well as the collective needs of the staff. This differentiated approach allows for the flexibility to meet both school-wide and individual instructor needs.

Setting goals helps ensure that professional development will be structured and organized around central themes rather than offered in an ad hoc or disjointed manner. When all staff members are focused on common goals, there is an opportunity for collaborative learning and commitment centered on achieving these goals.

Professional Development Plan Component II: Action Steps

Once the goals of the professional development plan have been established, the plan should specify the steps to be taken to achieve them. These action steps serve to focus professional development on the set targets and **prioritize learning opportunities** on the basis of available resources. Action steps determine the types and focus of professional development to be provided. There should be at least one action step for each of the goals set forth in the plan.

During the process of determining action steps, several elements should be considered and addressed.

- **Determine the type and delivery style of professional development to be offered.**
 - Include opportunities for peer-to-peer learning through activities such as mentoring, professional learning communities and classroom observations.
 - Allow instructors to provide turn-around training through which they share what they learned at a professional development session with colleagues who did not participate.
 - Include opportunities to address updates in technical areas.
 - Include project-based and real-world learning experiences.
 - Differentiate professional development offerings based on learning styles, experience and interest.
 - Tap resources from within staff and have instructors present to colleagues.
 - If available, instructional coaches can provide professional development and help customize strategies for instructors.
 - Additional strategies are outlined in RCCSD's Professional Development Plan (previously outlined in BLT Manual)

- **Identify who is responsible for each action step.**
Determine who will assume responsibility for making sure the action step is completed. Identify who will be involved in the action step. (All staff? New educators? Educators within a certain program?)
- **Establish a timeline for completing each action step.**
Define the period of time during which the action step will be implemented. For example, rolling out larger professional development initiatives in incremental stages may be more effective than implementing them all at once. Breaking out the initiatives into smaller steps may make them more manageable and prevent affected staff from feeling overwhelmed.
- **Determine the resources and costs.**
In light of budget constraints, it is important to determine the resources and costs associated with each action step.

Professional Development Plan Component III: Application and Follow-Through

- **After professional development is provided, what measures will be taken to help ensure the learned strategies are implemented?**

An effective school-wide professional development plan should address how faculty members will be held accountable for the application and follow-through of what they learned from professional development. ***It is not sufficient or effective for educators to merely participate in professional development sessions without applying the new knowledge in the classroom. In such cases, professional development is essentially rendered futile because it will not lead to improved educator or student performance.*** Therefore, a professional development plan should include strategies to help bridge the gap between what is learned through professional development and the extent to which this new knowledge actually is applied consistently in the classroom.

BLTs can use various strategies, such as those outlined below, to help ensure such follow-through occurs on a school-wide basis. These strategies range from informal practices, such as providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, to more formal ones, such as linking instructor evaluation to the professional development plan.

Practices to Promote Application and Follow-Through of Professional Development Strategies

- Create opportunities for peer-to peer learning among colleagues as a means to build buy-in, create a culture of learning and encourage collaboration. Examples of peer-to-peer learning include:
 - Observing in colleagues' classrooms,
 - Staff presentations to colleagues on topics of interest or expertise,
 - Professional learning communities that meet regularly on a particular topic, and
 - Turn-around training during which selected faculty members who attended a workshop or conference present on what they learned to the rest of the staff. (One PLC member suggested that presentation guidelines could be developed for faculty members to ensure consistency.)
- Provide job-embedded support to educators to help them implement strategies according to their individual needs.
- Conduct follow-up meetings to discuss progress and experience with implementing strategies addressed through professional development. After a school-wide in-service, administrators can schedule a follow-up meeting during which staff members report back on their experiences with applying the strategies addressed in the in-service (artifacts and data should be provided during the report).
- Build in "reminders" for staff of the goals and action steps. Such reminders may include practices as simple as sending email updates to staff or reviewing the plan during faculty meetings.
- Build upon what is already being done. Educators may be more likely to implement action steps and follow through on strategies if they are extensions of practices already in place.
- Link the implementation of action steps to instructor evaluation. Aligning the expectations included in the professional development plan with educator evaluation may support widespread educator follow-through on the action steps.
- Require educators to maintain a **professional portfolio** in which they document how they are focusing on the professional development goals and implementing the action steps.
- Conduct **pre- and post-observation conference**. During the pre-conference, the criteria upon which educators will be evaluated are discussed. After the observation, the evaluator and the educator discuss the extent to which the criteria were met during the lesson.

Professional Development Plan Component IV: Evaluation and Assessment

- **How and when will progress made toward goals be measured?**

Evaluation and assessment is an important component of the professional development plan. “What gets measured, gets done.” BSTs should put into place practices and tools that can “continually assess” the extent to which the goals of the professional development plan are met. This assessment should take place on an ongoing basis rather than occurring only at the end of the school year. This allows for modification to the actions steps and continued progress toward the goals to be made.

To support ongoing evaluation of the extent to which goals are being met, the professional development plan should detail the types of assessment to be used and specific points in time at which assessment will be conducted. To determine which types of assessment to be used, consideration should be given to what data is available and the types of analysis necessary to determine whether there is progress toward achieving the goals.

It is recommended that the plan be re-visited throughout the school year to evaluate whether its goals are being addressed. At the end of the school year, the cumulative progress made toward the goals should be reviewed so that the next year’s plan can address any remaining goals.

Things that must be done by leadership teams:

- Access reports
- Monthly BLT report to district office
- Facilitate the involvement of the school community in the development of the School Success Plan
- Align School Success Plan with the RCCSD Strategic Plan
- Focus on student achievement for all
- Develop, implement, and monitor school’s CCSS implementation plan
- Develop professional development plan for the school
- Coordinate professional development initiatives and resources between the school and district office
- Allocate and manage the school’s resources – people, time, funds, and materials – to address the school priorities and students’ needs
- Support the overall operation of Professional Learning Communities
- Monitor the effectiveness of the School Success Plans, professional development, instructional strategies, key initiatives, and intervention programs

- Empower staff and holds them accountable for results, developing a plan for leadership succession
- Operate in a manner consistent with the District's beliefs, expectations, goals and objectives
- Analyze student achievement data
- Identify resources to support testing, training, use of data, professional development
- Demonstrate best practice for using data to develop lessons
- Develop testing and PLC schedules, troubleshooting testing schedules
- Verify lab readiness, coordinating services/support with tech when necessary
- Communicate program details form Test Coordinator
- Collect and addressing or forwarding teacher questions
- Ensure successful testing administration and PLC implementation
- Communicate with faculty members about the nature of the test and PLC process
- Provide expert knowledge about assessments to parents and the larger school community
- Support teachers' efforts to create learning goals using data, differentiated lessons, professional development needs, common assessments
- Show teachers how data is aligned with Common Core State Standards and curriculum
- Develop agendas for in-service; follow up on teacher implementation of learning activities as an outcome of professional development
- Demonstrate how to use excel, online reports, I-tracker etc.
- Provide support for teacher access to data
- Identify challenges to implementation
- Build consensus among teacher to support initiatives

Leading Action Research in Schools

Introduction

Action research is a model of professional development that promotes collaborative inquiry, reflection, and dialogue. “Within the action research process, educators study student learning related to their own teaching. It is a process that allows educators to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to monitor improved student learning” (Rawlinson & Little, 2004). “The idea of action research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where the action is: at the classroom and school level. By integrating research into these settings and engaging those who work at this level in research activities, finding can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly” (Guskey, 2000).

Therefore action research is a continuous and reflective process where educators make instructional decisions in their classrooms based on student needs reflected by classroom data.

The action research process involves four phases:

1. Identifying a classroom problem
2. Developing and implementing an action research plan
3. Collecting and analyzing data
4. Using and sharing results

Action research provides teachers and administrators with an opportunity to better understand what happens in their school. This process establishes a decision-making cycle that guides instructional planning for the school and individual classrooms. Creating the need for research and establishing an environment for conducting classroom action research is the responsibility of a school administrator. A principal’s support of any new initiative is crucial in order for the practice to be sustained and impact student learning.

This support is ongoing as the principal should ensure the following components are established to promote an effective learning environment for their faculty:

- provide sufficient and consistent opportunities in the school day for collaborative action research (studying, analyzing student work, dialoguing collaboratively, and analyzing student data to make instructional decisions)

- build a support system for teachers through a coach or a knowledgeable person(s) of the action research process, student learning, and instructional practices
- set high expectations for faculty and students
- create a professional library housing professional literature, assessment tools, and other instructional resources for faculty
- plan several sharing sessions for faculty to present their action research and findings throughout the year
- encourage all faculty to participate, including the principal and assistant principals.

The support for continuous learning of all within the school is the most important task of the leadership within a school. Trust and collaboration are critical components of a school that seeks to embark on problem-solving instructional dilemmas through action research. Once a climate of mutual trust and support has been established, the administrators continue to support this critical process of action research through their knowledge, organization and management, and continuous alignment and support of teachers throughout the action research process.

Within the action research process, teachers may choose to focus their study on one student, a small group of students, a class or several classes, or a whole school. The focus and level of participation among school and district colleagues depends on the level of support, needs, and interests of the teacher(s) and school. Emily Calhoun (1993) described three approaches to action research: individual teacher research, collaborative action research, and school-wide action research. Even though the environments are different, the process of action research remains the same. This process uses data to identify classroom/school problems, creates and implements a plan of action, collects and analyzes data, uses and shares the results, and makes instructional decisions to improve student learning continuously.

Individual teacher research focuses on studying a problem or issue within a single classroom. The teacher who engages in individual teacher research may or may not have support from colleagues and administration to share, brainstorm, and discuss the topic of action research. Although just one teacher may become directly involved in action research, support from knowledgeable educators at the school or district site is still important for successful teacher research to occur. Also, universities, educational agencies, and districts may encourage teacher action research by providing ongoing professional development related to the needs of the individual teacher researcher.

These resources may also provide different venues for sharing the successes of the action research.

Collaborative action research focuses on studying a problem or issue within one or more classrooms. Teachers may collaborate and work together to study a particular problem in many different ways.

- co-teachers in one classroom studying a specific group of students
- a team of teachers focusing on a grade level issue (PLC/CT)
- a teacher and district, educational agency, or university personnel learning and studying a particular instructional practice
- a group of teachers in the same school studying the same instructional concern.

This collaborative action research approach fosters a joint effort because more than one teacher is involved in a specific area of study. Opportunities for sharing and dialogue are more likely to occur.

School-wide action research is a school reform initiative. Every faculty member of the school is involved in studying a specific issue identified from school data. This approach requires a great deal of support from the administrators and lead teachers/personnel, but the results can lead to school-wide change. Successful school-wide action research is directly related to initiatives contained within the school improvement plan.

Please refer to the following chart on the to read examples of research questions that were studied using the different approaches of action research.

Different Approaches to Action Research

Approaches	Level of Focus	Level of Participation	Example of Research Questions
Individual	Single classroom	Individual teacher	1. What impact can daily phonemic awareness activities have on my kindergarten students' oral language development? (kindergarten teacher) 2. How can using concrete objects (manipulatives) improve my students' ability to identify and extend patterns in mathematics? (third grade teacher)
Collaborative	One or more classrooms	Co-Teachers, teams, departments,	1. How can students with disabilities experiencing deficits in phonemic awareness show improvement in

		educational agencies & teachers, university faculty & teachers, teachers within a district, etc.	those skills by participating in additional and intensive instruction in phonemic awareness activities at least four times per week? How will it affect their overall reading ability? (exceptional student education (ESE) teacher & literacy coach) 2. How can implementing “Organizing Together,” a Strategic Instruction Model curriculum, improve students’ abilities to come to class organized and prepared? (grade 6 teachers in a middle school team)
School-Wide	School Improvement	Whole faculty	1. How can we teach our students to organize, analyze, synthesize, and interpret what they read? (school-wide questions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can modeling through readalouds improve students’ abilities to organize, analyze, synthesize, and interpret what they read? There are several action research teams within the school. The above example is one question being studied by one action research team. 2. How can implementing a school-wide positive behavior support program improve students’ safety and increase appropriate student behaviors within the school? (all faculty)

Guideline 1: Build Knowledge of the Action Research Process

Information is the critical ingredient when implementing a new process that could change the formal learning of the instructional staff. The principal’s role is to generate interest in the action research process by expressing the need through essential questions on student and teacher learning. The principal should pose the following questions during team meetings, individual teacher planning conferences, and with members of the school advisory committee:

- Based on school and classroom data, what do students need to learn in order to achieve in school?
- What instructional practices are we implementing that have positive results on student learning?
- What instructional practices are we implementing that do not have positive results on student learning?
- What do we (faculty) need to know or learn in order to ensure our students achieve their learning goals? What instructional practices or techniques should we investigate and research?
- How are we going to learn about these instructional practices and ensure student impact?
- How will we know that students are achieving their academic and behavioral goals?

It is important that the principal develop an understanding of action research to become proficient in explaining the impact of classroom research on student learning and teacher professional growth. Participating in professional development and reading literature on action research builds a base of knowledge for the principal that makes it possible to respond to questions and work with teachers as they implement the phases of the action research process. The commitment of time will result in a new depth of knowledge about action research that can only reflect in the continued support of teachers.

Action research is continual professional development and provides a direct route to improving teaching and learning (Calhoun, 2002). Using the process to facilitate school-wide change offers the opportunity to transform the school's climate. Teachers and administrators work together to create a professional community in which all contribute to the plan. As the principal begins to investigate the practicality of implementing action research school-wide, the following questions should be addressed:

- What does the disaggregated classroom data reflect about student and teacher learning?
- What do teachers need to learn in order to impact specific student learning needs?
- How is the school going to support teacher learning to ensure student achievement?
- How will teachers and the school evaluate classroom instruction and professional learning? What evaluation tools will be used?

- How will teachers and the school use the information collected through the evaluation to make specific and targeted decisions regarding research-based instructional strategies?

Action research is a process in which teachers systematically investigate instructional practices and techniques in order to improve their teaching. The impact of a specific instructional practice on student learning is measured, and the results become the basis for educational planning and decision-making.

Guideline 2: Understand the Benefits of Action Research

Action research is a teaching, learning, and decision-making process that can be used in a myriad of ways to assist the learning process of students and teachers.

- Action research is a means of improving student achievement through more effective teaching and administration of schools (Cohen & Manion, 1980; Elliot, 1991; Kemmis, 1982; Stenhouse, 1975).
- Educators involved in action research became more flexible in their thinking, more open to new ideas, and more able to solve new problems (Pine, 1981).
- Engaging in action research influenced teachers' thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to communicate with colleagues, and attitudes toward professional development and the process of change (Simmons, 1985).
- Teachers engaged in action research depended more on themselves as decision makers and gained more confidence in what they believed about curriculum and instruction (Strickland, 1988).
- Action researchers were reading, discussing, thinking, and assessing ideas from related research with expanded analytical skills (Simmons, 1985).

Guideline 3: Identify and Address Implementation Issues

School environments are varied and approach new learning methodologies in a multitude of ways. Preparation and planning to address the potential barriers to new learning is important to successful implementation. The following list of issues to discuss to facilitate effective implementation of action research includes:

- Action research may be viewed as a tool for gaining support for one instructional practice over another.
- Action research may be viewed as a way to document support for a proposed initiative.
- Action research requires time to collaborate.

- Some teachers are confident in their own abilities and do not feel the need to conduct formal action research.
- When the term “action research” is discussed, the definitions and applications are numerous and varied.
- Individual teachers’ comfort levels with seeking outside support and assistance can be an obstacle to action research.

Guideline 4: Develop Goals That Include Action Research

The additional guidelines and resources provided in this booklet are suggestions to guide the continued implementation of data-based instructional decision-making through classroom action research. The basis of the school improvement plan is student data. The quality of goals, strategies, and objectives of the school’s vision and school improvement plan is measured by the achievement of those goals, strategies, and objectives by all the students in the school. Achieving these goals is directly related to the high quality implementation of research-based instructional practices, methods, and strategies by each individual teacher in the school. This is the foundation or the school to investigate the quality instruction that must take place if student learning is to improve. If the school’s vision is “every child can learn and achieve,” it is important to be able to support the teaching practices that are used to make this belief happen. Action research provides that support by verifying successful investigations. The principal discusses with the staff and community the importance of researching what teachers think will create learning opportunities for the students. Using the benefits of action research (guideline 2) is an excellent way to lead this discussion.

Once improved student learning through continuous progress monitoring has become a part of the implementation of the school’s vision, it is straightforward to incorporate action research as a process to measure the established instructional goals. For example, a goal could be, “Successful learning experiences will be provided for every child each day through instructional practices that have been researched by the classroom teachers.” This goal lays the foundation for individual action research plans to be implemented by teachers based on classroom and student needs.

Goals are incorporated into the school improvement plan and action plans are written to ensure the goals are met. As a part of action plans, include professional development and support during implementation of the action research process. The goals created in the school improvement plan reflect what needs to happen so that all students can achieve the required state standards.

Guideline 5: Establish a Support System for Teachers

The premise of conducting action research is to provide feedback of student learning as a result of instruction. Action research is conducted to identify specific factors that cause students to improve their performance and achieve greater gains in applied learning. The principal facilitates the process and resulting accomplishments of action research. Teachers will need a support system as they conduct action research. A thorough plan of follow-up opportunities and support should be developed and expressed to all instructional staff.

- Create a team that will participate in additional professional development in order to scaffold and facilitate teachers as they conduct action research. This team can be made up of resource teachers, subject/grade level chairpersons, district staff, state agency representatives, and/or university professors.
- Investigate and disseminate information on conferences, seminars, and resources to enhance the continued learning and support of the established instructional initiatives.
- Review action plans in the school improvement plan to align action research to ensure that resources will be available.
- Develop a calendar of dates and times that assistance, dialogue, and sharing will be available to teachers facilitated by a support team and/or principal.

Example: On scheduled days for professional development, the support team can facilitate teachers in collaborative dialogue providing teachers with opportunities to reflect on their action research and receive guidance or suggestions from their colleagues and support team.

- In the staff newsletters, assign a section to communicate action research tips to consider, questions and answers, testimonials, examples, resources, and grant information.
- Classroom observations should be linked to the teacher's action research study.

Guideline 6: Provide Professional Development in Action Research

To conduct action research successfully, a professional development plan at the school level should be developed, implemented, and sustained to provide teachers with opportunities to develop a knowledge base of action research.

The principal should actively participate in the professional development that is planned and delivered at the school. Remember, it is important for the administrator to demonstrate not only knowledge but also support the teacher's action research

continuously. When the principal models an understanding of the process and is actively involved in the professional development of teachers, positive attitudes can be maintained and strengthened.

It is important for the principal to align professional development and action research to teachers' individual professional development plans. It is also important to communicate to teachers that action research is a process related to their individual professional development plans.

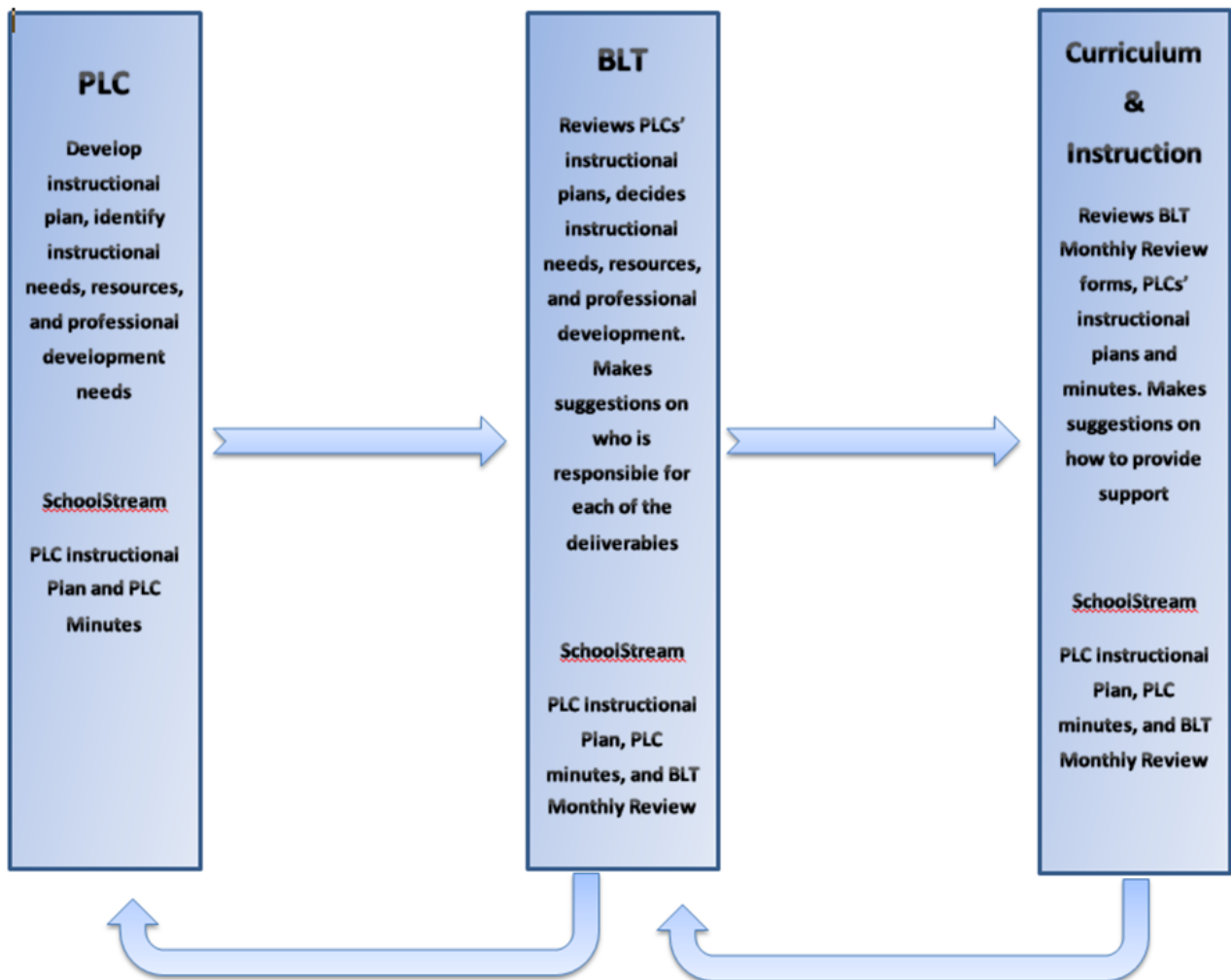
Guideline 7: Provide Opportunities for Collaboration

Principals know that teachers learn not only by themselves but also by working with others. Teachers need to work together to plan what instructional practices and techniques need to be implemented, what changes can occur, and how to evaluate their instruction. The more teachers learn, the more likely they will think of changes to implement to enhance student learning.

Teachers must look at action research and ask

- What do we want our students to achieve related to the curriculum standards and student needs?
- Which instructional practices and techniques are we using which have a research base?
- What instructional practices, programs, and materials should we investigate to verify the effects on student learning?
- How will we know that all students are mastering the established goals and objectives?

Professional Development Flow Chart



PLC Instructional Plan Form (example)

PD Request

School: PLC School of Excellence											
Date: October 24, 2011	Group: 3 rd Grade PLC										
Attendance: Joe, John, Jordan, Sue, Tara											
Content Area: ELA											
Essential Outcome: Increase 3 rd grade students' critical thinking through the use of higher level questions.											
SMART Goal: The third grade team's SMART goal is that 90% of the students in our ELA classes will be able to respond to level IV and above (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) questions (Bloom's Taxonomy) with 92% accuracy (3 or 4 on the rubric) by April 2012.											
Instructional Plan: <u>Baseline Data and Monitor of Student Progress:</u> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Level of Performance</th> <th>Benchmarks</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>27% of the students are meeting the Smart Goal at this point in the school year.</td> <td>End of Selection Test- Substitute original questions with 2 RARE response questions with higher-level thinking.</td> <td>Sept. 2011</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Scott Foresman Test Questions for Extended Response (higher level)</td> <td>Every 6 weeks</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Level of Performance	Benchmarks	Date	27% of the students are meeting the Smart Goal at this point in the school year.	End of Selection Test- Substitute original questions with 2 RARE response questions with higher-level thinking.	Sept. 2011		Scott Foresman Test Questions for Extended Response (higher level)	Every 6 weeks
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<u>Activities Used to Help Achieve Goal:</u> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Activities</th> <th>Resources</th> <th>Schedule</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>* Small Group and Whole Group Instruction- verbal and written assessment of comprehension using questions from Bloom's Taxonomy.</td> <td>* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart with ready-made questions for each level. * Differentiated Instruction professional development</td> <td>* Weekly</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Activities	Resources	Schedule	* Small Group and Whole Group Instruction- verbal and written assessment of comprehension using questions from Bloom's Taxonomy.	* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart with ready-made questions for each level. * Differentiated Instruction professional development	* Weekly			
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* Small Group and Whole Group Instruction- verbal and written assessment of comprehension using questions from Bloom's Taxonomy.	* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart with ready-made questions for each level. * Differentiated Instruction professional development	* Weekly									

* Think and Respond Questions at end of story (change to include higher level thinking questions from Bloom's Taxonomy).	* Utilize Bloom's Taxonomy flip chart and book questions.	* Weekly
* Read books on best practices regarding Bloom's Taxonomy and QAR	* Read QAR and Bloom's Taxonomy books to increase comprehension through subject matter. *The Literacy Coach will come into the classroom to give a lesson on QAR.	* Ongoing
* Instruction on short answer responses using RARE to answer questions regarding the SF stories and leveled books.	* Utilize SF materials. * Literacy Coach will come into the classroom to give a lesson on RARE.	*Weekly in small group.
* Instruction on Super QAR lessons with 6 booster lessons to reinforce concepts of QAR for higher level thinking questions	* Read super QAR lessons and teacher guide book to reinforce instructional practices.	* February * Booster lessons: (Prior to DCAS).
* Students will use a 2 point and a 4 point rubric to score responses.	* 2 and 4 point rubrics hanging in the classroom for reference.	* Weekly
Professional Development Need: QAR Model Lessons	Professional Development Source: School	
Professional Development Need: RARE Model Lessons	Professional Development Source: School	
Professional Development Need: Differentiated Instruction (small reading groups, tiered, centers)	Professional Development Source: District Office	
Professional Development Need:	Professional Development Source:	
Professional Development Need:	Professional Development Source:	

School-Level Professional Development Overview

District Strategic Plan Goal	Key Priority	Student Population	Professional Development Activity		Target Audience	Evaluation	Cost (Building Budget)
			Focus (Content/Topic)	Format/Type			
Estimated Total Cost from Building Budget							

District Strategic Plan Goal: Identify the Strategic Plan Goal (s) that the Key Priority aligns to or support.

Key Priority: Identify the main focus for school-wide initiatives (i.e. Block scheduling, develop common formative curricular-based assessments, summarization, etc.). Key priorities must align (support) with one of the Red Clay Consolidated School District Strategic Plan Goals. Additional information on Key Priorities can be found in the BLT Manual and PLC Overview and Guidelines.

Student Population: Identify the subgroups the Key Priority will assist in improving their academic achievement. Note: may also include school-wide discipline (i.e. PBS, Cooperative Discipline, etc.)

Professional Development Activity: Identify the Focus (i.e. Block Scheduling) and Format/Type (i.e. workshop, consultant, book study, webinars, etc.) for the PD activity.

Target Audience: Identify the audience for the professional development (i.e. teachers, counselors, administrators, etc.)

Evaluation: Identify the methods that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development (i.e. walkthroughs, student achievement on common formative curricular-based assessments, discipline rates, attendance, etc.)

Cost: Estimate the cost to implement the professional development activity. The funding source will be the building budget.

District Strategic Plan Goal:						
School-wide Professional Development Focus: SMART Goal (Student Achievement):						
Teacher Implementation Objective						
PLANNING		LEARNING AND IMPLEMENTATION		EVALUATION		
Needs Assessment Based on Data	Resources	Professional Development Activities		Teacher Learning Outcomes (Knowledge/Skills) <i>Guskey Level 2</i>	Teacher Practice Outcomes (Behaviors) <i>Guskey Level 4</i>	Student Learning Outcomes <i>Guskey Level 5</i>
		<u>Focus</u> (Content/Topic)	<u>Format/Type</u>			

BLT Monthly Review

School:
Date:
BLT Members in Attendance:
RCCSD Strategic Plan: (List activities/strategies that you have undertaken to support the District's Strategic Plan)
School Success Plan: (List activities/strategies that you have undertaken to support the School's Success Plan)
Knowledge: (What new knowledge about research surrounding the District and School initiatives have you gained and how has this knowledge been transferred to other staff members in the building?)
Accomplishments to date: (List any major accomplishment (s) or significant outcome(s) and any data to support)
Upcoming tasks: (List key tasks that the BLT is going to undertake to improve student achievement in your school)
Challenges: (List any major challenges (actual or anticipated) to you successfully improving student achievement)
Actions to address challenges: (Explain how you plan to overcome the identified challenges)
Professional Development Resources/Support Needed from District: (List any professional development resources/support you need from the District to successfully improve student achievement)
Other Resources/Support Needed: (List other resources/support you need to successfully improve student achievement)

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