

Professional Learning Community Portfolio

Part One

Please Note: Except for the three required activities, your group is free to make choices among the other activities. This part of the PLC process reflects 12 meeting periods. Some of these activities will take more than one meeting to complete. For example, the “Challenging Student” activity will take at least three meetings; several other activities will take at least two meetings. You do not have to complete twelve activities; rather, you need to complete twelve meetings of work on these activities. The number of activities you complete will be governed by which ones your PLC group selects. All responses and work must be kept in your PLC Portfolio, available to be viewed and discussed at any time.

Activity	Required?	Number of Meetings Spent on This Activity	Date Completed
Getting to Know the Members of Your Group	Yes		
What Does Your Room Say about You and Your Instructional Goals	Yes		
Code of Cooperation	Yes		
Routines in the Classroom			
Best Teacher			
What Does Brain Research Say about Teaching and Learning?			
Teen Brains			
Differentiated Instruction			
Making Parent Contacts			
Planning for Open House			
Connecting Your Course to Reality			
Challenging Student			
Integrating Text-Based Writing			
Analyzing Results			

PLC Activity: Getting To Know the Members of your Group

You will be doing some very important educational work with the members of your group, and it is important that you get to know each other; therefore, please answer the following questions and then share your responses with your other group members. The completed sheet should be placed in your PLC portfolio.

1. What led you to become a teacher?
2. What led you to teach in your specific subject area?
3. What is the best thing about being a teacher?
4. What is the greatest obstacle in the teaching profession?
5. What is one belief that you hold about students?
6. What is one belief that you hold about Glasgow High School?

7. If you have or were to have a child, would you want that child to become a teacher? Why or why not?

8. What is one quality that you believe all good teachers share?

9. What do you believe your greatest strength as a teacher is?

10. What is one area of teaching in which you would like to improve?

11. If you were a car, what kind of car would you be? Why?

12. As you discussed each person's answers, what is one interesting thing you learned about each of your group members?

PLC Activity: What Does Your Room Say About You and Your Instructional Goals?

Students gain an impression of you and what type of learning environment you are striving to create by looking around your room. For this activity, you are first going to answer the questions in Part I. Then you are going to visit each group member's classroom and give your honest impressions. The person whose room is being visited will record the other group members' reactions in Part II. At the conclusion of the visits, each person will complete Part III and discuss the results with the group.

Part I: What are you trying to say with your room?

Please answer these two questions before you begin the next part of the activity.

1. What is the impression that you want your room to give to your students?

2. How does the arrangement of the furniture match the kind of teaching you plan to do? (For example, if your class involves a lot of group work, does the arrangement facilitate that?)

Part II: The visitation

Record the observations of your group members about the following topics as they visit your room.

1. What is on the walls? Does what is on the walls link to or enhance instruction in any way?

2. Look around the room. Does it give the students any insight into their teacher/teachers?

PLC Activity: Routines in the Classroom

One of the best practices in teaching is bell to bell instruction. We know that we lose a great deal of instructional time to events such as testing, so it becomes imperative to make the best use of every minute of instructional time that is available each day. One way to save instructional time is to establish smoothly functioning classroom routines. Please reflect on the following questions, writing down your responses and then discussing them with your group members.

1. How do you handle getting your students settled at the start of the period?
2. How do you handle taking attendance and getting it into the computer?
3. How do you handle informing your students of what is on the agenda for each day's class?
4. How do you handle giving out materials such as handouts?
5. How do you handle having your students hand in homework and other assignments?

6. How do you return homework and other assignments?

7. How do you inform students about their homework?

8. How do you accommodate students with special considerations such as ADD?

9. How do you signal transitions from one part of your instructional plan to the next?

10. How do you keep students on task until the end of the period?

What is one good idea you gained from one of your group members about the establishing of routines?

PLC Activity: Code of Cooperation

Jim Hoge, a consultant who specializes in Professional Learning Communities, shared with us his Code of Cooperation. These are a set of guidelines by which people agree to abide in their interaction with each other.

We will be accountable to our agreed upon Code of Cooperation by:

1. Showing support within our school community by acknowledging, welcoming and showing appreciation for all staff members and school activities.
2. Being honest, having integrity and showing trust by affirming each others' strengths and differences, listening empathetically to others, and accepting all.
3. Communicating within the school community in a professional, respectful, efficient, responsive and timely manner.
4. Making a commitment to begin resolution of conflicts in a timely manner (within 24 hours) with the appropriate person, while consistently maintaining professional relationships.
5. Following the platinum rule of meeting each other more than halfway, respecting time constraints of meetings by being on time and fully present, while modeling professionalism in all our words, actions and attitudes.
6. Agreeing to work within the established framework for decision making in our school and striving to consistently improve communication about those decisions.

In your group please discuss each of the six articles in the Code of Cooperation. For each one, indicate whether your group members reached consensus that they could abide by the article, or change the article so that you feel comfortable with it, or recommend that it be omitted. Then propose at least one additional new article that your group believes should be a part of the Code of Cooperation. Please write your own notes on this sheet to include in your portfolio. Your group also needs to complete one copy of the Code of Cooperation Feedback Sheet that should be placed in the mailbox of Jane McFann at the end of your work session so that she may begin to draft a Glasgow Code of Cooperation.

(over)

Code of Cooperation Individual Worksheet

We will be accountable to our agreed upon Code of Cooperation by:

1. Showing support within our school community by acknowledging, welcoming and showing appreciation for all staff members and school activities.

Your reaction:

2. Being honest, having integrity and showing trust by affirming each others' strengths and differences, listening empathetically to others, and accepting all.

Your reaction:

3. Communicating within the school community in a professional, respectful, efficient, responsive and timely manner.

Your reaction:

4. Making a commitment to begin resolution of conflicts in a timely manner (within 24 hours) with the appropriate person, while consistently maintaining professional relationships.

Your reaction:

5. Following the platinum rule of meeting each other more than halfway, respecting time constraints of meetings by being on time and fully present, while modeling professionalism in all our words, actions and attitudes.

Your reaction:

6. Agreeing to work within the established framework for decision making in our school and striving to consistently improve communication about those decisions.

Your reaction:

Code of Cooperation Feedback Sheet

Please complete one of these for your group. Turn in to Jane McFann's mailbox at the end of your meeting.

Names of your group members:

We will be accountable to our agreed upon Code of Cooperation by:

1. Showing support within our school community by acknowledging, welcoming and showing appreciation for all staff members and school activities.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

2. Being honest, having integrity and showing trust by affirming each others' strengths and differences, listening empathetically to others, and accepting all.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

3. Communicating within the school community in a professional, respectful, efficient, responsive and timely manner.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

4. Making a commitment to begin resolution of conflicts in a timely manner (within 24 hours) with the appropriate person, while consistently maintaining professional relationships.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

5. Following the platinum rule of meeting each other more than halfway, respecting time constraints of meetings by being on time and fully present, while modeling professionalism in all our words, actions and attitudes.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

6. Agreeing to work within the established framework for decision making in our school and striving to consistently improve communication about those decisions.

- **We can abide by this**
Or
- **We recommend the indicated change in wording**
OR
- **We recommend dropping this article**

We recommend the addition of the following article for a Glasgow High School Code of Cooperation:

PLC Activity: Best Teacher

One of the most powerful ways to reflect on good teaching is to think back through all of the teachers you have had, from the earliest days of your education through to the most recent. What one person was your best or most influential teacher? What made that person so special?

Step I: Your task is to write about that person in as much detail as possible for approximately 20 minutes. Attach your response to this sheet and include it in your PLC portfolio.

Step II: Now read your description to the other group members.

Step III: After listening to all of your group's descriptions, what traits did these special teachers share? List them below.

1.

2.

3.

PLC Activity: What Does Brain Research Say About Teaching and Learning?

Please read the attached section from Designing Brain Compatible Learning by Terence Parry and Gayle Gregory (SkyLight Professional Development, 2003). Then discuss in your group at least five ideas from this research that you might apply in your classroom.

Five ideas from this research that you might apply in your classroom:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

PLC Activity: Teen Brains

Part I: Please read this brief article from The News Journal that makes mention of the research on the under-developed frontal lobes.

Part II: Please answer and discuss the following questions:

1. The first recommendation is to “be there for them.” How might this translate into the classroom?
2. The second recommendation is “don’t be their friend.” Reflect on and discuss the line between teacher and friend in the classroom. What are the hazards of being too friendly? Not friendly enough?
3. The third recommendation is to “talk to them over and over.” How does that translate into the classroom?
4. Does it make you feel better to know that your students’ frontal lobes are still works in progress? Why or why not?

PLC Activity: Differentiated Instruction

Being able to differentiate instruction – to have varying assignments based on students’ skills, learning styles, or interest, for example – can make your classroom a more engaging and effective learning place.

STEP 1: Choose an assignment that you have used or plan to use that is not differentiated; that is, it asks all students to do the exact same assignment.

STEP 2: Discuss with your PLC members options for differentiating that assignment. This could be something as simple as giving homework options or essay topic choices to something as complex as providing different stations for students to visit or different reading assignments. Make notes about your ideas and your colleagues’ suggestions.

STEP 3: Now actually make the changes on your assignment. Rewrite what you will give to your students or write your differentiated lesson plan. Include a copy of your final copy here as a part of your PLC portfolio.

STEP 4: Discuss your revised lesson with your PLC members and get their feedback. Note their reactions here.

Note: This activity will probably take at least two sessions.

PLC Activity: Making Parent Contacts

Often teachers hesitate to make phone calls for a variety of reasons, including a fear of the unknown: what will they hear from the other end? Will the parent or guardian be hostile or unhelpful? Will the student's version have created a bias in the parent or guardian's mind? Often, however, those fears are unfounded, and teacher-parent contact becomes one of the most powerful tools in enhancing a student's academic achievement.

PART I: Discuss with your group members some of the experiences they have had making parent phone calls. New teachers can discuss what concerns they have about making calls home. Note some of your group's points.

PART II: Choose one student whose parents you will call. Please note that you may call for positive reasons (to praise a student's excellent work or cooperative attitude) as well as because of academic or behavioral concerns. Discuss with your group the reasons for selecting the student you did, and note them below.

PART III: Discuss and note below the points you want to make in the parent phone call.

PART IV: Make the phone call. Make notes below about what occurs during it.

PART V: Discuss with your group members how your phone calls went. Note comments here.

FOLLOW-UP: Did your phone call create any noticeable changes in or reactions from the student whose family you called? Add some notes to finish the activity.

Note: This activity will take more than one PLC session to complete.

PLC Activity: Planning for Open House

Glasgow High School's Open House occurs on September 20, and it provides an opportunity for parents/guardians to get a quick yet important view of their students' teachers as they move through a shortened version of their student's schedule.

Please discuss and make notes about the following:

1. How can you encourage more of your students' parents/guardians to attend our Open House?
2. What do you plan to communicate to the parents/guardians? What are the most important things for them to know about you and your class?
3. Do you want to give them a handout of any kind? If so, what?
4. As the parents/guardians leave at the end of Open House, what are three things you would like for them to remember about you?

PLC Activity: Connecting Your Course to Reality

Sometimes that perennial student question, “Why do we have to learn this?” really does reflect an inability of students to connect what they are learning to a purpose for gaining that knowledge. For example, if students are being taught linear equations in tenth grade and the only reason they are given for learning about them is that they’ll need to know about them for calculus in twelfth grade, that might not inspire some of the not-so-motivated budding mathematicians. However, if they are shown that linear equations can be used to understand which cell phone minutes plan is actually the most cost-effective or to gain insight into the statistics of their favorite athlete, the knowledge might become more relevant.

Part I: Select a topic that you know you will teach this year. Explain it briefly to your group members and note it below.

Part II: With your group members, brainstorm ways that you could help students relate your topic to the real world.

Part III: Indicate how you are going to integrate these connections into your presentation of the topic.

PLC Activity: Challenging Student

DAY ONE:

Part I: Choose one student you teach who is challenging for you. Please note that this could be for a variety of reasons, not all of them behavioral. Describe the student to your group members, focusing on the specific behaviors that the student demonstrates in your class. Provide a brief description here. Do not use the student's actual name.

Part II: Your goal is to observe this student in another teacher's class. Check the student's schedule and figure out a time, either during your PLC time or during your personal planning time (which you replace with your PLC time on the day you carry out the observation) when you could observe this student in a different classroom. Contact the teacher and ask permission to observe, emphasizing that you are observing the student, not the teacher.

Part III: Now discuss with your group members and note below exactly what you want to observe. For example, do you want to focus on rate of engagement? Interaction of the student with the teacher? Interaction of the student with other students? Focus your observation on what makes the student challenging in your own classroom.

Part IV: Now, with the input of your group members, create an observation form that will help you focus your observation.

Day 2

Part V: Now carry out a one-period observation. Include your observation notes in your PLC portfolio.

Day 3

Part VI: Discuss with your group members and note below what you learned about your challenging student by observing him or her in a different class.

Part VII: Did you learn anything about your challenging student that might help you teach him or her more effectively? Discuss and note your conclusions below.

PLC Activity: Integrating Text-Based Writing

Glasgow High School's DSTP data shows us that we still have a lot of work to do to on helping students with test-based writing. This means that students need to be given text, literary or informational, and then asked to use information gained from that text in a writing task. (For example, students could be given data showing a wide range of statistics about the population in New Castle County and then asked to write a letter arguing either for a new elementary school or for new housing for people 55 and older.)

Part I: Choose an assignment that you use or plan to create that at present does not include a text-based writing component. Discuss it with your group members; either describe the assignment below or attach a copy.

Part II: Discuss with your group members possibilities for adding a text-based writing component to your assignment. Make notes below.

Part III: Create the text-based assignment. Show your group members what you have designed. Include a copy in your PLC portfolio.

PLC Activity: Analyzing Results

As teachers we create and assess a wide variety of assignments. Now it is time to step back and do an analysis of the results of one of these assignments.

Part I: Choose an assignment that you recently gave. It could be a quiz, test, writing assignment, homework assignment, or anything else that produced student results. Bring a copy of the assignment as well as the results that you collected from one class of students.

Part II: Discuss with your PLC members the results that you got. Some possibilities for analysis include:

Grade breakdown: How were the grades distributed?

Item goals: what were you assessing with each item?

Item analysis: what was the rate of student performance item by item? Did some items create more difficulty for students than others?

Part III: Now comes the really important part: what are the implications of the results for teaching? Are there areas that you need to re-teach? Are there individual students who need remediation? Is what you were assessing critical to their ability to successfully move ahead in your course? What have your students learned? What have you learned? Discuss with your group members and create a plan for moving forward in your instruction.

