

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES OF TEACHERS

DO YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER TEACHERS?

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE EXCITING STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY?

DO YOU WANT TO BE MORE PROFESSIONAL IN YOUR WORK AND IMPROVE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN EDUCATION?



THEN JOIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY! OR START ONE IN YOUR AREA!

WHAT IS A PLC?

A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of professionals who decide to come together regularly to learn with and from each other on professional development needs they have identified themselves.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) considers PLCs to be an effective way to do professional development as explained in the Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED 2011-2025): PLCs allow educators to take responsibility for their own professional development with the support and encouragement of district officials and leadership from participating schools.

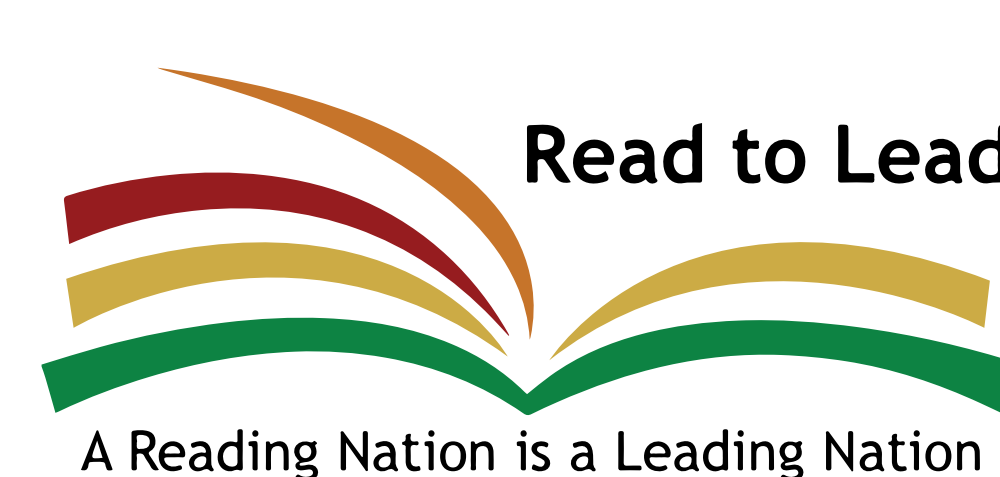
PLCs are a strategy for professional development which allows all steps in the learning process (shown below) to take place. Currently, professional development is usually offered in the format of workshops or training sessions. Such professional development can help teachers to develop awareness and build professional knowledge, but doesn't allow teachers to practice this new knowledge in their daily work. PLCs, on the contrary, create opportunities for trying out new skills and approaches in a safe environment. Teachers can reflect on current and new approaches and the impact on their work.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN A PLC?

In a PLC, teachers choose what they want to focus on, and this can change with time. You can develop lesson plans together, share teaching strategies on reading, writing and other topics, develop teaching resources, etc. It does not always have to be subject based. You can also focus on aspects of teaching such as discipline, supporting learners with learning barriers, classroom management techniques, etc.



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WHAT ARE KEY ELEMENTS THAT MAKE PLCS EFFECTIVE?

- PLCs are a bottom-up, teacher-driven strategy.
- They are needs-based and therefore authentic, relevant and immediately useful.
- They need active nurturing.
- To sustain them, support is crucial.
- The support needs to be tailor-made and cannot be cast in stone.



SACE CPTD POINTS

SACE requires that educators participate in Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD). Participating in a PLC will earn you CPTD points which can be recorded in the SACE CPTD Management System.



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WHAT CAN I DO AS A TEACHER TO START A PLC?

You may know of teachers that are interested in sharing and collaborating as professionals. When you have the opportunity, discuss your idea to start a PLC with other teachers. These could be teachers from your own school and/or teachers from other schools. You can invite interested teachers to a first session, either directly or through your district officials. Secure the venue for your first session, for example with the leadership of the school.



THE FIRST PLC SESSION

1. At your first session you can explain:
 - a. The concept of a PLC. You can emphasise that a PLC is a professional development approach that is recognised and encouraged by the department and by SACE. Participation is voluntary.
 - b. That teachers can earn CPTD points by participating in PLC sessions. The provincial coordinator of SACE can assist you with more information.
 - c. That teachers in the PLC choose what topics they want to discuss depending on their own needs;
 - d. Different activities that can be done in a PLC, e.g. sharing teaching strategies for different types of lessons, preparing lesson plans, error analysis, preparing and sharing teaching resources, inviting experts for input on different topics, etc.
2. As a group, agree on the focus of the PLC. You can brainstorm and decide on some topics that you will deal with in the first sessions.
3. Decide how often you will meet and where. Venues can be rotated. Draw up a schedule for your sessions. Decide on the dates for at least a term.
4. Discuss roles and choose a coordinator and/or facilitator. These roles can rotate among members.
5. Keep in mind that engagement is usually optimal when your PLC has between 5 and 15 members.



**HAVE YOUR FIRST SESSION,
AND YOU ARE SET TO HAVE
YOUR OWN PLC!**



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FACILITATING A PLC

Facilitating a PLC entails a variety of tasks. Combining these tasks is a balancing act and it is important that you find the mix that works for your PLC and in your context.

COORDINATING:

The logistics of bringing people together; planning and structuring the PLC sessions.

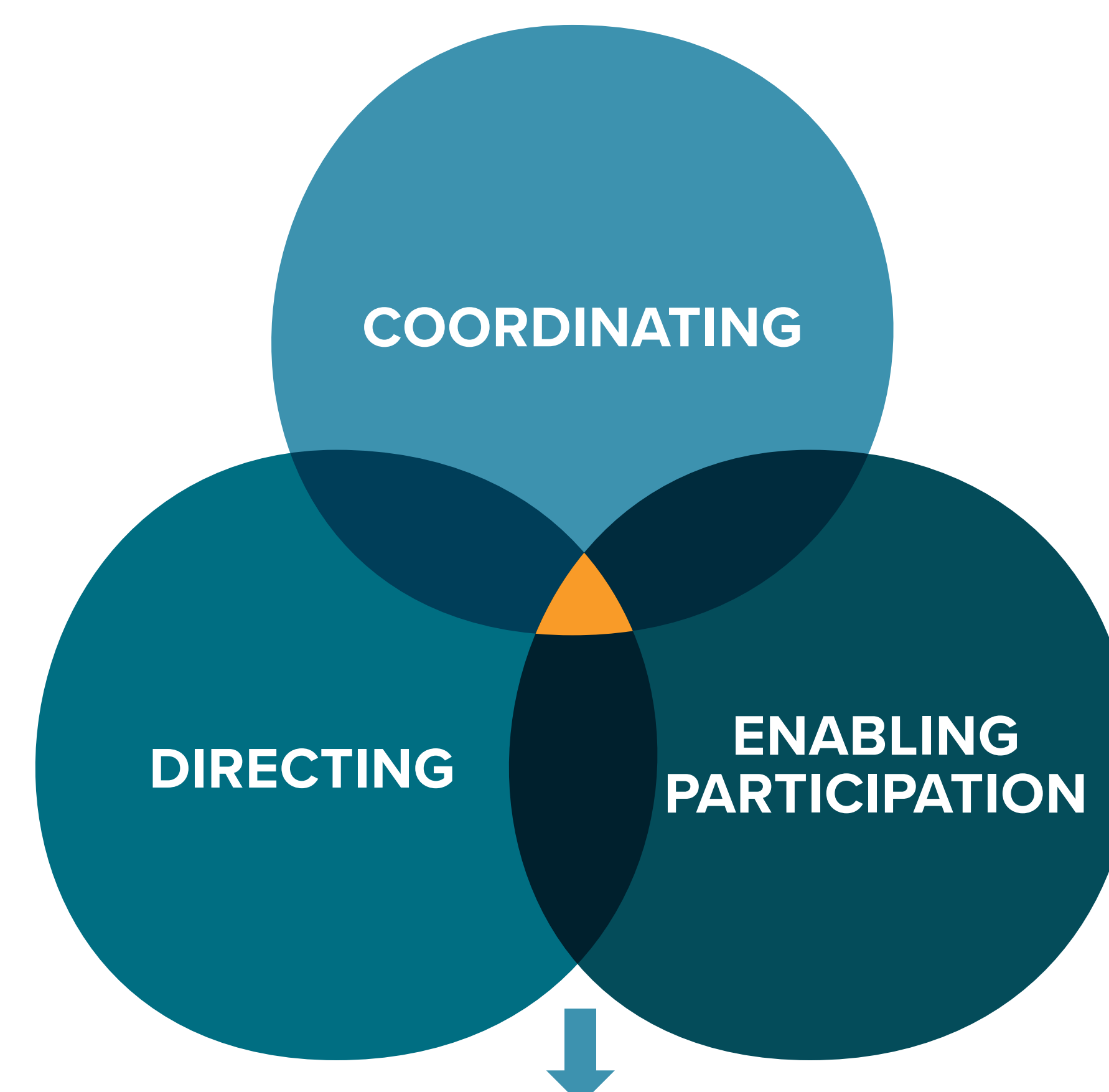
DIRECTING:

keeping the group focused and disciplined; ensuring orderly proceedings. Holding all members accountable for progress in their learning.

ENABLING PARTICIPATION:

motivate teachers to join the PLC; ensuring everyone has voice and shares challenges, insights and good practices. Building professional and collaborative learning. Stimulating group- and self-reflection. Soliciting support from leadership and relevant experts.

BALANCING ACT!
FINDING THE MIX THAT WORKS FOR YOU.



COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN A PLC

IMPROVING THE LEARNING OF ALL LEARNERS

ADMINISTRATION OF YOUR PLC

- Keep a record of attendance through a register that is signed at every session.
- These registers must eventually be given to the manager of your District Teacher Development Centre (DTDC).
- Each member should keep a file of the materials and resources shared in the sessions of the PLC. These records can be used when logging activities in the SACE CPTD system.



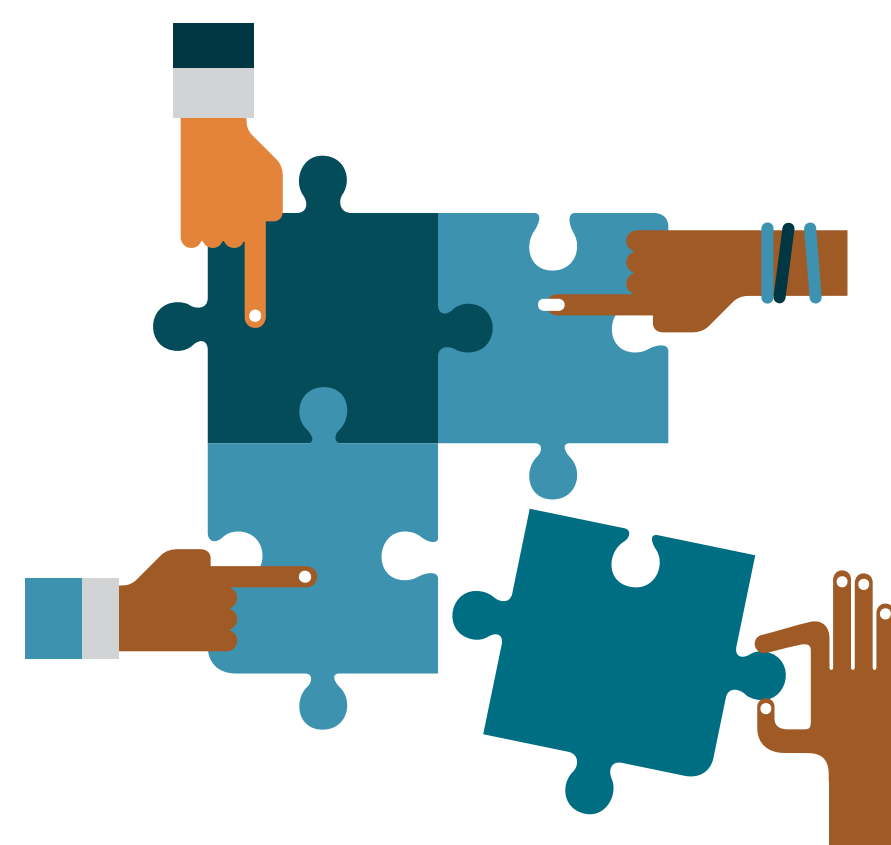
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WHY SCHOOL LEADERS MUST SUPPORT PLCs

YOUR SCHOOL, A LEARNING ORGANISATION

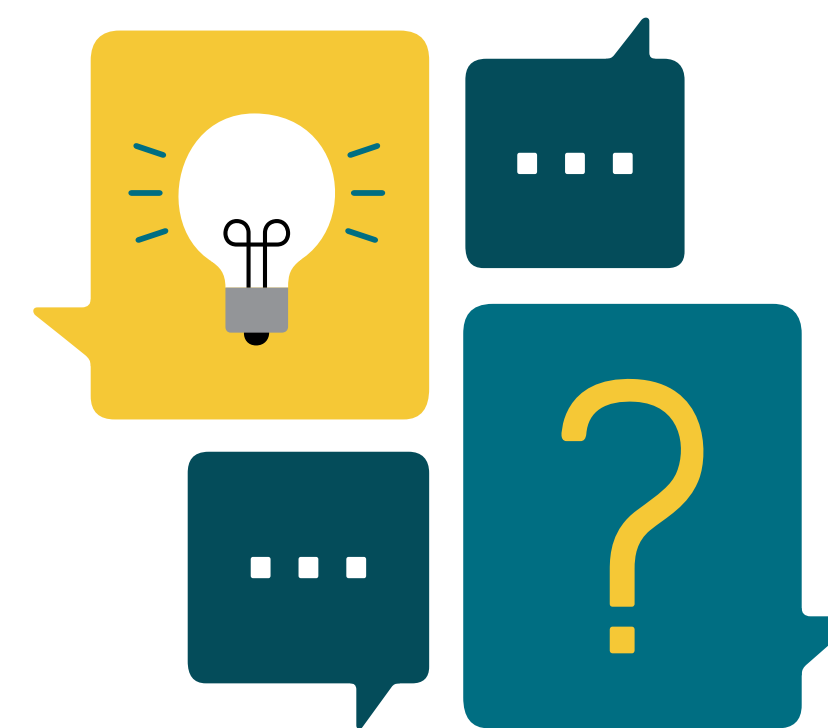
Your leadership can motivate teachers to follow on your footsteps and participate in PLCs as well. Peer learning and collaboration amongst teachers is amongst the highest indicators of effectiveness in teachers' development. It allows teachers to learn from colleagues, transfer that knowledge to their classroom practice, and be reflective about what they've learnt. As school leader, you can create a culture of collaborative learning in your school. You can give teachers encouragement and your practical support to establish and engage in PLCs, either within the school, or with teachers from other schools. For example, you can provide space and time for a PLC to meet; you can celebrate successes by giving a PLC opportunities to share their learning and progress with others.



Collective responsibility for student learning.



Mutual trust and respect.



Challenge each other with ideas and questions.

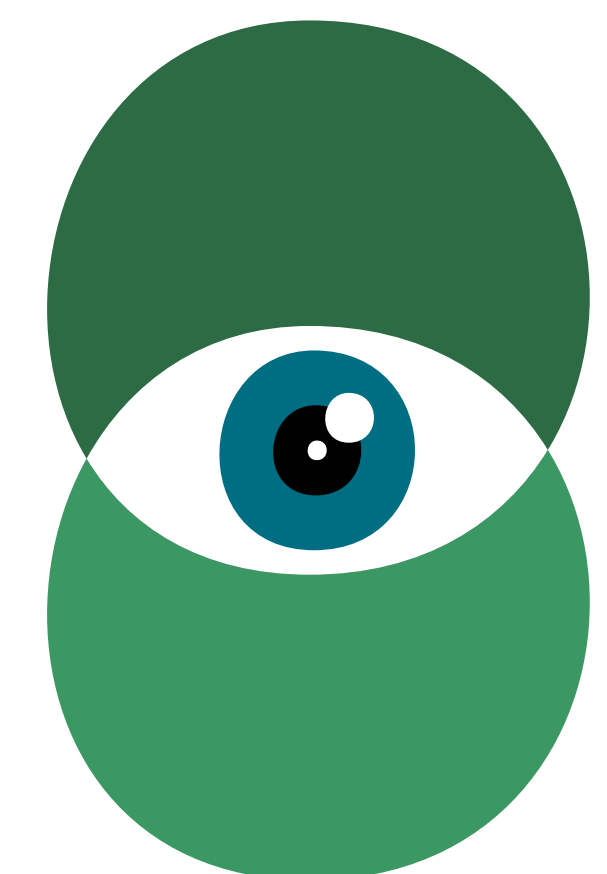


We reflect on our practice, together.

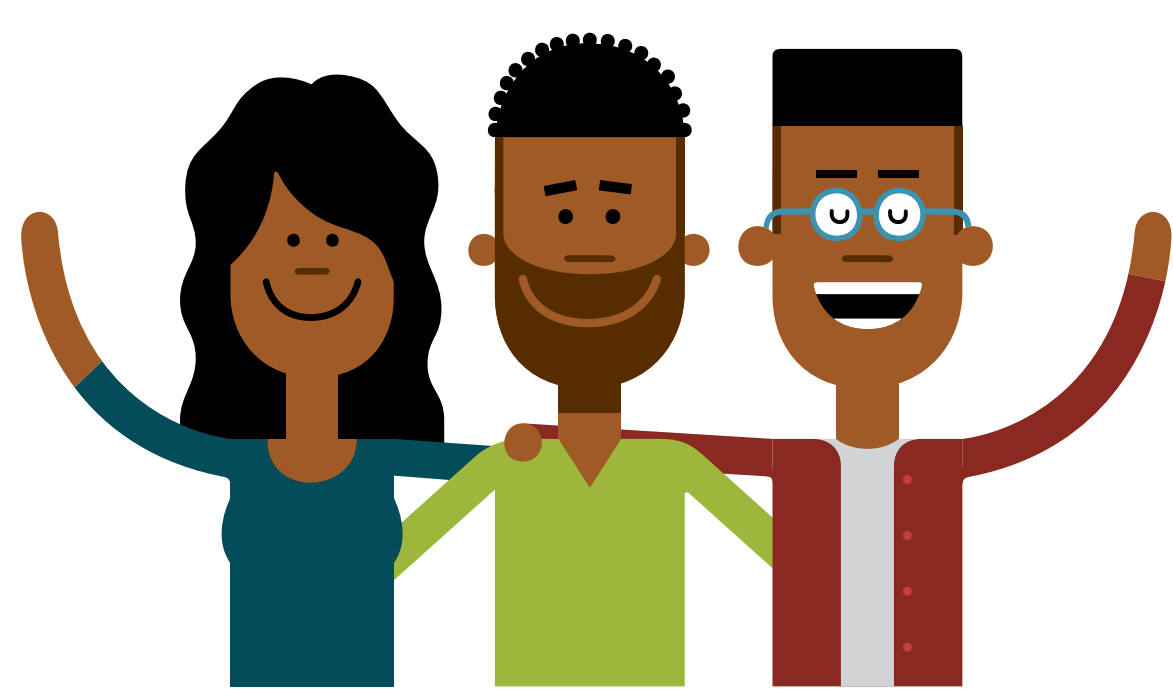


We come together regularly - and keep in touch inbetween.

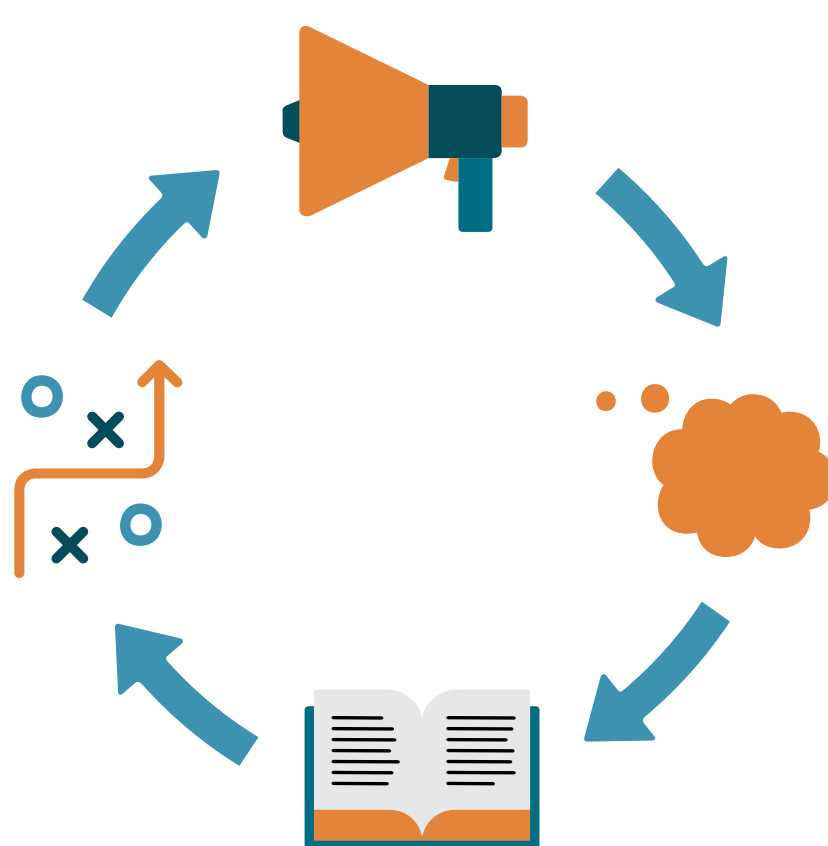
THE TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A PLC



Shared vision to ensure learning by all learners.



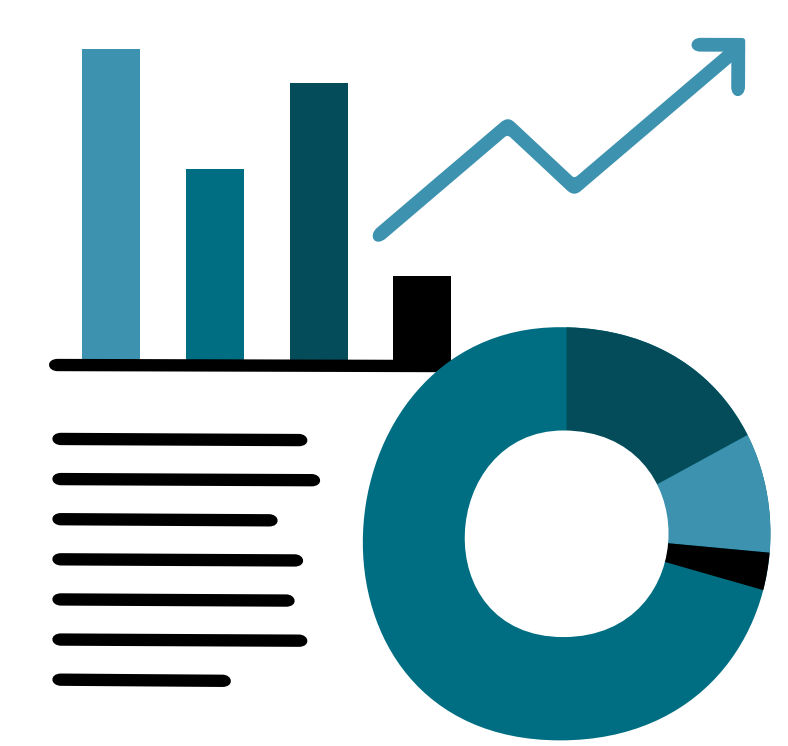
Inclusive membership. Diversity is an asset that builds our practice.



We apply what we learn and reflect on it the next time we meet.



Shared leadership in the PLC.



Systematic and rigorous. We use data to help in reflection.



“MY PLC IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS FOR ME TO LEARN, BECAUSE WE ARE A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DISCUSS REAL MATTERS THAT WE COME ACROSS IN OUR CLASSES - THE CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE FACED WITH EACH AND EVERY DAY.”

PLC PARTICIPANT MOTHEO



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