

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?



You can scan this QR code with your device to read the DBE guideline: Professional Learning Communities: A guideline for South African Schools.



You can scan this QR code to view video clips on PLCs, based on the experiences of South African educators.

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DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

OUR SCHOOLS – LEARNING ORGANISATIONS

OCTOBER 2019

DISTRICT OFFICIALS

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.

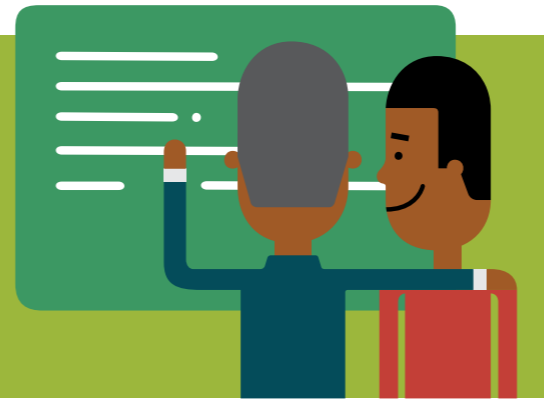
The Department of Basic Education (DBE) considers PLCs to be an effective way to do professional development as explained in the Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED 2011-2025): PLCs allow educators to take responsibility for their own professional development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



HOW DOES A PLC HELP EDUCATORS?

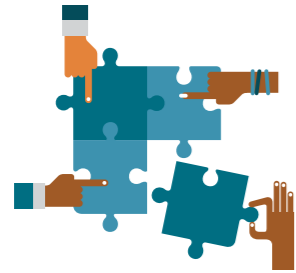
- A cost-effective and needs-driven approach for professional development.
- Leads to improved learning outcomes, educators' practices and educators' confidence.
- Can be an important part of a new educator's induction.
- Earns Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points that can be recorded in the SACE CPTD Management System.



HOW CAN DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT PLCs?

PLCs are needs-driven and require autonomy of educators, but there are things you can do to encourage, support and strengthen by:

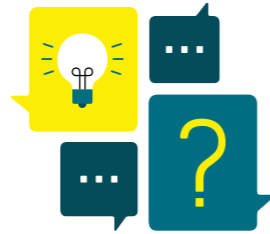
- Integrating PLCs in your professional development activities with educators. This can help them to try out new skills and approaches in a safe professional environment.
- Encouraging external trainers to do the same.
- Bringing educators of one or several schools (facing similar challenges) in touch with each other.
- Suggesting relevant external experts or schools with good practices that the PLC can learn from.
- Actively participating and contributing in relevant PLCs sessions.
- Ensuring that successes of PLCs are acknowledged and celebrated. For example, you can ask PLC members to present their learnings and progress with other educators.
- Offering practical support. For example:
 - Discuss with the school(s)' leadership how timetables can accommodate PLC sessions;
 - Provide a space for a PLC to meet;
 - Provide resources (e.g. access to internet for research purposes; stationery, transport).



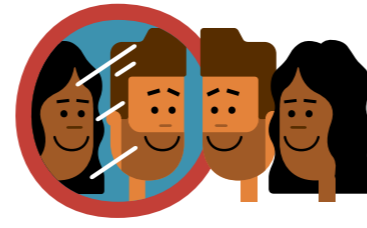
Collective responsibility for student learning.



Mutual trust and respect.



Challenge each other with ideas and questions.



We reflect on our practice, together.

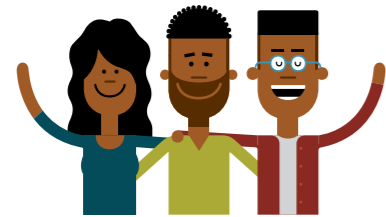


We come together regularly - and keep in touch inbetween.

THE TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A PLC



Shared vision to ensure learning by all learners.



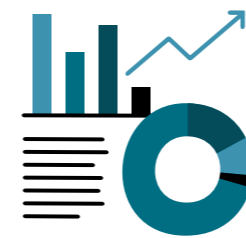
Inclusive membership. Diversity is an asset that builds our practice.



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.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN A FIRST PLC SESSION?

- If needed, you can help build understanding around PLCs. For example: the concept of a PLC, and CPTD points.
- You can give advice on 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.
- You can advise the PLC to agree on a focus and decide on some topics for the next sessions.
- You can ask the PLC to consider how often they will meet and where. They can draw up a schedule for the sessions for the coming term.
- If needed, help the PLC to consider different roles that are needed for a sustained and successful PLC. For example, a facilitator for the sessions, a coordinator, a notetaker...
- Ask the PLC to keep a record of attendance through a register that is signed at every session as this register is needed by the District Teacher Development Centre (DTDC) manager.
- 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.

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 tailored and cannot be cast in stone.

“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.”