

# Building Our PLC Foundation

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JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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SAM FURTO AND STACY VESLING



## Background Leading to this Inquiry

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- Corporation goal to increase consistency across 5 elementary buildings
- Preliminary attempt to begin PLCs in 2020-2021 school year
- Formal training for admin beginning April 2021, staff Sept 2021 using *Learning by Doing* (Dufour et al., 2016)
- Many other initiatives are jumping or will jump from the PLC work



# Purpose of this Inquiry

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Therefore, the purpose of our inquiry was to build capacity and understanding at Jackson Elementary by carefully laying the foundations of our building PLC in order to support future initiatives, such as building a guaranteed, viable curriculum.

# Our Wondering

With this purpose, we wondered how could we engage our staff in purposeful activities to create capacity and understanding while also uniting the staff with a common purpose that will underlie and support future building and corporation initiatives?

# Our Actions

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- Administrator all-day PD on PLCs: April 14, May 26, June 15, August 2
- Analysis of HRS Level 1 data for low scores that align with our PLC initiative
  - 1.3: Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives
  - 1.4: Teacher teams and collaborative groups meet regularly to interact and address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students
  - 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school

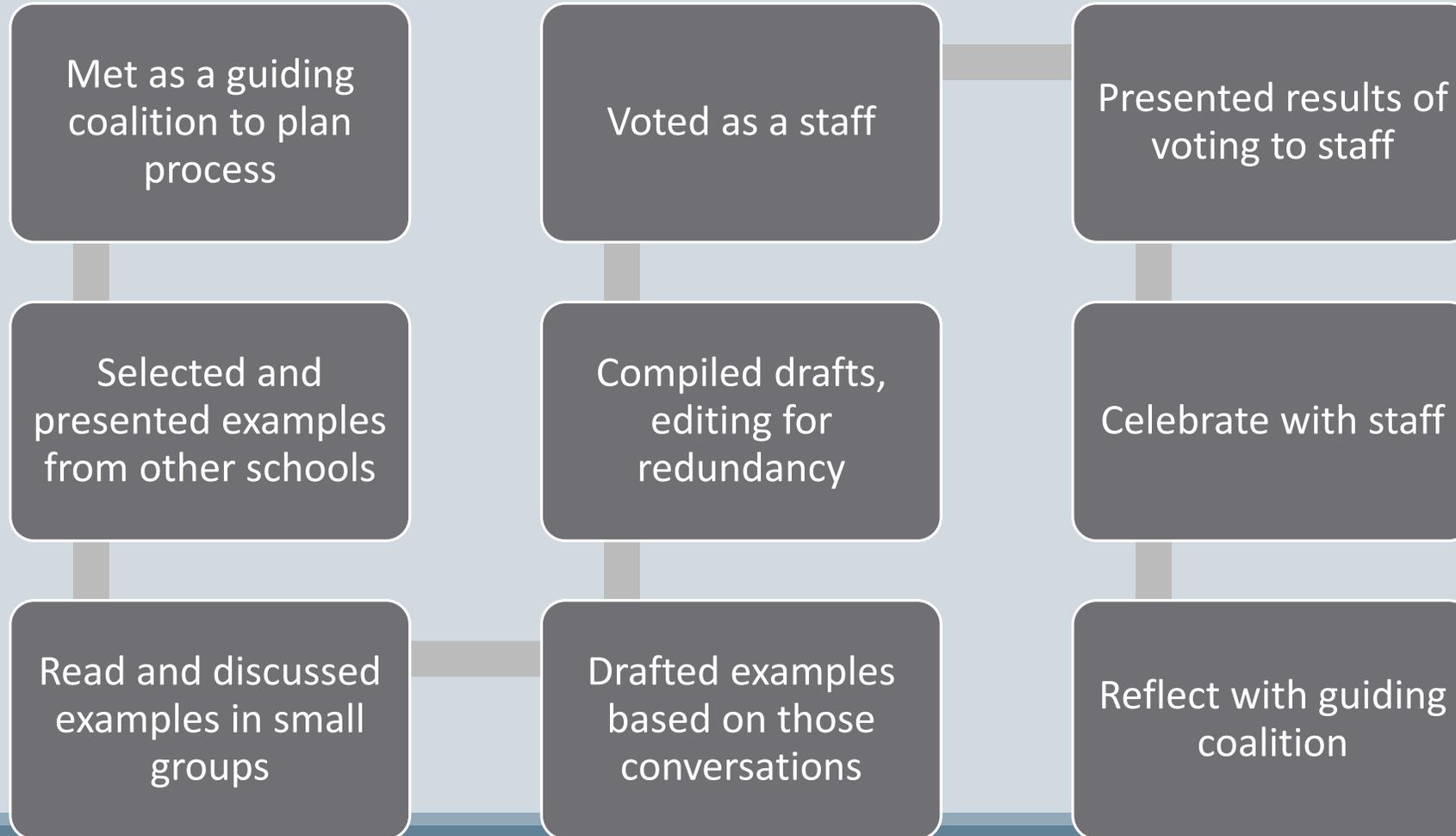
# Our Actions

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- Reorganized building leadership
  - Positions paid by stipend existed in one group prior to this
  - Added a “Guiding Coalition”: Principal, Instructional Coach, Reading Specialist, 3 classroom teachers
- PD with Guiding Coalition: Oct 18/19, (January sessions postponed due to COVID), March 1/2, upcoming May 17/18
- Built capacity and understanding through regular meetings and discussions with staff
  - Mission statement
  - Vision statement
  - Collective commitments

# Our Actions (A Generalized Process)

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# Data Collection

## Collective Commitments:

In order to achieve our vision, the staff of Jackson Elementary School has made the following collective commitments:

- We will create a physically and emotionally safe school environment students want to be in every day by modeling and teaching empathy, compassion, and self-awareness.
- We believe in Jackson's culture, and we will teach students to protect and to promote it by looking for opportunities to positively impact their classrooms, school, families, and community.
- We will encourage a love of reading by meeting our students at their level and addressing their individual reading needs.
- We will help students to grow as problem solvers through effective modeling and extensive practice opportunities.
- We will teach students to be independent thinkers capable of explaining and supporting their thinking, both verbally and in writing.
- We will be responsive teachers to all types of learners by monitoring each student's learning on an ongoing basis through formative assessments. We will use evidence of student learning to inform and improve instruction to better meet the needs of individual students.
- We will engage in continuous collaboration with all staff members, seeking continuous improvement while holding each other mutually accountable to meeting the needs of all learners.
- We will be proactive communicators with parents to ensure they have every resource available to support their student at home.

## Vision:

Jackson Elementary School inspires students to become innovative thinkers who adapt to our changing world

## Mission:

Jackson Elementary School, in partnership with all components of the community, will ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment for all learners. We are committed to creating and maintaining a responsive, child-centered learning environment in which students will acquire the knowledge and skills to be productive, lifelong learners by building upon students' individual abilities to reach their greatest potential.

## Jackson Collective Commitments, 1.6.22

We previously met to agree on schoolwide mission and vision statements. At our last meeting, we used Padlet to generate potential commitments that we might be willing to make as part of this step of the process we are going through to lay the foundation for our PLC. As people contributed, I asked that people use the upvote feature to draw attention to commitments that others liked.

After that meeting, I copied all of the suggestions from Padlet into a document, tallying and ranking those with the most votes at the top. There was a great deal of overlap, so I tried to combine suggestions and incorporate phrases as seemed appropriate. After that, the guiding coalition reviewed the commitments, suggested several rewrites, and we are now ready to share everything with the staff.

### Directions:

Please review the following collective commitments. If you are comfortable with affirming the suggested statement as a commitment we can make, please mark Yes. If you are not, please mark No.

Any statement that the votes show would not represent the combined will of the staff will be tabled until the future.

As a note, we intend to review mission, vision, and collective commitments yearly, so there is always the chance to make new decisions in the future, either by adding, deleting or rewording items.

We will create a physically and emotionally safe school environment students want to be in every day by modeling and teaching empathy, compassion, and self-awareness. \*

Yes

# Data Collection

## Feedback on Building Initiatives for IPLI

After reflecting on some of the building-level PLC initiatives we have pursued this year (establishing a PLC guiding coalition, rewriting the mission statement, writing a vision statement, brainstorming and agreeing on collective commitments, etc.), please answer the following questions.

Mrs. Vesling, Miss Furto, and I will use the results of the surveys to assess and comment on our initiatives during our presentation at IPLI on April 12.



smarshall@duneland.k12.in.us (not shared) [Switch account](#)



Collaborating as a building to rewrite Jackson's mission statement was a valuable exercise.

**Mission:**

Jackson Elementary School, in partnership with all components of the community, will ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment for all learners. We are committed to creating and maintaining a responsive, child-centered learning environment in which students will acquire the knowledge and skills to be productive, lifelong learners by building upon students' individual abilities to reach their greatest potential.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

# Our Data

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Leading Indicator 1.3: Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.

	Starting Mean	Current Mean	Starting Std. Deviation	Current Std. Deviation
It is clear which types of decisions will be made with direct teacher input.	3.57	4.37	1.09	0.68
Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis.	4.05	4.37	0.82	0.68
Notes and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions.	3.55	3.78	1.20	0.81
Electronic tools are used to collect teachers' opinions regarding specific decisions.	4.32	4.42	0.55	0.69
Groups of teachers are targeted to provide input regarding specific decisions.	4.14	4.32	0.87	0.75

# Our Data

Leading Indicator 1.4: Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.

	Starting Mean	Current Mean	Starting Std. Deviation	Current Std. Deviation
A professional learning community (PLC process is in place in our school.	4.45	4.63	0.58	0.83
Our school's PLC collaborative teams have written goals.	4.00	4.63	0.87	0.68
School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals.	3.95	4.26	0.79	0.99
Our school's PLC collaborative teams create common assessments.	3.35	3.84	1.15	1.07
Our school's PLC collaborative teams analyze student achievement and growth.	3.82	4.32	0.89	0.75
Data teams are in place in our school.	3.86	4.32	0.94	0.89
Our school's data teams have written goals.	3.44	3.68	1.01	0.95
School leaders regularly examine data teams' progress toward their goals.	3.58	3.79	1.04	0.98
School leaders collect and review minutes and notes from PLC collaborative team and data team meetings to ensure that teams are focusing on student achievement.	3.53	4.42	1.04	0.77

# Our Data

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Leading Indicator 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.

	Starting Mean	Current Mean	Starting Std. Deviation	Current Std. Deviation
Data collection systems are in place to collect opinion data from teachers and staff regarding the optimal functioning of our school.	3.50	3.68	1.23	0.89
Opinion data collected from teachers and staff are archived.	3.67	3.53	1.01	0.84
Reports of opinion data from teachers and staff are regularly generated.	3.31	3.47	1.04	0.84
The manner in which data from teachers and staff are used is transparent.	3.05	3.53	1.19	1.02
Our school improvement team regularly provides feedback about our school's improvement plan.	3.48	3.79	1.01	1.08

# Our Data

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- Collaborating as a building to rewrite Jackson's mission statement was a valuable exercise.
  - 4.95/5.00
- Collaborating as a building to write Jackson's vision statement was a valuable exercise.
  - 4.84/5.00
- Collaborating as a building to brainstorm, write, and agree on collective commitments was a valuable exercise.
  - 4.84/5.00

# Our Discoveries

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**Learning Statement One:** Overall, our staff was able to build capacity and understanding through our work laying the foundation of our PLC.

**Learning Statement Two:** Despite our change in leadership structure and our increased use of survey data, our scores remain low in leading indicator 1.5.

**Learning Statement Three:** What seems like a simple process takes far longer than we anticipated.

# Our Discoveries

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**Learning Statement One:** Overall, our staff was able to build capacity and understanding through our work laying the foundation of our PLC.

Responses were nearly universal that we engaged in useful exercises this year. Moreover, we saw an increase in mean scores for all three tracked leading indicators.

- Leading Indicator 1.3
  - Started 3.93, now 4.25/5.00
- Leading Indicator 1.4
  - Started 3.78, now 4.21/5.00
- Leading Indicator 1.5
  - Started 3.40, now 3.60/5.00

# Our Discoveries

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**Learning Statement Two:** Despite our change in leadership structure and our increased use of survey data, our scores remain low in leading indicator 1.5.

We only increased our score in leading indicator 1.5 from 3.40/5.00 to 3.60/5.00. We surveyed and made use of the survey data more than in the past three years. We have involved more staff in leadership than at any time in the past. Given this, we thought we would see a greater increase here than we did. Perhaps those not selected to be part of the guiding coalition are unhappy with this new leadership structure.

# Our Discoveries

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**Learning Statement Three:** What seems like a simple process takes far longer than we anticipated.

In our guiding coalition meetings, we thought we could do the work highlighted here in less than four weeks; it took closer to 10 weeks. It is difficult to focus on a task like this while simultaneously balancing other initiatives and the challenges of the pandemic.

# Where We Are Heading Next

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We will continue to build understanding of purpose and role of the guiding coalition in our PLC work. We are proud of the work these building-leaders have done this year to move us forward. We are excited to see them to continue developing both individually and as a group.

We would like to begin work on HRS Level 2 by creating a schoolwide instructional model, as 44% of our classroom teachers have been with us less than three years and we are expecting to lose two more experienced staff members at the end of this year. We think doing this will help with setting clear expectations for all staff, minimizing confusion and allowing us to focus more on teaching and learning.

# Bibliography

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DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. and Mattos, M., 2016. *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. 3rd ed. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.



## Building Our PLC Foundation

**Principal Name:** Sam Marshall

**School Name:** Jackson Elementary School

**Team Members' Names:** Samantha Furto, Stacy Vesling

**Principal's Email Contact:** smarshall@duneland.k12.in.us

### **Background Leading to Our Inquiry (Slide 2)**

This is my third year at Jackson Elementary School. As a corporation, we have been working diligently to increase consistency and equity across our five elementary buildings. We made a preliminary attempt to begin professional learning communities (PLCs) during the 2020-2021 school year. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, it was not as successful as we hoped.

In April 2021, a trainer came in to help administrators prepare to try PLC implementation again over four all-day sessions. Staff training began in September 2021 using *Learning by Doing* (Dufour et al., 2016). It is crucial that we build a strong foundation for our PLC because many other corporation initiatives are jumping or will jump from our PLC work.

### **The Purpose of Our Inquiry (Slide 3)**

Therefore, the purpose of our inquiry was to build capacity and understanding at Jackson Elementary by carefully laying the foundations of our building PLC in order to support future initiatives, such as building a guaranteed, viable curriculum.

### **Our Wondering (Slide 4)**

With this purpose, we wondered how could we engage our staff in purposeful activities to create capacity and understanding while also uniting the staff with a common purpose that will underlie and support future building and corporation initiatives?

### **Our Actions (Slide 5-7)**

We began with four days of all-day professional development for all corporation administrators on PLCs with a professional trainer from Solution Tree. Once we had the HRS Level 1 data, we met to examine our data. Our results showed low scores in the following Leading Indicators:

- 1.3: Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives
- 1.4: Teacher teams and collaborative groups meet regularly to interact and address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students

- 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school

In conjunction with our training, we reorganized our building leadership. We added a “guiding coalition” with the principal, the instructional coach, the reading specialist, and three classroom teachers. These individuals were selected based on their interest in pushing forward initiatives that will improve the building. Our guiding coalition attended all-day PLC training on Oct 18-19 and again on March 1-2; we were to have an additional pair of days in January that were postponed due to the pandemic.

We made regular progress with building capacity and understanding through regular meetings and discussions with staff. We also engaged in rewriting our mission statement, vision statement, and agreeing on collective commitments as a staff.

In general, we followed this process for each step:

- Met as a guiding coalition to create each step
- Selected and presented examples from other schools
- Read and discussed examples in small groups
- Drafted examples based on those conversations
- Compiled drafts, editing for redundancy
- Voted as a staff
- Presented results of voting to staff
- Celebrate with staff
- Reflect with guiding coalition

### **Data Collection (Slide 8-9)**

We gathered data in several forms. We had the notes generated by each series of drafts. At one point, we used a Padlet to help draft the more lengthy and numerous responses needed for the collective commitment stage. We made regular use of Google Forms to gather data on which drafts would become the final choices for the buildings.

Once completed, we delivered a separate survey through Google Forms that repeated items from the original HRS Level 1 survey connected with the Leading Indicators 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5. We also added some more general questions about staff perceptions of the process.

### **Our Data (Slides 10-13)**

Leading Indicator 1.3: Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.

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### **Our Discoveries (Slide 14-17)**

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### **Bibliography (Slide 19)**

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