

# PLC Collaboration: Our Journey Towards Increasing Student Achievement

By: Katrina Overton, Waterford Elementary School

Team Members Names: Julea Ciesielski, Shelley Kauffman

Contact: [koverton@goshenschools.org](mailto:koverton@goshenschools.org)

## **Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:**

According to Marzano, Heflebower, et al in Collaborative Teams that Transform Schools, "The majority of collaborative teamwork should fall into the category of high-depth interactions: discussing research-based instructional strategies, planning lessons, reviewing assessment data, and so on. To ensure this, protocols for productive collaboration should be set up from the beginning and their implementation monitored over time." (p. 27)

\*During the 2015-2016 school year, the school leadership team determined from multiple data points that instructional planning was an area of need.

\*At the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, all grade-levels had new team members.

\*At the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, school administration met with grade-level PLC team leaders to analyze lesson plans. One team leader commented, "There are as many ways to plan as there are teachers."

\*During Cluster, teachers received professional development aligned to the teacher need of instructional planning (S.A.M.E. format).

Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to begin to transform our school through productive collaboration that was set up and monitored over the school year.

## **Statement of Your Team's Wondering:**

How will the creation, implementation, and reflection of grade-level norms impact productive collaboration and student achievement?

## **Methods/Procedures:**

Step One:

Create grade-level/PLC norms with examples and non-examples.

Step Two:

Reflection on grade-level norms with collaborative team rating scales.

Step Three:

Grade-level reflections shared via Waterford Weekly.

Step Four:

Primary and intermediate PLC videos shared with grade-level chairs and Cluster groups.

Step Five:

PLC's selected one content area to intentionally plan with while using student work (weekly).

Data Collection

\*Survey Monkey - December, May

\*Grade-Level Reflections and Goals - October, January, April

\*Primary/Intermediate Planning Videos - December

Kindergarten Reflections

\*SW is brought to PLC and discussed. Teachers are discussing qualitative trends. The student work is being discussed at a procedural level.

\*SW is not being used to plan next steps as aligned to Lucy Calkins and the six-week writing window.

Third Grade Reflections

\*SW is brought to PLC and discussed. Teachers discuss qualitative trends. The student work is being discussed at a procedural level. "As you are teaching this week, keep in mind the needs of your students and weave this back into your plans."

\*SW is not being used to plan next steps as aligned to the district instructional map and six-week reading window.

### **Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

Learning Statement One: Most grade-levels are now using student work as they plan on a weekly basis.

Learning Statement Two: Teachers are naming the connection between norms, collaboration, and student work .... and how these actions increase student achievement.

Learning Statement Three: The leadership team will need to provide a model on how to utilize student work to intentionally inform next teacher actions (moving from procedural to conceptual).

### **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

We have strong evidence of student learning through student work; we have a laser-like focus in Cluster (weekly professional development) and coaching. Our teachers are analyzing and scoring student work in Cluster as a result of a concerted focus on "data" by the Master/Mentor teachers each week. We need to continue to keep our foot on the gas pedal so that our work is driven by student outcomes and learning. Our next step is to take the analyzing of student work and coaching into the weekly collaboration with PLC teams. The student work is currently being looked at in generalities and we need to deepen our thinking in this area so that we can transfer the Cluster thinking to our teachers and build the skill of using student work to drive instruction. This will be done through the use of a "modeled" protocol. As we think about going "deeper" in this area, we might need to additionally down and make connections for our teacher to planning and assessment, which are critical components in the student work piece.

As we continue to look towards the future, our big idea needs to be: "Responsible Teaching." We need to continue to have a growth mindset and ask ourselves, "How can we get better at the things we care about the

most?" We also need to continue to use Cluster to teach best practices and then transfer that learning to the classroom, through our PLC work, in order to impact productive collaboration and student achievement.

### **References:**

Marzano, R. J. (2016). Collaborative teams that transform schools: the next step in PLCs. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.