

# PLCs Drive Tri-County Towards Personalized Learning

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

Tri-County mapped our curriculum K-12 after our corporation AdvanEd certification six years ago. This was done over a two year process with all grade levels and content area teachers collaborating. Even after this process, our instruction within and across grade levels were inconsistent, priority standards ranged from 18 to 36 per content area, and we didn't determine content vocabulary. Our collaboration within and across grade levels were focused on content and pacing, with little attention to instructional improvement. We needed to develop a collaborative culture where teachers continually monitor each students progress towards mastery of priority standards, and focus on continual improvement of curriculum and instruction.

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

How can identifying priority standards and grade level vocabulary lead to improved instruction in our school?

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into our wondering, we first divided teachers into Math, E/LA, and STEM integration PLCs. First, we provided PD for teachers on evaluating and refining priority standards, and developing comprehensive vocabulary programs. Our IPLI team worked with each PLC throughout to ensure consistency and drive progress. We established roles within each team and set expectations. Each team was to meet a minimum of twice each month outside of the required 1.5 hour bi-weekly professional development time. By March 1, each PLC was to identify 12 priority standards per grade level using Marzano's Priority Standards Matrix. By April 1, each PLC was to identify 30 essential vocabulary words vertically aligned for each grade level and subject. The teams collaborated throughout the process on Google Docs for communication and feedback among all teachers.

Our team collected data by monitoring each PLCs progress and format for identifying 12 priority standards and 30 vocabulary for each grade by each due date. We also collected data on teachers assessing mastery of priority standards and targeting instruction during our weekly enrichment block, the number of PLC meetings for collaboration and focus on instructional improvement, and teacher, parent, and student surveys both from High Reliability Schools and quarterly surveys created by our IPLI team.

We collected our data and held IPLI team meetings weekly to compile and analyze the data. In these meetings we would discuss each PLC teams process and determine ways for improvement in the process. We would then communicate with each team and all staff on the progress and provide any development necessary for teachers throughout.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include establishing team goals and expectations are a critical step in successful outcomes of PLCs, and refining priority standards provides collaboration among teachers across grade levels to evaluate and focus instruction for mastery.

Establishing team goals and expectations are a critical step in successful outcomes of PLCs. The first quarter of the process, one of our PLCs decided on their own they didn't need norms or roles. I let this go, as a way to assess the importance of roles in teams. The team that didn't establish roles found it difficult to stay on task and toward a common goal and timeline. It was apparent to all teachers this group was dysfunctional and the following quarter all PLCs determined roles on their own and followed expectations. Once expectations and goals were established, we found an increase in PLC team meetings. Each team worked harder and more efficient when they had a common goal or outcome to strive for. (Math PLC: 2 meetings/month January to 5 meetings/month March; E/LA PLC: 3 meetings/month January to 5 meetings/month March; STEM PLC: 1 meeting/month January to 3 meetings/month March)

Refining priority standards provides collaboration among teachers across grade levels to evaluate and focus instruction for mastery. Teachers used the priority standards to target skills for intervention and enrichment. When we started the enrichment block this year, many teachers were planning intervention and enrichment based on what content students were learning in the classroom at the time. Using the priority standards developed teachers to target instruction based on the individual needs for each student to master the standards. This allowed them to develop a growth mindset and target mastery of the skills through progress monitoring.

## **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

Our team has learned a lot through the action research process. We learned our school needed to target specific areas of collaboration, determining our schools expected instructional framework, and determine shared procedures for instructional improvement. We expect our students to collaborate as a STEM school, but we need to lead by example and demonstrate the 21st Century Skills we are teaching our students. We created an instructional framework to determine best practices of instruction and learning in Tri-County Elementary classrooms. The instructional framework and PLCs provided development for teachers to gain an understanding of how to improve our school through shared goals and outcomes through growth of our instruction and programming.

Our next steps are to work with the primary and JSHS for vertical alignment of "in and out" of priority standards and vocabulary. Our PLCs will be creating instructional pathways and choice as we continue this process into personalized learning. We have visited schools to begin this development of personalized learning based on mastery of standards, and are currently developing a timeline and framework for implementation.

## **References:**

N/A