

\*Improving the PLC: Enjoying the Process

Tamara Swarens, Grant Line Elementary

Team Members: Courtney Mattox & Hollee Young

Leadership and staff changes have taken place over the last several years. This project explored the impact made on the professional learning community when a focus was made on building trust and connections across the building.

# IMPROVING THE PLC: ENJOYING THE PROCESS

**Grant Line Elementary**

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**Team Members Names: Dr. Tamara Swarens, Courtney  
Mattox and Hollee Young**

# BACKGROUND LEADING TO THIS INQUIRY



Building changes in the past four years:

- New principal
- Three different assistant principal interns
- Staffing changes in all grade levels
- Covid-19 and virtual learning obstacles
- New literacy coach
- Two out of three new special education teachers
- All new office staff members

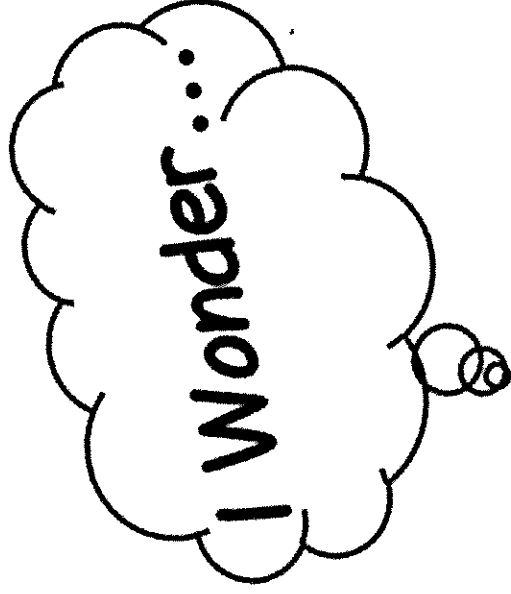
Due to all of these changes and from the Level 1 data collection, we noticed a lack of trust between staff members. We wanted to focus on strengthening relationships to create a stronger foundation for our students.

# PURPOSE OF THIS INQUIRY

Therefore, the purpose of our action inquiry is to incorporate steps to help strengthen our professional learning community in grade level teams and vertically across grade levels throughout the building.



# OUR WONDERING



With this purpose, we wondered if implementing activities that build connections between staff members would strengthen trust and relationships across the building.

# OUR ACTIONS

- \*Positive recognition and team building activities
- \*Grade level team norm surveys to allow honest and open discussion of team strengths and weaknesses.
- \*Implement team roles based on the needs of specific grade level teams.



# DATA COLLECTION

We originally sent out a pre-survey with questions regarding relationships with coworkers.

Based on those results, we decided to survey each grade level team's norms to get a better understanding of the struggles within each team.

## Grade 4 Team Norms

 tswarens@hafcs.org (not shared) [Switch account](#)



Team members communicate directly in a positive way with one another.

Choose ▾

Team members are open for discussions and remain open minded.

Choose ▾

Team members are efficient with time.

Choose ▾

Team members stay on topic/task.

Choose ▾

Team members trust one another with all of the students.

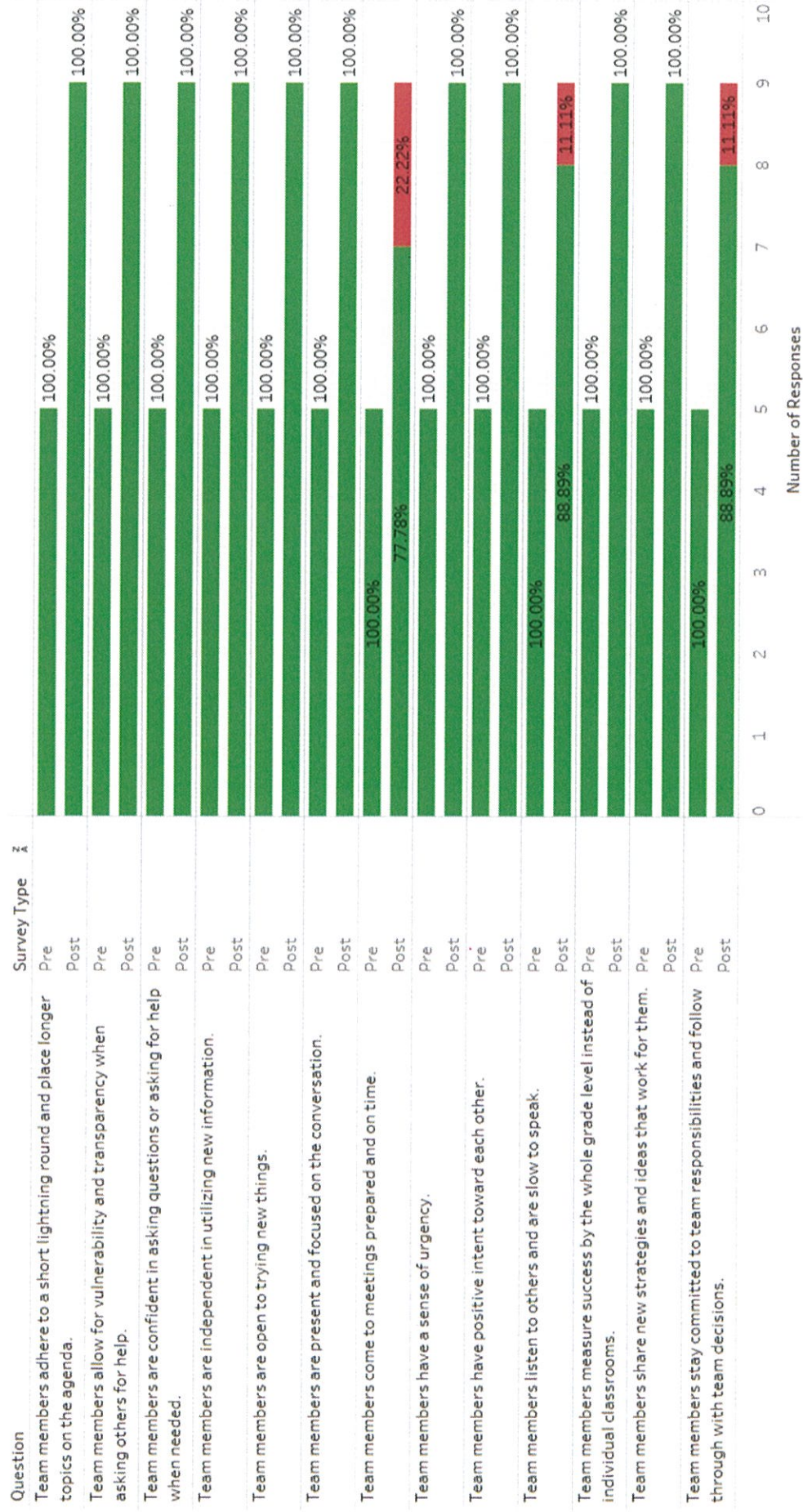
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# KINDERGARTEN

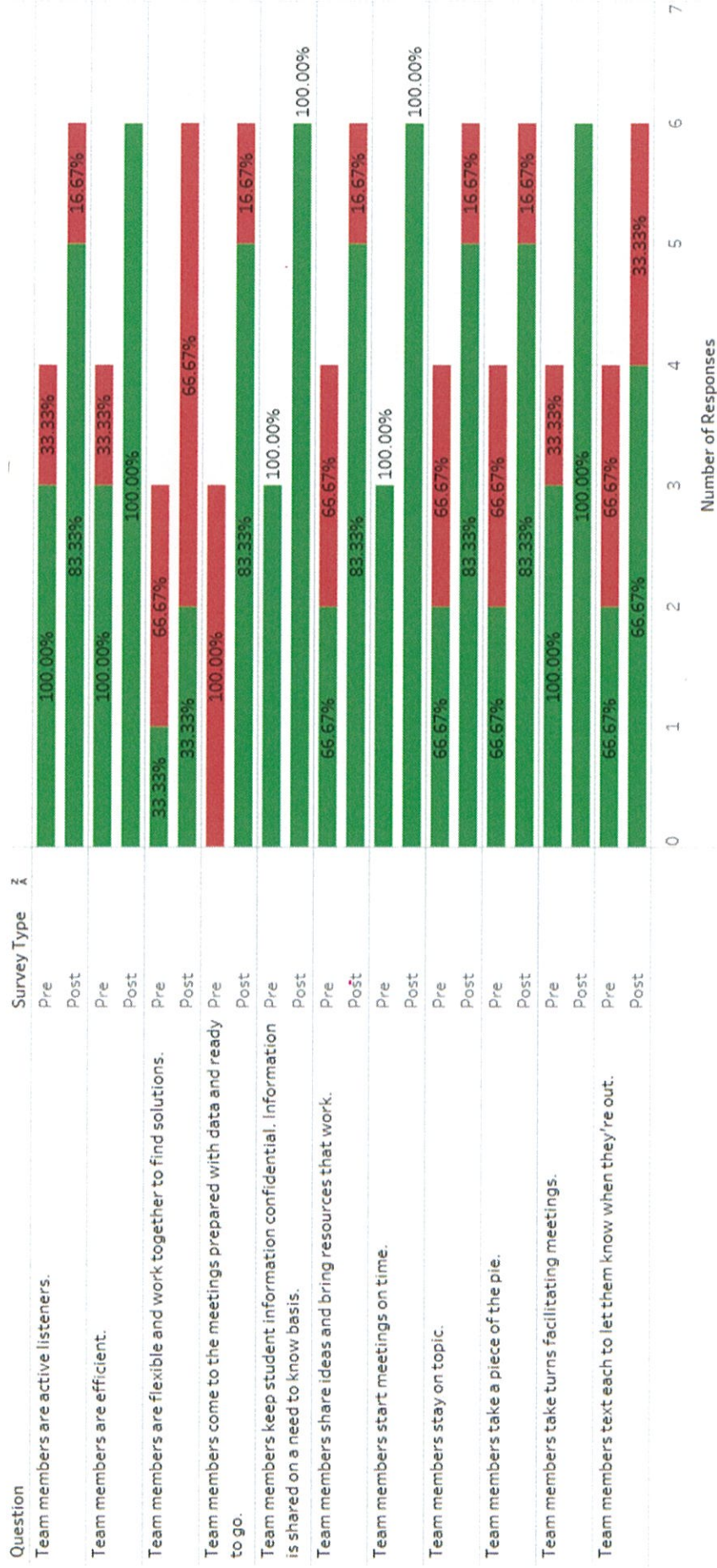




# 1ST GRADE



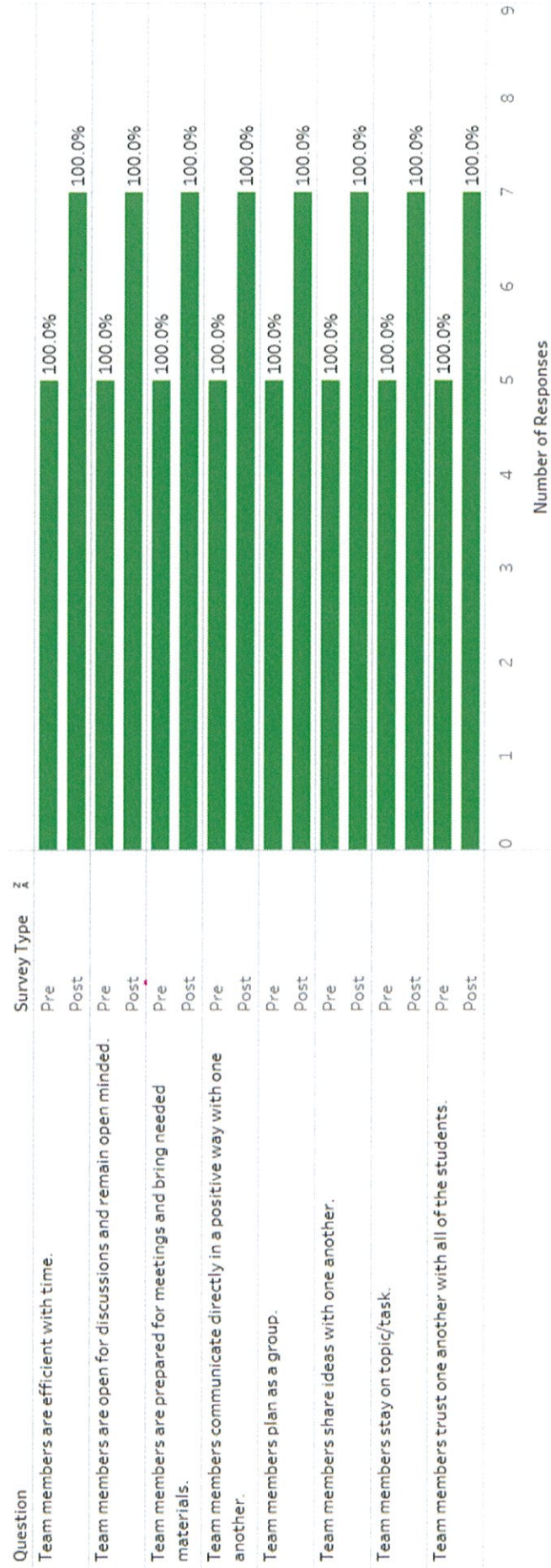
# 2ND GRADE



# 3RD GRADE

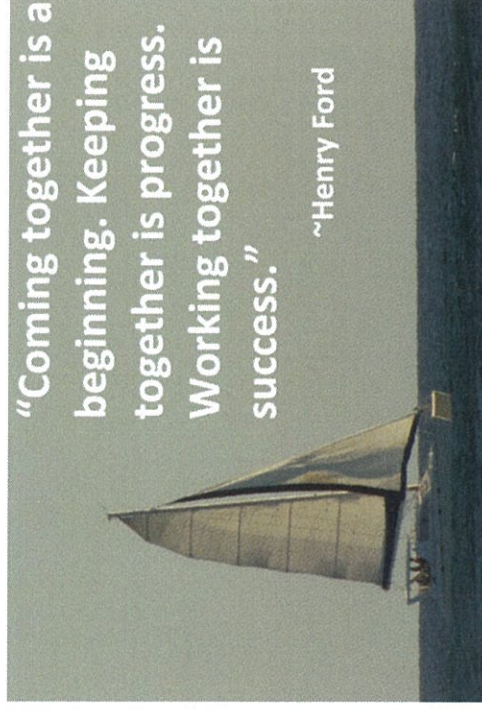


# 4TH GRADE



# OUR DISCOVERIES

- Learning Statement One: We learned the importance of building teacher team leaders to continue the PLC process.
- Learning Statement Two: We learned that consistently implementing staff bonding opportunities helped to maintain and grow our PLC.
- Learning Statement Three: We learned the importance of having tough, but meaningful discussions.



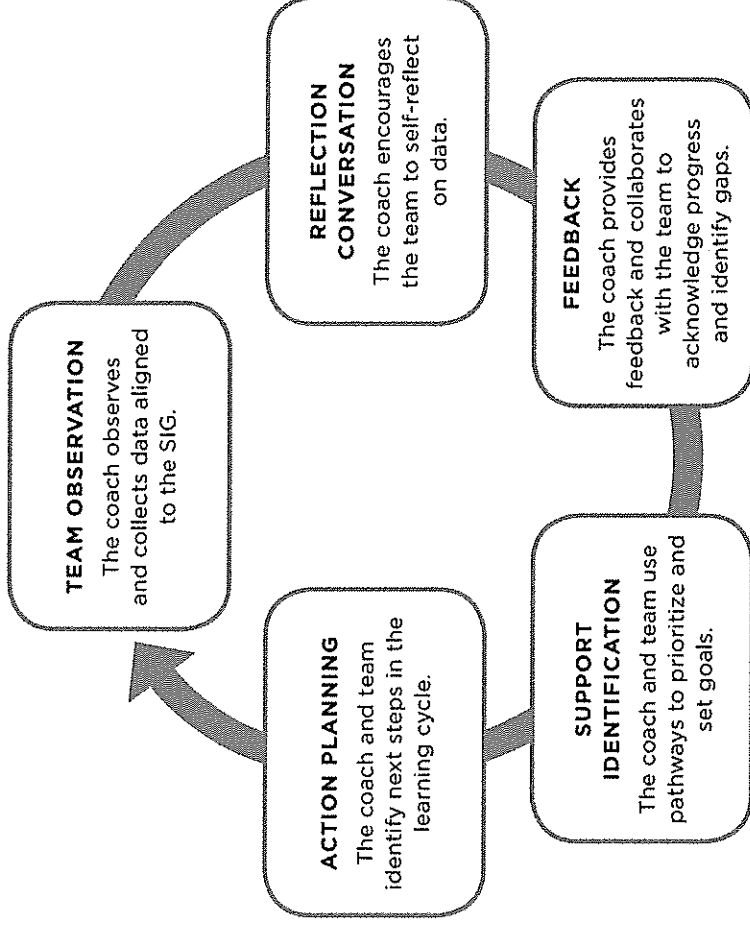
# OUR DISCOVERIES

- Explanation of Learning Statement One: We learned the importance of building teacher team leaders to continue the PLC process.
  - Teacher leaders can help get more “buy in” from staff members.
  - Teacher leaders can implement strategies that follow the mission and vision of the school.



# OUR DISCOVERIES

- Explanation of Learning Statement One: We learned the importance of building teacher team leaders to continue the PLC process.
- Teacher team leaders can collaborate with the administrators and leadership team to generate ideas that follow the PLC process.



# OUR DISCOVERIES

- Explanation of Learning Statement Two: We learned that consistently implementing staff bonding opportunities helped to maintain and grow our PLC.

## Positive Walk-Throughs-Staff Comments

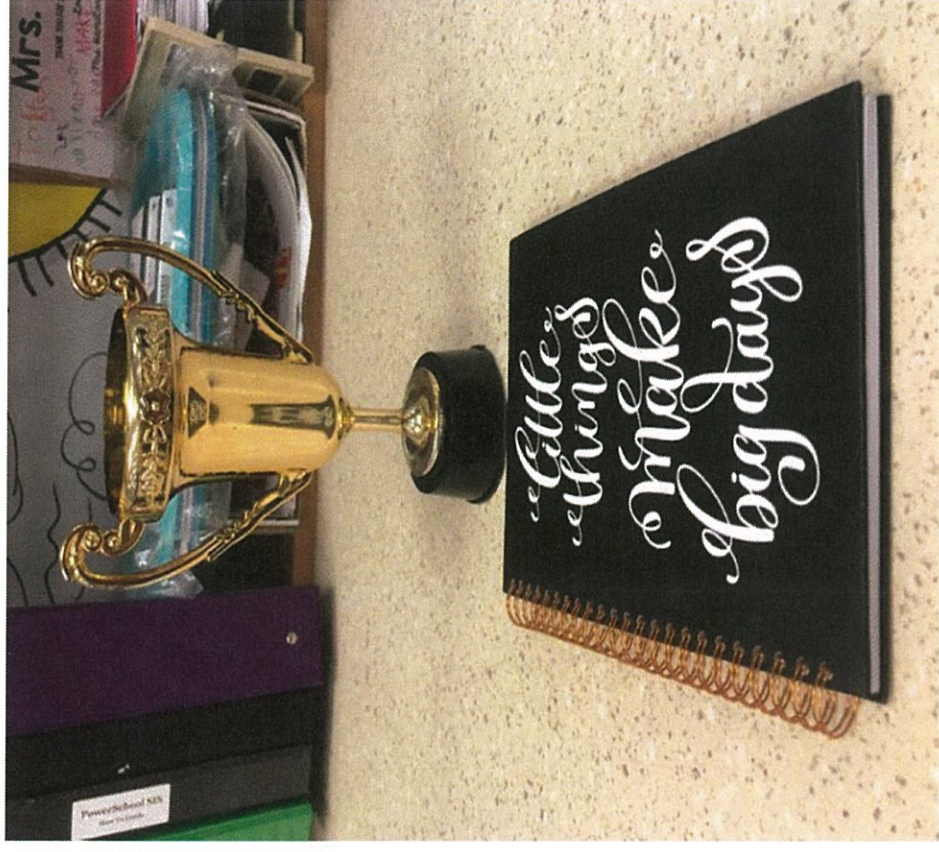
- *"You work to encourage, support, and uplift us as a staff."*
- *"Thank you so much! I love being here!"*
- *"You made my day!"*
- *"I appreciate you taking the time to share the positives! That really means a lot to me."*
- *"I really appreciate you taking time to notice these kinds of things."*
- *"I'm so thankful to be here and have the opportunity to learn and grow!"*



Learning Statement Two: We learned that consistently implementing staff bonding opportunities helped to maintain and grow our PLC.

## **Traveling Trophy**

Staff members recognize one another which includes a kind message in the book.



Learning Statement Two: We learned that consistently implementing staff bonding opportunities helped to maintain and grow our PLC.

### Fun Activities

- Fun morning assembly competitions to win gift cards (ex. caller #6 to correctly name a movie quote or song).
- Treats (popcorn bar, Valentine's candy)
- Scavenger hunt activity
- Results.....positive interactions and happy faces!



# OUR DISCOVERIES

Explanation of Learning Statement Three: We learned the importance of having tough, but meaningful discussions.

- Team norm survey result discussions included strengths and weaknesses.
- Teams created plans to improve areas of weakness.
- Team roles were implemented on some teams.
- Positive feedback has been discussed during end of the year evaluation conferences.

Learning Statement Three: We learned the importance of having tough, but meaningful discussions.

**Tool: Establishing Team Roles**

**Instructions:** Listed in the following template are five roles—(1) team leader, (2) challenger, (3) producer, (4) encourager, and (5) realist—that all collaborative teams need if they are going to be productive. Working together, record all members of your team who have the skills and dispositions to fill each role. That way, you can maximize your collaborative potential by ensuring that all members are doing work that matches both their personalities and their professional abilities. Remember that on small teams, some members may need to fill more than one role.

Name of Role	Description of Role	Skills Necessary for Filling Role	Members Suited for Filling Role
Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizes agendas for weekly meetings</li> <li>Addresses conflict between team members</li> <li>Leads consensus-building conversations</li> <li>Keeps the team focused on yearly goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong relationship builder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Good sense of the overall direction of both the team and the school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Willingness to listen to all perspectives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to seeing everyone move forward together</li> </ul>	
Team Challenger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges the current practices of the learning team</li> <li>Contributes to or leads brainstorming of new alternatives and approaches worth considering</li> <li>Regularly asks, "What if we tried _____?" when the team is working to generate new ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong professional knowledge base and learning network to draw ideas from</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Good sense of the professional strengths and weaknesses of the learning team</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ability to look at data summarizing the team's current reality and offer logical suggestions for next steps</li> </ul>	

# WHERE ARE WE HEADING NEXT?

We plan to provide opportunities for staff to bond throughout the school year.

Create professional development opportunities for staff who wish to build leadership skills.

Continue pre and post surveys for grade level team norms each year and discuss strengths/weaknesses.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Ferriter, W. (2020) The Big Book of Tools for Collaborative Teams in PLC at Work. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n8LUmluVmuaevWqvSICS3tNBk8sSYhP/viiew?usp=sharing>