

Professional Learning Communities (P.L.C.)

Why do we have P.L.C.'s?

Over the past two years, we, as school administrators, have noticed some changes occurring at our school. Elementary classes are increasing in both number and size. With any increase in population, there comes an increase in student need. The culture of our school is naturally changing with the development of the west side also.

Student needs have changed in proportion to these shifts within our school. We have noticed an increasing number of students who are not achieving the success we would like them to have, and teachers are expressing frustration that they are finding it even more difficult to meet all the students' needs.

As administrators, we have to be attentive to teacher and student needs, as well as the demographic changes that influence our school; therefore, we researched a program called Pyramid Response To Intervention (PRTI).

Three staff members went to a conference with the goal of assessing if this would benefit our students. An overwhelming positive response has resulted in the beginning of this journey.

The first requirement for this process to work is the establishment of Professional Learning Communities.

What happens during this scheduled time?

A weekly schedule of P.L.C. times has been established. Teachers arrive at school to begin their meetings by 8:30 a.m. Each group of teachers (K-3, 4-6, 7-9) talk about how their practices can be improved in order to better meet student needs. Their one-hour meeting is recorded and submitted to school administration for feedback and suggestions to follow up on over the next week.

It is important to understand that the action from these meetings over time will benefit students in the classrooms. In the economic climate we have, it is unlikely that we will have surplus staff, so we must look at doing things differently within the classroom.

During these times also, students are gathered in the gym. There, we do the following:

- I. Prayer
- II. Announcements
- III. O'Canada

- IV. Attendance
- V. A lesson on a Religion theme
- VI. Student Recognition, such as birthdays, academic awards, etc.

Will students always be in the gym?

For the short term, yes. We are planning a number of activities that enhance student learning in our school.

1. Literacy hours – Where a student-parent reading partnership is formed. We will be asking for parent volunteers to be trained for this program.
2. Reading buddy time.
3. Junior High study time.
4. Special events/guests in our school.

Summary

This weekly schedule has as its goal the improvement of student learning. We are still trying to find the “best” time for P.L.C.’s. Staff has to be commended to date on some actions resulting from these meetings, such as:

1. Extended Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time to enable more individual teacher-student contact.
2. Analysis of Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT) and Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT) for individual teachers.
3. Early identification of “at risk” learners through teacher collaboration.
4. Core Support class (Junior High).
5. Success Room (Junior High).
6. Increased parental contact with teachers.
7. Consistency of teaching/assessment practices.