

Glossary of Key PLC Terms and Vocabulary

Balanced System of Assessment. An assessment system that recognizes no single assessment yields the comprehensive results necessary to inform and improve practice and foster school and system accountability. A Balanced System of assessment utilizes multiple measures of student achievement, including formative assessments for learning and summative assessments of learning.

Benchmark Assessment. District-level assessments given to students in each class, course, or grade level in a specified window of time 2-4 times throughout the year. A key purpose of these assessments is to assess the effectiveness of curriculum, instructional strategies, and pacing.

Collaboration. A systematic process in which people learn together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results. In a PLC collaboration focuses on the critical questions of learning.

Collective Inquiry. The process of building shared knowledge by clarifying the questions that a group will explore together. In PLCs, educators engage in collective inquiry into more effective practices by examining both external evidence (such as research) and internal evidence (teachers who are getting the best results).

Consensus. Sufficient Consensus is achieved when (1) all points of view have not only been heard but also solicited, and (2) the will of the group is evident even to those who most oppose it.

Critical Questions of Collaborative Teams. In a PLC, collaboration focuses on four critical questions of learning: (1) What do we want students to learn, (2) How will we know if our students are learning, (3) How will we respond when students do not learn, and (4) How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?

Data Cycle/Collaborative Research A process of collective inquiry in which individuals work together to become more proficient at identifying and solving problems. The steps of action research include: (1) formulating a problem, (2) identifying and implementing a strategy to address the problem, (3) creating a process for gathering evidence of the effectiveness of the strategy, (4) collecting and analyzing the evidence, and (5) making decisions based on the evidence.

Essential Learning Targets. The critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions each student must acquire as a result of each course, grade level, and unit of instruction. Essential learning outcomes may also be referred to as power standards or a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

- **Leverage.** One of the three criteria for determining essential learning outcomes— knowledge and skills of value in multiple disciplines.
- **Endurance.** One of the three criteria for determining essential learning outcomes— knowledge, skills, and dispositions of value over time and beyond a single test date.

- **Readiness.** One of the three criteria for determining essential learning outcomes— knowledge, and skills necessary for success in the next grade level or next level of instruction.

Formative Assessment. An assessment *for* learning used to advance and not merely monitor each student's learning; the assessment informs the teacher regarding the effectiveness of instruction and the individual student regarding progress in becoming proficient. The checks for understanding that individual teachers use in the classroom on a daily basis are examples of formative assessments. In a PLC, collaborative teams also use common formative assessments to (1) identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their learning, (2) provide those student with additional time and support in a way that does not remove them from new direct instruction, and (3) give them additional opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

- **Common Formative Assessment (CFA).** A building or district-level assessment created collaboratively by a team of teachers responsible for the same grade level or course.

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum (GVC). A curriculum that (1) gives students access to the same essential learning regardless of who is teaching the class, and (2) can be taught in the time allotted.

Instructional Roadmaps. Developed units of instruction that align with the pacing guide. They contain essential elements from the district pacing guide as well as building-level common formative assessments, instructional strategies and instructional materials used by the PLC team.

Learning Assessment Process The ongoing cycle of planning, implementing, assessing and revising designed to improve results—constantly. In a PLC, this cycle includes gathering evidence of current levels of student learning, developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning, implementing those strategies and ideas, analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective.

Norms. Agreements developed by each team to guide members in working together. Norms help team members clarify expectations regarding how they will work together to achieve their shared goals. Norms may also be referred to as working agreements.

Pacing Guide. A document created by district-level teacher teams containing the following components:

- **Timeline for Pacing.** A cluster of integrated standards organized by months and weeks into viable instructional units.
- **Essential Standards.** The critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions each student must acquire as a result of each course, grade level, and unit of instruction. Essential standards are selected using three criteria.
 - Endurance
 - Leverage
 - Readiness

- **Additional/Supporting Standards:** These are additional standards that support the unit focus. Those standards that are not essential become the supporting standards to teach the essential learning.
- **Essential Questions:** Overarching questions that lead to the heart of a particular unit. Essential questions point to and highlight big ideas.
- **Essential Vocabulary:** These are the terms that all students across the district need to support the learning in the unit.
- **Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs):** A description of what students know and are able to do in order to make a claim that they have demonstrated a certain level of proficiency (i.e., Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic).

Performance-based Assessment. An assessment that requires students to demonstrate learning through demonstration or completion of a task (for example, essays, oral presentations, open-ended problems, labs, or real-world simulations).

Professional Learning Community (PLC).

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an overarching framework to guide and focus all district and school improvement processes. Developing a school’s ability to function as a PLC is a journey that requires fundamental changes in school culture—changes that occur incrementally. PLCs go beyond merely organizing the faculty into teams to collaborate, share ideas, discuss issues, or participate in a book study. It is essential that educators are clear about what the work of collaborative teams is:

- Clarifying the essential outcomes for each subject or course
- Developing common assessments
- Collaboratively analyzing and utilizing the results of common assessments
- Monitoring the learning of each student on a frequent and timely basis, skill by skill
- Developing systematic plans to provide students with additional time, support, and enrichment
- Reflecting on and share with other team members their own instructional practices in order to improve their individual effectiveness, as well as the team’s effectiveness.

Results Orientation. A focus on outcomes rather than inputs or intentions. In PLCs, members are committed to using evidence to achieving desired results.

School Culture. The assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norm for the school and guide the work of the educators within it.

Student Learning Objectives (SLO) Are a SMART goal created in a process by which a teacher establishes expectations for student growth during a specified period of time. Within the state evaluation system, SLOs are not just a pre-test/post-test measurement of student achievement. They promote reflective teaching practices through a formal, collaborative process between teachers and administrators.

SMART Goals. Goals that are Strategic & Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented,

and Timebound.

Summative Assessment. An assessment *of* learning designed to provide a final measure to determine if learning goals have been met.

- **Common Summative Assessments (CSAs):** Summative assessments designed by district-level PLC teams to be given to all students at a grade level or course at the beginning (pre-assessment) and end (post-assessment) of each unit of instruction.

School-wide Pyramid of Intervention. A schoolwide plan that provides opportunities for every student to receive additional time and support for learning essential knowledge and skills.