

The District-Wide Implementation Of A Professional Learning Community: Challenges to Building Capacity

Presentation

By

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Abstract

- The purpose of this study is two-fold, to explore what influence the school district's transformation into a PLC had on the district's culture and to focus on identifying specific actions and processes used by the district that may have changed the district's culture.
- The presentation will share preliminary findings for one of Hord's PLC dimensions -- collective learning and application of that learning. Additionally, presenters will discuss challenges and share lessons learned about building capacity at the district level.

What Do We Know about PLCs

- What is a PLC?
- What does the research tell us about PLCs
- What have we learned about district-wide PLCs
- What does building capacity have to do with a successful PLC

Statement of the Problem

- PLCs identified as a promising framework to implement reform efforts
- Numerous research studies underscore positive impact of PLCs on teachers, schools, and districts
- There are many studies about PLCs at the campus level but few related to PLCs with a district-wide focus

Theoretical Framework

- The purpose of this study is two fold, to explore what influence the school district's transformation into a PLC had on the district's culture and to focus on identifying specific actions and processes used by the district that may have changed the district culture.

Hord's PLC Dimensions: #1-5

- **Supportive and Shared Leadership**
 - ▣ *School administrators participate democratically with teachers by sharing power, authority, and decision making, and by promoting and nurturing leadership among staff.*
- **Shared values and vision:**
 - ▣ *Staff shares visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning. Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.*
- **Collective learning and application:**
 - ▣ *Staff at all levels of the school shares information and works collaboratively to plan, solve problems, and improve learning opportunities. Together they seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.*

PLC Dimensions #1-5 continued

□ Supportive conditions:

- *Collegial relationships include respect, trust, norms of critical inquiry and improvement, and positive, caring relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. Structures include a variety of conditions such as size of the school, proximity of staff to one another, communication systems, and the time and space for staff to meet and examine current practices.*

□ Shared personal practice:

- *Peers visit with and observe one another to offer encouragement and to provide feedback on instructional practices to assist in student achievement and increase individual and organizational capacity.*

Purpose of the Study



The purpose of this study is two-fold, to explore what influence the school district's transformation into a PLC had on the district's culture and to focus on identifying specific actions and processes used by the district that may have changed the district's culture

Research Questions

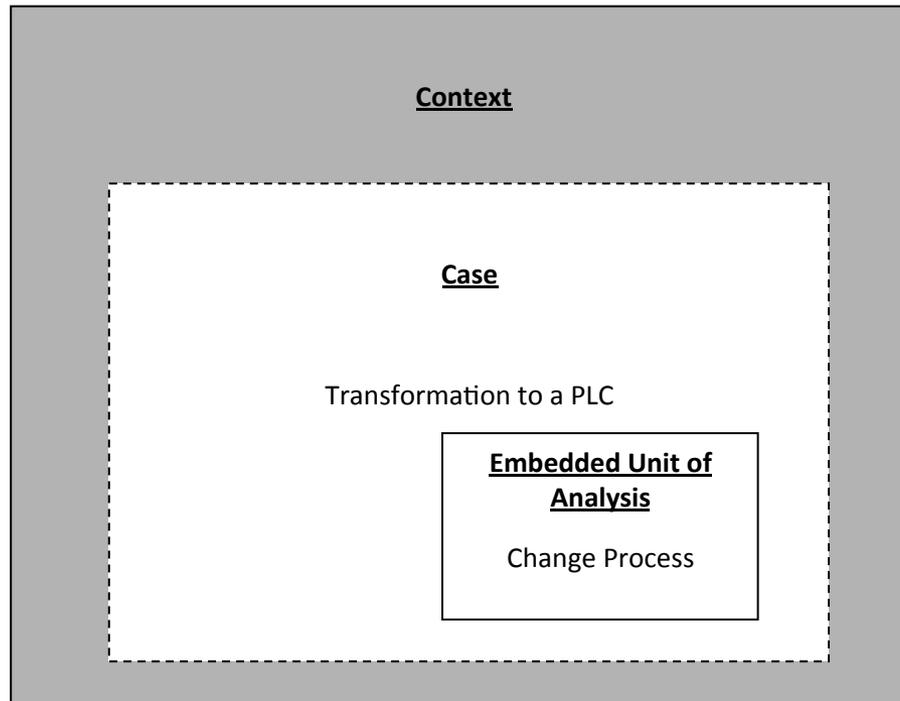
1. What dimensions of a PLC are evident in this school district?
2. What actions and processes have influenced the change process and district culture?
3. What specific tools and structures were designed and used to facilitate the district-wide implementation of a PLC?

Methodology

- Research Site- One School District
- Enrollment of 18,464
- Participants
 - ▣ Group 1 – All current teachers, support staff, central office administrators, school board and superintendent (n=1401)
 - ▣ Group 2 – Purposive Sample of participants to conduct interviews (n=627)
 - Criteria – Employed by district five years prior to superintendent ([Fullan, 2007](#))
 - All school leaders ([DuFour et al., 2008](#); [Graham, 2007](#); [Hord & Sommers, 2008](#); [Mullen & Schunk, 2010](#); [Pankake, 2004](#); [Stoll, McMahon, & Thomas, 2006](#)) n=21
 - Superintendent (1)
 - board member (1)
 - central office (4)
 - campus principals (6),
 - Teachers, librarians, and counselors
 - elementary (15)
 - middle School (6)
 - high school (4)

Methodology

Type 2 Single-Case Study



Methodology

Sources of Data

- Survey
 - PLCA-R ([Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman, 2003](#))
- Interviews
 - Interview Protocols ([Ostmeyer, 2003](#))
- Documents ([Yin, 2009](#))

Findings

Survey Data

- Collective Learning Mean Scores
- Elementary - 3.06
- Middle Schools - 3.12
- High Schools - 3.01

Note

3.00 Reflects mean score of participants that responded “Agree” on the PLCA-R

Preliminary Results / Findings

Themes

- Leadership Support
- Superintendent's understanding of change process
- Shared Mission and Vision on developing Staff Capacity
- Common Language
- Communicating a vision

Significance & Conclusion

- Numerous studies pertaining to the implementation and benefits of PLCs to schools.
- Challenges to building capacity at the district level.
- The development of new cultures of learning in order to improve
- Particular benefits to practitioners
- Strategies and instruments designed or used to create sustainable PLCs – specifically to collective learning and application of learning.

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