



IT WORKED!

Building Shared Vision through PLC Work

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In our building, one of our goals the past few years has been to develop professional learning communities (PLCs) around a shared belief that all students can learn. Each year has focused on the development of a certain aspect of PLC work. As our teachers have learned more about how to function as a professional learning community, our school has seen positive gains in both teaching and learning.

At the end of the last school year, we met as a leadership team to analyze our data and determined that our building focus for mathematics needed to be in developing deeper reasoning and justification skills in number and operations, including both whole numbers and fractions. We wanted to create consistency throughout our building around the work we did in these areas, so that we had a common vision and goals.

We used several of our faculty meetings at the end of last year to engage teachers in this work. As a leadership team, we decided to start these discussions with teachers at the end of the school year, so that we could use their reflection and perspective from that year to inform our work and make the best plan possible for our school. In these PLCs, we worked to build shared vision of our focus for the upcoming school year. We shared the data we had and discussed how that guided our reasoning in developing a building-level focus, helping teachers to see why this work was important for kids and how it could make a difference in achievement. Teachers then worked in vertical teams to discuss how each grade level's standards in these areas played into the whole picture, looking for progressions in teaching and learning throughout the school year. In this work, teachers collaborated to decide which standards would become essentials for the year in relation to our overarching goals and the standards they chose became the main focus for this school year.

This work served as a basis for all PLC conversations during that school year. During the time spent in collaboration with teachers throughout the year, we worked together to create, plan, and pace assessments. We analyzed student work related to our building goals. All our work was centered on the 4 PLC

Questions:

1. What are students expected to learn?
2. How will we know when they have learned it?
3. What are we going to do for the ones who have learned it?
4. What are we going to do for the ones who haven't?

As a result of this work, we are having deeper discussions about what standards really mean, student learning, proficiency, and how to enrich/intervene for individual students more than ever before.

Building a shared vision and focus for mathematics in our building has made a huge difference in achievement this year. We have seen positive gains in student performance with every common summative and/or formative assessment we have given. The best work with teachers happens when our work is grounded in collaboration, focused on common student learning goals, and honors their expertise as professionals. Utilizing professional learning communities to do this important work has served as a catalyst for change, increasing our instructional effectiveness and serving as a support system for our entire building as we work toward common goals.

Brought to you by the NCSM Coaching Committee (May 2017)

Special thanks to the Arkansas Association of Mathematics Leaders (AAML)

