
The Journey Begins: Problem of Practice and Inquiry Questions

- How can I change the perceptions of PLCs from negative to positive?
- How can I facilitate the creation of collegial relationships within the schoolhouse?
- How can I reduce feelings of isolation among Special Education Teachers?

Mapping Our Journey: Methods

- What is in Common?
- Instructional Implications of Commonalities
- Community Building

Paths Left to Explore: Next Steps

- Continue building reflective teacher researchers that use qualitative and quantitative data to guide their decision making.
- Develop positive working relationships between specialists and classroom teachers.
- Find a common area of interest that, even with our diverse classroom environments, we can study and research together for our SMART goals.
- Deepen member understanding of what qualitative and quantitative data are, and how to collect and use data beyond standardized test scores to guide instruction.

Entering the Woods of Teacher Leadership

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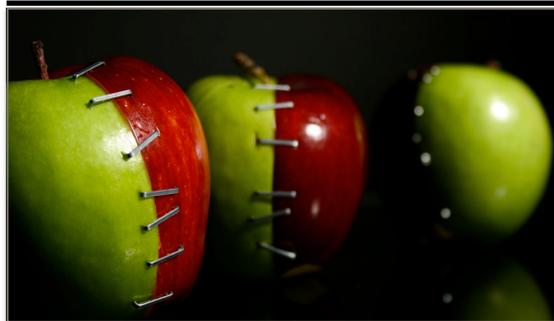


Following the Breadcrumbs: Data Collection and Analysis

- Perception Surveys
 - Pre-survey
 - Mid-point check
- Exit tickets after each meeting
- Focus Group at the end
- Personal Reflection Journal

A Fork at the End of the Path: Key Findings

- Don't Waste My Time: Changing Perspectives of PLCs
- Can't We All Just Get Along: Changing Relationships for Collaboration
- We're All in This, No Longer Alone: Diminishing Feelings of Isolation



Relevance of the Study:

Participant perceptions of PLCs based on previous participation:

- “The overwhelming feeling of failure, anxiety...”
- “PLC time is a waste of time! I just want to be in my classroom, doing the work I need to get ready for the day!”
- “Spending too much time on issues that do not pertain to my specialty and worrying about students in the 50th percentile.”

Yet, Professional Learning Communities are a potentially viable response to the ineffective one stop workshop model (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 46). My hope was to help PLCs work more effectively for specialists in my district.

Abstract

My interest was three-fold. Historically, Special Education teachers, P.E. teachers, Science and Music specialists participated in grade-level band PLCs, which left some teachers feeling like an isolated, stitched-on appendages. My first goal was to reduce these feelings of isolation. Second, I wanted to work to break down the historical norms of autonomy and to help calm the rushed communication between teachers that occurs either in the staffroom or the parking lot. Third, I wanted to provide a connection between the random in-service days to the actual teaching and learning that is occurring within our classrooms while also providing a platform to empower teachers to share their knowledge and expertise with others.