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PLC at Work® and Your Small School: Building, Deepening, and Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration for Singletons

By Breez Longwell Daniels

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *PLC at Work® and Your Small School: Building, Deepening, and Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration for Singletons* by Breez Longwell Daniels. *PLC at Work and Your Small School* shows educators how to build a strong PLC in their school that both centers the unique culture of the school and prepares their students for lifelong success.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

Breaking With Tradition

1. Why might the PLC process be ideal for small schools?
2. What are the three big ideas of a PLC? How do you think these ideas interact to form a culture that values high levels of learning for all students?
3. What are the four critical questions of a PLC? How do these questions form a cycle of continuous improvement?
4. What is your reaction to the anecdote about the visiting principal who declared implementing the PLC process would be too much work because the student in his school were already doing well enough? Do you feel he has a point? Do you feel he has flaws in his thinking? How do you think a change in culture at his school could benefit students?

Chapter 2

Establishing Vision and Goals

1. What is potentially problematic about having one teacher in a grade level or content area make curriculum decisions about essential learning? How could a vertical content-alike team overcome these problems?
2. What are some the resources that teams should use when determine essential learning for a content area?
3. Describe how teams can scaffold specific skills, and how vertical teams in particular can uniquely make use of scaffolding.
4. Why is third-party data important for small schools in particular?

Chapter 3

Structuring Time

1. What are the two main challenges that small schools face when it comes to scheduling?
2. How can a master schedule define a school's commitment to learning for all? How can it act as either a reason the work gets done or an excuse for not getting the work done?
3. How are small school uniquely able to redefine their vision and shift their efforts with everyone on board?
4. How can schedules center students rather than teachers? How can the silo effect be harmful?

Chapter 4

Building Your Culture

1. What is are one-thousand conversations, and how can they contribute to a collaborative culture?
2. How can big personalities have a harmful or helpful effect on a collaborative culture?
How can the strengths of these personalities be activated to help drive a small school's positive culture?
3. List some examples of loose and tight leadership. What could be some red flags to look out for as collaborative team work ensues?
4. How can teachers and team leaders overcome situations in which other team members resist the will of the team before they devolve into culture wars?

Chapter 5

Supporting Collaboration

1. Describe the different kinds of collaborative teams that a small school could form. How can these structures overcome the problem of singleton silos?
2. How do vertical content teams make decisions about essential standards?
3. How can leaders facilitate peer observations in a small school? What is the importance of peer observation?
4. What is a site intervention team? Who should be on it, and what is its significance?

Chapter 6

Using Data

1. While data are clearly important, are there dangers in having too much data? What are they?
2. What are the advantages of making sure the school's data and SMART goals are transparent and published at least once a year?
3. How can being a small school be a benefit when dealing with data?
4. How should schools react to downward trends in data?

Chapter 7

Overcoming Barriers

1. What are some signs among students and teachers that the school's focus on learning is not being maintained?
2. The authors describe what they call the vocation myth. What is the vocational myth and how does it steer students into a dead end?
3. How can schools win over students and parents who see little value in education?
4. How does adherence to the four critical questions of a PLC help ensure that even the most at-risk students are making progress?

Chapter 8

Celebrating Success

1. The authors believe that small schools are often great at celebration in general but may overlook academic achievements. What are some ways a school might inadvertently take the focus off learning with its celebrations?
2. What are some ways to celebrate students without making academics into a competition?
3. What are some ways to involve parents and the community in celebrations?
4. What are some ways to celebrate teachers in a small school?