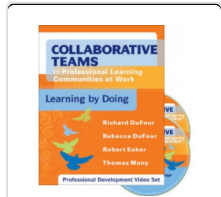
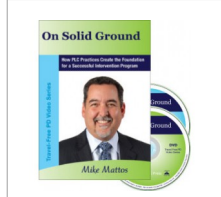


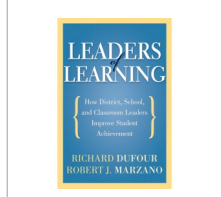
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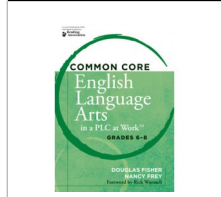
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Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work™, Grades 3-5



Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work™, Grades 6-8



Richard DuFour
Richard DuFour, EdD, was a public school educator for 34 years. A prolific author and sought-after consultant, he is recognized as one of the leading authorities on helping school practitioners implement the PLC at Work™ process.

November 30, 2011

How Can Elective Teachers Participate in the PLC Process?

I received the following letter from the chairman of a Fine Arts Department. The question she raises is one facing all elective teachers:

“I have a question that I was hoping you could help me with. I am the department head for the fine arts department, and over the past 3 years we have had so much trouble doing our PLC. Our department is made up of 1 drama teacher, 1 band teacher, 1 broadcasting teacher, 1 choir teacher and 1 art teacher. We want to collaborate, and we want to share data and improve instruction but we can’t figure out what we have in common to look at and analyze. Do you have any insight you could give me on how we can be successful? This is my first year as department head, and in all honesty...in years past it has felt more like co-blaboration instead of collaboration.”

Here is my response:

I think the best route for you to go is to use vertical teams with the junior highs or electronic teams. If the proximity of the schools does not allow for face-to-face meetings, use the technology that is available to you. For example, a band teacher at the high school has a vested interest in working with junior high band directors so that they can create a great band program. If the principals could coordinate their schedules, they could meet using the technology like Skype to agree on standards students should achieve at their various grade levels and how to assess whether or not their bands are achieving the standards. They could videotape performances or rehearsals to share with their teammates, jointly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the performance, and discuss ways to improve upon it. They could set SMART goals regarding the ratings their bands get in competitions or

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the number of students who qualify for distinction in the regional or state band, or the number of students who remain in band from 8th to 9th grade.

Art teachers could do the same. As you know, the College Board has established criteria for assessing the quality of student art work, and teachers submit digital portfolios of their students' work for review and assessment. A high school and junior high art teacher could do the same, sharing digital pictures of their students work for review and discussion of how to help more students move to a higher level of production.

This vertical articulation should have the same expectations as teachers of the core curriculum. Teachers agree on what they want students to learn, agree on the standard of quality they seek, agree on the criteria they will use in assessing the quality of student work, practice applying the criteria until they can assess the same work consistently (inter-rater reliability), and then use the results (the evidence of student learning) to consider ways they can improve upon student performance. They should set SMART goals each year to help more students achieve at higher levels and they should establish norms about how they will work together.

If there is no teacher at the junior high who teaches a subject (like broadcasting) you should work with your teacher to find another teacher in the state to become an electronic teammate.

Finally, another strategy some schools have used is to have the fine arts department coordinate a schoolwide program that will engage all students in the arts in a meaningful way. For example, they assume responsibility for all freshmen for a block of time (for example, one morning) to provide them with a program aimed at helping develop an awareness and appreciation of the arts. The program could have several components to provide students with some options. Students could be asked to provide feedback on the performance which could then be used to set goals for improvement of future performances. The freshmen teachers of other departments could use this morning for collaborative time. The next month the program could be sophomores, then juniors, etc.

These options require a lot of creativity from the teachers, but after all, that is what they are teaching.

Posted in: [Adjust for Small Schools & Singletons, Structure Teams](#)

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