

Web posted 8/31/04

Nova Southeastern University
Fischler School of Education and Human Services

EDL 9472

Professional Learning Communities

3 credits

Study Guide

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership (DEDL)

Revised Fall 2004

© 2004 Nova Southeastern University
All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Professional Learning Communities (PLC) study area. We invite you to join us as we explore creating a Professional Learning Community. It is our desire that, through our time together both face to face and/or online, we will learn much from each other that will enrich our experiences and knowledge. We invite you to join together as we create a PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY.

Each PLC instructor and participant brings his/her own individual talents and experiences to the learning process. It is the synthesis of these talents that makes us strong. We encourage you to be an ACTIVE participant in this Professional Learning Community. We hope that you will view your NSU peers with a deeper understanding of what it means to be a community and that, through your experience in this study area, you will become better equipped to foster the development of a professional learning community within your own setting. In this PLC study guide, we present PLC guidelines that we hope you will use as a reflective lens to frame your thinking about professional learning communities and how together we might structure our learning for maximum development of our Professional Learning Community. We look forward to sharing this professional learning experience with you.

This PLC Study Guide is arranged in three parts:

Part One sets forth the basic rationale for the PLC study area provides a general overview.

Part Two describes the major themes and the learner objectives. The major themes are:

- Leadership and Community: The Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Building the Foundation for a PLC: Mission, Vision, Values and Goals
- Creating a Collaborative Culture
- A Focus on Learning: Curriculum and Assessment
- Supporting Student Learning: Developing a Pyramid of Interventions
- Cultural Shifts: Becoming a Professional Learning Community
- Call to Action: Passion and Persistence.
- Professional Learning Community: What Is It?
- Curriculum: Learning Within the Professional Learning Community
- Professional (Staff) Development: Developing Professional Through Community

Part Three lists the required texts for the course as well as the readings and assignments for each of the 5 modules. The FSEHS Grading Policy and the grading scale for the PLC course are also presented. Part Three provides very important information concerning the required PLC Final Project (Assignment #5), which is a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Professional Development Plan (PDP) and counts 30% of the overall course grade.

Each individual PLC professor may require additional readings to enhance the study area as well as recommend additional Web sites which will provide material for you to reference in completing the course assignments and the PLC Final Project. Note that each PLC instructor may have additional handouts and activities that you will be required to complete, discuss, and submit as directed (in person, by e-mail, or in WebCT if taking the course online).

Although we are anxious that you recognize the unified themes within this study area and that we bring the objectives together in a meaningful whole, we are also concerned with how this study area fits into the larger purpose of the Educational Leadership Program and your current work setting. You will note that many ideas in the PLC course are connected to ideas in other study areas. We invite you to bring these connections to our attention during the course. The intent of all the EDL 9472 assignments is to provide your opportunities to expand your own capacity and the capacity of the organization(s) in which you are employed. To accept this invitation is to sense your own efficacy **in creating a successful Professional Learning Community (PLC).**

PART ONE

Overview

This PLC course is centered in a PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY and has everything to do with LEARNING for all individuals within that community. Professional Learning Communities are based on the notion of reciprocity for they encourage the fullest development of the individual as well as the community. Much of the responsibility for creating and building a Professional Learning Community (PLC) rests with the leader. The leader is a *catalyst* for the responsive behavior of all members and for the sense of unity that enables mutual growth. This view of leadership is mindful of the notion that leadership alone is not the creative process; rather it is the cooperation that results from that leadership. Leadership is merely the catalyst for that behavior. This PLC course recognizes leadership as a widely distributed phenomenon. It suggests that a leader is a leader for the moment only, for the roles of leader and follower are continually exchanged. This leader perspective reflects a *servant leader* perspective. Embedded in this notion is a commitment to an ethic of care, for personal empowerment rests at the center of the process. There is a transformational aspect to such leadership that enables the maximum development of individuals and the organization.

It is a major thesis of this PLC course that the educational leader's positive attitude and behavior with regard to Professional Learning Community (PLC) sets the tone and example for all within the organization. Furthermore, we believe that the creative leader uses his or her talents to help others identify and use their talents. Creative leaders seek opportunities to create contexts that will release the learning and leadership potential of themselves as well as others. Curriculum development is a central part of creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The term "development" conveys the optimistic tenet that teachers, students, leaders, and community should and can play a major role in creating curricula as well as using predetermined curricula. We locate this optimistic tenet in the philosophical camp known as constructivism.

It is also our view that professional learning should be the center of the school community, not only for students, but also for the professionals and the external community who guide student learning. Professional Learning Communities must be a major part of any learning organization. Professional (staff) development within the school and/or school district must take on a comprehensive view and focus on two major goals, the growth of the person and the growth of the organization. Professional (staff) development leaders move persons to experiences and experiences to persons. In this PLC course, we are interested in promoting an understanding of professional (staff) development models, teacher and administrator career stages and phases of development. In short, professional (staff) development is ultimately personal development and

there are reciprocal benefits when the individual and the organization have a shared purpose. One of our challenges in implementing the ideas above is to identify, understand, and implement learning theories that meet the unique needs and motivations of both pre K-12 students and the adults who work with them.

Educational leaders must also consider the role technology has played, should play, and is currently playing in creating and maintaining Professional Learning Communities. Human and non-human resources can be tapped and integrated by imaginative leaders who stay abreast of fast-moving technological changes.

Participants in the PLC course will learn to assess the history and culture of their educational organizations: “What can go right and wrong as professional learning communities are created and why?” One hallmark of the leader who creates and maintains PLC is the ability to describe what has been done, what is being done, what should be done, and what can be done in a democratic, ethical framework. The educational leader who values the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) gives attention to both opportunity and responsibility, two forces that sometimes seem at odds with each other in our society. For example, this PLC course recognizes the fundamental tension that today’s school and school-system instructional leaders face in trying to reconcile accountability measures that can promote standardization with developmental needs and interests of students and educators. A major purpose of this course is to critique this dilemma in light of curricular and instructional designs and development as well as appropriate assessment and evaluation systems that align with the culture of the Professional Learning Community in which you work.

PART TWO

Themes

Leadership and Community: The Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Promotes the participants’ understanding of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model and describes the major characteristics of a PLC school. The PLC model presents a framework for improving schools. This framework is a process, not an end in itself. PLC schools and school districts are all different and always trying to improve.

Building The Foundation for a PLC: Mission, Vision, Values and Goals

Promotes the foundational components of a PLC – shared mission, vision, values, and goals. While almost every school (district) has a mission, vision, values, and goals, PLC schools actively use these to guide their actions and decisions. A school cannot function as a PLC until it has delved in to the questions that provide direction both for the school as an organization and the individuals within it.

Creating a Collaborative Culture

Promotes how PLC schools (district) use teams and build a collaborative culture to improve teaching and learning. In a PLC school (district), collaboration does not just mean creating teams. It means creating a focus, time, support, and guidelines to foster effective teams.

A Focus on Student Learning: Curriculum and Assessment

Promotes two key questions for every school: “What do we expect students to learn?” and “How will we know they have learned it?” Explores strategies for developing a curriculum, standards,

and assessments that are focused on learning. A priority of PLC schools (districts) is that they are focused on results. A clear curriculum helps establish what results are intended, and curriculum-based assessments help determine whether those results are being achieved.

Supporting Student Learning: Developing a Pyramid of Interventions

Promotes and examines a key question for schools (districts): “What will we do when students are having trouble learning?” When learning is truly a priority, schools do not just have one level of interventions to help students, but a pyramid of interventions. Having a pyramid means having a system in place that helps all students learn and prevents students from falling between the cracks.

Cultural Shifts: Becoming a PLC

Promotes cultural change, and that change is rarely easy. The role of culture in schools (districts) and how it affects the way in which a school functions.

Call To Action: Passion and Persistence

Promotes the understanding that a PLC is only a concept and idea, but putting it in to action is another. Presents tools for effective goal setting and planning. Develop a passion and persistence that is necessary to create, participate in, and maintain a Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Learner Objectives

The study area is designed to promote participants’ understanding of:

1. community and the values that support it
2. the relationship between the organization and the individual and of the reciprocal benefits of shared purpose
3. the broad dimensions of leadership within the community
4. organizational context and its role in shaping (a) the purpose of education, (b) teacher and administrator roles, (c) the purpose and design of individual and organizational learning, (d) the perceived nature of the learner, and (e) the design of evaluation and reform
5. personal empowerment, efficacy, and an ethic of care, as well as the role each plays in promoting community
6. community and the role it plays in human learning
7. definitions of “curriculum,” their historical underpinnings, and their impact on school learning
8. models of curriculum development and how these may be of value in promoting learning communities
9. elements in curriculum change, such as: (a) the role of major stakeholders, (b) the importance of vision and mission, (c) resources {fiscal, human, and temporal} needed and available, (d) evaluation of and reflection of process and product
10. the usefulness of historical and contemporary educational literature about curricular issues
11. the impact on the curriculum of such contemporary trends as (a) increases in poverty, (b) increase in the number of handicapped youth in schools, (c) increases in the number of

- linguistically challenged youth {in English}, (d) societal lack of consensus about the appropriate roles of the school, (e) the role of technology, and (f) current shortages in the number of teachers and administrators
12. adult learning theory and its implications for the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
 13. the changing paradigm of professional (staff) development
 14. the systemic relationship of professional (staff) development and other aspects of the learning process
 15. the primary models of professional (staff) development and the dimensions of the professional (staff) development process
 16. application of the tenets of *complementary associations* in creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in their own work places
 17. application of a planning model based on community beliefs, vision, mission, and the resulting performance standards
 18. development of performance standards applicable for use in professional (staff) development programs
 19. application of their own repertoire of strategies to address various reform and accountability concerns facing education
 20. various information sources taken from the literature and discussion

PART THREE

Required Textbooks and Electronic Resources

Educational Impact. (2000). *Educational Impact electronic textbook*. [Online] Go to <http://secure.eionline.net/nsu/index.cfm> to purchase your FSEHS Electronic Resource for Graduate Studies.

DuFour, Richard & Eaker, Robert (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Publisher: National Educational Service (<http://www.nesonline.com>) Bloomington, Indiana.
ISBN 1-879639-60-2

Huffman, Jane Bumpers & Kipp, Kristine Kiefer (2003). *Reculturing Schools as Professional Learning Communities*. Publisher: Scarecrow Education (<http://www.scarecroweducation.com>) Lanham, Maryland. (1-800-462-6420).
ISBN 1-57886-053-9

FSEHS Format for Student Assignments

To standardize the presentation of assignments for all courses and programs, a format for student course work has been adopted.

Effective Fall 2004, students will be required to use the following format for all assignments except dissertation documents, for which the Style Guide for the Applied Dissertation is the reference. This guide can be located by accessing the ARO Web site.

Fischler School students are expected to use the following format for all written course assignments:

- Title Page
- Body of Text
- References

(If other sections are required, an explanation will be provided in the syllabus or course guide.)

- Set 1” margins on all sides.
- Use left margin justification.
- Set the font for 12 pt with Times New Roman or other readable serif font.
- Use no bold or underlining. Underlining may be used for linking URLs if requested for certain assignments.
- Use no running heads or page headers.
- Use the “Insert” function to insert Arabic page numbers at the upper right corner with the same font as the text (no italics, periods, hyphens, underlining, or bold).
- Use white paper.

The title page will contain three single-spaced sections, vertically and evenly spaced and centered. It will contain no page number.

- Top section:

Title of the Assignment
Upper and Lower Case Style

- Middle section:

by
Student’s Full Name
Course code and CRN
Title of Course

- Bottom section:

Nova Southeastern University
Month, day, year

The Body of Text will start with the page number 2.

- Indent ½” for each new paragraph, the default on most word processors.
- Text is to be double-spaced.
- For headings and subheadings, follow current APA style as described in sections 3.31-3.32 of the APA manual.

In the following cases, single-spacing will be used.

- Block quotes
- Table of Contents
- Abstract
- Table titles and figure captions

The References list will start on a new page after the main body; pagination should be continuous throughout the main body and the References section.

The title is to be centered at the top of the page on the first available line (as shown below). The ensuing instructions show how each item will look with hanging indent.

References

For each entry, use a hanging indent and single-spacing. To format a hanging indent in MS Word, click on “Format,” select “Paragraph,” and choose “Indentation”; under “Special,” change to “Hanging.” Double-space between entries.

References are listed in alphabetical order and follow the current APA format. Hanging indent looks like these two instruction items. Appendix pages follow the References list.

FSEHS Grading Policy

Effective Fall 2004 term (200520), the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has adopted the grading scale below. This scale will be included on the official transcript key (legend).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- All applied dissertation benchmarks (concept paper, proposal and final report) will be graded Pass (P)/No Pass (NP).
- DEDL and DHEL students formerly on Pass (P)/No Pass (NP) scale. A Pass (P) is equivalent to a B or higher and No Pass (NP) is equivalent to an F.

Doctoral Level:

A	=	91 - 100	=	4.0
B+	=	86 - 90	=	3.5
B	=	80 - 85	=	3.0
F	=	No Credit		

Additional Grading Codes:

W	=	Withdrawn without Penalty
I	=	Incomplete
IP	=	Incomplete Pass
IF	=	Incomplete Fail
EQ	=	Credit awarded based on prior experience
NG	=	No Grade AU Audit
PR	=	Progress
RSC	=	Required Summer Course Completed
CL	=	CLEP (Undergraduate Only)

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS for EDL 9472

DUE DATES**:		SITE-BASED	ONLINE
MODULE 1			
Assignment #1-1*	10 points	End of Week 3	End of Week 3
Assignment #1-2*	20 points		
Assignment #1-3*	10 points		
Class Participation	10 points		
MODULE 2			
Assignment #2-1*	10 points	End of Week 6	End of Week 6
Assignment #2-2*	20 points		
Class Participation	10 points		
MODULE 3			
Assignment #3-1*	10 points	End of Week 9	End of Week 9
Assignment #3-2*	20 points		
Class Participation	10 points		
MODULE 4			
Assignment #4* Educational Impact – Lectures/Paper/Discussion	25 points	End of Week 12	End of Week 12
MODULE 5			
Assignment #5* PLC Final Project	65 points (30% of total course grade)	Middle of the last week of the course	Middle of the last week of the course
TOTAL POINTS: 220			

*Written assignments will be graded and returned with instructor's comments.

**Assignment due dates may be adjusted by the instructor in site-based groups depending on the actual class meeting dates.

Grade	Percent of Overall Grades	Points Required out of 220 Possible
A	91- 100%	200 - 220
B+	86 – 90%	188 - 199
B	80 – 85%	175 - 187
F	Below 80%	Below 175

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR STUDENTS TAKING EDL 9472 ONLINE:

All assignments within each Module of the course will be submitted online via the WebCT Assignment Dropbox. Modules 1, 2, and 3 have a threaded discussion in lieu of the “live” class participation, and students will be required to participate in all three threaded discussions in order to earn the points for “class participation.”

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Those students who take this course in the online format will participate in the “class discussions” through WebCT’s “threaded discussion” feature. You will respond by opening the appropriately named discussion area and composing an original response to the questions in each module

below. Additionally, you **must** respond to a **minimum** of two of your peer’s postings within each module’s discussion area. Responses must be more than simply “I agree” or “good point” – in other words, responses must be at least a paragraph of solid academic quality. Students who take this course in the site-based format will participate in the classroom discussions. Refer to the “Summary of Assignments” chart above for due dates. Individual instructors may adjust due dates depending on the start and end dates of the term, and students will be notified in writing of such changes.

2. Those students who take this course in the online format will submit the written assignments via the WebCT Assignment Dropbox. Students who take this course in the site-based format will submit written assignments either in hardcopy or electronically via e-mail attachment as directed by their instructor. Refer to the “Summary of Assignments” chart above for due dates. Individual instructors may adjust due dates depending on the start and end dates of the term, and students will be notified in writing of such changes.

MODULE 1 The PLC Model and Building the Foundation for a PLC: Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

DuFour & Eaker (1998), the authors of one of our course textbooks, stated that “If schools are to be significantly more effective, they must break from the industrial model upon which they were created and embrace a new model that enables them to function as learning organizations. We prefer characterizing learning organizations as ‘professional learning communities’ for several vital reasons. While the term ‘organization’ suggests a partnership enhanced by efficiency, expediency, and mutual interests, ‘community’ places greater emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, and as strong culture – all factors that are critical to school improvement. The challenge for educators is to create a community of commitment—a professional learning community.” (p. 15).

Readings

Professional Learning Communities at Work (1998)

Chapter 1	The Disappointment of School Reform
Chapter 2	A New Model, The Professional Learning Community
Chapter 3	The Complexity of the Change Process
Chapter 4	Building the Foundation of PLC: Mission
Chapter 5	Building the Foundation of PCL: Values & Goals

Discussion Questions

Review your school’s Mission Statement. After completing the required readings for Module 1, respond to the following questions within ONE posting in the Module 1 discussion area. (Subject line: YourLastName – Module 1)

1. Why should your school become a PLC? What changes would be needed at your school to become a PLC? Is it worth it? Why or why not?
2. Reflect on what each of the words “professional,” “learning,” and “community” means to you? To what extent do these three factors currently affect your current work setting? To what extent would you like them to have an impact? To what degree does your school’s Mission Statement have the fundamental tenets of a PLC included?

Written Assignments

Assignment 1-1 Case Study #1 (10 pts)

Suggested length: 4-6 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage

Read and complete the case study on pages 89-96 in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to “The Challenge” and provide comprehensive responses to the “Key Questions” at the end of the Case Study. No references are required but may be included.

Assignment 1-2 Analysis of Work Setting (20 pts)

Suggested length: 5-8 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage and reference list

Part 1: This activity provides an opportunity to conduct an informal analysis of your own school or district. Read “The Connie Donovan Story” on pages 29-44 in *Professional Learning Communities at Work*. After reading the scenario, go back through and underline the PLC-related practices or ideas that you liked – things you would want for yourself or your school.

- Type up a list of those ideas or practices that, in some fashion, could be implemented (or are already being implemented) within your school or district.
- If there are ideas or practices that you liked but you do not think could be implemented within your school or district, think about why they could not be implemented. Are the barriers structural or cultural? Are the barriers dependent on resources or leadership? Becoming a Professional Learning Community involves making change. What are some changes you might have to make? How can you draw energy and progress from change rather than being overwhelmed and drained? List some strategies through which these barriers could be cleared or reduced.

Part 2: Write a candid and honest assessment of your school and/or school district based on your knowledge and interactions. The assessment is regarding the school and/or district educational platform. Consider the following questions based on values and beliefs (culture) you have witnessed in the school and/or district. Support your statements with references from a **minimum of 5 current educational journals**. Cite the references within your paper in proper APA format and include a reference list.

- What is the purpose of education in my school and/or district? What should be the purpose of education in my school and/or district?
- What is the administrator’s role and expectations?
- What is the teacher’s role and expectations?
- What is the community’s role and expectations?
- What is the nature of the learner in my school and/or district?
- What does learning look like in my school and/or district?
- What should learning look like in my school and/or district?
- What do we do when we know that learning is not happening in my school and/or district? What should we be doing?
- What is the culture in my school and/or district?

Assignment 1-3 PLC Survey (10 pts)

Suggested length: 3-4 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage

Make a copy of the Professional Learning Community Assessment (Figure 8.1) which can be found on pages 70-73 in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Communities* for each faculty/staff member. You may duplicate the survey or print a copy from the PDF copy of the survey that is available electronically via e-mail from your instructor. The PLC Assessment instrument will be disseminated as an ‘informal’ assessment tool for you to measure and obtain some idea of practices (perceptions) observed at the school level relating to the five dimensions of a PLC and their critical attributes.

Distribute the survey to ALL faculty/staff members at your work setting – a minimum of 25. Stakeholders such as parents, business partners, or school improvement team members may complete the survey if you do not have a minimum of 25 faculty/staff members. Include a cover letter to these persons informing them you are conducting a “field assignment” for a graduate course. (See sample letter at end of this study guide). If your work setting is at the building level, then distribute the survey to all faculty/staff. If your work setting is at the district level, you should choose one school or individual setting where you can complete the survey to collect your data.

The participants will complete the survey **anonymously**, and you must have a system where they return it to you without being identified. The data from the completed surveys will be used for this assignment as well as your PLC Final Project (Assignment 5).

Once you complete the survey data collection, you must compile, submit and analyze the data using the PLC Survey Results Analysis Spreadsheet (in Microsoft Excel), which will be provided to you by your instructor (via WebCT or by e-mail attachment for site-based students). Tally the results of the survey and enter the appropriate numbers in columns C, D, E, and F for each indicator. (These are the only cells in the spreadsheet that you will be able to change.) The spreadsheet will display the corresponding percentages in columns H, I, J, and K for each indicator within each section of the survey. The spreadsheet will also display a stacked bargraph of the results within each section of the survey. Click on the corresponding tab at the lower left side of the screen to move among the various parts of the spreadsheet and charts. Use the data from the spreadsheet to analyze the overall results of the survey. Prepare a professional narrative explaining the results of your survey. You must include the following:

- Comments about the process of securing permission, distributing, collecting the surveys or about the process of analyzing the results.
- The percentage of total return rate of surveys (how many were distributed and how many were returned?)
- Identify the indicators under each of the PLC Dimension (Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning and Application, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive Conditions-Relationships, Supportive Conditions - Structures) that yielded areas of concern for moving toward a PLC. What criteria were used for determining the areas of concern?

MODULE 2 The PLC Model and Collaboration

A school can better sustain its transformation to a PLC if teachers are able to collaborate on such things as lesson plans and materials, curriculum and assessment practices, new programs and strategies, and continuous improvement processes. Creating teams is one of the most effective strategies for developing and fostering a collaborative culture and climate. Teams are the units that drive collaborative culture, and collaboration is a vital component of a PLC. A collaborative team is a group of people working interdependently toward a common goal. Interdependence and common goals are vital elements for productive teams. They are characteristics that separate collaborative teams at PLCs from most teams in traditional schools.

Readings

Professional Learning Communities at Work (1998)

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Chapter 6 | Sustaining the School Improvement Process |
| Chapter 7 | Embedding Change in the Culture of a School |
| Chapter 8 | Planning for Learning: Curricular Focus in a Learning Community |
| Chapter 9 | The Role of the Principal in the Professional Learning Community |

Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities (2003)

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Chapter 3 | Shared and Supportive Leadership |
| Chapter 4 | Shared Values and Vision |
| Chapter 5 | Collective Learning and Application |
| Chapter 6 | Shared Personal Practice |
| Chapter 7 | Supportive Conditions |

Discussion Questions

After completing the required readings for Modules 1 & 2, respond to the following questions within ONE posting in the Module 2 discussion area. (Subject line: YourLastName – Module 2)

1. What does it mean to have consensus for a team decision?
2. How do you define collaboration and consensus?
3. Analyze and describe the use of collaboration in your current work setting.

Written Assignments

Assignment 2-1 Case Study #2 (10 pts)

Suggested length: 4-6 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage

Read and complete the case study on pages 97-107 in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to “The Challenge” and provide comprehensive responses to the “Key Questions” at the end of the Case Study. No references are required but may be included.

Assignment 2-2 – Analysis of Work Setting (20 pts)

Suggested length: 5-8 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage and reference list.

Part 1: Examine your own school (district) and evaluate how it uses collaboration and teams. Most every school (district) has teams, task forces, or committees, but are they effective teams in the PLC sense?

- Type up a list of ten ideas or opportunities about ways your school or district might improve collaboration.
- Choose five ideas or opportunities from your list above and discuss/explain each in greater detail.
- Think about a highly effective team on which you have served. Did it have the characteristics of an effective PLC team? Explain why.
- Think about an ineffective team on which you have served. What are some strategies for avoiding that inefficiency again?
- What is your definition of consensus for a team decision? What does it mean to have consensus for a team decision?

Part 2 – Write a candid and honest assessment of your school and/or district professional (staff) development based on your knowledge and interactions. The assessment is regarding the school and/or district professional (staff) development program. Consider the following questions based on values and beliefs (culture) and actions you have witnessed in the school and/or district. Support your statements with references from a **minimum of 5 current educational journals**. Cite the references within your paper in proper APA format and include a reference list.

- Consider a recent professional development effort in your school and/or district. What was the nature of the effort?
- Did it connect to the school and/or district defined vision or mission? Why or why not?
- Did it connect to the value and goals of the school and/or district? Why or why not?
- Who was involved in the effort? How were they chosen? Did it have the “esprit de corps” of a team effort? Why or why not?
- Were any of the ideas of a PLC in evidence? Explain in detail and candor.

MODULE 3 The PLC Model: Teaching vs. Learning

Both learning and teaching are critical in a successful school. However, many schools focus predominantly on teaching – what teaching strategies and materials should be used, what teachers should do in class, and how lessons should be taught. Professional learning communities focus on learning. This may seem to be merely semantics, but is it not. It is a powerful cultural shift that encourages all school plans and decisions to be made in light of how they help students learn. A PLC still asks questions about teaching, however, the primary focus is learning. Teaching can be considered to be the process and learning to be the result. A PLC focuses on results. Often the teaching process needs to be adjusted to achieve better or more consistent learning results. It is learning and desired learning results that set the direction for teaching, not the other way around.

Readings

Professional Learning Communities at Work (1998)

- Chapter 10 Teaching in a Professional Learning Community
- Chapter 11 The Role of Parents in a Professional Learning Community
- Chapter 12 Staff Development in a Professional Learning Community
- Chapter 13 Passion and Persistence

Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities (2003)

- Chapter 8 Assessing Schools as PLCs
- Chapter 9 The PLC Connection to School Improvement

Discussion Questions

After completing the required readings for Modules 1-3, respond to the following questions within ONE posting in the Module 3 discussion area. (Subject line: YourLastName – Module 3)

1. Do state standards already indicate what we expect students to learn? Why or why not? Be specific.
2. Describe the process at your work setting for monitoring the curriculum?
3. How does your school know that students at your school are learning? What types of assessment are used? Multiple assessments? Are assessments aligned with the curriculum?

Written Assignments

Assignment 3-1 – Case Study #3 (10 pts)

Suggested length: 4-6 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage

Read and complete the case study on pages 109-120 in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to “The Challenge” and provide comprehensive responses to the “Key Questions” at the end of the case study. No references are required but may be included.

Assignment 3-2 – Analysis of Work Setting (20 pts)

Suggested length: 5-8 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage and reference list.

Part 1: Examine your own school (district) and evaluate and determine the extent to which it focuses on student learning.

- How well does your school (district) answer the questions, “What do we expect students to learn?” and “How will we know students are learning?”
- How is student learning evaluated within your school or district?
- Is instruction driven by the data that are gathered about the learners?
Explain the process of data-driven instruction within your school/district.
- Type up a list of ten ideas or opportunities about ways your school or district might improve its focus on student learning.
- Choose five ideas or opportunities from your list above and discuss/explain each in greater detail.

Part 2: Reflect about an experience in your past in which you had difficulty learning. What did it feel like to struggle? What did it feel like to receive support and help to get through that struggle? Assess whether your struggle was a genuine learning problem or was it based more on a “fear of learning.” Based on your own experience, relate ideas that you have for helping students who are struggling and

have a “fear of learning.” Review a **minimum of three articles from current educational journals** and cite them in your responses to the questions below. Your paper should be a cohesive essay about current best practices to ensure that “no child left behind” is a reality in our schools. Cite the references within your paper in proper APA format and include a reference list.

- What are some things we can do to help students who are struggling or who have fallen through the cracks, i.e., flunked a course, was held back a year, or dropped out of school?
- What are some ways these situations might be prevented?
- What are some things we might do to help these students succeed?
- Would implementing the PLC be a path in the right direction to address these issues?

MODULE 4 Educational Impact: Lectures/Analysis Paper/Discussion

Readings

For this module of the course, you will access the Educational Impact (EI) electronic resource. Go to the EI Web site at <http://secure.eionline.net/nsu/index.cfm> and subscribe if you have not already done so. The subscription fee is \$100. Subscribing to the Educational Impact electronic resource is a requirement of every individual student enrolled at the NSU Fischler School of Education & Human Services. You can subscribe to the Educational Impact Web site online and use your personal credit card. Make sure you enter your NSU e-mail address for tracking purposes.

Once you have subscribed to the EI Textbook, you will then login and go to the **Leading Learning Communities** program. Leading Learning Communities is a partnership with National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and provides experts and practitioners addressing the six standards of educational leadership.

When you click on the **Leading Learning Communities** program, you will see a menu. You will be working in I. Developing Quality Schools; II. Balance Management & Leadership Role; and III. Set High Expectations and Standards. You will first read and review the following:

- I. Developing Quality Schools**
 - a. NAESP Manual

The NAESP offers this manual, **Leading Learning Communities: Standards for what Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do**, as a guide for those who care about creating and supporting quality in schools. Please print out a hard copy of the document so you will have it for future reference to complete assignment 4. As you read the document, make notes about how these standards and information relates to the tenets of the Professional Learning Community (PLC). After reviewing the document, you will then do the following:

- II. Balance Management & Leadership Roles**
 - a. Expert – Dr. Roland Barth

You will view Dr. Barth’s presentation on the topic of Balance Management & Leadership Role. The Educational Impact video presentation is not lengthy (approximately 30 minutes) and is divided into segments, which allows you to watch the segments at your convenience. Also, please note that you can print a copy of the transcript of Dr. Barth’s presentation. Click on the Handout link and print the article (Balancing Leadership and Management Roles: Lessons from an Online Discussion of Principals & Legitimate Questions Followers Can Ask Of Leaders) **before** you view the video. While viewing the video (and reviewing the transcript) make notes about how this information and material relates to the tenets of the Professional Learning Community (PLC).

III. Set High Expectations & Standards

a. Expert – Dr. Richard Elmore

Again, view Dr. Elmore’s video presentation on the topic of Set High Expectations & Standards. Again, this Educational Impact video presentation is approximately 30 minutes in length. Again, click on Handouts link and print the article *Guiding Teachers in Putting Professional Development Into Practice & Ensuring Opportunities to Learn* **before** you view the video. While viewing the video (and reviewing the transcript) make notes about how this information and material relate to the tenets of the Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Discussion Questions

After completing the required online readings and videos for Module 4, respond to the following questions within ONE posting in the Module 4 discussion area. (Subject line: YourLastName – Module 4)

1. What new information did you learn from the Barth presentation/materials?
2. What new information did you learn from the Elmore presentation/materials?
3. How will you be able to use this information to enhance your current work setting?
4. How will you be able to use this information in your PLC Final Project?

Written Assignment

Assignment 4 – Educational Impact Analysis Paper (25 points)

Suggested length: 5-7 double-spaced pages, excluding coverpage and reference list

Review the Leading Learning Communities: Standards For What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do document as well as the Barth & Elmore lectures/materials. Type a five to seven (5-7) page double-spaced paper using APA 5th Edition form and style addressing the following question:

How do the “Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do” and the information you acquired from the Educational Impact videos/materials relate to the tenets of creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?

Provide several specific examples from the standards and the EI video/materials that relate directly to PLC tenets and support this information with your increased knowledge base and professional competence that you experienced through the readings and lectures.

MODULE 5 – PLC Final Project (65 points)

Introduction

The problem with our schools today is not that they are not what they used to be, but that, for most, they are what they used to be. If a school is to “close the achievement gap” or “leave no child left behind,” then it must strive to become a true professional learning community whose primary focus is the improvement of student achievement. Professional staff development is a critical component to the creation of a PLC. Professional staff development should focus on the dimensions of a professional learning community.

Schools and school districts spend millions of dollars annually on professional staff development initiatives that could be described as “shotgun drive-by shooting” – workshops, “feel good,” or awareness sessions that offered with a “one shot” methodology, and it is hoped that some of the buckshot hits and takes! Educators have operated on the premise that professional staff development is good for teachers and administrators and, therefore, more is always better. If you want to improve your professional staff development program, simply add a day or two!

The myth has been that if teachers and administrators became more knowledgeable in the professional development flavor of the month, their students would achieve at a higher level. Unfortunately, high stakes testing and the age of accountability have exposed the myth about ineffective professional staff development activities. Educators know that sustained professional development requires coaching and follow-up.

This final project requires the application of the knowledge base acquired in Modules 1 through 4 of this course. You will utilize data from two surveys (PLC survey and ASCD professional development survey) to create a professional development plan (PDP) that addresses the creation of a professional learning community within your school and/or organization.

Assignment Specifications

This assignment has multiple parts that are explained in detail below. There is no threaded discussion for Module 5. Follow the directions carefully in preparing each section of the assignment. All of the required components for this assignment will be submitted in a “zipped” folder via e-mail (in site-based courses) or via the WebCT assignment dropbox (in online courses). You should create a folder on your computer’s desktop (right click on the desktop and select New Folder), name it PLC Final Project, and save your work for each section of this assignment in the folder. Instructions on how to “zip” this folder are provided later in this study guide.

If your computer has Windows XP, the zipping utility is built in. Directions for zipping the folder using the Windows XP zipping utility are provided below. If your computer does not have Windows XP, it will be necessary for you to download and install a FREE zip utility (ZipCentral or WinZip). Directions for downloading, installing, and using ZipCentral (freeware) and WinZip (evaluation version) are provided below.

Part 1 – PLC Survey

This section of the final project expands upon Assignment 1-3. You should include the spreadsheet and bar graphs in the PLC Final Project Folder. Then prepare an analysis paper that explains WHY you think the specific indicators within each of the dimensions appeared as an area of concern based on participants' responses. What kind of professional development (types, topics, etc.) might address each area of concern? Why do you think it would be effective? Explain your reasoning for each suggestion. Explain any part of the results with which you disagree and why. Save the analysis paper in the PLC Final Project folder with the filename *PLC Survey Analysis*.

Part 2 – ASCD Professional Development Survey

Complete the professional development survey on the Web site of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development at <http://webserver3.ascd.org/ossd/planning.html>.

1. Respond to all items within the five sections of the survey (assessment, instructional strategies, curriculum development, instructional leadership, and understanding the learning process).
2. On the "Survey Results" screen, click on "Snapshot" to view a bar graph that shows how you responded to the survey.
3. Save a "screenshot" of the bar graph in the PLC Final Project folder to send to your instructor and for your own future reference. To save the "screenshot," do the following steps:
 - a. Using the horizontal and vertical scroll bar, center the graph on the screen so the whole graph is visible. Press the "PrtScr" key on your keyboard. This will make a copy of the contents of your screen in your computer's memory.
 - b. Start up Word. In the new document screen, select Paste from the Edit menu. A graphic of the "screenshot" will appear.
 - c. Save the "screenshot" with the filename *ASCD Survey Graph.doc* in the PLC Final Project Folder.
4. Click on each bar of the graph and review the information that is provided about that category of the survey. You may wish to print/save this information for future reference. You will be able to use this information in the preparation of your Professional Development Plan (Part 3 of this assignment). Are there any commonalities between the results of this survey and the results of the PLC survey.

Part 3 – Professional Development Plan (PDP)

1. Provide an executive summary of your organization and its status at this point in time as a Professional Learning Community using the PLC characteristics from DuFour & Eaker and Huffman & Hipp. For this introductory summary, you should utilize descriptions and demographic data that you prepared for in Assignments 1-2, 1-3, 2-2, and 3-2. Remember to write as a researcher and not

personally. Leave out opinion. The executive summary should include only conclusions that can be supported by the research data.

- Use the outline below to prepare a **minimum of five objectives** for your professional development plan based on the results of the ASCD professional development survey and/or the areas of concern from the PLC survey.

Professional Development Plan	
Prepared by Position School/District Date	
<i>NOTE: Repeat this section for each of the 5 objectives.</i>	Objective # __ Description of activities and timeline Strategies to be used and explanations (e.g., workshops, peer coaching, informal peer observation, action research, collaborative teacher planning, faculty/team meetings, study groups, off site visitation, analysis of student work, etc.) How it supports district goals How it supports school improvement plan How it supports the PLC model Evidence of improvement

- Save the Professional Development Plan (including the executive summary and 5 objectives) with the filename ***YourLastName - PDP*** in the PLC Final Project folder.

DIRECTIONS FOR ZIPPING THE PLC FINAL PROJECT FOLDER

ZIP is a popular archive format in which one file or several files in a folder are compressed. The files stored in a ZIP file are compressed, making the ZIP file smaller than the size of the uncompressed files. The smaller file size requires less time for the electronic transfer of the files via e-mail or within WebCT. "Zipping" the folder of files will allow you to send only ONE attachment when you submit this assignment via the WebCT assignment dropbox.

Using Windows XP Zip

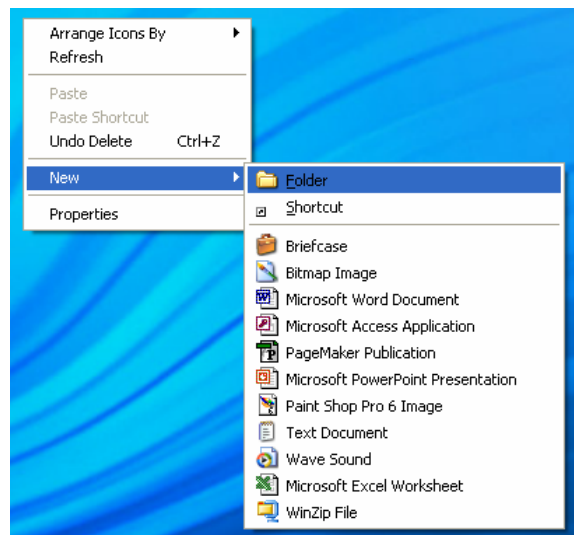
If your computer has Windows XP, the zipping utility is built in. After creating the PLC Final Project folder on the desktop and saving all of your files for this assignment in that folder, you can zip the folder by completing the following steps:

1. Right click on the PLC Final Project folder. Scroll down and left click on "Send to."
2. Scroll down and left click on "Compressed (zipped) folder."
3. You will see the zipped folder on the desktop. Its name will be "PLC Final Project.zip." This is the folder that you will submit to your instructor.

Using ZipCentral

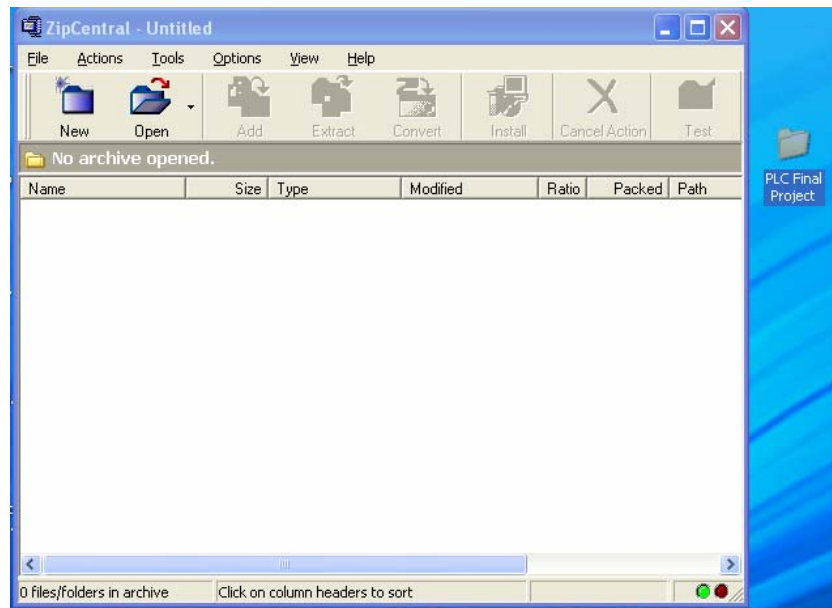
If your computer does not have Windows XP, it will be necessary for you to download and install a FREE zip utility. Directions for ZipCentral (freeware) and WinZip (evaluation version) are provided below.

1. Make a folder on your desktop by right clicking anywhere on the background of your desktop with your mouse; pick "new" from the menu with a left click. Pick "folder" and name it "PLC Final Project."

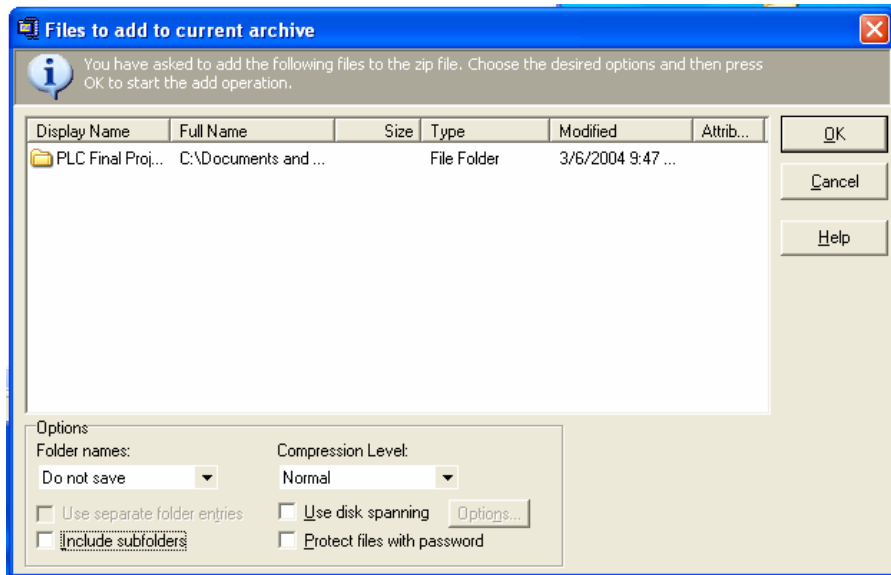
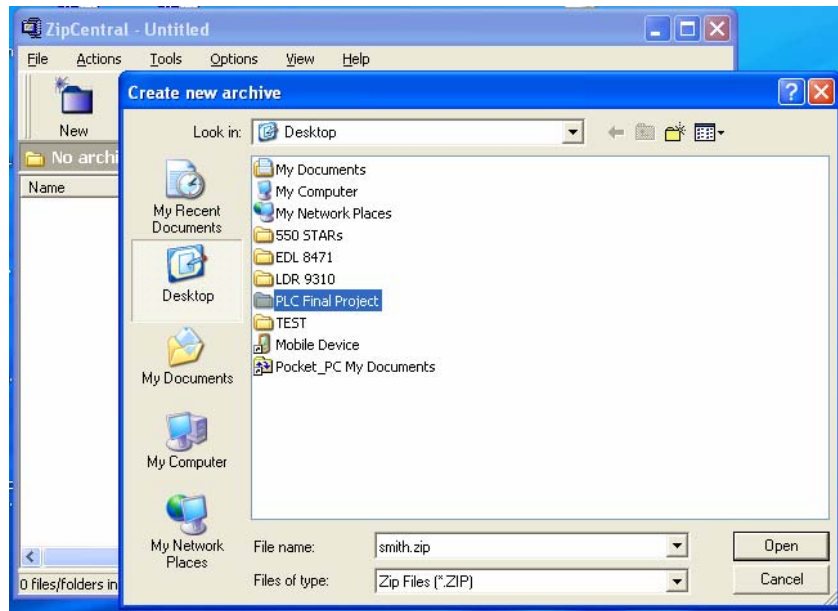


2. As you work on the different parts of this assignment, save the files in the new folder that you just created on your desktop.

3. Download the program ZipCentral from the Web site <http://zipcentral.iscool.net/>. Click on the “Downloads” link at the top of the page. In Step 1, you must select the language; in Step 2 you must select the download site. In the “File Download” box, select Save. Save the downloaded file (zcsetup.exe) on the desktop or in the Downloads folder. Remember the location so you can find the file after the download has finished.
4. Locate the downloaded file and double click it. Accept the default settings through the download process by clicking the Next button on each new screen. An icon for the program will be created on the desktop.
5. Start ZipCentral by double clicking on the desktop icon. Close the Tip of the Day and you will see the “ZipCentral – untitled” screen.



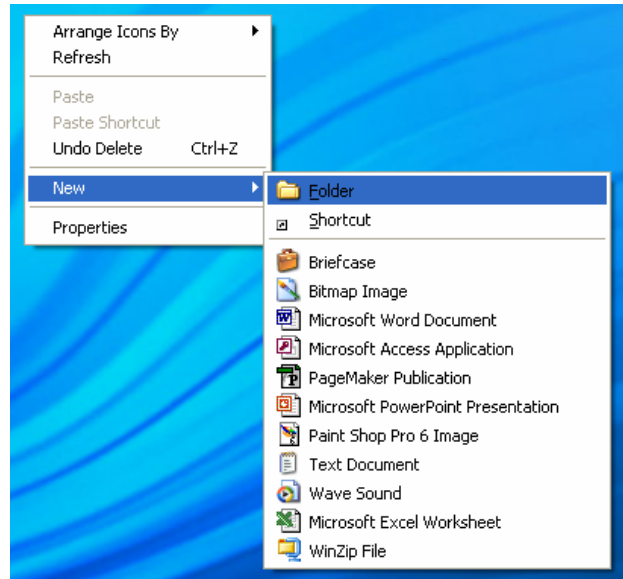
6. Drag and drop the PLC Final Project folder (which contains all of the files that you have created for the assignment) onto the ZipCentral open screen (as shown above). A “create new archive” window will open. Type a filename for the file using your surname (for example smith.zip) and click the Open button. The “files to add to current archive” window will open. You will see your PLC Final Project folder within this window. Click the OK button.



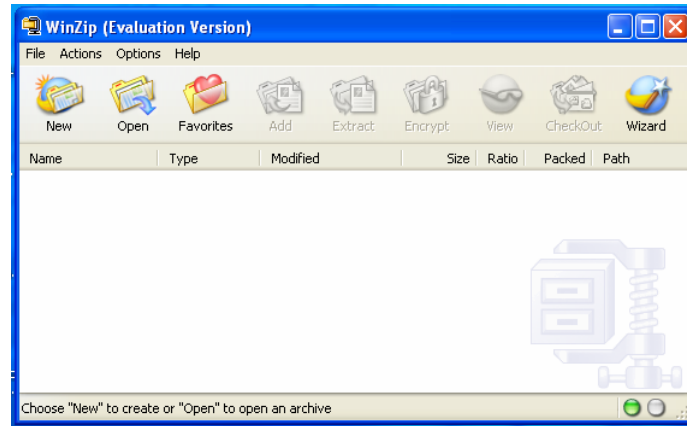
7. You will now see a window displaying the files that are in your zipped file and you will see a file with your last name (with the .zip file extension) on the desktop. The zipped file's icon will look like a folder in a vise. This is the file that you submit via the WebCT assignment dropbox.
8. Exit from ZipCentral by clicking the red X in the upper right corner (or selecting Exit from the File menu).

Using WinZip

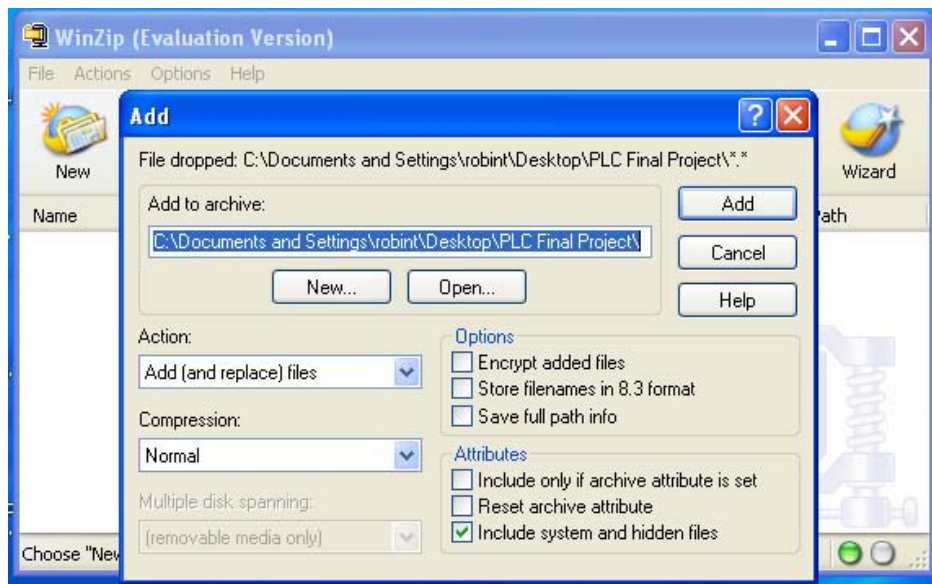
1. Make a folder on your desktop by right clicking anywhere on the background of your desktop with your mouse; pick "new" from the menu with a left click. Pick "folder" and name it "PLC Final Project."



2. As you work on the different parts of this assignment, save the files in the new folder that you just created on your desktop.
3. If you don't have WinZip on your computer, you can download a fully-functional version from <http://www.winzip.com>. You may use the evaluation version free of charge for a period of 21 days. Pick any download site and follow the directions to download the file "winzip90.exe" Save the downloaded file on the desktop or in the Downloads folder. Remember the location so you can find the file after the download has finished.
4. Locate the winzip90.exe and double click it. Follow the on-screen instructions to install the program.
5. Start WinZip by double-clicking the WinZip shortcut icon that was created on the desktop during the installation. Click "Use Evaluation Version." Click on the "WinZip Classic" button to start the program in the classic mode.



6. Drag and drop the PLC Final Project folder (which contains all of the files that you have created for the assignment) onto the WinZip open screen (as shown above). An “Add to archive” screen will open. Click on the New button to begin the process.



7. Select “Desktop” from the “Save in” pull-down list. Type a filename for the file using your surname (for example smith.zip) and click the OK button. Click the Add button.
8. You will now see a window displaying the files that are in your zipped file and you will see a file with your last name (with the .zip file extension) on the desktop. The zipped file's icon will look like a folder in a wise. This is the file that you submit via the WebCT assignment dropbox.
9. Exit from WinZip by clicking the red X in the upper right corner (or selecting Exit from the File menu).

SAMPLE LETTER FOR PLC ASSESSMENT

(Note: If your school district and/or faculty union requires you to obtain permission to conduct such a survey (assignment) then be sure to do so prior to sending this letter with the survey)

DATE

Dear _____ Colleague,
(name of school)

I am enrolled in a graduate course titled Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Nova Southeastern University this term. As part of my course requirements, I must conduct an anonymous survey of all the faculty/staff at my work setting regarding the dimensions of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and related attributes.

Attached is the survey. Would you please be kind enough to complete this survey and return it to (insert here where you want the survey returned) no later than (insert date)?

Please do not put your name or any identification (grade, subject area, etc.) on the survey as your feedback must be anonymous.

I thank you very much in advance for assisting me with this graduate school project.

Sincerely,