

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES
(PLC)**

**EDL 9472
STUDY GUIDE**

(3 CREDITS)

SPRING 2004

**STUDY GUIDE TO BE USED ONLY
FOR SPRING 2004 TERM!**

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION!

***THIS STUDY GUIDE IS FOR EDL 9472
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES
ONLY!***

In times of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves beautifully equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.¹

Welcome to the Professional Learning Communities course. We, the professors in this course, invite you to join us as we explore creating a Professional Learning Community. It is our desire that, through our three sessions together, 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 professor and participant brings their own individual talents and experiences to the learning process. It is the synthesis of individual 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 course, you will become better equipped to foster the development of professional learning communities within your own setting. In this PLC study guide, we present Professional Learning Community 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 sessions for maximum development of our Professional Learning Community. We look forward to sharing this professional learning experience with you.

¹ Hoffer, E. (1972). *Reflections on the human condition*. New York: Harper-Collins.

INTRODUCTION

A learning organization is “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its own future.”²

This study guide frames the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) course and is intended to provide you, the participant, with a conceptual understanding of the total course and its three sessions. It will provide you with answers to some important questions that will help you to shape your learning experience. Included in this study guide are answers to such questions as: (a) What is the purpose of the course? (b) What are the major learning objectives of the various class sessions and how do these objectives come together under one meaningful umbrella? (c) What will I, the participant be required to complete in this course? (d) What readings will be required? (e) How does this course and required activities connect to my current work setting?

The PLC Study Guide is arranged in four parts:

PART ONE

Part One sets forth the basic rationale for the PLC course, suggests the manner in which each session connects to the overall theme and provides a general overview for the entire course.

PART TWO

Part Two describes the major themes and the learner objectives in the three day-long classes. The major themes are:

- Building the Foundation for a Professional Learning Community: Mission, Vision, Values and Goals
- Creating a Collaborative Culture

² Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Doubleday.

- A Focus on Learning: Curriculum and Assessment
- Supporting Student Learning
- Cultural Shifts: Becoming a Professional Learning Community
- Call to Action: Passion and Persistence.

PART THREE

Part Three lists the assigned texts and required readings and assignments assigned for each session. Each individual PLC professor may distribute additional readings to enhance their class session, as well as recommend additional readings and Web sites which will provide material for you to reference in completing the course assignments and the **PLC Final Examination Assignment which is a PLC Assessment Paper**. Note that each PLC instructor will have additional handouts and in-class activities that you will be required to complete and discuss.

PART FOUR

Part Four provides very important information concerning **the required PLC Final Examination Assignment which is a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Assessment paper**.

Although we are anxious that you recognize the unified themes within this course and that we bring the three sessions together in a meaningful whole, we are also concerned with how this PLC course fits in to the larger purpose of the Educational Leadership Program and your current work setting. You will note that many ideas in the Professional Learning Communities course are connected to ideas in other courses. We invite you to bring these connections to our attention during the class sessions. The intent of all the course assignments is to provide your opportunities to expand your own capacity and the

capacity of the organizations in which you are employed. To accept this invitation is to sense your own efficacy in **learning to create a Professional Learning Community.**

PART ONE

Overview

*Only the organizations that have a passion for learning will have an enduring influence.*³

This PLC course is centered in a PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY and has every thing 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 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 Chester Barnard's 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, advocated by such writers as Greenleaf, Sergiovanni, and Foster, 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 sets the tone and example for all within the organization. Furthermore, we believe that the creative leader uses his

³ Covey, S. (1996). Three roles of the leader in the new paradigm. *The Leader of the Future*. Jossey-Bass.

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. 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 Professional Learning Communities course will learn to assess the history and culture of 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 Professional Learning Communities 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 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 PLC 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 promotes the participants' understanding of the professional learning communities' 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 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.

Supports 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. In addition, a twelve-item assessment on where your school is along the PLC continuum is included in the text.

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.

Professional Learning Community: What Is It?

The term “Professional Learning Community” has become a popular term in current literature and yet its definition bears further exploration. In this course, we consider a Professional Learning Community to be much like a **setting**, defined by Sarason as “an instance when two or more people come together in new and sustained relationship to achieve common goals” (Sarason, 1972, p. ix). The concept of a relationship is central to the definition for it suggests an emotional bonding that results from the interaction of individuals unified for a particular purpose. In a Professional Learning Community the

purpose is “learning”; therefore, individual and collective growth are the products of that relationship.

“Community celebrates the dignity and worth of self and others, fosters the empowerment of both, and encourages and supports the maximum development of human potential for the benefit of the common good.” (Norris, C. et al, 2002). Indeed, empowerment is the by-product of a true community, for through unity individuals are provided opportunities to more fully realize their human needs, clarify their values, and enhance their capacity for thinking and learning. It is these three opportunities that Rath suggests provide the foundation for personal empowerment.

This PLC course challenges leaders to serve as catalysts for the establishment of professional learning communities designed to promote this sense of mutual care and responsibility. We explore the nature of care as both a practice and a disposition. Caring leaders recognize that responsibility to others extends beyond merely establishing good interpersonal relationships with students, staff, and parents. Leaders who foster community recognize that moral and social responsibilities are deeply rooted in the concept of leadership. There is a sincere desire to make a difference in the lives of others. Leaders take on a “servant-leader” perspective that changes the whole nature of the educational enterprise. As Sergiovanni⁴ suggests, there is no longer a bureaucratic hierarchy with the leader at the top; instead the organization is based on follower ship and is guided by ideas, values, and commitments. Leaders become both followers and leaders, their roles are constantly changing. Foster⁵ sums up this concept in the following:

Leadership, in the final analysis, is the ability of humans to relate deeply to each other in the search for a more perfect union. Leadership is a consensual task, a sharing of

⁴ Sergiovanni, T. (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. Jossey-Bass.

⁵ Foster, W. (1986). *Toward a critical practice of leadership*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

ideas and a sharing of responsibilities, where a leader is a leader for the moment only, where the follower ship exerted must be validated by the consent of the followers, and where leadership lies in the struggles of the community to find meaning for itself.

Curriculum: Learning Within the Professional Learning Community

Special attention is given to the traditional definition of curriculum as “a course of study” (outer curriculum) as well as a more contemporary definition of curriculum as “what each person experiences as learning settings are cooperatively created” (inner curriculum). “Hidden curriculum” is a concept that encourages participants to explore the subtext of purpose and underlying values implicit in school and school-system practices.

It is our intent that participants will be able to clearly articulate what it means to be an effective school and school-based leader in curriculum development and specifically how these are relative and cogent the creation and establishment of a Professional Learning Community. “Fadism” is a topic that is given considerable attention: In whose interest is the parade of programs and instructional materials? What from this barrage of proposed curriculum reforms is essential and will be with us 10 to 20 years from now? Senge cautions us to know what point the fad is in its cycle before committing it. To commit at the end of the fad cycle is to deny oneself access to many human and non-human resources.

Contemporary issues that affect the school curriculum are the subject of much discussion: increased poverty in this country and its impact on already financially burdened educational institutions; larger numbers each year of disabled children in our schools; more non-English speaking students; the mobile society (making local control somewhat open to suspicion); the societal conflicts about the appropriate directions for the schools (vouchers, home schooling, testing, character education serve as examples); and finally, the teacher and administrator shortages that are getting worse by the day.

You have in each classroom a miniature version of issues facing the larger society and community outside of the classroom. For example, American identity, cultural identity, micro-cultural identity, multicultural education as a process, not a product, and gender inequities are cutting-edge issues. Tomorrow's curriculum is being previewed on talk shows and editorial pages today. In critiquing these matters, we are especially alert to the distinction between problems to be solved (for example, getting new computer hardware and software) and dilemmas to be reconciled (for example, being called a professional but treated as a bureaucrat).

We also ask the question, "What knowledge is of most worth?" It is in answering this question that we get to underlying premises of the advocate of a particular curriculum reform effort. Underlying premises may or may not be articulated. In the event that they are, we can note the discrepancy between rhetoric and action. If underlying premises are tacit or understood, rather than articulated, the curriculum development leader is challenged to ferret them out so that the discrepancy question may also be raised. This makes clear the educational leader's challenge in recognizing and reconciling, where possible, political interests and learning interests.

Professional (Staff) Development: Developing Professionals Through Community

It is essential to explore the relationship between professional (staff) development and quality teaching and learning. Focus is on the role of educational leaders in designing professional (staff) development settings conducive to community and to the promotion of both individual and organizational growth. In reading the textbooks and materials for this PLC course, you are encouraged to reflect on how research related to teacher characteristics, adult learning, change, and systemic reform has influenced professional

(staff) development philosophy and practice in recent years. Special attention will be given to the dimensions of the professional learning organization and how they are enacted within cohesive communities that encourage team learning, shared vision, questioning of mental models, and the promotion of personal mastery at all levels (students, teachers, administrators, and community members). What part do personal empowerment, a sense of efficacy, and an ethic of care have on the full development of individual and organizational potential?

Learner Objectives

The class sessions are designed to promote participants' understanding of:

- community and the values that support it
- the relationship between the organization and the individual and of the reciprocal benefits of shared purpose
- the broad dimensions of leadership within the community
- organizational context and its role in shaping (1) the purpose of education, (2) teacher and administrator roles, (3) the purpose and design of individual and organizational learning, (4) the perceived nature of the learner, and (5) the design of evaluation and reform
- personal empowerment, efficacy, and an ethic of care, as well as the role each plays in promoting community
- community and the role it plays in human learning
- definitions of “curriculum,” their historical underpinnings, and their impact on school learning

- models of curriculum development and how these may be of value in promoting learning communities
- 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, and (d) evaluation of and reflection of process and product
- the usefulness of historical and contemporary educational literature about curricular issues
- 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
- adult learning theory and its implications for the establishment of professional learning communities
- the changing paradigm of professional (staff) development
- the systemic relationship of professional (staff) development and other aspects of the learning process
- the primary models of professional (staff) development and the dimensions of the professional (staff) development process
- the application of professional (staff) development models to various teacher career stages and phases of teacher development
- apply the tenets of *complementary associations* in creating professional learning communities in their own workplaces

- apply a planning model based on community beliefs, vision, mission, and the resulting performance standards
- develop performance standards applicable for use in professional (staff) development programs
- apply their own repertoire of strategies to address various reform and accountability concerns facing education
- relate and apply various information sources taken from the literature and discussion presented in all class sessions

PART 3

DAY 1

Pre-Assignment – Session 1 - (Due Session 1) – All participants **MUST** bring a copy of their school (or district) Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Goals, Values; whichever is applicable to their work setting.

Pre-Assignment – Session 1 - (Due Session 1) - Read and complete **Case Study #1** (pp. 89-96) in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to The Challenge and **type the Key Questions and your comprehensive response** to each Key Question at the end of the Case Study.

Pre-Assignment - Session 1 - (Due Session 1) - This activity provides an opportunity to conduct an informal analysis of your own school or district. Read the following: The School As A PLC: A Scenario: Connie Donovan Story (pp. 29-44 in *Professional Learning Communities at Work*) and Lessons Learned: Boones Mill Elementary School (pp. 57-76) in *Getting Started*. After reading these scenarios, go back through them and underline the things that you liked—things you would want for

yourself or your school. Type up a list of those “things” that, in some fashion, could be implemented (or are already being implemented) at your school. If there are “things” that you liked but you do not think could be implemented at your school (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? Strategize and list some “ways” these barriers could be cleared or reduced. Be prepared to discuss and share this information with your cluster. Note, this assignment is not a formal paper—it is a required list of “things” and “ways”—you will use these as discussion points in Session 1.

Day 1 Required Reading

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 PLC: Values & Goals

Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become PLC (2002)

Introduction – Getting Started: A Conceptual Framework for Creating A PLC

Chapter 1 – Cultural Shifts: Transforming Schools into PLC

Chapter 4 - A Conversation with the Authors (pp. 105-107)

Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities (2003)

Chapter 1 – Overview of Professional Learning Communities

Chapter 2 – Responding to the Challenge

Day 1 - Post - Assignment (Due Session 2) – This formal paper is to be written after completing Session 1 and will be discussed at the beginning of Session 2. Use APA 5th Edition and you may use references to support your assessment of your school and/or district.

In a five (5) page (double-spaced) paper you will 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** by considering the following questions based on values and beliefs (culture) you have witnessed purported in the school and/or district.

- What is 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 be (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 is the **culture** in my school and/or district?

Day 1 – Post-Assignment (Due Session 2)

You are to make **25 copies** of the Professional Learning Community Assessment (Figure 8.1) (pp. 70-73) in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Communities*. You may retype the survey if you so desire. 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. You must distribute the survey to 25 randomly selected faculty/staff members **at your work setting**. Include a cover letter to the 25 persons informing them you are conducting a “field assignment” for a graduate course. (See sample letter at end of Study Guide). If your work setting is at the building level, then do a random survey of all faculty/staff that includes a variety of grade levels and subject areas. If your work setting is at the district level, you should choose one school or individual setting where you can complete a random 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 25 completed surveys will be DUE FOR SESSION 2 for your PLC instructor to review. You will not turn in the surveys as you will need them to complete your Final Exam Assignment (Professional Learning Community Assessment Paper); however, you are required to have copied, distributed, and collected the 25 surveys prior to Session 2.**

DAY 2

Pre-Assignment – Session 2 - (Due Session 2) – All participants **MUST** bring a copy of their school (or district) policy on professional (staff) development. Specifically, bring a copy of the official school board policy, district policy, or building level policy. Be prepared to share, critique and discuss the policy.

Pre – Assignment – Session 2 - (Due Session 2)- Read and complete **Case Study #2** (pp. 97-107) in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to The Challenge and **type the Key Questions and your comprehensive response** to each Key Question at the end of the Case Study.

Pre-Assignment - Session 2 - (Due Session 2) 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 “**10 ideas**” about ways your school or district might improve collaboration. Additionally, brainstorm about additional “opportunities” for collaboration and list **five (5)**. Think about a highly effective team you were on. Did it have the characteristics of an effective PLC team? Explain why. Think about an ineffective team you were on. 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? Be prepared to discuss and share this information with your cluster. Note, this assignment is not a formal paper—it is a **required** list of “ideas” and “opportunities” and “strategies”—you will use these as discussion points in Session 2.

Day 2 Required Reading

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

Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become PLC (2002)

Chapter 2 - Time, Perspective, and Priorities

Chapter 3 – Lessons Learned: Boones Mill Elementary School

Chapter 6 – Artifacts

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

Day 2 Post-Assignment (Due Session 3) – This formal paper is to be written after completing Session 2 and will be discussed at the beginning of Session 3. Use APA 5th edition and you may use references if you choose to do so.

In a five (5) page (double-spaced) paper you will write a **candid and honest** assessment of your school and/or school district’s professional (staff) development **based on your knowledge and interactions.** The assessment is regarding the school and/or district **professional (staff) development program** by considering the following

questions based on values and beliefs (culture) and **actions** you feel are purported (and have witnessed) in the school and/or district. Consider a recent professional development effort in your organization (school or district). What was the nature of the effort? Did it connect to the school/district's defined vision or mission? Why or why not? Did it connect to the value and goals of the school/district? Why or why not? Who was involved in the effort? How were they chosen? Did it have the "esprit de corp" of a team effort? Why or why not? Were any of the tenets of DuFour & Eaker's PLC in evidence? Explain in detail and candor.

DAY 2 POST-ASSIGNMENT– FINAL EXAMINATION (PLC Assessment Paper)

(See PART FOUR of STUDY GUIDE for detailed instructions.) Note the Final Exam Assignment is due at Session 3 as it will be used as a "tool" for discussion as, per NSU Policy, all assignments MUST be graded and the instructor must post final grades within 7 days after the last session. Your final grade posting will be one of the following: PASS or NO PASS.

DAY 3

Pre-Assignment – Session 3 - (Due Session 3) – All participants **MUST** bring a copy of their school (or district) policy on “student learning” and “teaching effectiveness.” Specifically, bring a copy of the official school board policy, district policy, or building level policy. Be prepared to share and discuss the policy.

Pre-Assignment – Session 3 - (Due Session 3)

Read and complete **Case Study #3** (pp. 109-120) in *Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities*. Respond to The Challenge and **type the Key Questions and your comprehensive response** to each Key Question at the end of the Case Study.

Pre-Assignment - Session 3 - (Due Session 3)

Examine your own school (district) and evaluate and determine the extent to which it focuses on 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?” Certainly all schools say learning is important, but is learning, and learning for all students, consistently in the foreground of your school’s (district’s) practices? Reflect on deep, rich learning activities at your school (district) or in your teaching/administration. What learning outcomes they have? How are they evaluated? Type us a list of “ideas” and “strategies” about ways your school or district might improve its focus on learning. Be prepared to discuss and share this information with your cluster. Note, this assignment is not a formal paper—it is a required list of “ideas” and “strategies”—you will use these as discussion points in Session 3.

(If you desire to have Day 3 Assignments returned you must bring a SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED (with the correct postage) envelope attached to the assignments to submit to your PLC instructor; otherwise, your assignments will not be returned.

Day 3 Required Reading

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

Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become PLC (2002)

Chapter 5 – A Call For Action

Chapter 7 – Case Studies

Reculturing Schools As Professional Learning Communities (2003)

Chapter 8 – Assessing Schools as PLCs

Chapter 9 – The PLC Connection to School Improvement

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (3)

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

Eaker, Robert; DuFour, Richard & DuFour, Rebecca. (2002). *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*. Publisher: National Educational Service (www.nesonline.com), Bloomington, Indiana.
ISBN 1-879639-89-0

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

You are strongly encouraged to search the NSU Electronic Library and Web sites of major educational leadership organizations below to complete additional readings and research on the topic of Professional Learning Community.

- National Association of Elementary School Principals (www.naesp.org)
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (www.nassp.org)
- Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org)
- American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org)
- National Staff Development Council (www.nsd.org)
- National Middle School Association (www.nmsa.org)
- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (www.nbpts.org)

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

All Assignments for Sessions 1, 2, and 3 MUST be submitted IN CLASS to your PLC Instructor! NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED!

Assignments for the class sessions must be submitted to the individual PLC instructor facilitating the 3 sessions of your course. ALL assignments will be used as “tools” for generating discussion. The PLC instructor will collect, review, grade, and return ALL Assignments with a PASS, NO PASS, or REWRITE. You are allowed only ONE REWRITE during the course; therefore, you are strongly encouraged to DO YOUR BEST SCHOLARLY WORK!

Assignments for Sessions 1 & 2 will be returned to you in class. However, if you desire to receive graded assignments that you submit in Session 3 you **MUST** attach a **SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED (with correct postage) ENVELOPE** to the assignments should you wish the instructor to return them to you.

Be sure to put your name as **BOTH** the Sender and Receiver on the Self-Addressed Stamped envelope should there be problems with the U.S. Mail and the U.S. Post Office will return it to you with **POSTAGE DUE** and not return it to the PLC Instructor. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

PART FOUR

FINAL EXAM ASSIGNMENT

(PLC Assessment Paper)

(DUE SESSION 3)

Professional Learning Community (PLC) Assessment Paper

The final exam assignment in the PLC course is to use the knowledge base that you have acquired from readings, videos, discussion, and activities and **compile the data from the 25 surveys** you distributed to the faculty/staff. Complete an **informal analysis (how many marked SD, D, A, SA on each question)** of the data (45 questions) per the five (5) categories in the survey, i.e, (1) Shared & Supportive Leadership, (2) Shared Values & Vision, (3) Collective Learning & Application, (4) Shared Personal Practice, and (5) Supportive Conditions-Relationships & Supportive Conditions-Structure.

You will complete an “analysis paper” paper analyzing and addressing the feedback you received from the surveys. Specifically, you are to address the following points in the paper: (1) what area/s does the survey yield that PLC is being practiced in your work setting? and (2) what area/s does the survey yield that PLC is not being practiced in your work setting? Identify what evidence (data) there is to support the positive practices of PLC that are occurring and provide any evidence (data) you have to refute the “strong disagrees” and “disagrees” (of the survey participants). Also, as you review the data, brainstorm on what can be implemented to start working to improve any specific area, i.e., (1) shared and supportive leadership, (2) shared values and vision, (3) collective learning and application, (4) shared personal practice, and (5) supportive conditions-relationships/structures. Overall, the survey data and feedback is to be used to write a

scholarly analysis paper and look at your work setting through a “variety of lenses” (those of the survey participants) and make a concerted effort to analysis and “interpret” what the data is telling you. No references are required as this is an analysis of the survey data and you are to include your opinion/s on “agreeing, disagreeing, or neutral” of the feedback data. But more importantly, you are to keep in mind this is but a “random sample” of “what” the survey participants believe regarding your work setting!

IMPORTANT!

The PLC Final Exam Assignment (PLC Assessment Paper) is due the last (3rd) PLC session. Please remember that you must include a SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED (with correct postage) envelope for the assignments due in Session 3.

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 at Nova Southeastern University this term. As part of my course requirements, I must conduct an anonymous survey of 25 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,

Name