

STRIDE Notes
(Randy Philipp)

Group #3 How do we translate our empirical evidence to usable, useful information to classroom teachers? PD providers? Policy makers? What is the message?

Ted, Nancy, Pinky, Greta, Anne, Randy

Pinky: Sometimes we make CTI sound as if *the* thing to do, instead of as *a* thing to do.

Anne: That is the case. I've seen that districts seem to think CTIs or PLCs are *the* thing. (Randy asked what do these groups think a CTI is.)

They think CTI is a professional learning community. It is joint work created in cooperation with the building administrator to come up with something to pursue. It often gets categorized by grade level, but then they might work cross-grade. It might also be by subject, say algebra or geometry.

Ted: We are always in situations to make choices - A or B. In China, the middle school math teacher is in two groups. One is with math teachers teaching the same kind of course, and one is with other teachers working with the same students. And they meet each week. Although they have the time in their schedules to do that.

Pinky: I think we could argue that student achievement is the product of good instruction, and good instruction is the product of many things, including CTI. Bottom line is student learning.

Nancy: But what if the goal is not about student achievement, but instead, about something the teachers need.

Ted: Who do we mean by policy makers? And we need to be careful with the language that we use. I would use the term student learning, not student achievement.

Anne: The issue of student achievement and student learning is too big for us to take on.

Pinky: The other piece that PLCs are valuable for is that I think they are the only viable induction model we have. If we can get a new teacher into a functioning community, that can be helpful.

Nancy: And I think functioning teacher communities are here to stay.

Pinky: Maybe a product could be a two-page talking point about this.

Greta: That gets to audience, too. What do we mean by audience?

Pinky: I think the principals. The site administrators.

Greta: There is an audience at the state level too. The bullet points might be different.

Ted: What are you worried about in terms of thinking that the PLCs are *the* thing.

Greta: Make it easy for administrators to see “what works,” and then be as clear as you can about what that model should look like. We should also include that which we should avoid.

Dave: The issue I have is about grain size. There can be some theoretical aspects, and there can be some specific issues.

Greta: It does come down to grain size. Our job is not to implement for a district. It is to guide them on key components.

Ted: What is the standing way PD works with teachers in Washington State?

Greta: They have to do a certain number of clock hours, a certain number of credits, every year.

Ted: I’m thinking of the messages here. With children, we don’t just want seat time, we want engagement. With teachers, we don’t just want teachers to be together - we want them to be engaging and learning. Maybe we would document what the teachers are learning by using, say, portfolios.

Anne: How do we tap into major messages that we already know about?

Ted: Consider the business world model. I don’t know how true it is that the whole business world works in teams. How ridiculous it is that teachers are not working in teams.

David: There is evidence on what effective P.D. is.

Ted: The literature is people doing projects who are studying themselves and reporting on it. Who is doing research on the customers of a for-profit PD?

POINTS:

- Focus is on student learning
- There is evidence that this is a powerful approach. But the message is more complicated than “just do it.” There is evidence that support is necessary. The simple model of teachers working together is not enough.
- Consider how to communicate to the audience. We might add a piece where we determine, in a structured way, how the audience is hearing the message and what implications they think follow from the message we are sharing.

If we state that PLCs need to be content-based, pedagogically-based, and involve student data, does that preclude teachers engaging in book clubs, or attending summer programs in science labs, or...?

For the man on the street, “data” means “numbers.”

This is about a reculturization of our schools.

Content-neutral PLCs.

Role of teacher unions? As long as giving teachers time does not take away jobs...

Principals and state leaders

What the message is

How to share the message

Content/pedagogy/student learning

Do it in a systems-thinking way

Think about the P in PLC

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Our group looked at:

How do we translate our empirical evidence to usable, useful information to classroom teachers? PD providers? Policy makers? What is the message?

What we discussed?

1) What is the message?

CTIs are powerful. Content/pedagogy/student learning are key aspects of CTIs and ought to serve as guides for thinking about how to support teachers.

But they are not the only way.

Don't stop supporting other forms of P.D. that teachers value, such as book clubs, or summer programs in science labs, etc.

We noted that there are grain size issues about sharing:

Theoretical issues

Practical issues

A systems-thinking way.

2) How is the message disseminated?

- Make the message short and to the point.
- Use data, stories, etc., as they are appropriate to make the point.
- Create an iterative cycle for sharing so that we take more responsibility for what is being heard. For example, find out what implications they see for what they have heard. And then change the message so that you are communicating.

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Group 1 - (Joan) What supports are necessary to create productive/effective CTI groups? Some key things that need to be in place are...

- Principal's role and what the principal could do to make the work deeper and more manageable. Framing is important. For example, Susan pointed out that every year a school improvement plan has to go on. If, under that umbrella, we consider the deep inquiry into practice, then some of what we do might be more instrumental in helping with the business of the school, but save some time for inquiry.
- Ways administrative support might be built, nurtured, and developed. For example, a PLC of administrators in a high school - APs, might get involved in book study. Or principals might work together in PLCs.
- Tools/assessments - conceptions of kinds of assessments and supports. The curriculum for the work of the PLC that an outside administrator might bring.
- Facilitator role. We did not reach clear consensus or understanding of that. We talked about some things a facilitator might do to help the work of the PLC, such as asking questions, providing reading resources. A big issue revolved around how strong a role a facilitator should play in starting the group. We drew a distinction between the kind of CTI model and how the facilitator might work with the group. - Potato-peeler example - Say he was getting really good at peeling a potato with a butter knife, and then mom came in and handed him a potato peeler. The potato peeler is like some high-leverage practices in teaching. At what point should the facilitator offer the potato peeler? Do we walk in and give them the potato peeler? Do we wait until they ask? Do we offer it after they are already peeling?

A facilitator as teacher?

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Group 2 - Teachers' perceptions of data and the role. (Maryl)

- A concern about not doing it right. Teachers shared examples of when their items were not providing useful data, and that was frustrating because they may have only had one shot that year.
- Drowning in data - it is easy to collect data but not so easy to reduce it or refine it.
- Frustration with one-shot each year. There does not seem to be time for the iterative process.

- We discussed factors that affect data development. One issue is that the teachers often view the data as summative, and we discussed relationship between teachers' view of evidence and of inquiry.
- Factors that resist teachers from engaging in genuine inquiry. Factors include experienced teachers who have no interest; An inside facilitator when there is no outside facilitator.
- Factors to support facilitation. Much more attention to the preservice/in-service continuum. How schools can be organized. Ongoing training and support. Maybe meeting outside the building.

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Group 3

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Group 4

Chain of Evidence/Research

What needs to be considered in terms of the linkages in the chain of evidence:

Distinguishes between core practices as they relate to SCTIs and core practices of teaching.

Professional practice ---> Teacher learning ---> Teacher practice ---> Student learning

That led us to discuss a book.

- Section 1: What is CTI, what counts, essential features and definitions
- Section 2: Detailed accounts of different CTIs instantiations reflecting the features in section 1
- Section 3: Analysis across those different CTIs
- Section 4: Suggestion of a set of design principles that work
- Section 5: Mapping of the research terrain

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Things that feel important that I will take away from the conference

PLCs and SCTIs have become a hot topic. There are for-profit companies selling models for schools to do this. Defining these things is difficult, because we are not clear on what should or should be included in a PLC. Is a definition important? Yes, in so far as we are talking about the same thing and in so far as we don't allow anything out there to pass itself off as a PLC. No, in so far as teacher professional development is important and ought to be supported and we need to get lost in exactly what we call what. But perhaps most importantly, if everyone thinks that PLCs are being done, but they really are not, then, we may prematurely kill PLCs before they really had a chance to get going.

I don't know what we know about PLCs, or how we know what we know, but it seems like it would be a good idea to make a list of some things.