STUDY GUIDE

Professional Learning Communities at Work – Richard DuFour and Rebecca DuFour, 2012

Chapter 1: Getting Started

1. Given the list of steps on page 7, where might your school begin?
2. How might the region help form PLC's for grade level articulation? Which steps would one consider for the region?
3. How difficult is it to follow the advice of the DuFours given on page 9, "It is important that this process engages the entire staff in reviewing all information. If the principal or guiding coalition does the analysis and merely reports findings to the faculty, staff members become passive recipients of someone else's conclusions rather than active participants engaged in a process to build shared knowledge. If people are to feel ownership in a decision, they must be engaged in the decision-making process."

Chapter 2: Creating the Structures for Collaboration

1. Given the range of possible grouping ideas on pages 16-17, how can you group teachers to make the greatest impact on student learning?
2. What are some possible ways to problem solve scheduling for PLC time?
3. Consider the question on page 18, "Does your school structure foster collaboration or isolation?" How do you know this? Discuss possible ways to promote collaboration.

Chapter 3: Transforming Groups into High-Performing Teams

1. Read the following statement from page 30, "As principal, you must recognize that *schools* do not have goals. People have goals – or they don't unless people throughout your school are aware of the goals and are acting on them, you have not addressed this important element of the PLC process." Does this statement ring true for your school and for your teachers?
2. Review page 32-33, SMART goals for a school and for a grade level. What steps need to be in place for a principal to use the academic assessment information to begin to create SMART goals in PLC's.

Chapter 4: Focusing on the Right Work

1. DuFour and Marzano talk about identifying and agreeing on the "right work" at all levels. What do you suspect is the right work around which you could collaborate with your school staff?
2. Consider the new religion standards for the Archdiocese, to move the standards to a living curriculum for your school, the PLCs could begin by following the steps listed on page 38:
   a. Study the intended curriculum together
   b. Agree on priorities within the curriculum
   c. Clarify how the curriculum translates into specific knowledge and skills
   d. Establish general pacing guidelines for delivering the curriculum
   e. Commit to one another that they will, in fact, teach the agreed-upon curriculum
3. Pages 42-43 list questions around three big ideas. How might you use these questions in your school PLC's?

Chapter 5: Demonstrating Reciprocal Accountability in a Professional Learning Community

1. How do you exercise the statement, "What gets monitored gets done."?
2. What is the full meaning of "reciprocal accountability"? From the bulleted list on page 47, what area needs focus in your school, and what areas might be strengths?
3. Consider the list of questions on the same page, page 47. The DuFours caution principals that we should be ready to answer the questions when introducing the PLC process. As a group, take time to walk through the questions, and the possible answers you might give.
4. How effectively have you dispersed leadership and identified teacher-leaders? What are some ways to do this?

Chapter 6: Establishing a Focus on Results

1. Compare and contrast the traditional school review of standards and a school that relies on PLCs. What are the benefits of the PLC process, and what are the challenges to implementation in a school community?
2. In a school with single grades, how might the school _collaboratively_ develop formative grade level assessments?
3. "The most powerful form of accountability came from peers through collaborative practice. By developing a shared concept of what good practice looks like, and basing it on a fact-based inquiry into what works best to help students learn, teachers hold each other accountable to adhering to those accepted practices." (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber, 2010) How can you use the information from the PLC work in formation of teachers?

Chapter 7: Responding When Students Don't Learn

1. Most school mission statements include the following phrase, "ensuring academic excellence" or "preparing for life-long learning". How do your teachers determine what is "academic excellence"?
2. How can the PLC process facilitate teacher formation as they consider the content, process or instructional strategies, the product and the learning environment to support students of diverse learning needs?
3. Pgs. 61-63, consider the necessary elements of effective intervention.   How can the following provide new lenses into intervention?
    a. Timely
    b. Directive rather than invitational
    c. Specific and precise regarding the needs of an individual student
    d. Provide students access to staff most effective in providing help
    e. Fluid and flexible
    f. Systematic
4. Discuss how scheduling provides support to students diverse needs.
5. Pg. 71, the authors state that "the biggest obstacle to powerful intervention and enlighment is addressing the assumptions and beliefs." How do leaders help change the culture to one that supports all learners?

Chapter 8: Communicating Purpose and Priorities

1. What do the authors mean by "tight" and "loose" - in what ways is your school tight and loose?
2. Discuss the following statement from page 77, "A school can succeed in creating a culture that I simultaneously loose and tight only if its leaders are willing to confront behavior that clearly violates the school's articulated core principles and priorities. Consider the bulleted list, what statement will help you with the difficult conversations?

Chapter 9: Sustaining School Improvement

1. Consider the three keys to sustaining school improvement. What key will be most important for you to emphasize at your school site?
2. How do you celebrate success, wins, at your school?

Chapter 10: Fostering Collective Efficacy

1. The authors quote Goddard, Hoy and Hoy, 2004, "…the collective efficacy of staff is a better predictor of their students' success than the socioeconomic status of the students." Consider the list, what area(s)could you focus on at your school site?
2. "Everything you will ever do as a leader is based on one audacious assumption. It is the assumption that _you matter._ Before you can lead others, you have to lead yourself and believe that you can have a positive impact on others. You have to believe that your words can inspire and your actions can move others. You have to believe that what you do counts for something. If you don't you won't even try. Leadership begins with you." (Kouzes and Posner, 2010) Offer reasons why this considered an "audacious assumption."