SCHOOL READINESS CONSULTING PRESENTS:

PLCS: A CATALYST FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

An Early Childhood Investigations Webinar
POLL
OBJECTIVES

PARTICIPANTS WILL:

➤ Develop new perspectives on creating partnerships needed to effectively implement a director-led professional learning community (plc)

➤ Understand the value of a professional learning community for program directors participating in Quality Rating Improvement System efforts

➤ Examine the development and implementation of a plc while recognizing the potential barriers and identifying strategies for successful integration
On a given day, about 12 million children under the age of five will need a safe place to go and someone loving to care for them.

The critical period of language learning begins to close around five years old and ends around puberty.

Disadvantages (including low quality early learning experiences) that begin early in life have long lasting effects on academic performance.
WHAT TEACHERS SAY: THE IDEAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

Despite their dissatisfaction with much current professional development (PD), teachers value its potential as a tool to help them plan and improve instruction. They describe the ideal professional learning experience as:

**RELEVANT**
“It looks different in every context. It has to be personalized.”

**INTERACTIVE**
“The best ... usually involve hands-on strategies for the teacher to actually participate in.”

**DELIVERED BY SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS MY EXPERIENCE**
“The best PD has been when a teacher shows me what has revolutionized their classroom ... anything that a fellow teacher who is still in the classroom [presents] beats out anything else.”

“All teacher driven, with administration only there to support teacher needs. Top down would be gone.”

**SUSTAINED OVER TIME**
“PD needs to be something that you keep working on for a semester or a year.”

**TREATS TEACHERS LIKE PROFESSIONALS**
“PD should treat us as adults, rather than children.”

*Teachers Know Best: Teachers’ Views on Professional Development*  
*Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014*
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

RESEARCH AND CORE ELEMENTS
The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. (And,) the path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities. (Mclaughlin, 1995)
A DEFINITION OF A PLC:

EDUCATORS COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER COLLABORATIVELY IN ONGOING PROCESSES OF COLLECTIVE INQUIRY AND ACTIVE RESEARCH IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS FOR THE STUDENTS THEY SERVE… KEY TO IMPROVED LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IS CONTINUOUS, JOB-EMBEDDED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many-2006
CORE ELEMENTS OF A PLC

TO PROMOTE SUCCESS

- Children are at the center of the work
- Shared goals that are aligned across the organization
- Data driven inquiry
- Teachers and Leaders are learning and improving practice
- Job-embedded learning
- Support and resources come from leadership
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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES TAKE PLACE...

- Once a month
- When you can find time on the schedule
- Within the routine work day; plcs are job-embedded
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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES FOCUS ON...

- What participants are interested in
- What children need
- What parents want programs to work on
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A PROGRAM LEADER’S ROLE IN A PLC IS THAT OF ...

- Organizer
- Lead learner
- Spectator
APPLICATION IN ECE

Prioritize ** instructional leadership which is learning focused**, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of (children’s) learning....it resides within a team of leaders of which the (program director) serves as the ‘leader of leaders.’

(Center for Educational Leadership)
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

AN EXAMPLE FROM MILE HIGH EARLY LEARNING
MILE HIGH EARLY LEARNING CENTERS
DENVER, CO

JESSICA SCHERDEN,
PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF EDNA OLIVER

MILE HIGH EARLY LEARNING CENTERS
DENVER, CO
WHAT DROVE MILE HIGH EARLY LEARNING TO START A DIRECTOR PLC?
DESCRIBE THE CURRENT WORK OF THE DIRECTOR PLC AT MHEL
WHAT CONNECTIONS DO YOU SEE BETWEEN THIS PLC WORK & ONGOING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS?

Interview Question
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES OF A DIRECTOR PLC?

Interview Question
ESSENTIAL SHIFTS UNIQUE TO EARLY LEARNING LEADERS
WHY BE PART OF A PLC?

1. Shared responsibility for the development of all children and their success.
2. Reduced isolation.
3. Powerful adult learning that shifts focus from teaching to learning.
4. Increased understanding of content.
5. Be professionally renewed.
6. Increased likelihood to inspire.
7. Other?

Adapted from Issues ...about Change Volume 6, Number 1, Professional Learning Communities: What Are They And Why Are They Important? (1997)
PERSPECTIVE ON MAKING A SHIFT

JESSICA SCHERDEN,
PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT EDNA OLIVER
DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING IN A DIRECTOR PLC?
DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE RUBRIC WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES?

*Interview Question*
HOW DO YOU DEFINE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?
HOW DOES YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT THE NOTION OF SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL CHILDREN?

Interview Question
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INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP INCLUDES TASKS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Professional Learning
- Hiring and on boarding
- Ongoing staff support (maintaining ratios, breaks, planning time)
- All of the above
CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Program director roles are shifting to include an elevated role as instructional leader
  - Lead by example
  - Keep children at the center of the work
- Directors need a strong learning community of their own to make this shift and sustain ongoing quality improvement efforts
THANK YOU! PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH...

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