**“The term Professional Learning Community describes a collegial group of administrators and school staff who are united in their commitment to student learning.” -Dufour**

**Two different comprehensive syntheses of research on the factors impacting student learning have come to the same conclusion: the most important variable in the achievement of students is the quality of instruction they receive on a daily basis. To ensure students learn at higher levels, simply improve teaching.**

**Six Core Principles/Characteristics of a PLC**

**1. A culture of collaboration**

**2. Shared mission, vision and values**

**3. Collective injury into best practice**

**4. Action orientation**

**5. Continuous improvement**

**6. A focus on results**

**Three “BIG” Ideas of PLC**

**Ensuring Students Learn (Brandy Bruce)**

**Four Key Questions**

* + 1. What do we expect kids to learn?

Expectations-curriculum-socialization-technology etc.

* + 1. How will we know when they have learned it?

Grades-assessments(formal,summative)-pre/post tests-charts

* + 1. How will we respond when they already know it?

Peer tutoring-cubing-leveled readers-separate curriculum

* + 1. How will we respond when they don’t learn? <--- Separates PLC from traditional schools.

-timely: the school quickly determines who needs help

-directive: they don’t “invite” students; they require them to attend

-based on intervention rather than remediation: supplies students with help as soon as they need it rather than waiting on summer school, or retention

RTI-differentiated instruction-guided reading-immediate feedback

^ this leads into collaboration which then produces results. Ties it all together. BAM. lol.

**A Culture of Collaboration (Dakota)**

***Overarching Idea:*** *instead of sharing data, they [teachers] respond to data, which requires a sense of mutual accountability and changing classroom practices.*

*“clear mission & shared vision”*

***Steps to an effective/productive PLC:***

1. ***Talk about Achievement:*** *The PLCs must come together and decide what their* ***core values/ beliefs*** *are and* ***what is the purpose of school/teaching?***
2. ***Purpose of school:*** *prepare every student for continuous learning beyond K-12 system (must be lifelong learners) What do they need to be true lifelong learners?*
3. ***How do we define this purpose/ how should we provide evidence?:*** *present evidence of students getting better (how can you present that?-- reduction in failure rate, student work portfolio, student satisfaction surveys, state testing scores, etc.) In other words, this is what success looks like (show proof)!*
4. ***Every school/learning community should debate their purpose and the way they provide evidence on their own. However you define it, provide evidence that your students are successfully learning or becoming successful.***
5. ***Create a Viable Curriculum:*** *elect to teach certain standards and not others. Focus on more skills and thought rather than standards. Timeline, concepts, skills, thought, critical analysis, project-based learning, etc. (prepare kids for success at next level)*
6. ***Collaborate on best practices:***

* *Focus student learning on essential aspects vs. memorizing things/facts*
* *Curriculum vs. Content standards-- overlap, by and large curriculum is tool for helping kids acquire knowledge and skills.*
* *Don’t let textbook or state department lead--what are the outcomes? Gain better understanding of standards (endurance leverage) preparing students for success (overarching lessons) rather than “common core”*
* *Guaranteed curriculum= need approval by actual teachers that implement these standards. You cannot get it by handing out documents, as the state department does.*
* *“Narrow focus in the curriculum”*
* *Mission, vision, value, goals*
* *Need to have teacher voices and community stakeholders*

***Example of PLC goals (small to large):***

* *Constantly check for student understanding*
* *As a team, gather evidence on if students are learning through common assessments?*
* *Identify kids that didn’t learn*
* *The reason to develop teams is to improve and inform professional practice*
* *At the end of every common assessment find one area where a student/member excelled.*
* *What were the strategies? Can we all use that? Look at strengths.*
* *Discover through evaluations and student performance*
* *Use effective instructional tools to make a better learning community.*
* *Teams must first admit, then address lack of skills, resources, or proper instructional strategies/tools individually*
* *To address this the entire team must collaborate via internet with other professionals, do professional development, collaborate with another team in the building, and/or seek resources and ideas*

***Richard Dufour states, “Unless you are using actual evidence of student learning to inform and improve practice then you are not yet a professional learning community.”***

**A Focus on Results (Tony)**

* *Common Assessment* - developed collaboratively by answering “What would be the best way to judge or assess student learning of the essential knowledge?”
  + frequent common assessment is necessary
  + Provides clarity and insight for teachers about what is being taught
  + Must be common for all students
* *Use Shared Results* (not opinions) in a specific way to
  + determine which students are struggling and need extra time and further instruction to understand the ‘essential knowledge.’
  + determine which students do understand the ‘essential knowledge’ and need extension and enrichment
  + to improve teaching by sharing methods that are the most successful.
* *Drives the Learning*
  + helps to ensure that students actually learn instead of simply ‘getting taught’
  + helps to guide group decisions moving forward
* *Motivational Benefit* - professionals see success and begin to perform out of commitment as opposed to compliance.