

Questions that Guide PLC Conversations



As mentioned in a previous blog post, PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) provide a framework for planning of student learning as well as professional learning to enable educators to plan effectively. One PLC model developed by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many (2010) seeks to focus the work of the PLC through a series of four essential questions. These questions are designed to drive the conversations of the PLC:

1. What is it we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

As you may note, the emphasis in these questions is on student learning which should be the focus of what we do. However, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, John Almarode, Karen Flories, and Dave Nagel (2020) identify a gap

in the sole examination of student learning, and that is the examination of our teaching. They state, "There is a link between learning and teaching, and to examine only one side of the equation limits our ability as educators to take action" (2020, p. 7).

Referred to as the PLC+ model, it grounds the work of the PLC in both teaching and learning. The + emphasizes reflection on our instructional practices, determining the quality of the experiences provided for students and learning about practices that would further impact student learning. Five essential questions serve to achieve this goal:

1. Where are we going?
2. Where are we now?
3. How do we move learning forward?
4. What did we learn today?
5. Who benefited and who did not benefit?

Furthermore, the authors (2020) note that the effectiveness of the PLC+ model is the iterative nature of the questions. They become "metacognitive scripts" that teachers ask themselves on a regular basis, leveraging the individual efficacy of teachers into collective efficacy within the context of a PLC.

References

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities as work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Fisher, D., Frey, N., Almarode, J., Flories, K., & Nagel, D. (2020). *PLC+: Better decisions and greater impact by design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.