Introduction

THE PURPOSE OF PLC JOURNALS ■

Journals as Frameworks for Professional Learning Communities is designed as a resource for focusing and facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs). Districts and schools have a collection of professional structures such as site leadership teams, district leadership teams, school site councils, grade-level teams, subject matter instructional teams, professional development council, and principal's roundtable. They meet on a scheduled basis to accomplish an identified scope of work around a shared purpose and/or agreement. These networks, committees, and teams provide the structure and forum for professional work. Each time they meet, they have the opportunity to convene as a PLC. The following structured journals are tools that can focus and facilitate targeted work that could be in the scope of work for a given PLC:

- PLC journal—facilitating school reform
- Action research journal—teacher as researcher
- School portfolios—our school and its benefits
- Professional performance portfolio—highly qualified teacher
- PLC instructional planning—aligning professional development with instructional priorities

Each of these structured journals serves as a framework to focus and inform collaboration and learning and, ultimately, to improve student achievement. Journals are essential tools designed to focus and enhance learning for professional educators as they are utilized to support the work of PLCs. The real power is in the collection of PLCs working as a coherent and dynamic system to support student achievement. As educators and school community members come together, they share in a purpose and pursue deeper and broader understandings of their work. Working in PLCs and using the structured journal process, as outlined in this book, provides opportunities for learning community participants to reflect on and consider research and new practices that will impact student learning.

Senge (1990), who pioneered the concept of the learning community, invited educators to assist school communities in becoming learning organizations where they can encourage and support learning as part of their professional work. If knowledge is the capacity for effective action, educators have to ask how they can facilitate learning communities to support systemic change in their schools—by use of structured *Journals as Frameworks for Professional Learning Communities.*

■   **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK AND CD**

Journals as Frameworks for Professional Learning Communities begins with a chapter on journals and learning communities. This chapter describes the role of structured journals in supporting the process of building and sustaining learning communities. Subsequent chapters offer coaching guides for using the journaling process to facilitate each professional tool for addressing accountability mandates. These later chapters also help in enhancing teachers' repertoire for improved instructional practices through the collaborative and reflective processes structured in the journals for each of the professional activities (School Reform, Action Research, School Portfolio, Professional Performance, and Instructional Planning Journals).

Chapters begin with background on each journal and an explanation of *how* to use the structured journal to facilitate the process. See Figure 0.1 as a graphic representation of how journals can be used as frameworks for PLCs.

Featured in each chapter is a case study/sample journal illustrating the four-phase journaling process (purpose, focus, process, and outcome) that is applied for each journal.

Figure 0.1

Journals as Frameworks for PLCs
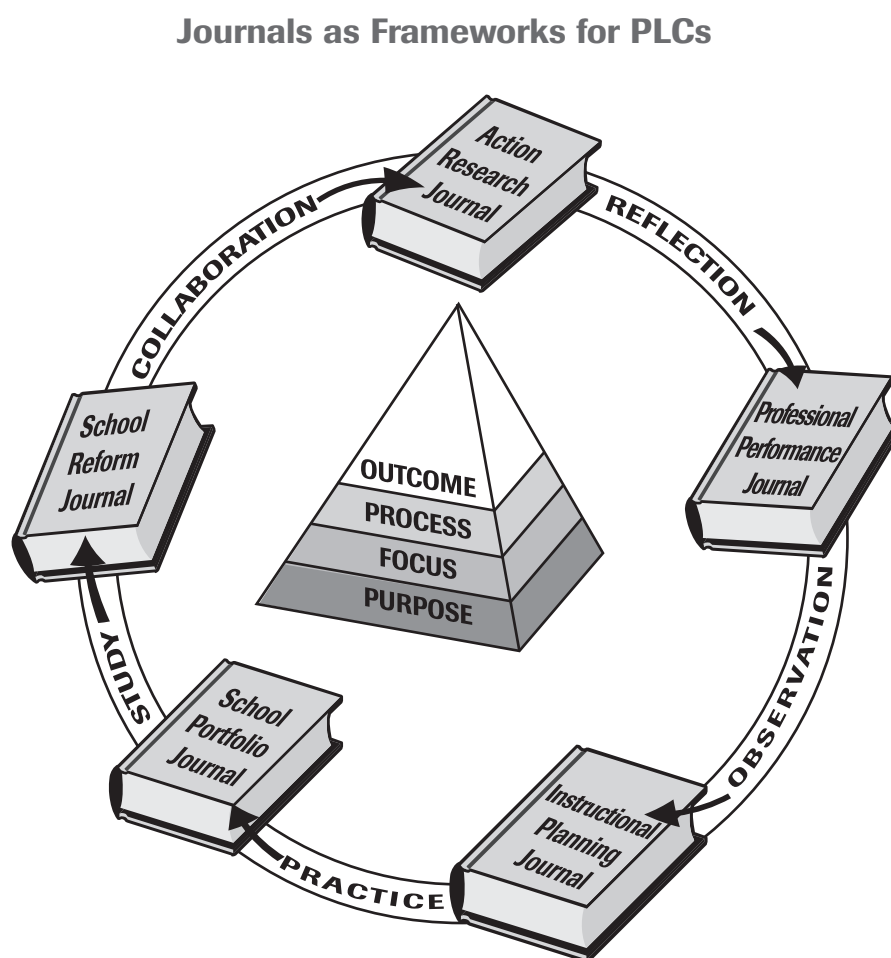
Figure 2.4   How? Action Planning (Process)

PLAN • LEARN • IMPLEMENT • MONITOR

Action Plan Table

The following table describes the planning model to assist with organizing the phases, activities, tools, and structures to design, facilitate, implement, and sustain school reform.

PHASE	PARTICIPANTS	KEY ACTIVITIES
PURPOSE PLC Serving as an SLT	SLT—School administrator and teacher representing multigrade levels and specializations in the school	1. Determine SLT membership 2. Define SLT purpose, roles, and responsibilities 3. Set up dates and times for SLT meetings and for faculty meetings 4. Establish dates for check points to monitor progress
FOCUS Instructional Priority Goals	SLT facilitating faculty meetings and working in grade-level/department groups	1. Analyze student data 2. Agree on instructional priorities 3. Identify instructional strategies 4. Determine professional development needs
PROCESS Action Planning Professional Development	SLT facilitating faculty meetings and working in grade-level/department groups	1. Finalize action plan and staff a faculty meeting for final agreement 2. Set up professional development schedule 3. Have SLT members support grade-level-teams in clarifying new instructional practices 4. Schedule checkpoints and benchmarks 5. Collect evidence to progress
OUTCOMES Monitor Progress and Report Results	SLT facilitating faculty meetings and working in grade-level/department groups	1. Assess and articulate results 2. Report results 3. Debrief lessons learned 4. Celebrate accomplishments 5. Identify next steps

development activities and other details of implementing the new instructional strategies that have been researched and selected by the grade-level teams.

The SLT uses the Checkpoint journal forms provided in the templates for the PLC school reform journal (see Figure 2.5) to capture reflections from the first of several checkpoints conducted by the SLT. It is important to monitor progress at scheduled checkpoints during the implementation

Resource 1.2 Organizers for the Systems Planning Model

PORTFOLIO JOURNAL PHASE	KEY ACTIVITIES	TOOLS AND STRUCTURES
Purpose for work	• Clarify purpose and how SLT will serve school reform purpose • Obtain leadership and Sponsorship for the work • Engage key stakeholders • Define roles and responsibilities	• Alignment on purpose • Establish Site Leadership Team (SLT) • Orient SLT to the Systems Planning Model and the Journal Process • Facilitation strategies
Focus for priorities	• Facilitate staff meetings to introduce process • Establish process for data analysis • Agree on instructional priorities in grade-level or subject-matter work teams	• Instructional priority setting process • Engage staff in data analysis and establishing an instructional priority • Engage faculty in identifying professional development needs to build capacity for instructional priority
Process for planning and monitoring progress	• Build action plan to implement new instructional practices • Establish professional development plan for implementing new instructional practices • Schedule check points to monitor progress	• Implement action plan and monitor progress • Implement professional development activities • Establish checkpoints with protocols • Collect learnings with artifacts and evidence of progress • Make adjustments in action plan according to check-point data
Outcomes for reporting results	• Assess and articulate results • Debrief lessons learned and impact of new practices • Report results to stakeholders • Decide next steps • Celebrate accomplishments	• Reflect on learnings from the process • Draw conclusions on results • Refine and archive collection of artifacts and evidence for reporting result

Note: These Key Activities are the most critical elements for establishing a sound foundation and organization to build the capacity and support the change process for school reform. These key activities contribute to building a professional learning community for change.

A LIST OF FACILITATION STRATEGIES ■

Jigsaw. Process for reading, summarizing, and integrating text.

Each participant reads a portion of the text, shares information, and collects information from others as well.

Carousel. Design for collecting ideas, reactions, and suggestions surrounding a model, strategic plan, or event.

Post charts around the room; write responses, suggestions, observations, and ideas; then walk around to read, respond, and enhance comments.

Multimedia Metaphor. Catalyst for constructing, connecting, and comparing multiple frames of reference.

Show brief video clip or read literature selection to facilitate dialogue regarding the representational meaning in the metaphor.

Cut Story. Technique for reading aloud—as a team or with the entire group.

Paste text on index cards then hand out the cards and have the group assemble in the appropriate order. Read the message aloud to the rest of the group.

Consulting Line. Design for aligning and connecting expertise with problems in the room.

Have participants line up in two rows facing each other. Ask the persons on the left to share a concern or problem they are experiencing. Have the corresponding partners on the right act as consultants and offer suggestions, solutions, pose questions, and so forth. After about five minutes, have each consultant on the right move to the next person in line and interview that person. As the line moves, each person meets another consultant and gains additional suggestions and questions. After two or three rounds, have the persons on the left become the consultants. Repeat this cycle several times.

Walk the Talk. Pick a partner and take a walk.

Select a topic, problem, or essential question. Report back at a specified time to share conversations with the others. This activity provides an opportunity to take a break, move around, and collaborate.

Visual Dialogue. Tool for collecting and recording the learnings in the room.

This tool could be a graphic organizer such as a mind map, a web, a drawing, a list, a chart, and so forth. Have a recorder keep a log of the session for the group.

Fish Bowl. Group dynamics technique for listening to others.

While others look on to observe, summarize, and take notes, inner-circle members of a group respond to essential questions.

Think-Pair-Share. Process for reflecting, writing, and sharing.

People pair up and compare thoughts with others in the room.

Constructive Controversy. A process for engaging in conversation.

Selecting a controversial issue, group members express as well as listen to multiple points of view.