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## WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE PLC?

We believe that the school is best served when two organizational arrangements are established within a PLC. The first of these is the grade-level team (in the elementary school) or subject-matter team (in the secondary school), in which the educators address and resolve issues concerning their particular grade level or department subject-matter curriculum, their specific students' needs, and the appropriate instructional strategies that best serve these students. In this setting, the teachers and administrators involved will undertake appropriate study and learning about these issues in order to become more effective in meeting their students' needs, thereby increasing student learning and success.

There is a second and important arrangement of the professionals in the school for the PLC. In this structure, all professionals at the school come together to meet as one community—comprising all staff members of the school—to share what the smaller units are learning and to carry out the specific learning that the whole school group deems important. This creates the environment for working on the school's common purpose, and for directing the adults' learning toward the school goals. Without this larger group's collegial and intentional learning, the various parts of the staff are moving in different directions that may well result in the lack of alignment of the scope and sequence of student learning.

## WHY ESTABLISH AND SUPPORT PLC IN A SCHOOL?

In brief, the PLC centers on *quality teaching* that results in students' successful learning. Quality teaching is strengthened and increased through continuous professional learning, and the PLC setting promotes this adult learning. Because understanding the purpose of a PLC is foundational to its creation and support, the first activity of this field book creates a short rationale for operating as a PLC.

Make no mistake: our primary focus is the learning and teaching that occurs in the school. Only by increasing the effectiveness of teaching quality, which results in higher student outcomes, are PLCs made to be worthwhile. Without this goal as its imperative, a PLC will be just another failed program.

A key reason for writing this follow-up volume was to provide additional support for implementing PLCs, through a series of learning opportunities for the PLC participants' engagement. Teams often struggle if learning opportunities are unstructured. The opportunities presented here provide structure and direct discussion and thinking in ways that help teams focus on student learning, as well as their own learning. Thus, this book takes readers deeper into the implementation of PLCs by facilitating individual and group development and growth.

# Component 2

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## Shared and Supportive Leadership

### OVERVIEW AND CURRENT THINKING

When PLC school staff demonstrates shared leadership, they are collaboratively sharing power, authority, and decision making. The principal and other positional leaders participate with the staff as learners and contribute democratically to decision making and guiding and supporting members of the staff to develop leadership qualities and skills. Characteristics required of these positional leaders whose school staff is operating as a PLC include the need to share authority, the ability to facilitate the work of the staff, and the capacity to participate without dominating.

In the PLC, principals (with the teachers) are learning, questioning, investigating, and seeking solutions that will lead to improved student results. The staff is consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about school issues, but with the understanding that some areas must be the purview of the principal alone. The principal actively nurtures the entire staff's development as a community, but finds opportunities for the staff to perform in leadership roles. Leadership is promoted and fostered among members of the staff who have accessibility to data and key information in order to make sound decisions.

Thus, this is not a school where the principal views only teachers and students as learners. As Roland Barth once stated, "The principal is the head learner." The principal is not the sole leader or authority in the school: these roles are shared with the staff that are actively supported in developing the attributes required of the leadership roles. The principal emerges from the "sage on stage" to the "guide on the side."

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITY 2.5

### Positive Deviance

*It's easy to come up with new ideas; the hard part is letting go of what worked for you two years ago, but will soon be out-of-date.*

—Roger von Oech

### Outcome

Learners will identify “positive deviants” in their schools; i.e., those staff members whose students show above-average learning and progress. Learners will collect examples of how these professionals are producing better results with or for students and create opportunities to share and implement those examples schoolwide.

### Assumption

There are staff members whose students are demonstrating higher proficiency than the norm. Better results are already happening with the very students about whom some staff say, “It can’t be done.” Finding out what these professionals are doing is an imperative if a learning community is to show increased results and to distribute successful instructional strategies.

### Suggested Time

Two meetings of 1–1.5 hours

### Materials

- Flip chart and markers
- Student performance data
- “Story of Positive Deviance” (see p. 89; one copy for each participant, or go to [www.fast-company.com](http://www.fast-company.com), type in Positive Deviance for the article, then send it to members electronically)

### Learning Event

1. **Set the stage** by asking participants to share one teaching practice that produces the best results for their students. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
2. **Download** on a computer or distribute the article Positive Deviance. How did Jerry Sternin find out what the major factors were in raising healthy children in Vietnam? How will the professionals in the PLC find out what the major factors are of getting higher student results?

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