Data Driven PLC  
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**Background That Led to Your Inquiry:**

One of our district initiatives was to develop our professional learning community within our buildings. We had started mid-year of the year prior but the buy-in and interest was not there. Through the summer session of IPLI, we learned about innovative ways to exhibit data that could be used in our PLC environment. Additionally, Marzano's High Reliability Level One survey provided data that we could reflect upon that would help us in supporting student learning in our building. As the building principal, I revised our school-wide schedule and made time in the day for our PLCs to occur. Research shows that "not using a teacher's personal time" is one of 4 important components to developing a PLC culture. Now that we had the time period in place, it was time for our action research to begin. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to develop a PLC culture that engage teachers in strategic use of data to increase student achievement.

**Statement of Your Wondering:**

With this purpose, we wondered how can we engage teachers in the use of data to increase student achievement?

**Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insight into our wonderings, we needed to develop a PLC framework. This framework would require group norms, what type of data we would track, and the development of smart goals. We decided we needed to track quantitative data for benchmarking purposes and to find out which standards students would need support on but we also wanted to look at qualitative data to develop our instruction. Additionally, as we have a growth mindset, we wanted to use survey our teachers to see how we were doing and what we could do to improve.

While I went to work researching norms and processes, the two teacher leaders transformed our conference room into a vibrant data room. We used large, black, pocket charts with color coded cards to show the reading level of each student for all students, grades k-6. Blue cards were above, green were at level, yellow were below, and red were far below (reading level). Kindergarten started with only one student testing at above reading level. K-2 used TRC to determine beginning reading levels (which is aligned to Fountas and Pinnell) and 3-6 benchmarked with the Fountas and Pinnell reading kits.

Though each grade level sat together, we met for PLC in two groups, K-2nd and 3rd-6th. K-2 focused much of the year on reading. Grades 3-6, as they must complete the state mandated assessment, added Acuity charts to study ELA and Math standards data.

Along with assessing students and documenting the beginning levels, we began the PLC meeting process purposefully. We created norms and used DuFour's 4 questions for PLC to lead us.
January was really the tipping point. Our Acuity scores and reading levels had looked within the normal, to even high range when we started at the beginning of the year. The mid-year benchmark scores provided a wake up call. Even better, they helped start our conversations focused on results. K-2 teachers noticed that some of their students had not made the necessary gain. Even worse, our 3-6 teachers noticed that their Acuity scores went from starting out tied at the top of the district to being at the bottom. Our focus really started at this point when we started looking at DuFour's 3rd question, "What do we do when they do not know what we want them to know?"

Kindergarten to Second Grade- I knew that the teachers were struggling with Guided Reading. The PD provided through the district was too thin and did not provide the necessary resources. I created a rough draft of the New Market Balanced Literacy and Guided Reading Plan and asked the teachers to add to it. Here, there was a framework of guided reading meeting times, strategies to use, and a reminder of what the district expectations were. We then began to discuss how we can help students grow as readers. This spurred us to do classroom walkthroughs of our classrooms before school started to see what everyone was doing. This was very scary for the teachers but they enjoyed it once it was over. They found ideas in each room and began sharing. Teachers also discovered stronger lesson planning techniques that were based on F&P reading levels. They also shared various ways to track this data. The final component for K-2 was getting parents on board. Teachers were expressing concern that parents did not know about the shift that has occurred in reading. So, together with Title 1, we planned a parent breakfast and provided a learning opportunity for parents. The turnout was great. After the training, parents were invited to go to the classroom and observe guided reading. Again, the teachers were very nervous but really enjoyed it once it was over. Our end of the year reading scores were 17% higher than they were in 2015 for grades K-2. It was very exciting!

Our shift with Grades 3-6 was a bit more serious. We needed to have our students mastering the standards. I had been listening in the PLCs and ordered math and ELA curricular material that was more rigorous than they had in the past. I also scoured the internet for resources. Additionally, I also set some expectations. As we needed special education and Title I to be able to help us, we needed to develop weekly benchmark assessments and document student growth and needs. We used the calendars to map out the standards needed to be mastered by the first ISTEP assessment. We went ahead and mapped out the remaining ones that would be needed to be mastered by mid-April as well. We talked continuously of the process that needed to be in place if students did not learn and how everyone would need to work together to ensure all groups were working together. We also began to develop our viable curriculum. We placed copies of lesson plans and the assessments that the teachers were creating in the binders. We also placed examples of student work (writing and math) to use next year and to guide our instructional practices. In our discussions, one of the teachers mentioned that last he wanted to work harder between the two assessments than he did last year. So, after nicknaming the drive between the two assessments the Curtis McVay plan, we all decided that we were going to teach at a high level of rigor and mastery until the very last assessment. So that all support staff could help the classroom teachers, I added another report. This one was a weekly report that listed the skill, materials (for future information) and a list of students who would require additional support. It really only took less than a minute to fill out if you did it regularly. Teachers continued to add lesson plans and material to the binders as well.

ISTEP Part A came quickly. The teachers felt that the students did well. Acuity came on the heels of ISTEP. The NMES teachers gave the assessment. Exciting news! We were now leading the district! IREAD was next up too. When we received the results from IREAD in April, we led the district again! IREAD scores went up 5% to 96.3% from 2015. We do not have our ISTEP scores back yet- hoping for positive results. To get a pulse of our PLCs and see where we should improve, Libby sent out a Google Survey asking six statements from DuFour. Example, "On a scale from one to five, do our PLCs have a shared mission, vision,
values, and goals which are all focused on student learning?" We felt the results from the survey were surprisingly high for our first year. Scores ranged from 3.94 to 4.26. The questions and results were:

- NMES PLCs have a shared mission, vision, values, and goals, which are all focused on student learning. 4.06
- NMES PLC's have a collaborative culture with a focus on student learning. 3.94
- NMES PLCs have a collective inquiry into best practice and current reality 3.94
- NMES PLCs have an action orientation or "learning by doing"? 3.88
- NMES PLCs have a commitment to continuous improvement. 3.93
- NMES PLCs have a results orientation. 4.26

**Stating Your Team’s Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

As a result of analyzing our data we learned:

Learning Statement #1- Guided Reading Levels- We learned what it takes to increase reading levels, how to plan, and how to get parents on board.

Learning Statement #2- Acuity- We learned the value of formative assessments and working collaboratively.

Learning Statement #3- PLC Survey results- When looking at the data, "NMES PLCs have an action orientation or "learning by doing" received the lowest score. We agreed and will work on that for next year.

**Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

Though we were very happy with our first year's survey results, we decided to find out why teachers didn't score our PLCs a 5. So we sent out another survey and asked why. Only 3 teachers responded. As the second survey went out twice and only three people filled it out, we hypothesized (and many confirmed when we shared) that the PLC program is “change” and we are all still adjusting to it.

Our goals for our PLC next year are to:

- Continue to embed PLC into our culture and seek survey input for growth
- Hand over more ownership and empowerment to grade level teams
- Apply new district formative assessments and use our historical data and school level formative assessments to support student learning and instructional practices.

Grades K-2: When reflecting on the balanced literacy guide and their ability to develop the structure and processes in place, teachers now feel more confident to begin guided reading earlier. It was very exciting to hear- especially in kindergarten.

Grades 3-6: When reflecting on our dip in the middle of the year with Acuity and then our difficult, but successful battle to improve our Acuity (and hopefully ISTEP) scores - The teachers said they will increase rigor at the beginning of the year and use formative assessments from the beginning to ensure we are always teaching to a high enough level.

This was an exciting journey and exactly what our building needed to shift experienced teachers away from working separately and becoming more collaborative. It also supported the ability for all groups to work
together. And, most excitingly, through the Acuity, IREAD, and Reading level growth, teachers were able to see the impact data can have on instruction.

**References:**


Hattie, J. (2014). High impact leadership, Educational L