

In order to effect systemic and ongoing school improvement, several structures are helpful for schools to have in place: a Shared Leadership Team to oversee the school's mission, vision and annual action plan, and to make decisions about the school's use of resources (professional learning and planning time, as well as financial resources); and Professional Learning Groups (PLGs), a structure for ongoing professional learning and planning in small groups to ensure school wide implementation of effective teaching and learning practices.

Leadership Team

Configuration

- Principal
- Leaders of each major school program or initiative (e.g., head of advisory program, content and/or grade level leaders, PLG facilitators)
- In some schools: guidance counselor, media specialist, other key personnel
- In some schools: students, parents, community members as determined by school mission, vision and goals
- Define process for who is on the team and how long, getting on/off the team
- Optimum group size: 5-12

Meeting Schedule/Operation

- Minimum: 2 hours once a month; better: 1 ½ - 2-hour meetings twice a month,
- Agree to working norms (define, reflect on periodically, revise as needed)
- Determine roles and responsibilities: facilitator, recorder, process observer, etc.
- Maintain and distribute (to full staff) minutes of all meetings
- Determine and distribute agenda prior to meetings

Responsibilities

- Ensure decisions are made in line with school's mission and vision
- Develop short (1-year) and long range (5-year) goals and annual action plan
- Oversee implementation of annual school-wide goals and action plan
- Determine data to review periodically (at least twice a year) to assess school's progress toward annual goals
- Determine use of professional development time; reflect on effectiveness of professional learning and planning time to ensure cohesion with other school, district and state initiatives
- Make and communicate decisions that have school-wide impact
- Craft and deliver clear messages to public (within the school and to local community)

Decision-making

- For each item the LT addresses, determine the purpose: FYI/awareness (often these items can be circulated in a written format); dialogue (to explore new or controversial topics with the goal of clarifying understanding and range of perspectives); discussion (to make a decision about next steps)
- For discussions, determine what level of decision-making the LT has:
 - A – Administrative decision (decisions made by organizational leaders without consultation from others)
 - B – Administrative decision with input (ultimately administrators make the decision, but recommendations from the LT figure heavily in the decision)
 - C – LT decision (ideally by consensus using thumbs up/down or “Fist to Five”; LT members solicit input from those they represent)
 - D – faculty and/or student consensus or vote (used relatively rarely in schools, but occasionally for the best decisions to be made, the full school community needs to be actively involved)
- Once a decision has been made, before moving on to the next topic, determine how the decision will be communicated and implemented.

Professional Learning Groups

Configuration

- Determine best configuration for school based on existing/desired school structures such that members have something in common (shared students, common content area and/or grade level, shared interests)
- Optimum group size: 6-10
- Determine facilitators for each group (co-facilitators is often a good model to ensure good support: for co-planning and in case of absences)

Meeting schedule/operation

- Optimum: weekly meetings, each 45-60 min; minimum: once a month, 2-3 hour meetings; or twice a month, 1 ½ - 2-hour meetings
- Agree to working norms (define, reflect on periodically, revise as needed)
- Determine roles and responsibilities: facilitator, recorder, process observer, etc.
- Maintain and distribute minutes of all meetings (to PLG members, cc administration as appropriate)
- Determine and distribute agenda prior to meetings
- Determine rotation of presenters, so each participant presents his/her work at least once per year (ideally, twice a year or more)

Responsibilities

- Each participant will take an active role to learn, implement, present and receive feedback on instructional strategies that enhance student learning
- Base decisions about instructional practice on research, school-specific data and identified learning standards

