Professional Learning Communities

The Bigger Ideas

GETTING A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT PLCs ARE.

**Big Idea #1: Ensuring Student Learning**

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn.

1. What do we want each student to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

The answer to the third question is what separates learning communities from traditional schools.

**Big Idea #2: Culture of Collaboration**

The fact that teachers collaborate will do nothing to improve a school. The pertinent question is not, “Are we collaborating?” but rather, “What are we collaborating about?” the purpose of collaboration—to help more students achieve at higher levels—can only be accomplished if the professionals engaged in collaboration are focused on the right things.

The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement.

**Big Idea #3: Focusing on Results**

Professional learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Every teacher team participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress.