

Constructive Thinking

Educators have always understood that “implementation matters.” It is only recently, though, that we are beginning to understand what implementation looks like when examined within the individual classroom. Currently, we are seeing power beyond measure in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Hubs and Networks when implementing the

A bird’s-eye view, from concept to implementation

Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway (T-LCP). T-LCP can be defined as a model used to organize actions for teaching and student learning (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2008). Teachers, who were feeling isolated, are now feeling connected and energized from their involvement in T-LCPs, PLCs,

Hubs and Networks. Working together to moderate student work and share resources and practice has created a learning community that works in the service of improving student achievement. As a result, teachers are feeling supported, empowered and confident in their practice.

BY ELAINE HINE & DENIS MAIKA • ILLUSTRATION BY LORRAINE TUSON



Feeling Inspired – Making a Difference

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”

– Marianne Williamson

For the longest time, it was believed that the “answers are in the room,” and through our work, we have begun to understand just how this statement plays out in schools PLCs, Hubs and Networks. What was deemed “group think” is no longer a part of this fully functioning process. The education community is seeing and hearing about PLCs, Hubs and Networks meetings in which the strengths of each educator contributes to the collective efforts of the group by creating solutions for any challenges. Creative and innovative practice is being shared and individuals are learning with and from each other.

Safe places and spaces are being created, providing a sense of self-confidence to educators. Teachers report that a specific program is no longer driving their instruction. Instead, they are being guided by the evidence of student learning.

OPERATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL PLC'S

In our T-PLC, school-based PLCs focus on assessment and are the unit that connects each of the schools in the Hubs and Networks. Schools decide how long the T-LCP will run (typically between six to eight weeks) and the Network decides on a date at which the culminating task will occur, as well as when the Network Meeting will take place. Teachers supply samples of student work to the Network Meeting for moderation. They also share their learning, insight, innovative practice and next steps.

The school-based PLCs connected to the T-LCP provide schools with the best opportunity to imagine ways and means of improving student achievement. These assessment PLCs are driven by evidence surrounding achievement. More specifically, educators try to define what the student

work samples are showing and telling them. What are the next steps in relation to meeting student needs?

In the T-PLC, more specifically the Learning Leads Teaching aspect, student samples are shared and moderated. The process gives educators insights into capacity building needs, collective inquiry into teacher practice and a commitment to action between PLC sessions. Professional learning is motivated by a strong focus on student learning and the power of collective learning on the job. Discussion and actions are centred on the interdependence of curriculum expectations, assessment of and for learning, thinking strategies and teaching strategies.

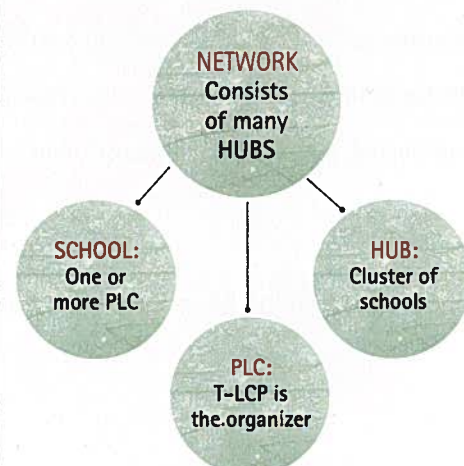
Educators utilizing the T-LCPs have expressed a significant and noticeable change in their school culture. Staff members are collaborating on projects and a compelling vision for change is emerging, including ways to sustain the change and build on successes.

HUBS AND NETWORKS:

GETTING YOU OUT OF YOUR BUILDING

It is so important for schools to meet with other schools! It is at these meetings that the following takes place:

- Swapping student work - moderation

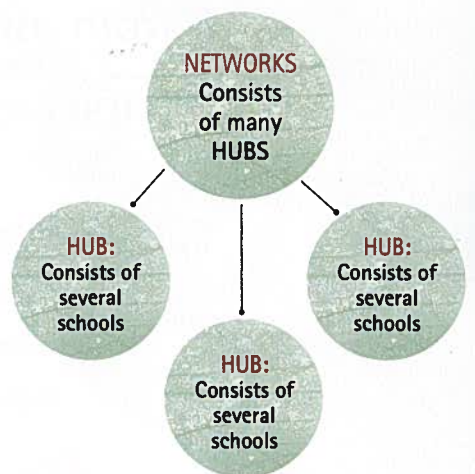


- Trading secrets – classroom practice
- Making new friends - collegiality
- Letting the sparks fly - innovation

A Network consists of many Hubs. Hubs are formed by a number of schools coming together to discuss the work of the school-based PLC. Hubs are a support network for the Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway. Hubs monitor and challenge the work of school based PLCs.

Hubs also plan for the Network Meeting that takes place at the end of each Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway and involves all schools in the Network of Hubs.

Hubs are created when three to five schools come together to support the work of school-based PLCs. A principal and at least one PLC member from each school attend Hub meetings. There is an identified Hub leader, a role filled by a principal, a teacher or both. Typically, Hub leaders have been successful leaders in similar types of work.



During the T-LCP, Hubs meet at least twice. Generally, a meeting takes place during Stage 1 of the process. Throughout the course of the meeting, schools share the start-up work regarding their individual

Five big lessons learned from the field



Leaders emerge as a result of collective actions to improve student achievement. Leaders understand that deconstructing student work is the most powerful collective action to improve learning and inform practice.

LESSON ONE

Student work is the work!

A leader's actions are always directed at improving student achievement through demonstrations of student thinking. In the T-LCP, leaders emerge as a result of collective actions to improve student achievement. Leaders understand that deconstructing student work is the most powerful collective action to improve learning and inform practice.

LESSON TWO

Leaders emerge as a result of working together.

This is hard work! Members of a PLC, a Hub and a Network fully engage when they can see that what they are actively doing is making a difference. Making a difference builds confidence. Leadership is 10 per cent knowing “what to do” and 90 per cent actually “doing it.”

The following are powerful social actions at work in PLCs, Hubs and Networks. This is the 90 per cent factor:

- Believing that we are educating students for tomorrow's world of work. This motivates and urges the PLC to stay the course;
- Viewing students as a mission, not as a product;
- Recognizing that a big part of the work is to engage

students with big ideas of character and social justice;

- Seizing every opportunity to see PLC actions as acts of passion and commitment;
- Valuing the process of working with others;
- Demanding a high tolerance for the truth; and
- Creating a safety zone for inquiry and reflection.

LESSON THREE

Leaders are people of action. They just do it!

Leaders do not wait for the stars to align; they act to get results. Leaders can

- live with the messiness that comes with inquiry,

- find and mobilize the work of the PLC around the real “go to” people (their colleagues who have been doing this kind of work but may have been working in isolation or working under the radar),
- understand that bad behaviour, differing points of view and resistance are opportunities to learn from each other,
- stay the course, sticking with the PLC (T-LCP); the Hubs and the Networks process and
- celebrate student work and student thinking as the sole reason for their work.

LESSON FOUR

Leaders attend to the learning agenda.

“If I believe that I am a Learning Leader, then I find time for the learning agenda.” Interestingly enough, the managerial, operational work also gets taken care of.

“If I believe that I will ‘get to’ the learning agenda after I complete the managerial work, I will never get to the learning agenda.”

LESSON FIVE

Leaders live in the world of “what if” thinking!

Effective leaders constantly find meaning in conjunction with others by asking questions, inventing, finding solutions and simply trying. Effective leaders are also constantly reflecting, sharing and refining practice. They have the ability to put their thinking on the line. This is a leader's gift to others. It is in their genuine act of giving that receiving is made possible.


Some educators live the belief that all students can learn and that all teachers can teach to high standards. However, a growing number of educators have reported that, in fact, the T-LCP is the effective change that is making a difference.

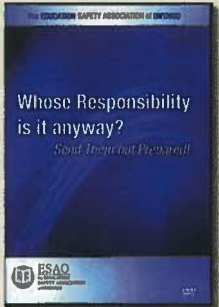
Best Kept Secrets on Leadership –

“We are constantly on the lookout for discrepancies between intentions and effect.”


– Catherine Keating

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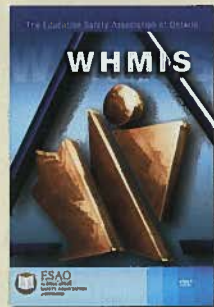




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PLCs. It is not important that all schools in a Hub be working on the same curriculum expectations. It is, however, important that they declare which expectations they are working on, why they are working on these expectations and how they evaluate the difference that has been made in terms of student learning. During Stage 2, another meeting takes place to share evidence of student work and teaching.

Similarly, the Network is comprised of all the individual Hubs. Hub Leaders meet prior to Hub and Networks meetings to plan and support each other, a practice that has been found to be a critical component of the process. At Hub Leader meetings, information is shared about the “health” of individual Hub Meetings. Actions to further support the school-based PLCs and the Hub Meetings can also be determined.

The Network Meeting takes place when the PLCs have completed their T-LCPs. This usually takes place six to eight weeks after the PLCs have begun work. The Network meeting signals an end date for the T-LCPs. Normally, there is a sense of urgency to complete the T-LCP.

In a Network Meeting, the goal is to moderate student work. Teachers from different schools who teach at the same grade level form small groups. Each teacher is asked to bring several examples of student work. Samples may include a very good piece of work, an emerging piece of work and/or a confusing piece of work. The group then discusses the samples and develops poten-

tial next steps to support student growth. For teachers, this is a unique opportunity to view student work from other schools, enabling them to assess if their expectations are close to those of their colleagues. The conversation naturally leads to teaching practice. Often, teachers will ask, “How were you able to get this kind of work?”

In the next segment, several teachers with interesting, promising or innovative practices are asked to share as part of a capacity building activity. The remainder of the Network time is spent on school-to-school sharing. Teachers describe what happened on their journey and what they want to do next. They can also seek advice and solutions to interesting issues that arose in their T-LCPs. Participants seek to find solutions to common issues that will make their next T-LCP better.

The Hubs and the Networks provide exceptional opportunities for educators. The Networks present multiple opportunities to meet with colleagues who are engaged in the same work and are looking for the same outcomes. Improved student learning does not happen by accident; it occurs because of intentional efforts and commitment. The Hubs and Networks are a way of providing maximum opportunity to grow the work together.

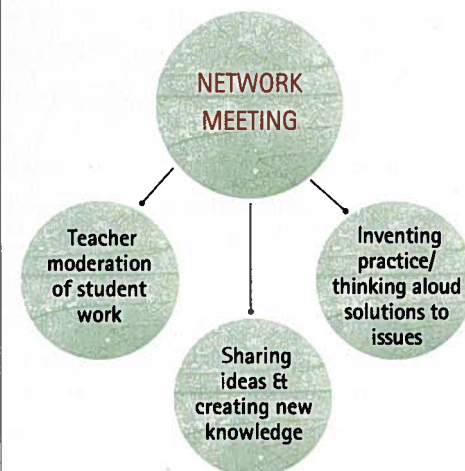
For additional information concerning Stage 1 T-LCP and Stage 2 T-LCP visit: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/teaching_learning.pdf.

REFERENCES

Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2008). *Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways. Capacity Building Series - Secretariat Special Edition #6*. June. p 1-4. www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/teaching_learning.pdf.

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Hubs and Networks –

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– Bonnie McEacherr

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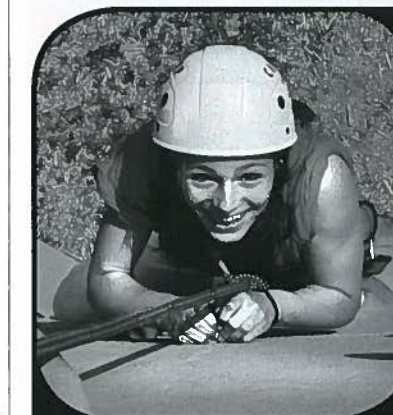
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