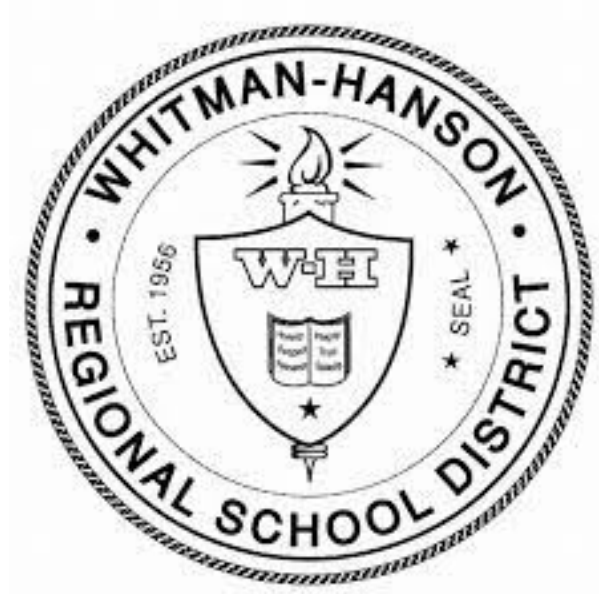


Whitman Hanson Regional School District



Professional Learning Communities Reference Document



August 2022


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Introduction

Whitman Hanson Regional School District *strives to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed in its schools. The district prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation and ensures that all students have equal rights of access and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, privileges, and courses of study.* WHRSD is guided by an **equity-based MTSS framework**, believing all students can succeed when provided appropriate support and instruction. To achieve this vision the district must ensure that faculty and staff have the opportunity to engage in meaningful collaboration about their practice as well as students' academic, behavior, and social emotional well-being. A high performing **collaborative culture** is one in which team members engage in [joint work](#) to achieve the desired objective. Our collaborative teams meet as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in which the participants agree to respect:

- Participants and their time
- The meeting's purpose
- Team members' roles
- The team's agreed-upon norms



"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community"

Milbrae McLaughlin

An additional resource article about the value of joint work: [The Power of Joint Work](#).

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan

The District's Curriculum Accommodation Plan ([DCAP](#)) is a key resource available to PLC teams. The DCAP describes Tier 1 accommodations and instructional supports available to all students. All school districts in Massachusetts are required to have a DCAP that acknowledges that students do not all learn in the same way. Thus, the onus is on the educators to utilize various approaches and strategies in the general education classroom to meet all students' needs. District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, Ch. 71, Section 38Q1/2 states:

*A school district shall adopt and implement a Curriculum Accommodation Plan to assist principals in ensuring that **all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in general education**. The plan shall be designed to assist the general classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the general classroom and in providing appropriate services and supports within the general education program including, but not limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning, or who do not qualify for special education services under chapter 71B.*



Types of Professional Learning Community Meetings

A PLC includes any meeting in which professionals work together **collaboratively** to achieve a specific meeting objective, noted on the agenda as the meeting's purpose.

PLCs at WHRSD include but are not limited to the following meetings:

- STAT or Child Study Team
- Data Teams
- Curriculum
- Assessment Meetings
- Problem of Practice
- Text-based Discussions
- Professional Practitioner's Book Study
- Faculty and Department meetings
- Special Education, 504, and Student Accommodation meetings

All effective PLC meetings are guided by the following essential questions:

1. What do we expect our students to learn and be able to do?
2. What are our expectations for students socially and behaviorally?
3. How will we teach/support so that all students can learn?
4. How will we respond when they are not learning/performing?

Roles and Responsibilities

This document provides a framework for faculty and staff to engage in PLC meetings effectively. Specifically, the principal (or principal's designee) has the responsibility for ensuring the following:

- The time and schedule for PLC meetings
- An agenda** including the meeting's purpose (and team norms when appropriate/necessary) is provided
- Documents for the meeting are available to participants
- PLC meeting norms are established (See page 6)
- Relevant team members are invited in a timely manner
- Team roles are appointed (See below)
- The meeting's outcome and next steps are designated before adjournment
- Team Notes*** are shared with the team at least 2 days after the meeting
**Notetakers can utilize a copy of the Agenda as a note-taking form.*

Different PLC meetings require certain roles, which will be determined by the principal/designee. The roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [Team Roles](#) document. Roles, especially notetaker, should change at each meeting.

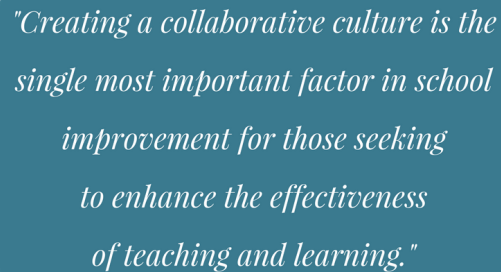
- Facilitator (Principal or designee)
- Notetaker/Scribe
- Timekeeper
- Norms Spotter
- Team members/Participants

PLC Meeting Norms

PLC teams will agree upon and follow norms to guide members in the **collaborative** process. Norms are “shared agreements”; they are the expectations and commitments for how the team will work together.

The documents below are intended to assist members in establishing norms. A PLC team’s norms need to be observed during meetings (norm-spotter role) and revisited periodically in order to assess their efficacy in guiding the team toward [joint work](#). To ensure the team’s adherence to the established norms, include them on agendas.

- [Article: “The Power of Team Norms”](#): This article should be read before developing norms.
- [Norm Setting Protocol](#): This protocol will guide your team toward developing norms.
- [Sample Norms](#)
- [Plus/Delta \(change\) Protocol](#): This protocol helps teams assess their norms.



"Creating a collaborative culture is the single most important factor in school improvement for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning."

-R. DuFour & B. DuFour

Additional resources about norms, and the value of norm-setting in creating equitable, inclusive meetings: [Why Norms Matter](#) & [Build Team Norms for Equity and Inclusion](#)

PLC Meeting Protocols

After establishing team norms, the purpose of the protocols listed below is to guide PLCs toward [joint work](#). Protocols are meant to assist teams in their collaboration and are helpful in creating meeting agendas. Norms can be listed as part of the meeting agenda.

Also, it is important to reiterate the [DCAP](#) is a key resource to which teams should refer, especially when discussing student learning. The [DCAP](#) describes Tier 1 classroom accommodations and instructional supports in academics, SEL, and behavior that are available to all students.

1. **STAT/CST** - The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a student's needs (academic, SEL, behavior) through a collaborative process guided by the protocols/forms listed below. The student(s) to be discussed should be shared in advance and only staff members with direct knowledge of the student should be required to attend. The team reviews strategies, interventions and accommodations that have been implemented and decide on next steps.

Elementary

- [Elementary Protocol](#): This document outlines the meeting process and proposed times.
- [Elementary Referral Form](#): The purpose of this form is to help staff members evaluate the steps already taken and be prepared to present a student.

Middle Schools

Referral Forms: The purpose of these Google Forms (below) is to help staff members evaluate the steps already taken and be prepared to present a student.

****Before submitting a referral, the referring teacher/staff should print a copy of the referral to present at the CST.***

Referral Google Form Grade 5

[HMS](#)

Referral Google Form Grade 6

[HMS](#)

[WMS](#)

Referral Google Form Grade 7

[HMS](#)

[WMS](#)

Referral Google Form Grade 8

[HMS](#)

[WMS](#)

[Child Study Protocol](#): The purpose of this protocol is to focus and guide the discussion. (For more information about the protocol or facilitator's role, see [Child Study Facilitator](#).)

[Child Study Agenda](#): Outlines steps listed on the protocol. (Here is a copy of the [referral questions](#) from the Google Forms above.)

High School:

2. [High School STAT referral checklist](#)

3. [High School STAT referral form](#)

4. **Data Teams:** The purpose of the Data Team meeting is to analyze the data collected for a specific need, assess the data yielded, and make informed action plans based on the data. This data includes but is not limited to academic, discipline, attendance, and SEL. PLCs should be used at least monthly to review data in these areas. District data team meetings will be conducted quarterly to review diagnostics.

[Data Team protocol](#)

[Intervention Meeting Protocol](#)

5. **Curriculum and Instruction Meetings:** The purpose of the Curriculum and Instruction PLC meeting is for educators to engage in collaborative dialogue about the efficacy of particular curricular units, lessons, or assignments as well as classroom instruction.

[Curriculum Review](#)

[WH Culturally Responsive Curriculum Score Guide](#)

[UDL Lesson study protocol](#)

[UDL Step-by-Step Lesson Plan Design](#)

6. **Assessments Meetings:** The purpose of an Assessment PLC Meeting is to review the accuracy and validity of assessments. The essential questions educators ask are: What is the purpose of the assessment? Is the assessment an effective tool for understanding student learning?

[Review of an Assessment](#)

[Review of Common Assessment](#)

7. **Problem of Practice:** The name is indicative of the purpose; in this PLC, the presenter shares an educational, instructional or classroom difficulty/challenge or question. The best problem of practice discussions are ones that can be adequately described in 5 minutes or less but can generate meaningful conversation. For example, one might have questions about the DCAP and a specific Tier 1 accommodation to present to the team for discussion and feedback. Note, the protocol can serve as the agenda as well.

[Problem of Practice](#)

8. **Text-based Discussion Protocols:** Discussing professional articles or chapters of academic literature can provide rich opportunities for educators to build collaborative understanding of the texts within the context of their practice. The purpose of these protocols is to guide meaningful discussions.

[Final Word Text Protocol:](#) With this format, the group can explore an article, clarify their thinking, and have their assumptions and beliefs questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The *Marshall Memo* may be a good source for topics/articles to explore.

[Four “A’s” Text Protocol:](#) This protocol explores a text deeply in light of one’s own values and intentions.

9. **Professional Practitioner’s Book Study:** The purpose of book study meetings is to create learning opportunities for staff on an educational topic of interest or one that has arisen from school data/feedback. The participants meet to discuss a book and its application to WHRSD.

[Book Study Protocol](#)

Below are district meetings that are included as PLCs with norms, agendas, and discussion that strives for [joint work](#) to achieve the [desired outcome](#).

10. Faculty and Department Meetings

11. IEP, 504, EL or School Accommodation Plan Meetings

*When using these materials, please note that the **protocols** provide useful outlines for creating **agendas**; copies of agendas are an excellent resource/format for the notetaker to use to create the official **team notes**. (*Protocols →Agendas→Team Notes*). Team norms can be listed at the top of agendas.