



**Professional Learning Community**  
**Collaborative Learning Teams**  
**Key Messages**



The *Professional Learning Community* process and the *Collaborative Learning Team* structure in SSRSB is about continuously developing as individual educators.

# TEACHING QUALITY

“Teaching quality exerts greater influence on student achievement than any other factor in education - no other factor even comes close.”

(Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien & Rivkin, 2005; Thompson and William, 2007)

“Quality teaching is not an individual accomplishment, it is the result of a collaborative culture that empowers teachers to team up to improve student learning beyond what any one of them can achieve alone.”

(Carroll, 2009)

# A HIGH LEVERAGE ELEMENT

Creating a **collaborative culture** is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives and the first order of business for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their schools.

Eastwood and Lewis

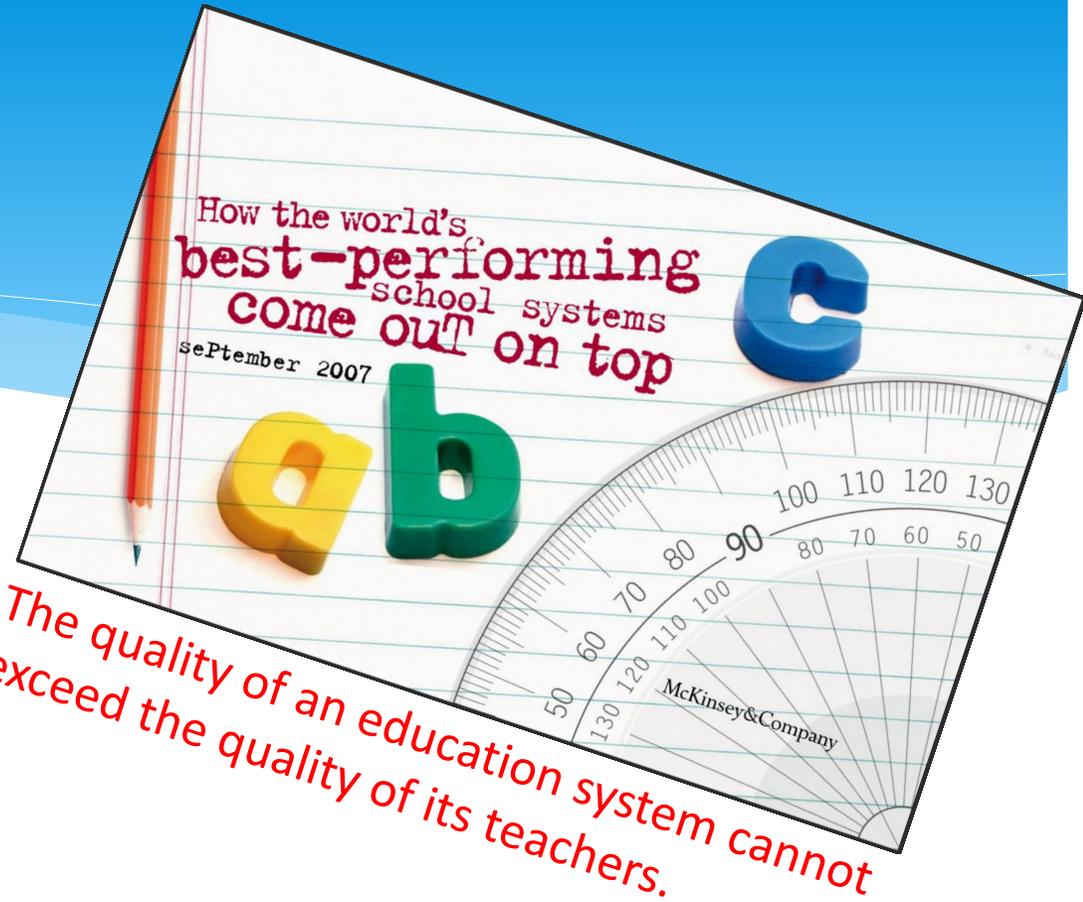
# It's a System Thing .....

When **developing** and **growing** quality instruction, top performing education **systems** world-wide (McKinsey Report, 2007) noted the following four approaches consistently and collectively were effective in achieving this:

1. Building teacher training programs in the classroom
2. Coaching classroom practice
3. Developing strong “instructional” school leaders
4. Enabling teachers to learn from each other (*Collaborative Learning Teams*)

This 4 m 30 s video describes how the PLC process can develop the capacity of educators within each school:

[Developing Capacity of Individual Teachers Develops the System as a Whole](#)





# CLARIFYING OUR COMMON UNDERSTANDING

What are *Professional Learning Communities*?

and

What are *Collaborative Learning Teams*?



In SSRSB, the process of **Professional Learning Community** (PLC) is the “umbrella” or overarching concept whereas the **Collaborative Learning Team** (CLT) is the organizing structure educators work within.



# **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

# Defining Professional Learning Communities

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an on-going process where colleagues work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.

PLCs operate under the knowledge that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators.

Job embedded learning for teachers aligns with the support provided by **Instructional Leaders** at the school (Principals and Vice-Principals) and **program support staff** (Coordinators and Consultants) and **Coaches** (Literacy Coaches, Mathematics Coaches, Culturally Responsive Coach, Instructional Coaches, Learning Disabilities Facilitator and Social Emotional Learning Facilitator).

# Defining Professional Learning Communities *continued*

Professional Learning Community is NOT a program:

- The PLC process is not a program that can be purchased nor can it be implemented by anyone other than the school staff itself.
- It is ongoing – a continuous, never-ending process.
- It is a way of organizing and operating our schools, offices and work-sites that has an impact on the culture and structure of the organization and the assumptions and practices of the professionals within it.

# Defining Professional Learning Communities *continued*

Professional Learning Community is NOT a meeting or occasional event when colleagues meet to complete a task.

- The PLC is the larger organization and not the individual CLT that comprise it.
- Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs) are the essential structure in the PLC process.
- PLCs are a school-wide and board-wide effort.
- It is helpful to think of the school or the board as the PLC and the various CLTs as the “building blocks” of the PLC.
- If colleagues meet on a regular basis only to return to business as usual, they are not functioning as a PLC. The PLC process is much more than a meeting.

# Principles of a Professional Learning Community

There are three principles of a PLC and six professional behaviours within these principles:

1. A focus on student learning
2. Collaborative team structure
3. Analysis of data / Results Orientation

**This 6 minute video is a synopsis of PLC principles and professional behaviours**

[Three Principles and Six Behaviours of a Professional Learning Community \(Dr. Anthony Muhammad\)](#)

# A Focus on Student Learning

A focus on learning means a clear focus on what the school must become in order to help ALL students learn. It means a focus and commitment to the learning of each student. It also means the educators in the school are also continually learning

An effective CLT works collaboratively to address the following questions:

1. What do we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if all students are learning?
3. How will we respond when some of our students do not learn?
4. How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?

This 4 m 30 s video shows a Collaborative Learning Team discussing the results of a common assessment using the four questions as a guide

[Collaborative Team Meeting \(AP Physics\)](#)



# **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TEAMS**

# Collaborative Team Structure

## What are Collaborative Learning Teams?

The Collaborative Learning Team is the structure that is the shift from working in isolation or working in groups to working in high-performing collaborative teams focused on learning.

The goal is to develop a systematic process in which teachers work together, interdependently, to analyze data and adjust practice accordingly to improve learning for all students.

This intentional collaboration allows the educators to learn along with the students.

**This 3 m 50 s video explains the difference between a group and a team**

[Collaborative Learning Teams: Teams versus Groups \(Dr. Richard DuFour\)](#)

# SSRSB Collaborative Learning Teams

## Collaborative Learning Teams in SSRSB .....

- Meet 14 times over the school year (14 meeting times with a minimum of 90 minutes each ... a great professional learning opportunity!!!)
- Keep teams notes on the portal that can be viewed by the Principal and HR Clerk (as required) only.
- Are organized before the first meeting in September.
- Are a minimum of two teachers (often 4 to 6).
- Principal is engaged, aware and participates in the CLT work.
- Program support staff and Instructional Coaches are called upon for participation as required.

# Organization of a Collaborative Learning Teams

## Collaborative Learning Teams in SSRSB .....

- CLTs can be organized in a variety of formats depending on the need of the teachers involved. They can be:
  - *Grade level teams* - teachers of the same grade.
  - *Subject level teams* - teachers of the same subject.
  - *Interdisciplinary teams* - teachers across subject areas but with common students, or teachers across subject areas with a common goal, for example, a CLT working on one or more of Rutherford's 24 Themes of Teaching Talent, assessment practice, and so on.
  - *Vertical teams* - teachers who are linked with those of the same content above and below their grade or course.
  - *Regional network teams* - grade or subject level across schools.
  - *Digital teams* - CLTs meeting using a digital platform.

# Regional Network Teams

- *Regional Network Teams* are teachers working together across schools.
- In order to create a critical mass of teachers to have an effective CLT, it may be required to team across schools and travel to meet on CLT days or to meet on-line using a digital video conferencing platform.
- For example, music teachers from several small elementary schools, O2 teachers traveling to one site, Mathematics teachers from smaller high schools and so on.
- If traveling, mileage will be paid according to SSRSB Policy 520: Staff Travel and Expenses (6.11).
- Principals can create networked teams by talking with each other or through Program Coordinators.

# SSRSB Collaborative Learning Teams *continued*

There are many practices that CLTs can engage in to increase their capacity:

- Gather evidence of student learning, collectively interpret the information, determine what has to change in practice, try the new practice, and collect evidence of student learning again to continue the cycle.
- Develop and implement common assessments.
- Select one of *Rutherford's 24 Teaching Talents*, try it, examine the success through evidence of student learning, debrief and begin again. This can be a particularly effective approach in interdisciplinary or cross-subject teams.
- Focus of Social and Emotional Learning through examination of student learning or other evidence.
- Response to Intervention.

# SSRSB Collaborative Learning Teams

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Teachers meeting in interdependent teams using their professional autonomy to collaborate, innovate, debate and create.
- A meeting agenda is co-created by the team members.
- Teams examining curriculum.
- Teams examining instructional and assessment practices.
- Teams creating common assessments and analyzing the results.
- Teams planning ahead, before the actual team meeting.
- Teams calling upon program support staff or Instructional Coaches to contribute to their work.
- The Instructional Leader participating in the conversation.
- Examining the school improvement plan to look for areas of alignment in CLT work ... and vice versa.

# The Role of the Principal in CLT Work

The Principal is expected to be involved and engaged in the work of CLTs:

- Be knowledgeable about the PLC process and coach CLT in that process to bring coherence to this work.
- Organize the teacher CLT in the format best suited to serve the team.
- Advise the CLT on resources available – program support staff, Instructional Coaches, professional research and so on.
- Within the school, develop a shared knowledge about current reality and the most promising practices about meeting the needs of students.
- Assist the CLT in data collection.
- Being “tight” about a focus on student learning AND teachers working collaboratively.
- Empower CLTs as they do their work.
- Establish a systematic process of student intervention and enrichment that respond to CLT work.
- Celebrate successes of CLTs internally AND with parents and community.
- Model collaboration and high expectations for all.

# Communicate and Celebrate

We have an excellent opportunity through the PLC process and CLT structure to look at authentic data, examine our practice and celebrate and communicate the excellent work of professionals within SSRSB.

What does this look like?

- Teachers sharing work of their CLT in newsletters home to parents / guardians.
- Teachers sharing at staff meetings the work of their team.
- Principals celebrating the work of a CLT at an open house or in a newsletter.
- SSRSB social media being used to share with the public the work of CLT on scheduled meeting days.

# Reflecting on CLT Development

Stage	Filling the Time	Sharing Personal Practices/ Planning, Planning, Planning	Developing Common Assessments	Analyzing Student Learning	Differentiating Follow Up	Reflecting on Instruction
<b>Characteristics of work:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams ask, "What is it exactly that we're supposed to do together?"</li> <li>Meetings can ramble.</li> <li>Frustration levels can be high.</li> <li>Activities are simple and scattered rather than a part of a coherent plan for improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teamwork focuses on sharing instructional practices or resources.</li> <li>A self-imposed standardization of instruction appears.</li> <li>Less experienced colleagues benefit from the planning acumen of colleagues.</li> <li>Teams delegate planning responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers begin to wrestle with the question, "What does mastery look like?"</li> <li>Emotional conversations around the characteristics of quality instruction and the importance of individual objectives emerge.</li> <li>Pedagogical controversy is common.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams begin to ask, "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?"</li> <li>Teams shift attention from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning.</li> <li>Teams need technical and emotional support.</li> <li>Teachers publically face student learning results.</li> <li>Teachers can be defensive in the face of unyielding evidence. Teachers can grow competitive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers begin responding instructionally to student data.</li> <li>Teams take collective action, rather than responding to results as individuals.</li> <li>Principals no longer direct team development. Instead, they serve as collaborative partners in conversations about learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams begin to ask, "What instructional practices are most effective with our students?"</li> <li>Learning is connected back to teaching.</li> <li>Practitioners engage in deep reflection about instruction. Action research and lesson study is used to document the most effective instructional strategies for a school's student population.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for supporting team growth:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set clear work expectations.</li> <li>Define specific tasks for teams to complete (eg. Identifying essential objectives or developing common assessment)</li> <li>Agree on sets of norms to help define work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require consensus around issues related to curriculum, assessment or instruction.</li> <li>Require teams to develop shared mini-lessons delivered by all teachers.</li> <li>Structure efforts to use student learning data in the planning process.</li> <li>Adhere to questions that require data analysis to answer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect upon and develop interpersonal skills and conflict management.</li> <li>Moderation or mediation of initial conversations around common assessments to model strategies for joint-decision making.</li> <li>Does everyone have the same understanding on how to best develop effective common assessments?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide tools and structures for effective data analysis.</li> <li>Data analysis protocol</li> <li>Emphasize a separation of "person" from "practice."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask provocative questions about instructional practices and levels of student mastery.</li> <li>Flexibility in approach to supporting teams' pursuit of novel approaches to enrichment and remediation.</li> <li>Provide concrete ways to support differentiation. (UDL?)</li> <li>Redesign positions to focus additional human resources on struggling students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate a team's efforts to study the teaching-learning connection.</li> <li>Create opportunities for teachers to observe one another teaching.</li> <li>Provide release time for teams to complete independent projects.</li> <li>Facilitate opportunities for cross-team conversations to spread practices and perspectives across an entire school.</li> <li>Celebrate and publicize the "findings" of team studies.</li> </ul>

# CLT and Teacher Performance Appraisals

Policy 650: Performance Appraisal of NSTU Staff

Teachers may choose to participate in the formative appraisal process through a CLT group goal or an individual goal in consultation with their Principal.



**Thank you**  
**Merci**  
**Wela'lioq**