Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

Kentucky Department of Education
Model Curriculum Framework

Section II:
Professional Learning Communities

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Introduction to the Model Curriculum Framework

The **Model Curriculum Framework,** per KRS 158.6451, provides guidance for schools and districts in implementing educational best practices in a way that creates curricular coherence to positively impact student success. Curricular coherence involves local alignment of standards, curriculum, instructional resources and practices, assessment, and professional learning within and across grade-levels in a district or school to help students meet grade-level expectations. According to research, schools that demonstrate increased curricular coherence also show marked improvements in student outcomes (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001). Figure 1.1 highlights the five key components of curricular coherence addressed within this document:

- **Section 1: Curriculum Development Process** – Outlines a systemwide process for articulating an instructional vision, developing a local curriculum aligned to the *Kentucky Academic Standards* (*KAS)* and selecting a primary high-quality instructional resource (HQIR) to support implementation.

- **Section 2: Professional Learning Communities** – Emphasizes a systems-based approach to developing a shared understanding of the PLC process as an aspect of continuous improvement, the role of leadership in creating a supportive culture and the role of teachers as effective collaborators within a PLC.

- **Section 3: Balanced System of Assessment** - Provides guidance on how teachers and leaders can implement a comprehensive, balanced system of assessments to ensure high-quality and reliable assessment practices with a focus on the formative assessment process and providing stakeholders with effective strategies for noticing, recognizing and responding to evidence of student learning.

Figure 1.1. *Key Components of Curricular Coherence*

- **Section 4: Evidence-Based Instructional Practices** - Supports leaders and teachers in understanding what constitutes an evidence-based practice, in coordinating a system of effective instruction aligned to disciplinary practices and outcomes of the *KAS* and in evaluating the quality of instructional resources.

The organization of this document mirrors the use of backward design, beginning with what educators must know and be able to do, proceeding to how learning will be assessed and concluding with how that translates into daily teaching and learning.
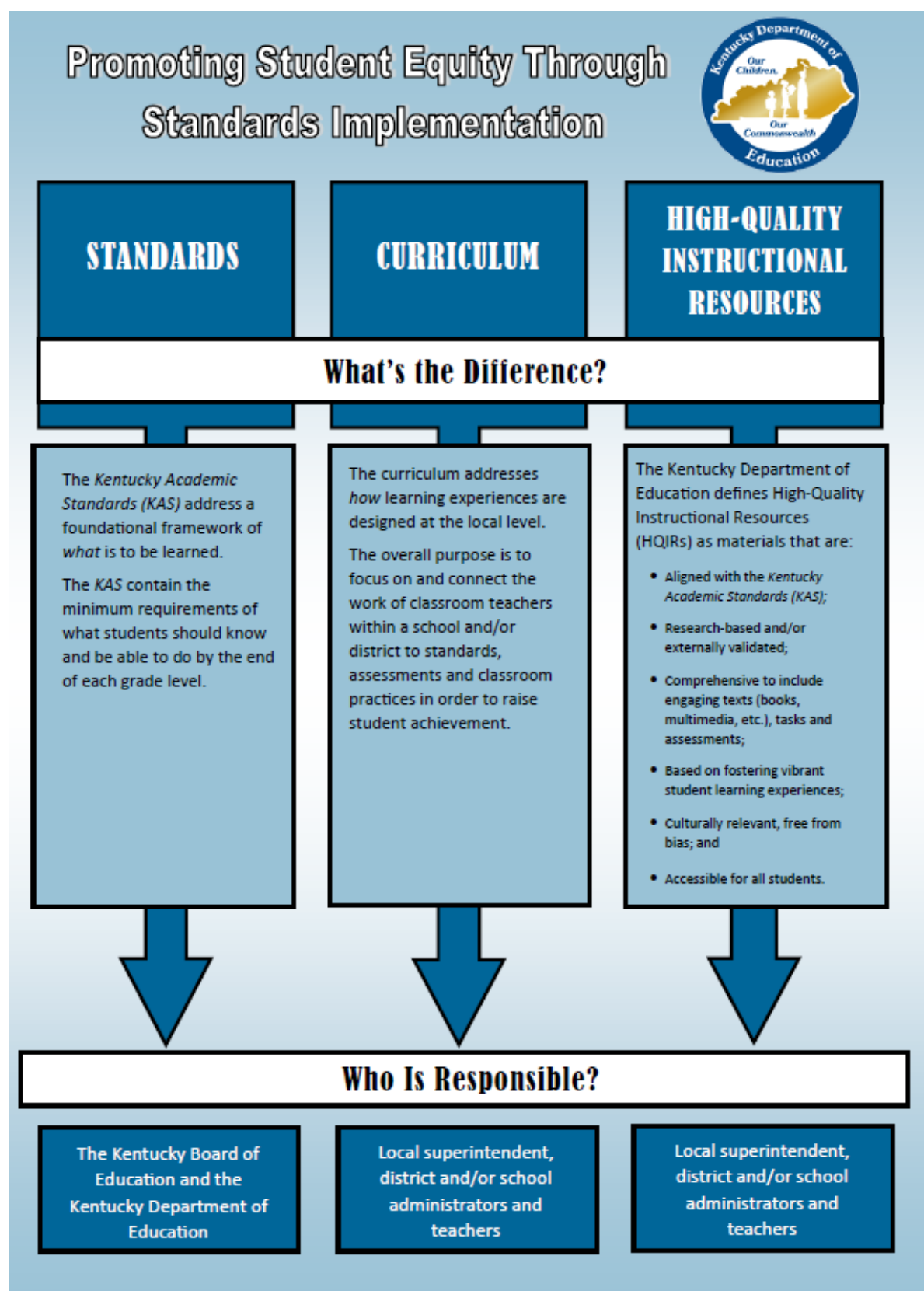
The five components of curricular coherence are essential to providing equitable access to learning for all students. Within U.S. schools, large racial and socioeconomic gaps still exist among graduation rates, test scores and advanced proficiency. Historically marginalized populations, such as students of color, English language learners and exceptional students, are less likely to be given access to high-quality curriculum and resources. A 2018 study, from districts around the country, found students of color and those from low-income backgrounds are less likely than white and higher-income students to have access to quality curriculum, instruction and grade-appropriate assignments (TNTP, 2018).

For educators to meet the challenge of helping **all** students reach grade-level expectations, they must have a clear vision of best practices in teaching and learning and a clear roadmap to follow throughout the year (Ainsworth, 2010). High-quality curriculum and instructional resources have the power to provide that roadmap by connecting standards, curriculum, effective instruction, assessment and professional learning (Achieve the Core, 2017).

To create curricular coherence, educators must understand the relationship between standards, curriculum and instructional resources. Figure 1.2 below highlights the differences between these terms as well as who has responsibility for each as defined in Kentucky law (KRS 160.345, 704 KAR 3:455).

Figure 1.2. *Defining Standards, Curriculum and Instructional Resources*

Promoting Student Equity Through Standards Implementation

Kentucky Department of Education — Our Children, Our Commonwealth

STANDARDS	CURRICULUM	HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

What's the Difference?

STANDARDS	CURRICULUM	HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES
The *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)* address a foundational framework of *what* is to be learned. The *KAS* contain the minimum requirements of what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level.	The curriculum addresses *how* learning experiences are designed at the local level. The overall purpose is to focus on and connect the work of classroom teachers within a school and/or district to standards, assessments and classroom practices in order to raise student achievement.	The Kentucky Department of Education defines High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs) as materials that are: • Aligned with the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)*; • Research-based and/or externally validated; • Comprehensive to include engaging texts (books, multimedia, etc.), tasks and assessments; • Based on fostering vibrant student learning experiences; • Culturally relevant, free from bias; and • Accessible for all students.

Who Is Responsible?

STANDARDS	CURRICULUM	HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES
The Kentucky Board of Education and the Kentucky Department of Education	Local superintendent, district and/or school administrators and teachers	Local superintendent, district and/or school administrators and teachers

For schools and districts, translating standards into a guaranteed, viable curriculum is vital to student success and the first step in creating curricular coherence.

- **Guaranteed Curriculum** – Guaranteed ensures specific content is taught in specific courses and at specific grade levels, regardless of the teacher assigned to a student. When schools and districts are unable to guarantee the curriculum being taught, the result is redundancy and inconsistency from one classroom to the next across grade levels and little alignment between the standards, assessment and instruction (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).
- **Viable Curriculum** - Viability means the articulated grade-level standards, instructional calendar (pacing guide), and daily instruction are all manageable and can be realistically taught to mastery levels in the instructional year (Marzano, 2003). This means schools and districts must ensure enough instructional time is available to develop essential knowledge, skills and concepts of the guaranteed curriculum.

Development of a district curriculum aligned to the *KAS* and adoption of a primary HQIR does not guarantee students have access to the same knowledge and skills. A distinction must be made between the *intended* curriculum and the *implemented* curriculum. In many places, gaps exist between the district- or school-established curriculum and what is implemented by teachers in classrooms. For districts to truly achieve a guaranteed and viable curriculum, the leaders and teachers accountable for delivering it must possess a common understanding of the curriculum and of the HQIR.

To support effective implementation, teachers and leaders need ongoing professional learning experiences that deepen their knowledge of how the curriculum and HQIR work together to set a strong instructional foundation (Instruction Partners, 2019). The professional learning can occur through the PLC process, workshops, coaching, classroom observations, feedback and other job-embedded contexts.

Referencing Figure 1.1, when districts across Kentucky create coherence by implementing high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum and instructional resources, support implementation and continuous improvement through high-quality professional learning and collaboration, measure student growth through a balanced system of assessment and provide teachers and students access to evidence-based instructional practices, a more equitable environment is established. Leaders and educators working together to implement the local curriculum help ensure every student has access to the same content, knowledge and skills regardless of teacher or school they attend.

Professional Learning Communities

The Need for PLCs

While translating the standards into curriculum at the local level is critical work, systems and structures are needed to ensure the intended curriculum is actually implemented in all classrooms across the school or district. Merely distributing the curriculum documents and pacing guides to individual teachers does not guarantee all students will be held to the same expectations. Student learning improves when a school or district can truly guarantee students will be taught the same knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned (Marzano, 2003).

The PLC process is a systems approach to continuous improvement. Through this process, teachers are organized into grade-level, course-specific or interdisciplinary teams, in which members work collaboratively toward a common goal while holding all members mutually accountable to improving student learning. The PLC process is specifically designed to create the conditions necessary for educators to become more skillful in their teaching practices. In addition, PLCs play a vital role in improving overall school performance, student engagement, educators' self-efficacy and overall job satisfaction (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Eaker & Keating, 2015).

Writing about the power of the PLC process, Eaker and Keating (2015) emphasize that teachers are the most important players in ensuring high levels of learning for all students and that the culture of a PLC fosters the conditions necessary for this to occur. Teachers in a PLC continually improve as they collaboratively review and analyze the results of their teaching. By working together, PLCs "break down the traditional barriers that lead to isolation, loneliness, and in many cases, a feeling of helplessness", and they "become places of mutual support, respect, interdependence, and importantly, mutual accountability" (p. 5).

The PLC process not only helps to increase overall teacher effectiveness and ensures greater consistency in delivering high-quality instruction to all students, but also teachers benefit from the shared-power, authority and decision-making inherent to the process (Hord, 2015). In a review of the research, Vesicles, Ross and Adams (2008) conclude that "PLCs honor both the knowledge and experience of teachers and knowledge and theory generated by other researchers. Through collaborative inquiry, teachers explore new ideas, current practice, and evidence of student learning using processes that respect them as the experts on what is needed to improve their own practice and increase student learning" (p. 89).

Clarity in PLCs

Therefore, one of the first steps to implementing effective PLCs is to build a common understanding of the PLC process and the work involved. In the book *Learning by Doing* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many & Mattos, 2016), the authors define a PLC as "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (p.10).

Three Big Ideas of a PLC

The level of impact the PLC process has on a school or district is largely determined by the degree to which they are able to understand and embrace the three big ideas that drive the process: (1) **a focus on learning**, (2) **a collaborative culture and collective responsibility** and (3) **a results orientation**.

The first big idea of a PLC, **a focus on learning**, is predicated on the belief that "the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure all students learn at high levels (DuFour, et al., 2016, p. 11). Educators within the school or district view this as their primary responsibility, not just that students are taught the content or simply provided with an opportunity to learn. This commitment to ensuring all students acquire the essential knowledge, skills and dispositions for each grade level or course drives every decision regarding practices, policies and procedures within the organization. In order to ensure that all students learn at high levels, it is important that educators within the school or district continually learn as well. PLCs provide opportunities for ongoing, job-embedded professional learning driven by student results (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

When schools and districts operate from the belief that their fundamental purpose is to ensure high levels of learning for all students, it changes the way in which educators traditionally work. No longer can teachers or administrators work in isolation. If all students are to achieve high levels of learning, it requires a **collaborative culture where educators take collective responsibility** for each student's success within the school or district. Collaborating with other educators is not an option; it becomes an expectation of employment. The goal is for teams to work interdependently in order to achieve common agreed-upon goals for which all members are mutually accountable (DuFour, et al., 2016).

The third big idea of a PLC, **a results orientation**, drives the focus of collaboration within the school or district. To determine if all students are acquiring the essential knowledge, skills or dispositions, educators must continually monitor and collect evidence of student learning. Educators use the results to assess the effectiveness of classroom practices and inform areas of continuous improvement. In addition, student results are used to immediately respond to student needs for intervention or enrichment (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

In order for collaboration to truly impact student achievement, educators must focus their time and energy on the right work. As explained by Dufour and Marzano (2011):

> "Collaboration is morally neutral. It will benefit neither students nor practitioners unless educators demonstrate the discipline to co-labor on the right work. The important question every district, school, and team must address is not, 'Do we collaborate?' but rather, 'What do we collaborate about?' To paraphrase W. Edwards Deming, it is not enough to work hard; you must clarify the right work, and then work hard. Effective leaders at all levels will ensure there is agreement on the right work" (p. 83).

Role of Leadership in Supporting PLCs

In order for a school or district to truly embrace the culture needed to support PLCs, it requires sustained commitment and focus from leaders at all levels throughout the organization. In their book, *Starting a Movement*, Williams and Hierck (2015) state that leaders often set out to implement the PLC process with good intentions. Yet, the work still feels like one more thing to do in a long line, and often educators are merely compliant in "doing" the work of a PLC, which is not the same as "becoming'' a PLC. Without true commitment to becoming a PLC, schools and districts will not see the results in student or adult learning.

Based on their observations, Williams and Hierck (2015), categorized different levels of commitment to the PLC process as either "flirting", dating" or "engaged" with the work. When educators are "flirting" with PLCs, they tend to simply observe the process from afar with no real action steps to move forward. In other cases, educators may be "dating" PLCs where they are scratching the surface and see the potential in the PLC process. However, they like to keep their options open for the next new thing that comes along. When educators are "engaged" to the PLC process, they have made a commitment to fully embrace the work and take the steps necessary to continually improve. DuFour and his colleagues (2016) added one more layer for educators who are "married" to the PLC process. These educators have chosen this way of life with no desire to return to the old ways of doing things. PLCs have become deeply embedded in the culture of the school and are seen as "the way we do things around here."

How do leaders move to creating a culture that fully embraces and is "married" to the work of the PLC process as a part of continuous improvement? Dufour and Marzano (2011) point to two adages that are critical to the success of PLCs: (1) addressing the "why" before the "how" and (2) the idea that clarity precedes competence. To support school and district leaders in effectively implementing the PLC process, this guidance suggests the following key leadership strategies:

- Establish Vision and Purpose
- Create Clarity and Coherence

- Create Collaborative Systems and Structures
- Monitor Implementation

For each key leadership action, the following guidance includes possible steps for leaders to consider to help support implementation and shift the culture of the school or district to truly becoming a PLC.

Leadership Strategy # 1: Establish Vision and Purpose

As leaders embark on creating the conditions necessary for a culture that embraces the PLC process, they must start with addressing the "why" before the "how." This involves working with stakeholders to establish and communicate a clear vision and purpose for undertaking the initiative. Three critical steps to support this leadership action include (1) **creating a collaborative leadership team**, (2) **analyzing current reality** and (3) **building a shared foundation**.

Step 1: Create a Collaborative Leadership Team

As a school or district begins the journey of implementing the PLC process, it is important to note that no single individual within the organization has the necessary expertise, energy and influence to lead the change process without first gaining the support of key stakeholders. DuFour (2015) states that "even the most competent leaders will struggle to bring about substantive change without the support of allies who are willing to serve as champions for that change" (p. 226). One of the key steps to laying the foundation for the PLC process is to create a collaborative leadership team.

The purpose of the collaborative leadership team, also referred to as a guiding coalition, is to create and sustain a culture of collective responsibility. They work to keep the school and/or district focused on its mission, vision and collective commitments. Members of the leadership team work to unite and coordinate the school and/or district's collective efforts across grade-levels, subjects and departments. The team operates from shared objectives and high levels of trust and helps guide the process with an emphasis on shared leadership, ownership and investment. Through the process of building shared knowledge and consensus, they develop goals, make decisions and then return to their job-alike teams to advocate for why the initiative is vital to the continuous improvement of the school and/or district (Williams and Hierck, 2015).

Instead of thinking of leadership in terms of positional authority, members of the leadership team should view themselves as servant leaders. DuFour (2015) states that it is imperative for the leadership team to view their roles as ensuring teams have everything they need to succeed in what is being asked of them to do as they work to implement the PLC process. For each critical element of the PLC process, the leadership team works together to anticipate the

questions teams may have as work through implementation. Dufour, DuFour, Eaker and Many (2010) provide the following questions the team will likely need to address for each critical component (p. 2):

- **Why questions**. Why should we do this? Can you present a rationale for why we should engage in this work? Is there evidence to suggest that the outcome of this work is desirable, feasible and more effective than what we have traditionally done?
- **What questions.** What are the exact meanings of key terms? What resources, tools, templates, materials and examples can you provide to assist in our work?
- **How questions.** How do we proceed? How do you propose we do this? Is there a preferred process?
- **When questions**. When will we find time to do this? When do you expect us to complete the task? What is the timeline?
- **Guiding questions.** Which questions are we attempting to answer? Which questions will help us stay focused on the right work?
- **Quality questions**. What criteria will be used to judge the quality of our work? What criteria can we use to assess our own work?
- **Assurance questions**. What suggestions can you offer to increase the likelihood of our success? What cautions can you alert us to? Where do we turn when we struggle?

DuFour et. al (2016) suggests selecting members based on their influence with their peers; those individuals who are seen as knowledgeable, respected and trustworthy can have a major influence on the rest of the group. This may include individuals who traditionally resist change but are important players to getting key staff members to support the work. The team should represent all relevant perspectives and reflect the various expertise and experiences of the school or district (Williams and Hierck, 2015).

When selecting the right people to serve as a part of the leadership team, consider using Kotter's (2012) four characteristics:

- **Position Power**: Are enough key players on board, especially those who are responsible for leading a large percentage of others and have influence, so that those left out cannot easily block progress?
- **Expertise**: Are the various points of view - in terms of discipline, work experience, nationality, etc. - relevant to the task at hand adequately represented so that informed, intelligent decisions will be made?
- **Credibility**: Does the group have enough people with good reputations in the system so that its pronouncements will be taken seriously by other employees?
- **Leadership**: Does the group include enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process? You need both management and leadership skills on the guiding

coalition, and they must work in tandem, teamwork style. The former keeps the whole process under control, while the latter drives the change. (p.56-57)

At the district level, possible key members include school principals, district office staff, teacher leaders and/or instructional coaches from each school, as well as other key stakeholders, such as parent/legal guardian and board member representatives.

When selecting members for the leadership team at the school level, possible members might include school administrators, teacher leaders, classified and support staff, parents/legal guardians, as well as School-based Decision Making (SBDM) council representatives.

Step 2: Analyze Current Reality

Leaders must spend time building shared knowledge throughout the organization as to why PLCs are needed. People throughout the system must have a clear understanding of what the initiative entails and why it is worth their time, energy and expertise. Leaders need to provide a compelling rationale for the change beginning with assessing the school and/or district's current reality (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Without an honest assessment of where the school and/or district is starting from, it is difficult to reach the intended destination.

Analyzing the evidence of the current reality before deciding next steps helps ensure the team makes informed decisions that lead to reaching the end goal. Spiller and Power (2019) state that "the deep work of school improvement takes time and energy, and, most important, understanding the truth of the current reality and working on the right work to exact the change" (p. 87). Possible evidence or data the team might analyze to gain a better understanding of the school and/or district's current reality includes:

- Student and staff attendance;
- Student discipline data;
- Student learning data;
- Data gathered from perception surveys from various stakeholder groups; and
- Demographic data.

When leaders and teams analyze the data, they should focus on the root causes of underperformance to understand the "why." It is difficult to create buy-in for the change process if stakeholders do not have a clear understanding why change is necessary. Once the "why" is clear, it is easier to move forward in planning for improvement and creating action plans that are tailored to address the "why" (Spiller & Power, 2019).

After an analysis of the current reality, teams should also spend time identifying evidence of best practice. The team might collaboratively analyze a synthesis of the research on characteristics of high performing schools, such as PLCs, use of clear learning outcomes,

ongoing monitoring of student learning, systematic approach to interventions and high expectations for all students. The team might conduct site-visits to see the PLC process in action or hear from schools that have successfully implemented the PLC process (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). In doing so, it is easier to identify the gap between current systems, structures and practices in the school and/or district and the systems, structures and practices of high-performing schools and districts. Understanding this gap and having a greater sense of what success looks like, educators then shift to creating a shared mission and vision that embodies what they want to strive to obtain and develop values and goals to help them achieve that vision.

Step 3: Build a Shared Foundation

In his book, *In Praise of American Educators*, DuFour (2015) points out that "the PLC process is to focus less on what educators in high-performing PLCs *do* and more on how the members of the organization *think* - the mindset of those educators. The assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and commitments of people in any organization shape the culture of that organization" (p. 100). To address this challenge, DuFour suggests engaging the staff in building consensus around the four essential pillars of the PLC foundation: (1) **shared mission**, (2) **vision,** (3) **values** and (4) **goals**. Once consensus has been established around these four areas, it lays the foundation that drives the daily work of the school and/or district as highlighted in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1. *Four Pillars of the PLC Foundation*

Pillar	Guiding Question	Purpose
Mission	Why do we exist?	Clarifies priorities and guides decisions
Vision	What must our school become to accomplish this purpose?	Provides directions and serves as a basis for assessing practices, policies and procedures
Values	How must we behave to achieve our vision?	Clarifies the collective commitments members of an organization make to one another
Goals	How will we mark our progress?	Helps in identifying targets, timelines and evidence that the new behaviors are positively impacting student learning

Mission

When focusing on the mission pillar, the school and/or district is responding to the question of "*Why do we exist?*" This question is aimed at getting educators to reach agreement around the fundamental purpose of school. Clearly articulating the fundamental purpose helps to establish priorities and guides decisions. If a school and/or district is to fully embrace the PLC process, then ensuring all students learn must be the core of its mission (DuFour, et. al, 2016). According to Dufour (2015), a "learning-focused culture understands that the school was not built so that teachers have a place to teach - it was built so that the children of the community have a place to learn" (p. 104). This requires educators to shift from schools ensuring students are just "taught" to ensuring all students "learn."

Dufour (2015) points out that most schools and districts likely have world-class mission statements. In this case, the task for educators embarking on the PLC journey is not in writing a new mission statement. It is in ensuring every practice, policy and procedure is aligned to their fundamental purpose of ensuring high levels of learning for all. Schools and/or districts must work to bring their mission to life by aligning what they do with what they say in their mission.

Vision

While the mission statement addresses the "why," the vision helps address the "what" by responding to the question of "*What must we become to accomplish our purpose?*" According to Dufour, et. al (2016), when educators collectively work to answer this question, they "attempt to create a compelling, attractive, realistic future that describes what they hope their school will become" (p. 39.) Developing a clear vision provides educators with a sense of direction and a basis for assessing potential strategies, programs and procedures aimed at reaching their goals. It also allows educators to create a list of what to "stop doing" in regards to current practices, policies and procedures because they are not aligned to the mission or vision.

Values

Creating a vision statement is meaningless without developing an action plan to reach the intended outcome. The third pillar focuses on stakeholders working collaboratively to address the question of "*How must we behave to achieve our vision?*" This involves clarifying the collective commitments (values) all members of the school and/or district make to one another. They determine the ways in which all individuals need to act now to reach their future goals. These values guide the individual and collaborative work of each staff member and describe how each person contributes to the overall success of improving student learning (DuFour, et. al, 2016).

To create the conditions in which everyone upholds the collective commitments, leaders need to clearly define, teach, model and continually reinforce each expectation. When educators in a school and/or district reach agreement on what they are prepared to start doing and

implement that agreement, it is a key step in closing the gap between their vision and their current reality. Dufour (2015) argues that in the absence of collective commitments and the willingness to hold each other accountable, schools often struggle to truly build a collaborative culture due to personal conflicts and adult drama and student learning suffers as a result.

The collective commitments should show that the system as a whole is committed to working together to improve student learning. By including all stakeholders in the development of the behaviors, it points to the fact that the PLC process works best when the entire school community and/or district functions in a collaborative and purposeful manner. The collective commitments reflect the shift from teachers working in isolation to teachers working collaboratively and from stakeholders thinking in terms of "my responsibility" to "our responsibility" and from "my students" to "our students" (Marzano, Heflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, & Grift, 2016).

Goals

The final pillar addresses the question of "*How will we mark our progress?*" In response to this question, educators need to clarify the specific goals they hope to achieve through implementing the improvement strategies. This involves articulating short-term goals and the steps necessary to reach each goal. Each goal needs to have clearly defined targets, timelines and results that will be gathered to provide evidence of the impact of the improvement strategies on student learning (DuFour, et. al, 2016).

Effective goals are critical components in supporting the three big ideas of a PLC by fostering a results orientation and the individual and collective accountability for improving student learning. In addition, goals are essential to the success of the collaborative team process. In the book, *Learning by Doing* (2016), the authors state that "in the absence of a common goal, there can be no true team" (p. 42). Effective goals help collaborative teams clarify how their work contributes to the overall improvement of the school and/or district and demand evidence of results rather than activity. Establishing achievable short-term goals creates a sense of positive momentum and contributes to the confidence and self-efficacy of the staff (DuFour, 2015).

Once the school and/or district has reached consensus on their mission, vision, collective commitments and have articulated their short- and long-term goals, DuFour (2015) offers four questions the group should utilize moving forward when making decisions:

- "Is this consistent with our purpose?"
- "Will it help us become the school we envision?"
- "Are we prepared to commit to doing this?"
- "Will it help us achieve our goals?

To support school and/or district leaders with implementation of this leadership strategy, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in Appendix B: Establish Vision and Purpose Toolkit.

Leadership Strategy # 3: Create Collaborative Systems and Structures

For a school and/or district to transform their culture from one of teacher isolation to one that embraces collaboration, leaders must create systems and structures that signal the importance of this shift in mindsets and beliefs. If leaders say they value teachers working collaboratively, they must ensure the conditions necessary for this to occur are put in place. This includes (1) **organizing staff into meaningful teams**, (2) **providing teams with time to collaborate**, (3) **clarifying the work teams must accomplish** and (4) **creating a school-wide system of interventions**.

Step 1: Organize staff into meaningful teams

At the heart of the PLC process lies the work of a high-performing team. When principals organize staff into meaningful collaborative teams, it is another avenue for building shared leadership. According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), when teams are empowered to make key decisions within clearly defined parameters, they are less likely to cite the decisions of others as the core of their problems because they are part of the decision-making process. This is important because people tend to advocate for and support what they help create.

The collaborative team process key to the success of PLCs requires people to work together *interdependently* to achieve *common goals* for which members are *mutually accountable* (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). Members benefit from shared responsibility for engaging in collective inquiry specifically designed to improve instructional practice and student learning. Without these conditions in place, teams will struggle to find meaning in their teams and will be prone to drift toward superficial conversations. Dufour (2015) stresses that "absent these three key elements, a group may be congenial or collegial, but its members are not a team" (p. 125). Groups do not become teams simply because that is what someone labels them.

When organizing staff into meaningful teams, the most important criterion is to base assignments on which team members have a shared responsibility for student learning and addressing the four questions that drive a PLC (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Mattos, et al., 2016):

1. What do we expect our students to learn?
2. How will we know if they are learning?

3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?
4. How will we extend learning for students who already know it?

Research has shown that grade-level or course content teams are the most effective at improving student and adult learning (Gallimore, et al., 2009; Little, 2006). Little (2006) argues that when the team's learning is content-based and they work collaboratively to focus on the curriculum, assessment and instruction aligned to their content, teachers are more likely to improve their practice.

The way in which principals organize their staff into meaningful teams is dependent upon the size and make-up of the school and/or district. Table 3.2 below includes a list of possible team structures that support collaboration focused on improving student and adult learning (Dufour, et al. 2016).

Table 3.2. *Possible Team Structures*

Team Structure	Description	Examples
Grade-level or course-content team	All teachers teaching the same grade-level or course	All 3rd grade teachers; all geometry teachers
Vertical teams	Link teachers with those who teach content above or below their students	K-2 teachers; Spanish I-IV teachers
Electronic Teams	Job-alike teachers in different schools that use technology to collaborate across the district, state, or world	All physical education teachers for each elementary school in a district
Interdisciplinary Teams	Members from multiple courses are mutually accountable for an overarching academic common goal	7th grade math, ELA, science, and social studies teachers working together to improve student proficiency in non-fiction reading and writing across the curriculum
Logical Links	Teachers placed in teams that are pursuing outcomes linked to their areas of expertise	A special education provides support to a biology team to help special education students achieve the intended outcomes of the course

Again, the key to organizing teachers is to utilize a structure that allows them to engage in meaningful collaboration that benefits the teachers and their students. The effectiveness of the

team structure depends on the extent to which it supports teacher dialogue and action aligned to the four driving questions of a PLC (DuFour, et al., 2016).

Step 2: Provide teams with time to collaborate

One of the most vital resources leaders can provide when attempting to create a culture of continuous improvement is time for teams to collaborate (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). If leaders are to ensure their actions align with creating a collaborative culture, then they must provide teams with the necessary time to do the work being asked of them (DuFour, et al., 2016).
For many schools and/districts, finding time within the schedule for collaboration may be challenging, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Here is a list of possible strategies adapted from *Learning by Doing* (Dufour, et al., 2016) to help leaders to address the issue of time (pp. 65-67):

- **Common Planning:** The master schedule is built to provide same grade-level or course content teachers with common planning periods. Each team then determines one day each week to engage in the collaborative work of a PLC instead of individual planning time.
- **Parallel scheduling:** Schedule common planning time by assigning the specialists (librarians, music teachers, art teachers, guidance counselors, etc.) to provide lessons to students across an entire grade level at the same time each day. Each team then determines one day each week to engage in the collaborative work of a PLC instead of individual planning time. Time also must be built in for Specials teachers to collaborate.
- **Adjusted start and end times**: Members of a team, department or an entire faculty agree to start their workday early or extend their workday one day each week to gain collaborative team time. In exchange for adding time to one end of the workday, the teachers are compensated by getting the time back on the other end of that day.
- **Shared classes:** Combine students across two grade levels or courses into one class for instruction. While one teacher or team instructs the students, the other team engages in collaborative work. The teams alternate instructing and collaborating to provide equity in learning time for students and teams.
- **Use large group lessons, testing and assemblies:** Teacher teams coordinate activities that require supervision of students rather than instructional expertise (i.e., videos, resource lessons, read-alouds, assemblies, testing). Nonteaching staff supervise students while the teachers engage in team collaboration.
- **Banked time:** Over a designated period of days, extend the instructional minutes beyond the required school day. After banking the desired number of minutes, end the instructional day early to allow for faculty collaboration and student enrichment.
- **Use in-service and faculty meeting time:** Schedule extended time for teams to work together on staff development days and during faculty meeting time.

Whichever combination of strategies a school and/or district utilizes, that collaborative time should be non-negotiable and never sacrificed for other purposes (Marzano, et al., 2016).

Step 3: Clarify the work teams must accomplish

Even if people are organized into meaningful teams and given the time to collaborate, without a focus on the right work they will not experience higher levels of student achievement. This applies to all levels of the system from principals' meetings at district level to teacher conversations at the school level (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Dufour and colleagues (2016) argue that "in a PLC, the reason teachers are organized into teams, the reason they are provided with time to work together, and the reason they are asked to focus on certain topics and complete specific tasks is so that when they return to their classrooms they will possess and utilize an expanded repertoire of skills, strategies, materials, assessments, and ideas in order to impact student achievement in a more positive way" (p. 67).

In a study of districts that implemented the PLC process for a minimum of three years, researchers focused on why some of those districts experienced dramatic gains in student achievement while others remained flat. The study revealed that in all the districts teachers were provided time to collaborate. The difference in achievement came down to what occurred during the team meetings. The districts that experienced gains in student achievement put processes in place to ensure the teams were focused on the right work (DuFour, 2015).

School and/or district leaders must establish clear parameters and priorities that guide the team toward the goal of improving student learning. Principals should meet regularly with team leads to agree on the work that must be done, determine a timeline for completion of the work, as well as clarify the products or evidence teams will provide to demonstrate their work (Mattos, et al., 2016). This helps teams to avoid focusing on frivolous topics and instead focus their conversations on specific aspects of teaching and learning as they address the four questions that drive the PLC process (DuFour, et al., 2016). By defining what is tight, each team is then provided the autonomy to determine the agenda for their meetings. It is also important for leaders to provide teams with meaningful and timely professional learning necessary to complete the work and to offer templates and models to help guide and assess the quality of their work (DuFour, 2015).

When looking at the work of a collaborative team, some of the work is addressed annually (i.e., team norms, SMART goals), and some are repeated throughout the year as part of the continuous improvement cycle. For example, for each unit, teams will establish clear learning outcomes, agree on pacing, develop common formative assessments, analyze results of those assessments and act on evidence of learning to support students and improve instructional practice. Below is an example of a possible timeline that a principal and team leads might establish (Mattos, et al., 2016):

1. **After the second meeting**: Present team norms and SMART goal.
2. **After the fourth meeting:** Present the essential learning goals for the first unit of teaching.
3. **After the sixth meeting:** Present first common assessment.
4. **After the eight meeting:** Present analysis form a common assessment, including areas of celebration, areas of concern, and strategies for proceeding.
5. **After the tenth meeting**: Present the essential outcomes for the next unit. (p.60)

While the team only completes step 1 at the beginning of the year, the remaining steps repeat for each new unit of study for the grade-level or course content team. The team members clearly know what is expected of the team, when it must be completed and the product that will show evidence of their work. In return, principals ensure that each team receives the time, resources and support necessary to accomplish the work and improve student learning (Mattos, et al., 2016).

Step 4: Create a schoolwide system of interventions

In their book, *Leaders of Learning*, DuFour and Marzano (2011) claim that "one of the most persistent brutal facts in education is the disconnect between the proclaimed commitment to ensure all students learn and the lack of a thoughtful, coordinated, and systematic response when some students do not learn in spite of the best efforts of their individual classroom teacher" (p. 173). This misalignment between purpose and practice often results in schools playing an educational lottery with their students, meaning that the response to students when they struggle is dependent upon the randomness of the teacher to whom they are assigned.

If a school and/or district is to substantially shift their culture to one that ensures all students learn, it is imperative for their actions to impact both individual teacher practice and the collective practice of the school when students struggle (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). This requires schools to develop **highly effective, systematic interventions** that provide students with the additional time and support they need. *Intervention*s are anything a school does above and beyond core instruction that all students receive. If it is *systematic*, then the school guarantees every learner receives the help needed regardless of the teacher he/she is assigned. For the support to be *effective*, the interventions used are evidence-based and targeted to meet the individual needs of each student (DuFour, 2015; Mattos, et al., 2016).

Implementing a schoolwide system of interventions may look different from one school to another, but DuFour (2015) argues that leaders must be insistent that specific critical elements of effective interventions are present in their schools. He suggests the following "tight" elements (p. 202):

- Interventions must be provided in addition to effective, grade-level Tier I instruction, not in place of it.
- An effective system of interventions starts with the foundation of strong Tier I instruction delivered to all students.
- There must be a systematic and timely process to identify students who need additional time and support.
- The master schedule must allocate time for supplemental and intensive interventions.
- Interventions must be targeted by student, by standard.
- Interventions must be provided by trained professionals.
- Interventions must be mandatory; not optional for students to attend.
- Interventions must not come at the expense of students who succeed in core instruction.

While the above elements must be "tight" in each school, the "loose" is in how each school implements these practices. For more information about interventions and how they fit into the bigger picture of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, please visit KDE's MTSS website.

> To support school and/or district leaders with implementation of this leadership strategy, the KDE has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in Appendix B: Create Collaborative Systems and Structures.

Role of Teachers in Effective PLCs

The heart of the PLC process lies in the work of high-performing teams. According to Eaker and Keating (2015), teachers are the most important players in improvement efforts aimed at ensuring high levels of learning for all students. PLCs create the conditions in which teachers are valued, empowered and provided opportunities to continually grow and learn as true professionals. In a culture that embraces PLCs, teachers are viewed as the key transformational leaders in a school and/or district because of their position to directly impact classroom instruction and assessment aimed at improving student learning.

n a school and/or district that promotes a simultaneous loose-tight leadership approach, teachers are expected to work collaboratively in teams rather than in isolation, take collective responsibility for student learning and clarify the commitments they make to each other about how they will work together. Within the school and/or district established "tights," teachers are empowered to make important decisions, such as agreeing on team norms and goals, what to teach in each unit, the sequencing and pacing of the content, the assessments used to monitor

student learning and the criteria used to assess the quality of student work (DuFour, et al., 2016).

When a school and/or district shifts from a culture of teacher isolation to one that requires collaboration, it is important for teachers to have clarity around the work they are being asked to do. DuFour, et al. (2016) stress that just having teachers merely collaborate will not improve a school: "The pertinent question is not, 'Are they collaborating?' but rather, 'What are they collaborating about?'" (p. 59). The purpose of collaboration in a PLC is to improve student learning, and this can only be accomplished if the collaboration is focused on the right work. This once again ties back to the four critical questions that define the work of a high-performing PLC (Dufour, et al., 2016).

- **What do we expect our students to learn?** Teacher teams identify the essential knowledge, skills and dispositions each student is to acquire as a result of each unit of instruction.
- **How will we know if they are learning?** Teacher teams use team-developed common formative assessments to elicit and interpret evidence of student learning for each unit of instruction.
- **How will we respond when some students do not learn?** Teacher teams identify students who need additional time and support by standard for every unit of instruction. They use evidence of student learning from common formative assessments to analyze and improve their individual and collective instructional practices.
- **How will we extend learning for students who already know it?** Teacher teams identify students who have reached identified learning outcomes to extend the student's learning.

Addressing Question # 1: What do we expect our students to learn?

One of the most critical factors that impacts student success is access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Marzano (2003) states that the work of translating the standards into a guaranteed, viable curriculum at the local level is the single most important initiative a school or district can engage in to raise student achievement. For the curriculum to be *guaranteed*, it must ensure that specific content is taught in specific courses and at specific grade levels, regardless of the teacher assigned to the student. To be *viable*, schools and districts must ensure enough instructional time is available to actually teach the essential knowledge, skills and/or concepts in each unit of instruction.

Simply creating and distributing a copy of the school or district curriculum aligned to the *Kentucky Academic Standards* (KAS) does not guarantee students have access to the same knowledge and skills. Often gaps exist between the school or district-established curriculum

and what is actually implemented by teachers in classrooms. If a school is committed to ensuring all students learn at high levels, then it must have a process in place in which teachers work collaboratively to respond to the question of "Learn what?" According to DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) "schools are more effective when the teachers within them have worked together to establish a clear and consistent understanding of what students must learn' (p. 186). DuFour, et al. (2016) stresses that the "entire PLC process is predicated on a deep understanding on the part of all educators of what all students must know and be able to do as a result of every unit of instruction" (p. 113).

Providing students access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum does not take away from an individual teacher's autonomy. Dufour, et al. (2016) states that implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum "does not mean that teachers must adhere to lockstep pacing by which all members are teaching from the same page on the same day. It does not mean that all teachers must use the same instructional strategies or same materials" (p. 113). However, it does mean that during the designated time frame established by the team for presenting a given unit, each team member will work to ensure every student acquires the essential learning outcomes for that unit. Clarifying the essential knowledge, skills and/or concepts allows teachers to establish the *what* of the curriculum, but each teacher is still responsible for determining *how* to most effectively present the content to his/her students (Mattos, et al., 2016).

The following list provides possible action steps teachers can use as they engage in collective inquiry to address the first question of a PLC for each unit of instruction:

1. Collectively study the standards using the KAS documents, local curriculum documents and other supporting internal and external resources.
2. Clarify and reach consensus on the essential knowledge, skills, and/or concepts necessary for students to reach the intended depth of the grade-level standards for that unit.
3. Determine a learning progression that leads students to what they are expected to know and be able to do.
4. Determine what proficiency looks like for each essential learning outcome.
5. Establish common pacing guides and agreed-upon assessment schedules.
6. Commit to one another to actually teach the agreed-upon curriculum.

Identify Essential Learning Outcomes

As teachers work collaboratively to prepare for each unit of instruction, they must start with identifying the essential learning outcomes. If teachers are not clear on what students should know and be able to do and how it will be measured, it is not likely their students will learn. As stated by Fisher, et al. (2020), all students need to learn at high levels, "not by chance but by design" (p. 32). This requires moving beyond just looking at pacing guides and curriculum maps

to members of a collaborative team spending time learning together to gain clarity around the standards and to make decisions about the learning pathway for each unit of instruction.

Responding to the question of what students need to know and be able to do requires the team to analyze the KAS standards, local curriculum documents and other supporting resources as they engage in professional dialogue about the specific knowledge, skills and/or concepts required to meet the intended depth of the standards. It is important to note that the _KAS documents_ were written by teachers with an intentional focus on providing support to teachers in understanding the grade-level expectations, whether this is through mini-progressions, coherence statements, multidimensionality or complete K-12 progressions. In addition, the Breaking Down a Standard Protocols walks teachers through a process that guides the collaborative team in utilizing the different components within the KAS documents to gain greater clarity of their grade-level or course standards.

Discussion and analysis of the standards prior to beginning a unit of instruction ensures all team members have common expectations for learning aligned to the appropriate depth for all students. It helps to create a clear path forward that allows teachers to stay focused on what students _need_ to know, understand, and be able to do to meet the grade-level expectations and to avoid potential distractions or digressions of what is just _nice_ to know and be able to do. As teams consistently work together, unit by unit, to review and discuss the standards and local curriculum documents, it helps to build both the individual and collective efficacy of the team (Fisher, et al., 2020).

Determine a Learning Progression

Once the team has determined what specific knowledge, skills and/or concepts are required for students to meet the grade-level expectations within the unit of study, the next step is to determine the appropriate learning progression necessary to help students reach those expectations. DuFour and Marzano (2011) define learning progressions as "attempts to organize the academic content into a progression of increasingly more complex and generalizable knowledge" (p. 111). This requires the team to consider the subksills or knowledge required to access the skills and concepts within the standard as a whole. Fisher, et al. (2020) offers the following questions teams can use to create a possible learning progression (p. 39):

- What prior knowledge is necessary for learners to successfully engage in this learning?
- What skills and concepts did students need to master in prior standards?
- What learning experiences must they have to successfully build their prior learning and background knowledge?
- What key vocabulary is explicit or implicit within the verbiage of the standard or curriculum expectations?

- What scaffolding is necessary for all learners to successfully engage in this learning?
- What do we know about students that can make these learning experiences more meaningful?

Once created, the learning progression is used to guide the team as they develop the learning intentions and success criteria for each lesson or series of lessons within the unit of instruction. It also serves as a diagnostic roadmap they can use to identify where potential learning gaps exist when students struggle. Additionally, the collaborative team can use their understanding of the learning progression to consider areas that may need to be explored and addressed in subsequent meetings. It also allows the team to identify areas that may require additional support to build member's individual and collective efficacy which allows for true job-embedded professional learning (Fisher, et al., 2020).

Determine Proficiency

When team members have gained clarity regarding the essential knowledge, concepts and/or skills required for students to meet the grade-level expectations, the next challenge is to determine what represents proficiency. Teachers need to think through the question of "What would this standard, if mastered, look like in terms of student work?" What evidence must students produce to demonstrate they have met each essential learning outcome? The team will use this shared understanding of what proficiency as they work together to address the second question of a PLC, "How will we know if they are learning?"

Establish Pacing Guide

In order for teachers to determine if all students are reaching proficiency on the essential learning outcomes for each unit and to provide the necessary supports and enrichments, the team needs to establish a common pacing guide and assessment schedule. Having a common pacing guide in no way means that teachers must teach the exact topic in the same way each day, but it does establish an overall timeline for a unit of instruction. It also includes the agreed-upon dates the team will administer common formative assessments and the unit summative assessment, as well as time for the team to respond to the results from each common formative assessment. The day-to-day pacing may vary from teacher to teacher, but the entire team knows that on certain dates during the unit, instruction stops and the entire team administers its common assessments. Mattos, et al. (2016) stresses that "without common pacing, it is impossible for a team to provide students with equal access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum" (p. 105).

The work of creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum is a never-ending process. DuFour (2015) recommends that teacher teams should review and revise each unit's essential learning outcomes every year. This allows teams to review their curriculum and make adjustments based on the needs of their students and the professional learning of the team as they work to

improve their individual and collective practice based on student results. In addition, it provides new teachers with an opportunity to participate in the collective inquiry process to better understand the standards and the essential learning outcomes for students and to create a sense of ownership of the grade-level or course curriculum.

For more information on developing learning goals and success criteria, please reference the Evidenced-Based Practices Section of the Model Curriculum Framework.

> To support PLCs with implementation of this action step, the KDE has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in [Appendix C: Recurring Work of a PLC](#).

Addressing Question # 2: How will we know if students are learning?

If a school and/or district is truly committed to ensuring all students learn at high levels, it must have a systematic process in place to gather evidence of each student's learning on an ongoing basis. The second question of a PLC, "How will we know if they are learning?" calls on collaborative teams to develop common formative assessments in order to monitor the learning of each student, skill by skill, on a frequent and timely basis (Eaker & Keating, 2015). After teams have clarified the intended learning outcomes for an instructional unit, they work together to create common formative assessments aligned to measuring those outcomes and establish the criteria they will use to assess the quality of student work (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Mattos, et al. (2016) argues that the second question serves as the linchpin of the PLC process. In order to answer this question, a team must agree on what students must know and be able to do. Then, once the assessment is given, the team is then able to respond to the third and fourth questions of a PLC of "How will we respond to students who have not learned?" and "How will we enrich and extend for those who are already proficient?" So, the driving questions of a PLC flow up and down from this critical second question.

Collaborative teams use team-created common formative assessments to ensure all students who are in the same curriculum and are expected to acquire the same knowledge, concepts, and/or skills are assessed using the same instrument or process, at the same time or within a very narrow window of time. The team then uses the evidence of student learning gathered from their common formative assessment to inform their individual and collective practice in four ways (DuFour, et al., 2016, p. 136):

- To inform each teacher of individual students who need intervention because they are struggling to learn or who need enrichment because they are already proficient;
- To inform students of the next steps they must take in their learning;

- To inform each member of the team of his/her individual strengths and weaknesses in teaching particular skills so each member can provide or solicit help from colleagues on the team; and
- To inform the team of areas where many students are struggling so that the team can develop and implement better strategies for teaching those areas.

As part of a balanced assessment system, evidence of student learning is elicited in many ways and for a variety of purposes, from large scale district and state assessments to the day-to-day use of the formative assessment process. Common formative assessments are only one element of a balanced assessment system. The system also relies on individual teacher's day-to-day assessments, unit summative assessments, interim district benchmark assessments and state and national assessments (DuFour, et al., 2016). The use of common formative assessments does not take away from teachers' autonomy; individual teachers are still empowered to use a variety of instructional strategies and administer their own quizzes and assignments to assess student understanding minute-by-minute, day-by-day while teaching a given unit in order to make decisions about where to go next in their daily instruction (Mattos, et al., 2016).

Creating Common Assessments

In order for educators to help students acquire the essential knowledge, concepts and/or skills, for the unit they must create assessments that provide information on each student's proficiency on the intended learning outcomes in a timely manner. DuFour, et al. (2016) recommends that the first step be the same as the first step in every aspect of the PLC process - the team must spend time learning together. Collaborative teams must engage in collective inquiry regarding best practices in monitoring deeper learning of their students and apply those insights as they work to create common formative assessments and the end-of-unit assessment.

When creating common assessment aligned to the essential learning goals for the unit, the team may need to write some items for scratch or use aligned items from other sources, such as publishers' tests, released items from state or national assessments or past exams. The format of the assessment should reflect the essential learning the team is assessing and provide the most useful information about each student's proficiency (Mattos, et al., 2016). What is critically important is that the level of rigor of the items used are aligned to the depth of the standards being assessed. When there is a disconnect between the intended learning outcome and the assessment question, the assessment is no longer valid. Ensuring that each learning goal clearly connects to specific items or key features within assessment items is a key alignment strategy (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017).

As teams work collaboratively to create their common assessments, they can use the following steps to help structure the work (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017):

1. Determine which essential learning goals from the unit to include on the assessment.
2. Discuss the cognitive demand associated with each learning goal.
3. Decide what type of assessment item to use and how many will be necessary to ensure reliability.
4. Match the rigor and the learning goal to the type of item that will best assess it.
5. Decide how many questions the student must get correct or what level of a rubric or other established criteria the student must achieve in order to be considered proficient.
6. Review the assessment plan to determine how much time the assessment will take.

The length of the assessment is dependent on its purpose and the number of learning goals being assessed. Mattos, et al. (2016) suggests creating common assessment that focus on smaller chunks will yield deeper understanding of the learning, help identify potential problems earlier and provide a more specific focus for interventions. In general, smaller, more frequent assessments over fewer learning goals are more likely to generate the most focused evidence of student learning.

All team members must review, discuss and agree that each item is clearly aligned to one of the learning goals being assessed in order for it to be used on the assessment. The process of teachers grappling with the type of evidence they need to gather to assess student learning is more important than the end product of the assessment itself (Mattos, et al., 2016). As the team engages in professional discourse on the type of evidence required to determine if students have reached the intended learning outcomes, it will also impact their understanding of the type of learning experiences students will need in order to reach the expectations and possible ways to scaffold and support their learning.

While common assessments provide teams with important information on student learning, they need to gather evidence from a variety of sources. Mattos, et al. (2016) cautions that "relying on any one type, method, model, or format of assessment would be a seriously flawed assessment strategy. Assessment of a student's work should provide a rich array of information on his or her progress and achievement. The challenge is to match appropriate assessment strategies to curricular goals and instructional methodologies'' (p. 104).

Analyzing the Results
After administering any common formative assessment and the end-of-unit assessment, teams need to meet in a timely manner to discuss, analyze and respond to their assessment data. As collaborative teams work to analyze the data, they must look at the results through both a student-focused lens and a teacher-focused lens (Garcia, et al., 2015). Analyzing the results

through a teacher-focused lens requires the team to look critically at their instructional practices used in the teaching of the content and identify strengths and weaknesses. This discussion can assist teams as they plan for student intervention and enrichment and to make adjustments for future instruction. The following questions can support teams as they analyze their results through a teacher- focused lens (Garcia, et al., 2015, p. 61):

- What instructional strategies appeared to work well?
- What instructional strategy or practice failed to produce results for the whole group as well the subgroups?
- According to the data, what lesson or activity should the team reconsider?
- What questions need to be reviewed and changed on the assessment?

In terms of a student-focused lens, the team uses the results to identify students, skill-by-skill, who did not reach proficiency who require additional time and support, as well as students who were proficient and would benefit from extending and enriching their learning. The following questions can support teams as they analyze their results through a student- focused lens (Garcia, et al., 2015, p. 61):

- How many students achieved a level well above proficiency, how many achieved a level just above proficiency, and how many did not achieve proficiency?
- What knowledge, concept and/or skills appeared to be especially difficult?
- What patterns emerged in terms of student performance by question difficulty?
- What patterns emerged as far as subgroups?
- How helpful do students find the assessment to be in providing feedback on their learning?

The one activity that often creates the greatest discomfort for a team is sharing the results of student learning from the common assessments with their colleagues. To avoid this discomfort, teams will often administer the common assessment but fail to be transparent when sharing the results. Conversations tend to stay surface level as the team only speaks in generalities about student learning, and they fail to use the results to examine the effectiveness of their instruction (Dufour, 2015).

DuFour (2015) argues that when the teams fail to use the results from their common assessments to improve their individual and collective practice, it circumvents the entire PLC process. He emphasizes that "this collective analysis and professional dialogue is the crux, the very essence, of the work. It brings student learning and instructional practice into the open. It is, in short, what real PLCs do. To fail to engage in this crucial element of the process is to fail to function as a PLC. If students are to learn at high levels, educators must assign a higher priority to improving student achievement than they do to preserving tradition or avoiding discomfort" (p.187).

The use of protocols is one way to build a team's capacity to analyze evidence of student learning. Protocols provide a structure for the team's conversation as they analyze the results of common assessments in a safe environment. They help ensure all voices are heard and prompt the team to examine success as well as failure. As the team repeatedly uses the protocol when examining evidence of student learning, it builds each member's skill in the type of professional dialogue necessary to improve learning for both students and adults (DuFour, 2015).

Each year, the collaborative team should revisit the results of their analysis from the previous year as they prepare to teach the same unit. They should examine areas where students experienced difficulty on the assessments, possible reasons why students struggled and any adjustments or corrections taken to improve their ability to teach those skills or concepts more effectively. The team would then set a short-term SMART goal for the unit focused on improving student achievement from the previous year. As teachers continuously use past evidence of student learning to improve student learning for the current year, it helps to drive the continuous improvement process of a PLC (DuFour, et al., 2016).

In their book, *Learning by Doing,* Dufour and colleagues (2016) argue that the benefits of using team-developed common assessments for formative purposes are so powerful that no teacher team should be allowed to opt out of creating them. They offer the following seven reasons (pp. 142-146):

- **Common assessments promote efficiency for teachers:** If all students are expected to demonstrate the same knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned, it only makes sense that teachers would work together to assess student learning. It is ineffective and inefficient for teachers to operate as subcontractors who are stationed in proximity to others yet work in isolation. Those who are called upon to complete the same task benefit by pooling their efforts.
- **Common assessments promote equity for all students:** When schools utilize common assessments, they are more likely to ensure that students have access to the same essential learning goals within each unit, use common pacing and assess the quality of student work according to the same criteria. Schools will continue to have difficulty helping all students achieve at high standards if the teachers within them cannot develop the capacity to define a standard with specificity and assess it consistently.
- **Common assessments represent a powerful strategy for determining whether the guaranteed curriculum is being taught and, more importantly, learned**: As teachers work together to study the elements of effective assessment and critique one another's ideas for assessment, they improve their assessment literacy. Perhaps, most importantly, teachers' active engagement in the development of the assessment leads them to accept greater responsibility for the results.

- **Common assessments inform the practice of individual teachers**: Common assessments provide teachers with a basis of comparison as they learn, skill by skill, how the performance of their students is similar to and different from the other students who took the same assessment. With this information, a teacher can seek assistance from teammates on areas of concern and can share strategies and ideas on skills in which his/her students excelled.
- **Common assessments build a team's capacity to achieve its goals:** When collaborative teams of teachers have the opportunity to examine achievement indicators of all students in their course or grade level and track those indicators over time, they are able to identify and address problem areas in their curriculum. Their collective analysis can lead to adjustments to the curriculum, pacing, resources and instructional strategies designed to strengthen the academic program they offer.
- **Common assessments facilitate a systematic, collective response to students who are experiencing difficulty:** Common assessments help identify a group of students who need additional time and support to ensure their learning. Because the students are identified at the same time and because they need help with the same specific skills that have been addressed on the common assessment, the team and school are in a position to create timely, directive and systematic interventions.
- **Common formative assessments are one of the most powerful tools for changing the professional practice**: There are two powerful levers that can persuade teachers to change their practice. The first is concrete evidence of irrefutably better results. The other is the positive peer pressure and support that come with being a team member. When people work interdependently to achieve a common goal for which all members are mutually accountable, the performance of each individual directly impacts the ability of the team to achieve its goal.

> To support PLCs with implementation of this action step, the KDE has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in [Appendix C: Recurring Work of a PLC](#).

Addressing Question # 3: How will we respond when some students do not learn?

How a school responds to the third question of a PLC, "How will we respond when some students do not learn?" is one of the key distinctions between those that have fully embraced the PLC process and those that are PLC-lite. If a school is to truly act on their belief of ensuring all students learn at high levels, it must create a systematic process to respond to students who experience difficulty in their learning.

As part of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework, schools should create and implement a schoolwide system of interventions that provides targeted and timely support to struggling students. The success of an effective schoolwide system is built upon the idea that all teachers implement and all students receive high-quality Tier I instruction at the classroom level. In general, at least 80-85% of students should meet proficiency of the essential learning goals though strong Tier 1 instruction. If this is not occurring in a school or within a specific collaborative team, then improvement efforts should focus on strengthening the quality of initial instruction at the classroom level. Fisher, et al. (2020) cautions that "bad instruction should not be covered up by having a majority of learners receiving a tiered system of support" (p. 166). Schools and/or district will never close the learning gap without an intentional focus on providing quality Tier 1 instruction along with the effective development and use of common formative assessments (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017).

However, even the most effective Tier 1 instruction will not meet the needs of all students. When teachers introduce a new essential learning goal, the team and the school must anticipate that some students will not achieve proficiency by the end of initial classroom instruction (Mattos, et al., 2016). it is impossible for a single teacher to meet the diverse needs of all his/her students. This is why it is crucial that a school creates a systematic intervention process that ensures all struggling students receive additional time and support in addition to what an individual classroom teacher can provide (DuFour, et al., 2016).

Dufour, et al. (2016) argues in order for a multi-tiered system of supports to be effective, every faculty member has a role in the schoolwide system of interventions. As teachers work in collaborative teams through the PLC process, they take primary responsibility for determining the essential knowledge, concepts, and/or skills for each unit of instruction, teaching the curriculum and monitoring student learning. As a result, they are in the best position to identify who needs additional time and support *by student, by standard*. Within each standard, the team further breaks this down as they identify *by student, by skill*.

In *Taking Action: A Handbook for RTI at Work*, Buffum, et al. (2018) stress that the best intervention is prevention. The authors define prevention as the interventions that occur as a part of Tier I instruction at the classroom level to help close student learning gaps. This requires teacher teams to proactively identify potential challenges students might encounter and to take steps to remove those barriers. In doing so, more students are likely to experience immediate success and fewer students will need additional support beyond the Tier 1 level. Possible criteria a team might consider in identifying barriers for students include gaps in prerequisite skills, predictable developmental needs, transitional needs, and previous struggles.

As collaborative teams analyze the results from their common formative assessments and end-of-unit assessments, part of the discussion should focus on a teacher- to- teacher comparison

of which teacher(s) had the greatest success with each essential learning goal. Based on this comparison, teachers should then discuss which strategies and resources led to greater student achievement. It is not about who is the best teacher, but rather a focus on what the evidence shows and how those results were obtained. Teams can then use this information to support student interventions by assigning students that struggled with specific learning goals to the teacher or teachers with the best results for that same goal. In addition, teams also should make note of these strategies and resources so the entire team can utilize them during that same unit the next time they teach it (Buffum, Mattos, & Malone, 2018).

One of the most common ways collaborative teams respond to results from common formative assessments at the Tier 1 level is to create differentiated groups based on common mistakes and misconceptions from the assessment and plan a specific lesson designed to address those issues. Whatever instructional response is used to provide the remediation, it must be different than what was used during the initial instruction. Teams can use the instructional strategies they identified as part of their data analysis that yielded the highest results on the common formative assessment (Bailey and Jakicic, 2017).

Other possible responses at the Tier 1 level include using manipulatives to make a concept more concrete, providing examples and nonexamples to help students more clearly see the concept, teaching specific scaffolding strategies like chunking text, and using graphic organizers (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017). When teams have assessed the essential learning goals through their common formative assessments and provided students additional support at the classroom level, teachers must reassess those students to ensure they are now proficient on the targeted learning goals. If they are not yet proficient, the students will be provided supplemental Tier 2 academic supports that target the specific learning goals (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017).

When teachers administer the end-of-unit assessment and analyze the results, they may find that some students have yet to reach proficiency on one or more essential learning outcomes for a given unit. In an effective RTI system, Tier 2 represents the targeted supplemental supports some students will receive to help them reach proficiency on the grade-level essential learning goals (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017). These supports are provided to students in addition to Tier 1 instruction, not in place of it. Once again, the interventions should be targeted by student, by standard. DuFour, et al. (2016) recommends that the school schedule dedicates a thirty-minute block of time at least twice a week for students to receive additional time and support to master the essential grade-level learning goals. This time is meant to be both flexible and fluid in which students should be able to move in and out of these interventions once they achieve mastery of the specific learning goals.

When designing supplemental Tier 2 academic interventions, Buffum, et al. (2018) offers the following six-step problem-solving process (pp. 164-166):

- **Identify concerns:** The teacher team uses the common end-of-unit assessment data to discuss team members' concerns regarding some of the students that were not successful. The team looks for common patterns affecting all groups of students and digs down to discover what may be impacting individual students. It also discusses concerns about the assessment itself and whether it is constructed in such a way to yield valid and reliable information about the students.
- **Determine cause:** The teacher team should consider the various streams of formative assessment information it gathers during Tier 1 instruction, as well as the end- of unit assessment results, in order to diagnose more specifically the causes leading some students not mastering the standards. Typically, this results in forming three to five different intervention groupings at a grade level or within a particular course. Each grouping reflects the different causes leading to student struggles.
- **Target desired outcome:** The teacher team now discusses exactly what desired outcomes each grouping of students must achieve as a result of the supplemental Tier 2 interventions. Rather than discussing what students have not been able to do, the team states exactly what it wants them to be able to do.
- **Design intervention steps:** Next, the teacher team brainstorms potential intervention strategies for each targeted group and shares any resources available with the staff assigned to a particular group. Many times, these strategies emerge as teacher team members compare their scores with one another. When one teacher records results that are significantly better than those of teammates, the teachers collectively inquire about how that teacher produced those results. What strategies, materials and techniques did he/she use?
- **Monitor progress:** The team now decides what tools to use to monitor the progress of students receiving the supplemental Tier 2 interventions. Often, the end-of-unit assessment questions provide much, if not all, of what teams need to know about whether a student has achieved mastery of a learning goal or goals underpinning the standard.
- **Assign lead responsibility:** The teacher team next discusses which staff members are most highly qualified to help which students. This important step should consider:
    - Which staff have special training in a particular area (for example, phonemic awareness)?
    - Which staff record stronger results on particular learning goals from the end-of-unit assessment when compared to other teachers on the team?
    - Which additional staff (administrators, counselors, instructional aides) might be trained and able to assist certain groups of students?

- How will additional staff providing interventions gain understanding of the standards assessed, the learning goals supporting the standards and the exact causes impacting student achievement?

When every teacher in a school has a strong Tier 1 system in place, the building will begin to see a decrease in the number of students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. In order for this to happen, it is critical that collaborative teams fully embrace the PLC process, which starts with developing clarity on the essential learning outcomes and the way in which those outcomes will be measured through team-created common assessments (Garcia, et al., 2015). Addressing the first two questions of a PLC as a part of Tier 1 instruction helps teams to create the instructional focus and ongoing assessment process necessary to provide an effective response when students struggle (DuFour, 2015).

In addition, teams must use the result of those assessments to improve their individual and collective capacity in order to provide strong Tier 1 instruction for their students. They must engage in job-embedded professional learning to address areas where the team as a whole struggle to help students reach proficiency on one or more essential learning goals. Effective Tier 1 instruction requires all teachers to use evidence-based practices that have the greatest impact on student learning while also empowering teachers to bring their own style into their instruction. The key is to identify and leverage the right practices all students must receive regardless of the teacher they are assigned as a part of the guaranteed and viable curriculum (DuFour, 2015).

For more information about interventions and how they fit into the bigger picture of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, please visit KDE's MTSS website.

> To support PLCs with implementation of this action step, the KDE has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in Appendix C: Recurring Work of a PLC.

Addressing Question # 4: How will we extend learning for those that already know it?

Highly effective PLCs recognize that they are not just obligated to help all students master the essential learning outcomes; they are obligated to ensure all students learn at the highest levels. Collaborative teams must recognize that their students are each unique with differing sets of ability. Because of this, it is likely that every student will need both interventions and extensions at different points throughout the year. When responding to the fourth question of "How will we extend learning for students who already know it?" teachers often only think about their academically gifted students. However, this question refers to any student who has

achieved mastery on the current essential learning goals based on the results from their common assessments (Ferriter, 2020).

According to Dufour, et al. (2016), extension occurs when students are stretched beyond essential learning outcomes or levels of proficiency. As collaborative teams design and implement extension activities, they must ensure the activities provide students with meaningful learning experiences, not just more of the same or busywork. It involves students digging deeper into the current content. This might include (Buffum, et al., 2018):

- challenging students to look at specific concepts and ideas from different perspectives,
- apply skills to new situations or contexts,
- look for different approaches to solving a problem, or
- use the skills they have learned to create a product or new outcome.

It is easier for collaborative teams to address how they will extend learning for proficient students by spending time considering possible extension opportunities as they work through the first critical question of "What do we want our students to know and be able to do?" Knowing up front that some students might have already learned the standards or will learn them during initial instruction, teams should discuss and identify what they can do to extend learning prior to starting the unit in instruction (DuFour, et al., 2016). The following questions can assist collaborative teams as they plan student extensions:

- What standard(s) will be used in the extension?
- What type of extension will be most beneficial to the majority of students that have demonstrated proficiency?
- How will student learning be measured for this extension?
- Which team member will lead the extension?

In addition to embedding extension activities into Tier 1 instruction, the flexible time that is built into the master schedule for providing supplemental Tier 2 academic interventions can also be used to extend learning and support for students who have already learned the essential knowledge, concepts, and/or skills for the unit (DuFour, 2015).

Providing students with additional time and support should never come at the expense of the high-achieving students. Collaborative teams should not take learning and attention away from one group of students in order to assist another group of students. When schools create and implement a system in which all students receive additional time, support and extension it in no way diminishes the attention for one group of students, but instead extends best practices to all students (Mattos, et al., 2016). In order for this to become a reality, schools and/or districts need to act on and live out the three big ideas of a PLC: (1) **a focus on learning**, (2) **a collaborative culture and collective responsibility** and (3) **a results orientation**.

To support PLCs with implementation of this action step, the KDE has created a supplemental resource toolkit that includes resources, templates, samples and other supporting documents. The resources are located in [Appendix C: Recurring Work of a PLC](#).

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Appendix B

Leadership Strategy # 1: Establish Vision and Purpose

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

Step 1: Create a Collaborative Leadership Team	• Create and sustain a culture of collective responsibility
	• Keep the school and/or district focused on its mission, vision and collective commitments
	• Anticipate and respond to the questions teams may have as work each critical element of the PLC process
		• Possible considerations when selecting team members:
		  ○ Position Power
		  ○ Expertise
		  ○ Credibility
		  ○ Leadership
		• Possible members might include:
		  ○ School and/or District Leaders
		  ○ Teacher Leaders from various schools and/or grade levels
		  ○ Instructional Coaches
		  ○ Classified and Support Staff Representative(s)
		  ○ Parent/Legal Guardian Representative(s)
		  ○ School-based Decision Making Council Representative(s)
		  ○ Board of Education Representative(s)
		• Does the makeup of the team represent all relevant perspectives and reflect the various expertise and experiences of the school or district?
			• [Selecting and Reflecting on Guiding Coalition Members]
			
			• [Building an Effective, Balanced Leadership Team]

Step 2: Analyze Current Reality	• Assess the school and/or district's current reality in regards to student achievement and culture
	• Conduct a root cause analysis to address underperformance
	• Identify evidence-based practices that support improving student achievement and school/district culture
	• Identify the gap between current systems, structures and practices in the school and/or district and the systems, structures and practices of high-performing schools and district
		• Possible evidence or data the team might analyze includes:
		  ○ Student and staff attendance
		  ○ Student discipline data
		  ○ Student learning data
		  ○ Data gathered from perception surveys from various stakeholder groups
		  ○ Demographic data
		• What are some ways in which the team might identify evidence-based practices that impact student achievement and school/district culture?
		  ○ Possible ideas include:
		    ■ Analyze a synthesis of the research on characteristics of high performing schools, such as PLCs, use of clear learning outcomes, ongoing monitoring of student learning, systematic approach to interventions and high expectations for all student
		• Conduct site-visits to see the PLC process in action.
			• [Data Focus]
			
			• [A Data Picture of Our School Template]
			
			• [Current Reality and Steps to Success Template]
			
			• [Whole Faculty Protocol for Analyzing Schoolwide Data]

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
Step 3: Build a Shared Foundation	● Engage staff in building consensus around the four essential pillars of the PLC foundation: ○ Shared Mission ○ Vision ○ Values (Collective Commitments) ○ Goals	● Questions to guide the creation of the PLC foundation: ○ Why do we exist? ○ What must our school become to accomplish this purpose? ○ How must we behave to achieve our vision? ○ How will we mark our progress? ● How will the school/district ensure every practice, policy and procedure is aligned to the fundamental purpose of ensuring high levels of learning for all? ● What must the school/district stop doing in regards to current practices, policies and procedures because they are not aligned to the mission or vision? ● How will school/district leaders clearly define, teach, model and continually reinforce the collective commitments?	● Guiding Questions for Clarifying Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals ● Protocol for Developing Mission and Vision ● Action Planning Template ● Elementary Example ● High School Example

Leadership Strategy # 2: Create Clarity and Coherence

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

Step 1: Utilize a Loose-Tight Leadership Approach	• Establish the non-negotiables ("tights") that must be adhered to and honored at all levels of the school and/or district regarding PLCs	• How will school/district leaders build a shared understanding throughout the system for each non-negotiable critical to PLC implementation?
		• In what ways will people through the school/district be provided opportunities to offer input and ask clarifying questions around each non-negotiable?
		• Recommended PLC non-negotiables include:
		  ○ Educators work collaboratively rather than in isolation, take collective responsibility for student learning and clarify the commitments they make to each other about how they will work together;
		  ○ The fundamental structure of the school becomes the collaborative team in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which all members are mutually accountable;
		  ○ The team establishes a guaranteed and viable curriculum, unit by unit, so all students have access to the same knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned;
		  ○ The team develops common formative assessments to frequently gather evidence of student learning;
		  ○ The school has created a system of interventions and extensions to ensure students who struggle receive additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, diagnostic and systematic, and students who demonstrate proficiency can extend their learning; and
		  ○ The team uses evidence of student learning to inform and improve the individual and collective practice of its members.
			• [Tools to Monitor Loose and Tight Leadership](#)
			
			• [Example of Simultaneous Loose-Tight Leadership](#)

Step 2: Create Common Language	• Ensure all stakeholders are speaking a common language throughout the school and/or district regarding the key terms associated with the improvement strategies	• How will school/district leaders build understanding of each key term and how that concept or idea fits into the overall picture of the PLC process?
		  ○ Possible steps for building understanding include:
		    ■ Identifying the key terms required to move forward
		    ■ Teaching those terms through descriptions, explanations and examples
		    ■ Engaging staff in discussions of the key terms
		    ■ Periodically assessing levels of understanding
			• [Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts](#)

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
Step 3: Limit Initiatives	• Identify a few key evidence-based priorities that support continuous improvement and then pursue them relentlessly	• How will school/district leaders build an understanding throughout the system of how each key priority related to the PLC process connects to the bigger picture of the vision, mission, values and goals to support one sustained improvement effort over time?	• [Aligning School Practices with Essential PLC Characteristics](#) • [Template for Clarifying Mixed Messages](#)
Step 4: Effectively Communicate Priorities	• Clearly communicate the goals and priorities to all stakeholder	• How will school/district leaders articulate a simple and consistent message regarding PLCs when speaking with various stakeholders? • How will school/district leaders ensure their actions align with the identified priorities? • How will school/district leaders ensure 2-way communication with all stakeholders throughout implementation of the PLC process to ensure all perspectives are heard and valued? • What formal and informal strategies will be utilized to seek feedback from stakeholders throughout implementation?	• [Effective Communication Planning Template](#)
Step 5: Develop Capacity to Lead the Process	• Build the capacity of staff to lead the change process • Provide ongoing training and support to staff to meet the established expectations.	• How will school/district leaders provide initial training for staff to build understanding of the PLC process and why the initiative is critical to improving student learning? • How will school/district leaders provide ongoing training throughout PLC implementation? • How might district leaders utilize principals' meetings to build capacity to lead the process in their respective schools, identify and resolve implementation challenges and to model the work of a PLC? • How might school leaders utilize their leadership team to build capacity, identify and resolve implementation challenges and model the work of a PLC? • How will school leaders identify and develop the capacity of teacher leads for school-based teams?	• [Critical Questions for District Office Consideration](#) • [Critical Questions for Principal Consideration](#)

Leadership Strategy # 3: Create Collaborative Systems and Structures

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

Step 1: Organize Staff into Meaningful Teams	• Organize staff into meaningful collaborative teams that require people to work together interdependently to achieve common goals for which all members are mutually accountable.	• How will school and/or district staff be organized into meaningful teams based on the criterion that members have a shared responsibility for student learning and addressing the four questions that drive a PLC?
		• Possible team structures include:
		  ○ Grade-level or course content teams
		  ○ Vertical teams
		  ○ Electronic teams
		  ○ Interdisciplinary teams
		  ○ Logical Link Teams
		• Will some individuals need to be a part of more than one PLC? How will leaders ensure those individuals are given the necessary time to be an active member of each team?
			• Checklist for Establishing and Maintaining Collaborative Teams Schoolwide

Step 2: Provide Time for Teams to Collaborate	• Provide teams with the necessary time to do the work being asked of them as part of the PLC process	• How will school and/or district leaders work with team leads to address the following:
		  ○ agree on the work that must be done,
		  ○ determine a timeline for completion of the work, and
		  ○ clarify the products or evidence teams will provide to demonstrate their work.
		• How will school and/or district leaders provide teams with meaningful and timely professional learning necessary to complete the work?
		• How will school and/or district leaders provide teams with the necessary templates and models to help guide and assess the quality of their work?
			• Making Time for Collaboration

Step 3: Clarify the Work Teams Must Accomplish	• Establish clear parameters and priorities that guide teams toward the goal of improving student learning	• How will school/district leaders build an understanding throughout the system of how each key priority related to the PLC process connects to the bigger picture of the vision, mission, values and goals to support one sustained improvement effort over time?	• Critical Issues for Team Considerations • "Are We Focused on the Right Work?" Graphic Organizer • Possible Products and Team Characteristics

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

Step 4: Create a School-wide System of Interventions	● Develop highly effective, systematic interventions that provide students with the additional time and support they need	● How will school leaders work with staff to create a school-wide system of interventions into the school schedule?
		● Considerations for non-negotiable elements of a school-wide system of interventions:
		  ○ Interventions must be provided in addition to effective, grade-level Tier I instruction, not in place of it.
		  ○ An effective system of interventions starts with the foundation of strong Tier I instruction delivered to all students.
		  ○ There must be a systematic and timely process to identify students who need additional time and support.
		  ○ The master schedule must allocate time for supplemental and intensive interventions.
		  ○ Interventions must be targeted by student, by standard.
		  ○ Interventions must be provided by trained professionals.
		  ○ Interventions must be mandatory; not optional for students to attend.
		  ○ Interventions must not come at the expense of students who succeed in core instruction.
			● Designing a System of Interventions
			
			● Systematic Intervention Worksheet
			
			● Checklist to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Our Systematic Support System
			
			● Intervention Targeting Process

Leadership Strategy # 4: Monitor Implementation

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
Step 1: Monitor and Provide Ongoing Support	• Establish a process for monitoring the work of the collaborative teams • Clearly communicate priorities and goals and the evidence that will be gathered to determine what is working, what is not working and what is needed to improve	• What products of the collaborative teams will be used to monitor implementation (i.e. team norms, SMART goals, common assessments and student data)? • How will school and/or district leaders provide differentiated support to collaborative teams based on analysis of each team's products? • Who will have the responsibility for collecting and analyzing the data? How might the collaborative leadership team be a part of the process? • How will school and/or district leaders create feedback loops focused on transparency of results from common assessments, collective analysis of results and shared responsibility for improving results? • How will district leaders provide time and support for principals to work collaboratively to identify and resolve problem areas in a school and learn from those that are being successful in improving student learning? • How will school and/or district leaders continually build trust among the staff to ensure the focus is on informing and improving practice, not about rating or ranking the schools and/or the teachers?	• Possible Products and Team Characteristics • Critical Issues for Team Considerations • Professional Development for Learning Teams • Action Planning Template
Step 2: Address Conflict	• Confront individuals when their behavior is in direct conflict with the established "tights" of the collective commitments	• How will school and/or district leaders address conflict and resistance and hold individuals accountable to the agreed upon behaviors? • Considerations when having crucial conversations to address conflict: ○ Conduct the conversation in private. ○ Express specific concerns regarding the behavior of the individual and avoid generalities or judgements about attitudes. ○ Contrast the individual's behavior with the collective commitments that staff has made to better achieve the mission of the school. Remind the individual that these commitments were created by the entire faculty and that he/she had a voice in this process.	• Administrator Role in Team Conflict • Suggestions for Addressing Conflict

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
		○ Invite the individual to explain his/her behavior in light of the commitments. Look for areas of agreement and common ground. Be prepared to share specific research and evidence to support why the requested behaviors are desirable and necessary. ○ Clarify the very specific behaviors that you will require of the individual both verbally and in writing to avoid any misunderstandings. ○ Invite the individual to suggest any support, training, or resources he/she may need to comply with the directive. ○ Clarify the specific consequences that will occur if the individual does not comply with the directive. ● How will school and/or district leaders monitor the individual's behavior and follow through on the specific consequences if the person fails to adhere to the discussed behaviors?	
Step 3: Celebrate Progress	● Recognize and celebrate the effort and incremental progress achieved throughout implementation	● How will school and/or district leaders build in opportunities for intentional and specific celebrations that reinforce the shared mission, vision, collective commitments and goals of the school and/or district? ● How will school and/or district leaders work within their leadership teams to establish a series of incremental, manageable steps aligned with implementation of key elements of the PLC process that will be used to mark short-term wins along the way? ● Key factors for incorporating celebration into the school and/or district culture: ○ Explicitly state the purpose of the celebration ○ Make celebration everyone's responsibility ○ Establish a clear link between the recognition and the behavior or commitment you are attempting to encourage and reinforce ○ Create opportunities for many winners	● Opportunities for Celebration

Appendix C

Annual Work of a PLC

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

Step 1: Create Team Norms	• Create norms that clarify the team's expectations of one another regarding procedures, responsibilities, and relationships	• Considerations for Team Norms:
		  o Each team should create its own norms.
		  o Norms should be stated as commitments to act or behave in certain ways rather than as beliefs.
		  o Norms should be reviewed at the beginning and end of each meeting for at least six months.
		  o Teams should formally evaluate the effectiveness of their norms at least twice a year.
		  o Teams should focus on a few essential norms rather than creating an extensive laundry list.
		  o One of the team's norms should clarify how the team will respond if one of more.
		• Possible areas for developing expectations when creating team norms:
		  o Time (i.e., punctuality, timeliness)
		  o Communication (i.e., listening, responding)
		  o Decision-making (i.e., inquiry, advocacy)
		  o Participation (i.e., attendance, engagement)
		  o Expectations (i.e., roles, responsibilities)
		  o Conflict Resolution
		• What process or protocol will the team use to ensure all team member's voices are heard when creating norms?
		• How will the team continually revisit the norms and make adjustments as necessary to ensure productive team collaboration?
			• Protocol for Developing Team Norms
			
			• Establishing Team Roles
			
			• Team Trust Survey
			
			• Sentence Stems for Communicating Responsibly
			
			• Managing Team-Based Conflict

Step 2: Establish Team SMART Goal	• Translate the broader goals of the school and/or district into specific goals for grade-level or course content teams to improve student learning	• Criteria for establishing a SMART goal:
		  o Strategic and specific
		  o Measurable
		  o Attainable
		  o Results-oriented
		  o Time bound
		• Considerations when establishing the team's SMART goal:
		  o Is the goal based on past student achievement?
		  o Does the goal include the improvement goal for the indicator
			• Criteria for Planning SMART Goals
			
			• SMART Goal Worksheet
			
			• Sample 8th Grade Smart Goal

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
		being monitored? ○ Do all members of the team feel confident that through their collective actions they can achieve the goal? ○ Do all members have a clear understanding of the goal, how each member can contribute to achieving the goal and the specific evidence that will be gathered to monitor progress toward the goal? ● Has each team established short-term goals that will be used to measure progress along the way to reaching the annual SMART goal? ● How will school and/or district leaders monitor the individual's behavior and follow through on the specific consequences if the person fails to adhere to the discussed behaviors?	

Recurring Work of a PLC (Each Unit of Instruction)

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
Address Question 1: What do we expect our students to learn?	● Clarify and reach consensus on the essential knowledge, skills, and/or concepts necessary for students to reach the intended depth of the grade-level standards for each unit of instruction.	● How will each team collaborate to determine the essential learning outcomes aligned to the KAS and local curriculum documents for each unit of instruction? ● Possible action steps teachers can use as they engage in collective inquiry to address the first question of a PLC for each unit of instruction: ○ Collectively study the standards using the KAS documents, local curriculum documents and other supporting internal and external resources. ○ Clarify and reach consensus on the essential knowledge, skills, and/or concepts necessary for students to reach the intended depth of the grade-level standards for that unit. ○ Determine a learning progression that leads students to what they are expected to know and be able to do. ○ Determine what proficiency looks like for each essential learning outcome. ○ Establish common pacing guides and agreed-upon assessment schedules.	● *Kentucky Academic Standards* documents ● Breaking Down a Standard Protocol ● Teaching Cycle Planning Template ● Balanced Assessment Module 3: Clarifying and Sharing Learning Goals and Success Criteria

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

		o Commit to one another to actually teach the agreed-upon curriculum.
		• Possible questions teams can use to create a learning progression:
		  o What prior knowledge is necessary for learners to successfully engage in this learning?
		  o What skills and concepts did students need to master in prior standards?
		  o What learning experiences must they have to successfully build their prior learning and background knowledge?
		  o What key vocabulary is explicit or implicit within the verbiage of the standard or curriculum expectations?
		  o What scaffolding is necessary for all learners to successfully engage in this learning?
		  o What do we know about students that can make these learning experiences more meaningful?	

Address Question 2: How will we know if they are learning?	• Create team-developed common assessments aligned to each unit's intended learning outcomes and establish the criteria the ream will use to assess the quality of student work
	• Discuss, analyze and respond to results of student learning from common assessments to improve student learning and teacher practice
		• Possible steps teams can use when creating common formative assessments for each unit of instruction:
		  o Determine which essential learning outcomes from the unit to include on the assessment.
		  o Discuss the cognitive demand associated with each learning outcome.
		  o Decide what type of assessment item to use and how many will be necessary to ensure reliability.
		  o Match the rigor and the learning goal to the type of item that will best assess it.
		  o Decide how many questions the student must get correct or what level of a rubric or other established criteria the student must achieve in order to be considered proficient.
		  o Review the assessment plan to determine how much time the assessment will take.
		• Possible questions for consideration when analyzing student results:
		  o Teacher-focused considerations:
		    ■ What instructional strategies appeared to work well?
		    ■ What instructional strategy or practice failed to produce results for the whole group as well the subgroups?
		    ■ According to the data, what lesson or activity should the team reconsider?
			• Sample Protocol for Developing a Common Assessment
			
			• Common Formative Assessment Plan
			
			• Common Assessment Data Analysis Protocol
			
			• Team Data Template
			
			• Unit Reflection Template

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources

		■ What questions need to be reviewed and changed on the assessment?
		  ○ Student-focused considerations:
		    ■ How many students achieved a level well above proficiency, how many achieved a level just above proficiency, and how many did not achieve proficiency?
		    ■ What knowledge, concept and/or skills appeared to be especially difficult?
		    ■ What patterns emerged in terms of student performance by question difficulty?
		    ■ What patterns emerged as far as subgroups?
		    ■ How helpful do students find the assessment to be in providing feedback on their learning?
		● What protocols or tools might teams use to structure and support analysis of student results on common formative assessments?	

Address Question 3: How will we respond when some students do not learn?	● Ensure all students experiencing difficulty in reaching proficiency on essential learning goals within each unit receive additional time and support
	● Provide targeted interventions by student, by standard
		● How will teams use the results of their common formative assessments to respond to student needs at the Tier I level?
		● How will teams use the results of their end-of-unit assessment to provide supplemental targeted interventions by student, by standard?
		● Possible steps teams can use to design supplemental Tier 2 targeted interventions:
		  ○ Identify concerns
		  ○ Determine cause
		  ○ Target desired outcome
		  ○ Design intervention steps
		  ○ Monitor progress
		  ○ Assign lead responsibility
			● Proactive Intervention Planning Form
			
			● Intervention Targeting Process
			
			● Unit Reflection Template

Address Question 4: How will we extend learning for students who already know it?	● Design and provide extension activities for students that have met proficiency	● How will the team ensure extension activities stretch students beyond the essential learning outcomes or levels of proficiency and allow them to dig deeper into the content of the unit?
		  ○ Possible examples include:
		    ■ Challenging students to look at specific concepts and ideas from different perspectives
		    ■ Apply skills to new situations or contexts
		    ■ Look for different approaches to solving a problem
		    ■ Use the skills they have learned to create a product or new outcome
		● Possible questions to assist collaborative teams as they plan student extensions
			● Teaching Cycle Planning Template

Action Step	Purpose	Considerations	Tools and Resources
		○ What standards will be used in the extension? ○ What type of extension will be most beneficial to the majority of students that have demonstrated proficiency? ○ How will student learning be measured for this extension? ○ Which team member will lead the extension?	