

## Facilitation Guide: Leading Intellectual Preparation in PLCs

**Purpose:** This guide is designed to assist district and school leaders in facilitating and supporting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as they engage in [Intellectual Preparation](#).

Intellectual Preparation is the cycle of core processes through which teachers work with a High-Quality Instructional Resource (HQIR) to acquire, develop and apply the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of all students while maintaining the integrity of the resource.

### Key Reminders:

- Intellectual preparation is **ongoing** during each unit of instruction.
- Begin with **unit internalization** and then deepen across the cycle.
- Look for what the HQIR might be trying to show us about **high-quality instruction**.
- Focus on **quality of discussion over completing every step**.
- Capture thinking in ways that are **visible and actionable** for the entire PLC.
- The goal is **improved student learning through stronger instruction**.

## Preparing for the PLC

### Clarify the Focus

- Which core process is the PLC engaging in?
  - For unit or lesson internalization, which part(s) of the protocol will be the focus?
- What is the intended outcome?

### Assign Pre-Work

- Ensure participants come prepared with any agreed upon prework. This could include:
  - Reading/annotating unit or lesson
  - Completing tasks or assessments
  - Pre-sorting student work
  - Viewing a model or video

### Prepare Materials

- Ensure all materials are easily accessible (digital or print) so participants can fully engage in the core process efficiently. This could include:
  - Core Process Protocol (e.g., protocol from KDE's [Intellectual Preparation Guidance](#) or vendor-provided)
  - HQIR unit/lesson materials
  - Student Work

### Determine How to Hold Thinking

- Work with teachers to determine how to capture thinking in a way that is most usable. Possible ways to hold thinking could include and may be a combination of:
  - **Chart paper (whole group):** Facilitator records key ideas to create a shared record. This can be especially helpful when initially engaging in internalization to keep the focus on rich, meaningful discussion rather than individual notetaking.
  - **Note-catcher (individual or team):** Participants capture thinking they will use during instruction.

- **Annotating the HQIR:** Teachers write directly on unit/lesson materials (highlight, note key moves, flag challenges).

## Beginning the PLC (5-10 minutes)

### Set the Purpose

- Ensure all members understand that the purpose of the meeting is intellectual preparation to improve student experiences and outcomes.
- Remind teachers of the core process that will be the focus of the meeting time and set a specific goal.
- Review the agenda.
- Possible Facilitator Prompts:
  - “What is the goal of today’s work?”
  - “How will this help us improve student learning?”

### Review Norms and Roles

- Ensure norms and roles are in place to maximize time on instruction.
  - Potential Roles: facilitator, timekeeper, notetaker, participant
- Possible Facilitator Prompts:
  - “What norm will be most important for today’s work?”
  - “Who is serving in each role today?”

## Engaging the Core Process (25-60 minutes)

### Facilitate the Team Through an Intellectual Preparation Core Process

- Ensure all voices are heard and maintain focus on instruction anchored in the HQIR.
- Important notes about time:
  - Recommended times reflect the *ideal* depth of engagement when completing the full protocol;
  - In early implementation, unit internalization may extend across two PLC meetings;
  - Actual PLC durations may be shorter; and
  - Meaningful intellectual preparation is still possible when the work is distributed across meetings, supported by pre-work, and/or focused on selected portions of the protocol.

### Core Processes at a Glance

Process	Recommended Time	Focus	Look-Fors
Unit Internalization ( <a href="#">Math</a> , <a href="#">Reading/Writing</a> , <a href="#">Science</a> )	45-60 min	Understand the unit’s instructional arc and outcomes.	Analyze learning objectives, assessments, and learning progression; anticipate student needs; identify key lessons; determine supports; make smart adjustments (in ongoing implementation).
Lesson Internalization ( <a href="#">Math</a> , <a href="#">Reading/Writing</a> , <a href="#">Science</a> )	45-60 min	Understand the lesson deeply.	Do the task as a learner; define success criteria; connect to unit; anticipate challenges; determine supports; make smart adjustments (in

Process	Recommended Time	Focus	Look-Fors
			ongoing implementation).
<a href="#">Lesson Rehearsal</a>	25-30 min	Practice key instructional moves.	Select a key portion of the lesson; rehearse; provide targeted feedback.
<a href="#">Student Work Analysis</a>	45 min	Analyze and respond to student learning.	Establish criteria; sort work; identify patterns; determine next steps.

### Look for Opportunities to Focus Thinking Through Coaching Questions

- As the PLC works through the protocol for the specific core process, facilitators may consider using the [“PLC Facilitator Coaching Card”](#) resource that contains examples of high-leverage coaching questions to help anchor or extend educator thinking for each intellectual preparation process. These questions are intended to enrich rather than to replace considerations in the protocols.

## Closing the PLC (5-10 minutes)

### Synthesize Learning

- Possible facilitator prompts:
  - *“What did we learn about the curriculum/HQIR?”*
  - *“What did we learn about our students?”*
  - *“What did we learn about our instruction?”*

### Determine Next Steps

- Possible facilitator prompts:
  - *“What instructional decisions will we make as a result of today’s work?”*
  - *“What data will we collect to determine impact?”*
  - *“What will we focus on in our next PLC?”*

## Facilitator Reflection (After PLC)

### Reflect on Enabling Conditions:

- Did participants come prepared?
- Were norms and roles effective?
- Did all voices contribute?

### Reflect on Core Process:

- Did the team stay focused on the HQIR and instruction?
- Was data used to inform decisions?
- Were next steps clearly identified?

### Reflect on Impact:

- Will this work lead to stronger instruction?
- What potential professional learning needs may have emerged?
- What specific data will be gathered to determine impact (e.g., classroom observation data, student outcome data)?