



DPS Curriculum Connection

Five Dysfunctions of a PLC

The very essence of a *learning* community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student. Teachers and administrators continue to make the shift from teaching in isolation to operating as a collaborative team. There are many commonalities across schools, and there are uniquenesses depending on the grade levels of the building. The information below addresses five dysfunctions of a PLC. The purpose is to describe how dysfunctional behavior can interfere with the school's commitment to the learning of each student. Lencioni (2007) wrote, "Like it or not, all teams are potentially dysfunctional. This is inevitable because they are made up of fallible, imperfect human beings." This is nice to know because educators struggle with teamwork, sharing resources, and working with a coworker who view teaching and learning from a different lens.

Dysfunction #1: Lack of Norms—Team norms are the foundation of a PLC. Some teams feel they can operate without norms, but conflict or a dysfunctional team member usually highlights the purpose of norms. When teams operate with norms, each member of the team understands how to communicate, how shared decisions will be handled, when to arrive for meetings, and how to professionally disagree. Teams also fail to revisit the team norms to ensure they are meeting the needs and goals of the team.

Dysfunction #2: Lack of Team Goals—Successful teams establish goals and when the team begins to succeed or fail, members return to their established goals. Establishing a PLC will not mean that a team will meet its goal any more than a team will go undefeated by having a daily practice. A team without goals will lack purpose, urgency, and a destination. It is difficult to celebrate a victory without established goals.

Dysfunction #3: Lack of Trust—According to Lencioni (2007), a lack of trust "occurs when team members are reluctant to be vulnerable with one another and are unwilling to admit their mistakes, weaknesses, or needs for help. Without a certain comfort level among team members, a foundation of trust is impossible." A PLC that operates with trust will ask—Which students seem to struggle with the key concepts and skills identified by the team? Which skills or concepts do I struggle to teach? If our students are not doing well on the _____ assessment, then what strategies should we incorporate at our grade level? How can the grade level(s) prior to our grade help us with the _____ assessment? What can teachers do to support students who are struggling in school due to a lack of _____ skills? Are there areas of the essential outcomes that could be revised to support teaching and learning?

Dysfunction #4: Lack of Communication—Top-down leadership is drastically different from the shared leadership that occurs in an effective PLC. Communication problems occur when teams operate without established norms or goals. Some communication barriers occur because teachers fail to take advantage of e-mail or other methods for communicating between meetings.

Dysfunction #5: Lack of Essential Learning Outcomes—Effective teams develop and agree to provide ALL students with essential learning outcomes. In the absence of learning outcomes, students receive a disjointed curriculum experience. Developing essential learning outcomes involves trust, conflict, debate, time, and the ability to come to consensus.

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If teams lack one or more of the items listed it will be difficult, if not impossible, to identify essential learning outcomes. It will also be difficult, if not impossible to function productively as a Professional Learning Community.

Academic Dates to Remember:

Veteran's Day Program at Lincoln	11/10
Pre-K Family Fall Festival @ RMS	11/10
IMEA Jazz Festival	11/12
Board of Education Meeting @ Lincoln	11/16
IMEA District Festival	11/19
Thanksgiving Break	11/23 11/24
Wed., Thurs., Fri.	11/25