

Ealing's Professional Learning Community (EPLC)

<http://www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/PLC.html>

Vision

The 'learning to learn' agenda (the idea that our students, and ourselves, can learn to get better at learning) has led Ealing schools to look closely at the 'learning culture' and the 'mindsets' we are cultivating in our students. We have looked for ways to build resilience, independence, social and emotional intelligence and other life-long learning skills in our students.

The aim of the Professional Learning Community is '*to share our learning experiences to date, and work together to generate new knowledge to improve the culture for learning in our schools*'.

This is part of a broader vision to create a collaborative and mutually supportive ethos between Ealing schools, to provide the foundations of trust and good will to foster further collaborative working.

Priorities

The PLC has a range of priorities, both at individual school level and at borough-wide level. Schools choose their own PLC priorities in line with development plans, and these are visited by PLC members during peer reviews (learning reviews). The Professional Learning Community collectively rearticulates its purpose at the end of every year (in preparation for the following one). Together members choose 3 or 4 new key focuses for the following year. We also agree a set of core convictions or core beliefs that provide the community with a common foundation on which to agree.

Our core convictions are (which have maintained over 90% agreement from PLC members since the PLC began in 2008):

Building Professionalism:

1. Use of Enquiry

We should ground our practices in our own and others' enquiry-led research; using tools such as learning reviews and reflecting on the findings and the process.

2. Teachers as Leaders

We are the people closest to the problems we face and are best placed to pioneer our own solutions through reflecting on our practices with (vertical teams of) stakeholders.

Building Learning:

3. Active and applied

People learn best when they have the opportunity to learn through contextualised experiences; where theory can be applied to a context and where contexts are relevant. This motivates and engages us and develop transferable skills.

4. Expandable Mindsets

We believe skills and attributes can be learned and developed. We can grow our intelligence, abilities and capacity for learning; these things are expandable.

Building Community:

5. Community Responsibility

As a community we are collectively responsible for one another's learning and for the learning of all our students, not just those attending our individual schools. As a community we should work towards converging on a common understanding of the learning process.

Our key priorities for 2011-12 are:

1. To develop our use of data within learning reviews
2. To improve the scope and impact of the PLC within schools
3. To broaden the scope of the PLC and begin to involve other stakeholders.

Tools

Vertical Teams:

The Professional Learning Community invites all member schools (all Secondary Schools and Academies, the Study Centre, and three of our four special schools are currently members, total membership= 17 institutions) to nominate an in-house 'PLC team'. This team should comprise of all leadership levels within the school. The purpose is to maximise the potential for change and dissemination. The average team size is three, comprising of: one senior leader, one middle leader and one classroom teacher.

Workshops (Learning conversations):

The Professional Learning Community provides colleagues from across schools at all leadership levels an opportunity to have profound and thoughtful conversations with one another about learning. Workshops, where all members meet three times throughout the year facilitate 'learning conversations'. These learning conversations often lead us to new understandings and give us an insight and perspective that is often difficult to achieve when we are working in the same school every day.

Learning reviews:

The PLC also gives schools access to the reflections of external critical friends from other member schools. Learning reviews involve teams of between 6-12 PLC members from across the other member schools who observe practice in order to feedback to the school on a specific line of enquiry. The feedback starts from an 'appreciative' perspective: feeding back on the best examples and using these to as the foundations for the recommendations. Learning reviews are delivered in a collaborative and supportive context and does not lead to a 'judgement', but rather a description of what reviewers have seen and interpreted. This can be highly valuable for schools whose only other 'external reviews' may have been undertaken in more stressful circumstances as part of an ofsted evaluation.

Use of enquiry:

A core conviction of the PLC is that valuable learning happens when we pose a question to which we do not already know the answer, and then we collect evidence to help us answer this question. Learning reviews are conducted in this way; the host school chooses a line of enquiry "How successfully are we using AfL to empower students?", then invites reviewers to look for evidence to help answer this question.

Disseminated leadership:

The Professional Learning Community is guided by a steering group comprising of volunteers from member schools. The steering group is also a 'vertical team' comprising of senior and middle leaders from schools who volunteer and also from the local authority who provide facilitation of the PLC.

Related Projects

The PLC shares common tools and priorities with the Lead Research Practitioner project, the Post-16 PLC and the Outreach Network.

For key dates and further information see CPD online: www.ealingcpd.org.uk contact Carrie Sharman, PLC facilitator, on 020 8825 7549 or email: csharman@ealing.gov.uk