



# What It Takes: PLC's From the Beginning

Garfield Elementary School  
Augusta, Kansas

Kim Christner and Diane Rhoten

# School Facts

- Elementary School
- 240 Students
- South Central Kansas
- 18 Certified Teachers / 16 Master's Degrees
- State Reading and Mathematics Assessments
- School-wide Title 1

# Effective Professional Learning Communities

- Solve problems thoughtfully, collectively, and continuously
- Work with what they have while inventing, innovating, and adjusting their way toward excellence
- Work to achieve the goal of “learning for all”
- Look “in the mirror”
- Collegial interchange

# Fundamental PLC Questions

- What is it we want all students to learn?
- How will we know when each student has acquired the intended knowledge and skills?
- How will we respond when students experience initial difficulty so that we can improve upon current levels of learning?

# What We Have In Place

- Common grade-level plan time
- Student-focused goals
- Building configuration

# Collegial Staff

- Values teamwork
- Consistency / low staff turnover
- Willing & open to change
- Think "outside the box"

# PLC Leadership

- Communication
- Process / organization
- Positive climate

# Accomplishments

- Assistance time
- Scheduling (How do we utilize our staff to best serve student needs?)
- After-school tutoring
- Flexible reading groups



# Continuing Dialogue

- Continue to analyze student achievement using data-driven dialogue
- Implementing innovative, research-based instructional strategies
- Formalize a hierarchy of interventions for struggling students

# Evidence of Effectiveness

- Significant gains in local assessments from pre/mid/post testing
- Kansas assessment scores continue to increase

# Finding Time for PLC's

- Before school
- After school
- Late start or early release days
- Lunch
- Creative scheduling

# Friday Celebrations

- Academic Pep Rallies
- Target specific academic goals
- Collaboration with other buildings in the district



# Summary Points

It's the goal of every teacher to have a classroom of students who learn, are challenged, and achieve.

Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Karhanek, National Educational Service, 2004

## **Celebration Friday**

1. **Parent volunteers** and staff members join grade level to supervise:
  - Mrs. Husselman's Kindergarten- Robin Ostrander
  - Mrs. McAnulty's Kindergarten- Sherrill Burke
  - Mrs. Bristow's First Grade- Lynn Warner
  - Mrs. Terick's First Grade- LyCrecia Garrison
  - Second Grade- Darla Watkins
  - Third Grade- Lisa Daigh
  - Fourth Grade- Bob Reynoso
  - Fifth Grade- Judy Schild
2. **Celebration music** begins at 7:50 A.M.
3. Mrs. Christner **welcomes** students and parents
4. **Fifth grade helpers** come forward for morning announcements
  - **Today is:** "Good morning, today is: (day/month/year)"
  - **The menu is:** "The menu for today is:"
  - **The motto** for the month is: Repeat after me... "I will be \_\_\_\_\_"
  - Stand for the **Garfield Code**
  - The **Pledge of Allegiance**
5. At 8:00 prompt Mrs. Christner announces our **featured guests** (High School and Middle School student athletes and club members will be dismissed by 8:15 A.M. to return to their schools)
6. Announcement of Class Award for **Principal's Prize**
7. Fifth grade students help Mrs. Christner hand out individual **student awards**
8. Best class in the **lunchroom trophy** given to class that earned eating lunch outside by the pond with the principal
9. **Students of the Week** (one student from each class who goes to the Dairy Queen in the afternoon)
10. Dismiss by class with **adult supervision** at 8:28 A.M.

# After School Tutoring Program Proposal

## Garfield Elementary

### 2006-2007

**Purpose:** To increase achievement of at-risk students

**Staff:** The tutoring sessions will be staffed by 5 or 6 teams of teachers and/or Para educators. Each team will consist of 3 teachers. The teams will work on a rotating basis during the week.

**Student Participation:** No more than 6 students per grade level will be targeted. Students will be recommended for the tutoring program based on NWEA scores, last year's state test scores, Pathways and/or DIBELS scores, and teacher recommendation. Permission from parents would be required to attend, and parents would be responsible for their child's transportation after tutoring.

**Dates/Times:** The program will begin in October and end March 14. Tutoring sessions will be held Monday through Wednesday of each week beginning at 3:15 and ending at 4:00.

**Cost:** We would like to request a stipend of \$15 per hour be paid to each teacher that participates based on their number of hours of tutoring during the month. We would also like to provide a small snack and drink for each student before each tutoring session begins.

\*\*Various reading and math strategies will be used to target specific skills; we will be utilizing differentiated instruction based on student need.

## Garfield PLC Group Norms

- Official Meeting times—7:40 a.m.-8:25 a.m.
- Expectations for each meeting should align with the student’s Grizzly Code:
  - Treat Politely—don’t talk over, or whisper while others are talking
  - Respect Property—return items to their proper place when finished
  - Always be prepared—bring ideas and concerns for the areas of discussion
  - Create a safe place to learn—Psychological Safety—Every idea has value. If it is a concern for one, it is a concern for all.
  - Keep trying—revisit topics discussed and decisions made—Are they working? Do we need to change or adapt what we’re doing?

*Items brought to PLC should be student achievement driven, not “faculty meeting” items.*

- Dialogue and Discussion

*The group will decide topics for dialogue and discussion one week in advance.*

*A time limit will be set for both dialogue and discussion items.*

- Dialogue will be treated as a “receive” item.
- Dialogue will begin in small groups to generate ideas.
- Dialogue groups should change to enable everyone a chance to participate with other members.
- Small group dialogue will be shared with the larger group.
  
- Discussion will be treated as an “action” item.
- Discussion will be held about each dialogue item.
- Discussion will begin in small groups and then move to the larger group as in dialogue items.
- Discussion may take place at the same meeting as the current dialogue, or it may take place the following week.
- Data, options, pros, and cons are all items for discussion.
- A time-line for each decision will be made.
- The group will come to consensus about each discussion.



## **Professional Learning Community Resources**

**Building Engaged Schools** by Gay Gordan

**Change Leadership** by Tony Wagner

**Data Driven Dialogue** by Bruce Wellman and Laura Tipton

**Fierce Conversations** by Susan Scott

**Good To Great** by Jim Collins

**Learning By Doing** by Richard and Rebecca DuFour

**Professional Learning Communities at Work** by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker

**Results Now** by Mike Schmoeker

**Whatever It Takes** by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker and Gayle Karhanek