

Chapter 2 Comprehension Questions

1. Why are schoolwide norms important?

Schoolwide norms are important because the entire school operates as a PLC. To create consistency of purpose and execution across the various collaborative teams, the whole school community should be tied together by schoolwide norms.

2. Identify three structures that should be allowed for in a PLC schedule. What are common ways that schools make time for these structures?

The most essential scheduled structure is collaborative time for teams to meet and work together. Other structures include regular intervention time and meetings between school leaders and collaborative teams. Many schools make time for collaboration by scheduling a common planning period for team members. Others use late-start or early-out schedules for students to create opportunities for teacher collaboration. Intervention time could be scheduled on a schoolwide basis by periodically setting aside instructional time; intervention could also be handled within a collaborative team by grouping and regrouping students within the team. Collaborative teams' meetings with school leaders can easily be accomplished by having leaders attend portions of team meetings or by having collaborative team representatives meet with the leader at another available time.

3. Describe two common structures for collaborative teams. What are the pros and cons of each?

Two frequently used groupings for collaborative teams are grade-level teams and subject-area teams. Grade-level teams are often able to serve a common set of students in a cross-curricular manner, consider broad pedagogical topics, and create opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. On the other hand, subject-area teams can focus closely on the specifics of their content area, such as common assessments and curriculum design within and across courses.

4. Explain the importance of the following three aspects of collaborative team culture and give an example of how a team might establish and monitor each one.

A. Group norms

Group norms are essential for governing team interactions and work. They operate as guidelines for respectful discussions and sometimes define the type of work that the team will engage in. A team can establish norms by brainstorming as a group and narrowing down the list through discussion or voting. Monitoring adherence to the norms is as simple as periodically surveying team members.

B. Trust and relationships

Trust and positive relationships between team members enable the team to collaborate without being derailed by personal ambitions or interpersonal misgivings. Establishing trust is an ongoing process. A good starting point is for team members to get to know each other as people, rather than just as coworkers. Each team member should also make an effort to behave in a trustworthy manner. Intrateam relationships can also be monitored through surveys.

C. Productive collaboration

Productive collaboration is the goal of a collaborative team. Once the team has established a base of norms and trust, the work the team does is what facilitates their effect on students. School leaders, as well as the team itself, should monitor the team's productivity using checklists or agendas or simply by looking at artifacts. If a team is collaborating productively, there will be clear evidence in the form of documents and other products.

5. Describe one challenging aspect of the PLC process and how it can be mitigated.

Answers will vary. One challenging aspect of the PLC process is that it takes time—often more than traditional systems. Groups often take longer to make decisions and, of course, school leaders need to find collaborative time in an already limited school schedule. Educators undertaking the PLC process can mitigate this issue first by simply being patient. They should not expect that implementing collaborative teams will be a fast process or a quick fix. People take time to adjust to any new system before they can reach peak effectiveness. Secondly, schools and teachers can make use of technology tools, such as shared documents, to allow teams to collaborate outside of meeting times.