PLCs and Shifting School Culture: A Case Study

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PLCS AND SHIFTING SCHOOL CULTURE: A CASE STUDY

A Specialist Project
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

By
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December 2019
PLCS AND SHIFTING SCHOOL CULTURE: A CASE STUDY

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December 2019

80 Pages

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The purpose of this action research was to effectively measure and evaluate the extent to which implementing professional learning communities in a high school setting can shift the school toward a more collaborative culture. Additionally, the study set out to aide school leadership in analyzing their role in designing and implementing PLCs so that they might make informed decisions regarding PLCs for collaborative school culture and improvement in the future. Data was collected utilizing staff surveys before and after the implementations of PLCs. Additionally, a focus group of staff was interviewed and provided feedback regarding PLCs and the role of school leadership in the implementation process. Analysis of the data suggests that the culture of the school remained mostly unchanged after PLC implementation, noting only marginal improvement in the fragmented culture. It may be concluded that the staff’s lack of knowledge and experience in the PLC process before the study contributed to inaccuracy in their perspectives and further studies could be conducted to evaluate the root causes of this lack of knowledge and balkanized school culture.
Chapter One

Introduction

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been a staple in schools across the country for more than twenty years (Dufour, 1998). Developing a school and/or district into a professional learning community with a focus on student learning and teacher collaboration has been shown to have significant effects on school improvement (Gruenert, 2005). Eaker and Keating (2008) assert that, “collaboratively developed shared values and commitments can be a powerful tool for shaping school culture,” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 15). They go on to discuss the expanse of research on how developing a strong PLC can help a school shift from a “culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration,” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 15). In a 2005 study, Gruenert concludes, “more collaborative schools tend to have higher achievement,” and “student performance in both math and language arts is positively correlated with a collaborative school culture,” (2005, p. 46).

This case study will focus on the design and implementation of PLCs at Hancock County High school, a small, rural high school in the western part of Kentucky. Although a fairly high achieving high school, the collaboration of teaching professionals within the building to promote student growth has traditionally been informal, brief, and unstructured. All collaboration and professional development have been conducted outside of the school day due to the structure of the class schedule; within a six-year period, the school had moved from a four-block schedule to a modified block schedule to a super modified block schedule. Throughout those changes, no plan had been put in place to ensure teachers of the same content area department were given common
planning blocks. Furthermore, for those teachers across disciplines who had the same planning time, the time was never leveraged to create PLCs. A new administration had to address these scheduling concerns, because many teachers were isolated and report that they “just stay in [their] room and do [their] work,” (K. White, personal communication, July 30, 2018). Over the last five years, the school has also experienced a significant culture shift. Fullan and Hargreaves define balkanization as “a culture of separate and sometimes competing groups, jockeying for position and supremacy,” (1991, p. 66). However, there has never been any collaborative planning time or any structure for collaboration or PLC process at Hancock County High School that would shift this balkanized culture.

This made it apparent that not only did the teachers need common planning periods within their content areas in order to create the opportunity to engage in the PLC process for the first time, the school leadership also needed to focus strongly on the school culture and work toward a collaborative work environment to foster growth and learning. One of the goals of school leadership is to develop a collaborative school culture with all stakeholders working together to promote and improve student learning. In *Learning by Doing*, the authors write, “...the fundamental structure of a PLC is the collaborative teams of educators whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable,” (Dufour et. al., 2016, p. 12). With this in mind, school leadership at Hancock County High School has made the development and implementation of the PLC process a priority for the school as the process should lead to significantly more collaboration and less isolation of teachers, because in order to develop meaningful collaboration centered on data and results,
teacher must grow together into high performing teams (Eaker, Dufour, & Dufour, 2002).
The purpose of this study was to explore the impact PLC implementation can have on school culture as well as to examine and analyze the role of school leaders in implementation of the PLC to impact school culture. Two research questions guided this project.

1. How did implementing professional learning communities (PLC’s) impact the culture of Hancock County High School?

2. To what degree did school leaders' roles in PLC implementation impact school culture?

Practical Significance

The research questions are important, because a strong, collaborative culture is imperative to the sustained success of a school (Gruenert, 2005). While there are many research-based strategies linked to the improvement of schools, the direct correlation between the implementation of professional learning communities where they have not existed in the past to improved student achievement makes this study particularly important as it could show a strong link between PLC implementation and shifting school culture toward a culture that is strong, positive, and collaborative enough to impact school success. Furthermore, this study examined whether the approach to implementing PLCs by school leaders in fact produces positive effects on collaborative school culture, which may then be used by school leaders to analyze and plan next steps in the PLC and culture building process within the school. Other schools may find the results beneficial as well, particularly if the leaders of those school are considering PLC implementation as a culture building strategy. Finally, by utilizing the data collected
through the surveys and feedback on the communication rubric, the strengths, weaknesses, and missteps of the PLC implementation can be identified and addressed.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been prevalent in high performing schools for decades and have been studied in relation to student achievement and school success for more than twenty years. This literature illustrates connections between implementing PLCs and developing a collaborative school culture that ultimately leads to student success. Furthermore, the literature highlights the role school leadership plays in the implementation of PLCs and the subsequent impact made on school culture to promote a strong, positive, and collaborative culture.

What are Professional Learning Communities?

Professional learning communities exist when “educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone,” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii). Commonly referred to as PLCs, professional learning communities have become a staple of professional practice in many schools, and their implementation varies from school to school, from grade level teams to content area teams, and even administrative level collaborative teams, PLCs exist for the primary purpose of shifting a school’s focus from teaching to learning (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 11-12).

According to Dufour and Eaker, in (1998), effective PLCs are characterized by six essential characteristics:

1. Shared mission, vision, values, and goals
2. Collaborative teams focused on learning
3. Collective inquiry
4. Action orientation and experimentation

5. Commitment to continuous improvement

6. Results orientation (Dufour and Eaker, 1998, p. 25-29)

Clearly, the process is intended to be centered around collaboration of teachers and leaders in the school.

Regardless of how a school structures its implementation of PLCs, utilizing teacher collaboration as a means to improve teacher quality and student achievement are the primary objectives of the process (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010, p. 35). Teachers in PLCs learn together, plan together, review student work together, analyze learning data, and reflect on next steps, with the primary focus being on teacher collaboration in contrast to teacher isolation.

Dufour et al. (2016), asserted that:

Educators must work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the success of each student. Working collaboratively is not optional, but instead is an expectation and requirement of employment. Subsequently, the fundamental structure of a PLC is the collaborative teams of educators whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable. These common goals are directly linked to the purpose of learning for all. The team is the engine that drives the PLC effort and the primary building block of the organization. (pp. 11-12)

Thus, developing PLCs in a school is a powerful practice to use in improving student success. McLaughlin and Talbert (2010) found repeatedly that in schools in which there
was strong teacher collaboration through professional learning communities, there were also gains in student learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010, p. 36).

Research also supports the idea that PLCs are powerful in schools because of their effect on teacher efficacy. In What’s Worth Fighting For? Working Together for Your School, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) discussed the impact collaborative efforts such as PLCs make on teachers and therefore schools. They found that teachers in schools with strong collaboration exhibited more confidence and a stronger desire to improve consistently than in schools with weaker collaboration (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 46), which further supports the need for professional learning communities in schools, particularly if a school is seeking a strong, positive, and collaborative culture.

**The Relationship between PLCs and School Culture**

This study seeks to examine how professional learning communities might positively shift a school culture to become more collaborative. In their work A Shift in School Culture: Collective commitments focus on change that benefits student learning, Eaker and Keating (2008) noted that, “collaboratively developed shared values and commitments can be a powerful tool for shaping school culture (p. 15). Although it may be difficult to develop an effective process for creating those shared commitments in schools without the structure for collaboration, “there is ample evidence to support organizing teachers into high-performing, collaborative teams. A teacher's world can change when the school shifts from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration,” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 17).

Providing the structure of small professional learning communities within a school can be one practice used to shift a school toward this collaborative culture by
altering the previously accepted norms and behaviors of teachers embedded in a fragmented and balkanized culture of isolation. Eaker and Keating addressed the challenge of shifting school culture from the perspective of trying to persuade teachers to behave in new ways, but maintain that engaging all teachers in a PLC process to discuss and adopt shared values can be a powerful tool for shaping school culture (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 15). In *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Dufour and Eaker (1998) noted that, “another strategy for shaping school culture is to bring teachers together on a regular basis to engage in reflective discussions on the practices in their schools and classrooms and to evaluate new concepts and ideas that bear upon those practices,” (p. 134). Eaker, DuFour and DuFour (2002), in their work in *Getting Started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities*, stated “schools that function as professional learning communities are always characterized by a collaborative culture. Teacher isolation is replaced with collaborative processes that are deeply embedded into the daily life of the school,” (p. 5), making the implementation of PLCs a strong strategy for shifting school culture.

Additionally, when a school’s culture is characterized by isolation and a lack of reflective practice, developing a PLC process can set a school on the path to systematic improvement. “A professional learning community will be attentive both to structure and to culture in its effort to create the best climate for improvement,” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 147). Dufour and his colleagues asserted in *Learning By Doing: a handbook for professional learning communities at work* that:

When the fundamental structure of the organization is the collaborative team, when time for
collaboration is built in the weekly schedule, and when the team members work in close proximity
to one another, they are far more likely to collaborate and take collective responsibility for student learning. (Dufour et al, 2016, p. 218).

Professional learning communities, thus, may serve as the foundation for a strong collaborative culture that ultimately leads to school improvement.

**The role of school leaders in PLCs**

Another aim of this study was to examine how school leaders’ roles in implementing the PLC process impacted school culture. While the purpose and goal of PLCs is to build collegiality among teachers, the role of school leadership in professional learning communities, particularly in the implementation phase, is also important. As Fullan and Hargreaves discussed, “the principal’s role as the supporter and promoter of interactive professionalism is essential,” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 98).

In the case of this study, which examines how implementation of PLCs might shift school culture, previous literature supports the premise that leaders “are uniquely situated to change the culture of their schools,” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 97). However, simply creating the teams and setting up the logistics for job-embedded PLC time may not be enough. “The challenge facing leaders in this area is not in creating the teams, but rather in providing the focus, time, support, and parameters critical to effective teamwork,” (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002, p. 40). The parameters mentioned in the research may be critically important in assessing a school leader’s impact on culture through professional learning communities, particularly the parameters and expectations
around communication. In *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*, the authors emphasized that school leaders must be cognizant that their words and actions around PLC implementation and expectations are parallel (Dufour et al, 2016, p. 14-15). Thus, the model for the collegial and collaborative culture of PLCs is first modeled by school leaders. Some research even suggests that school leadership can influence major shifts, both positive and negative in school culture through the PLC process. “Similarly, the roles of principals are key. We’ve seen really vital professional learning communities just completely evaporate with the change of the principal, who didn’t share the importance of collectivity,” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010, p. 39). A focus on collaborative collegiality appears to be key in order for leadership to make positive impacts through PLCs and ultimately on school culture.
Chapter Three

Method

The explanation of the purpose of this study as well as an overview of the tools used for data collection and analysis are present in this section.

Purpose

The purpose of this action research was to effectively measure and evaluate the extent to which implementing professional learning communities in a high school setting can shift the school toward a more collaborative culture. In addition, the study will help school leadership analyze their role in designing and implementing PLCs so that they might make informed decisions regarding PLCs for collaborative school culture and improvement in the future.

Participants

Participants in this study were the certified teachers at Hancock County High School. The school is the only high school in the small, rural, district in Northwestern Kentucky. The average student population in the last ten years has been 515 students. The school has less than a 3% minority population. In the last six years, the percentage of students at-risk because of economic factors has increased from 36% to 54%; this a community-wide trend. Currently, 66% of students who graduate from Hancock County High School report the intention to enroll in post-secondary education programs, yet only 33% of those students remain enrolled at their original institution after one year. The community is a small manufacturing and agriculture community; however, 72% of the jobs in the community are held by persons living outside the community, which contributes to rising poverty rate, which is currently at 17% even though the
unemployment rate is 4.2%. Less than 8% of the community hold an education credential above an associate’s degree. The faculty of the school is comprised of 34 certified teachers, ranging in teaching experience from one to 28 years. Currently, 47% hold a master’s degree in a field related to teaching and learning, 24% have earned the state recognized Rank I certificate, and one faculty member has earned National Board Certification, with three other faculty members currently pursuing the same certification, a professional growth experience they started after this research study began.

Furthermore, 71% of the faculty reside in the school district, 41% are alumni of the school, and 76% of the faculty have worked at Hancock County High School for the entirety of their career. Before this research study, the faculty had never participated in professional learning communities, nor had they ever experienced a schedule in which teachers within the same content departments shared a common planning time for collaboration. The researcher is the principal of the school. Prior to her arrival 3 years before the study began, the faculty worked under principals who led the school for more than a decade each, with the most recent principal serving 12 years, as well as an additional Assistant Principal with a 3-year tenure. With the permission of the Superintendent of the district and approval of a new master schedule by the school’s Site Based Decision Making Council, the participants in the study had the opportunity to begin a weekly PLC process during their common planning times using the principles and protocols outlined in Dufour’s *Professional Learning Communities that Work* (Dufour, 1998).
Participant Consent

The researcher created a consent form for the certified faculty. All faculty members read and signed the form prior to their participating in the study. The researcher also obtained written permission from the Superintendent to conduct the study.

Timeline

The research was conducted weekly during the specified common planning times set aside by school leadership for a period of one school year, beginning the first full week of instruction, and ending two weeks prior to the last day of school. Teachers met in PLCs using the Improving Teaching and Learning (ITL) protocol (Appendix C), adapted from the process outlined in *PLCs that Work* (1998). Before beginning the PLC process, faculty members engaged in the School Culture Triage and Level 1 High Reliability Schools surveys to evaluate school culture. At the end of the study, participants took the same surveys; a random sample of faculty was also selected to participate in focus group questions using the *Learning by Doing* (2016) rubric to gather further faculty perspective on the impact school leaders make in the PLC process. The pre and post PLC data were collected and reviewed to evaluate the impact PLCs had on the school culture.

Process

In order to implement PLCs in Hancock County High School and collect data related to school culture, the master schedule of the school had to be adjusted from a six period day (4 traditional, “skinny,” fifty-six minute classes; two in the morning and two in the afternoon, and two block courses at eighty-five minutes each in the middle of the day that changed after Winter Break) to a seven period day (only 1 block course during the day remains) Each class is now forty-eight minutes, with one eighty-five minute
block in the middle of the school day. This accommodated each content area department in the school with one common planning time to allow blocks of time for job-embedded PLCs.

The leadership of the school planned, designed, and assisted in implementation of PLCs for teachers. A schedule for PLC meetings was developed, as well as a beginning structure to the meetings that followed the guidelines suggested in *Professional Communities that Work* (Dufour, 1993, p. 106-114). The primary focuses in the beginning of PLC implementation was consistency in meeting together, facilitating student-centered conversation, and improving effective classroom instruction through collaboration. School leaders facilitated the first several PLC meetings to support the norms of the protocol and guide conversations toward a student-centered, instructional focus, as the faculty had never been a part of PLCs in the past; school leaders prioritized PLCs and were in attendance in all PLCs throughout the year to support teachers as needs arise.

The *Improving Teaching and Learning* template created by the school leadership was utilized in each PLC to drive conversation, work, and focus as well as serving as a qualitative data tool to structure the beginning stages of PLCs. Changes in the PLC structure and process were a direct effect of the notes and conversations reflected on this template, such as the early addition of assessment discussion in two of the PLCs based on teacher need.

**Data Collection Tools**

Initial baseline data were collected through surveys administered to the faculty before implementing the PLC process. The researcher administered both the *School*
Culture Triage Survey (Phillips & Wagner, 2003) and the High Reliability Schools, Level 1 Indicators Staff Survey (Marzano, Warrick, and Simms, 2014, p. 17-19). Both surveys were administered using Google forms by sending a link to teacher emails. The School Culture Triage Survey (Phillips & Wagner, 2003) consists of seventeen questions on a Likert Scale. Participants choose a range of answers from 1 (never) to 5 (always), and the questions are sub-headed into the following categories: collaboration, collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. For the Level 1 Indicators Staff Survey, participants also respond on a Likert Scale ranking 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and also including a “not applicable” option. The indicators in the Level 1 survey used for this study include statements related to two main indicators: Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives, and Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.

The teacher groups used the Improving Teaching & Learning Protocol (Appendix D) to record notes about their conversations and work around the parameters and norms created by school leadership. Together, teachers noted student concerns, notes about discussion they had regarding instructional strategy, resources or ideas they committed to researching before the next meeting, as well as a general space to notes needs or questions from school leaders.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected responses from the surveys, followed by the implementation of PLCs approximately two weeks later. Each PLC met weekly. Anecdotal evidence was collected from the groups using the ITL (Improving Teaching &
Learning) Protocol (Appendix D) throughout the school year. The data collection tools were used to establish data regarding the perception of school culture and level of collaboration at least two points during the process of PLC implementation in order to draw conclusions about the level of positive effects. Two weeks before the end of the instructional year, faculty members took the same surveys for the second data point. The use of Google Forms to collect the survey data allowed for calculation and organization of the data in a Google sheet so that tabulation of average responses among participants could be tabulated with little room for human error.

The documents and artifacts from the beginning of the PLC implementation were compared to parallel documents and artifacts after implementing the PLC protocols and process over the course of several months. Qualitative comparisons were drawn based on the quality of those documents and artifacts to help draw conclusions about the impact of the PLC process. The researcher noted patterns in the artifacts as the PLCs progressed throughout the year; for example, groups noted many complaints about individual students at the onset of PLCs, yet as the PLCs continued, a pattern of concern for students needs and intervention began to emerge. These instruments and how they evolved over the course of the year helped determine the impact on classrooms and teacher efficacy. The rubric for effective communication, completed by a random sampling of teachers across all PLCs, helped assess the communication component of leadership in relation to implementing PLCs, and suggested next steps to continue positive communication in the process.

Additionally, the data collected from surveys and interviews directly related to PLCs and drawn from Learning by Doing (DuFour) and the High Reliability Schools
Level 1 Leading Indicators Survey for staff (Appendix B) were paired against the surveys and interviews conducted regarding the current state of school culture to help draw qualitative conclusions regarding the impact PLCs have had on the school culture since first implementing PLCs. If the PLC process has made a positive impact on school culture, the surveys should illustrate positive attitudes about PLCs as well as results on the surveys and interviews that indicate a more collaborative school culture on the school culture surveys as compared to the results from the school improvement planning needs assessment conducted early in the PLC implementation process. The data collected helped determine the extent to which implementation of PLCs positively or negatively impacted the school culture and whether or not school leadership played a positive and supportive role in the process.

**Focus Group**

A focus group was conducted on the same timeline as the surveys. A sample of eight teachers (one representing each content department) were asked to review the *The PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively* rubric (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 16-17), located in Appendix C, and rate school leaders on the rubric on the scale from *pre-initiating* through *sustaining*. Each PLC was content specific, and the researcher asked the leader of each group, the department chair, to participate in providing feedback specific to the impact of school leaders, because in addition to participate in the PLCs during implementation, the department chairs also attending leadership team meetings with school leaders during which planning and discussion for the PLC process took place. They were also invited to share a rationale for their rating. The same process was conducted at the end of the 32 week PLC implementation, and the responses were
compared for a qualitative analysis. The invitation to participate, along with the rubric, and responses will be collected through email communication.

Analysis

For each question to which participants respond, an average was calculated, both for the pre-implementation survey and the post implementation survey. The averages for each were then compared to analyze differences between perception before and after PLC implementation to determine if shifts in the culture occur and whether those shifts are positive or negative. Focus group responses were entered into a table and the pre-implementation and post-implementation responses were coded differently in order to more accurately gauge if perceptions about leadership communication and culture have shifted across the rubric.
Chapter Four

Results

The data collected from this case study will be used by school administration to measure the effectiveness of utilizing the implementation of professional learning communities to shift school culture toward a more collaborative and collegial culture at Hancock County High School. Leaders will also be able to evaluate their role in PLCs in relation to collaboration and collegiality among staff. Furthermore, this data will serve as a tool to review and revise the strategic plan in place to improve PLCs, school culture, and collegiality and efficacy of staff.

Baseline data were collected from the teachers at Hancock County High School before the PLC process was introduced and implemented on both the School Culture Triage Survey and the High Reliability Schools Level 1 Leading Indicators for Staff Survey. The researcher administered the surveys and rubric prior to discussions with staff regarding the implementation of professional learning communities. Thirty-five teachers participated in the pre-implementation surveys, which was a 100% response rate. Teachers were sent the survey through an email link and chose to complete the survey at the end of a teacher meeting before PLC implementation. The PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively rubric (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 16-17) in Appendix D for the focus group was sent to eight teachers and six teachers responded for a response rate of 75%.

The baseline data from the surveys and rubric before PLC implementation are in Tables 1-3 below.
## School Culture Triage Survey Baseline

Data represents average responses in each category as well as the overall score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2 - Rarely</th>
<th>3 - Sometimes</th>
<th>4 - Often</th>
<th>5 - Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.</td>
<td>It is clear which types of decisions will be made with direct teacher input.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic tools (for example, online survey tools) are used to collect teachers' opinions regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groups of teachers are targeted to provide input regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.</td>
<td>A PLC process is in place in our school.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school's PLC collaborative teams have written goals.</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school's PLC collaboratively create common assessments.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school's PLC collaborative teams analyze student achievement and growth.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data teams are in place in our school.</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school's data teams have written goals.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders regularly examine data teams' progress toward goals.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders collect and review minutes and notes from PLC collaborative team and data team meetings to ensure that teams are focusing on student achievement.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
HRS Level 1 Longform Indicators Baseline

Data represents average of the responses for each indicator.

1: Strongly disagree  
2: Disagree  
3: Neither disagree nor agree  
4: Agree  
5: Strongly agree  
N: N/A or don’t know

Table 2

PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively

Data represents the number of participants in the focus group rating the indicators at each level. An “X” represents a participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Implementing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The school has established a clear purpose and priorities that have been effectively communicated. Systems are in place to ensure action steps aligned with the purpose and priorities are implemented and monitored.</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The leaders in the school communicate purpose and priorities through modeling, allocation of resources, what they celebrate, and what they are willing to confront.</strong></td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Over the next 32 instructional weeks, school leaders implemented content specific professional learning communities with teachers. Each week, teachers met during their common planning time to engage in PLC work. School leaders met with all PLCs weekly throughout implementation, and collected artifacts from PLCs as evidence of the
processes and work in which teachers were engaging. These artifacts included the Improving Teaching & Learning form developed by school leaders. At the end of the school year, after more than 32 PLC meetings, the researcher again administered the same surveys and communication rubric to staff to measure the impacts made by PLCs. Ninety percent of the faculty chose to participate in the post-implementation survey which was again administered through Google forms using an email link. Tables 4 - 6 show the side-by-side data from the pre-implementation data and post-implementation surveys.

School Culture Triage Survey Pre and Post Results

Data represents average responses in each category as well as the overall score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional Collaboration</th>
<th>Affiliative Collegiality</th>
<th>Self Efficacy/Determination</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to PLC Implementation</td>
<td>17.43</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>22.81</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 32+ PLC meetings</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>20.88</td>
<td>21.63</td>
<td>60.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Change</td>
<td>+0.95</td>
<td>+0.12</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
### HRS Level 1 Longform Indicators Pre and Post Results

Data represents average of the responses for each indicator and the rate of change of each indicator.

1: Strongly disagree  2: Disagree  3: Neither disagree nor agree  4: Agree  5: Strongly agree  N: N/A or don’t know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.3 Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.</th>
<th>It is clear which types of decisions will be made with direct teacher input.</th>
<th>3.33</th>
<th>3.38</th>
<th>+0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>+0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>+0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic tools (for example, online survey tools) are used to collect teachers’ opinions regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>+0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groups of teachers are targeted to provide input regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>+0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4 Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.</th>
<th>A PLC process is in place in our school.</th>
<th>4.37</th>
<th>4.62</th>
<th>+0.25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school’s PLC collaborative teams have written goals.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams’ progress toward their goals.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school’s PLC collaboratively create common assessments.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>+0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school’s PLC collaborative teams analyze student achievement and growth.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data teams are in place in our school.</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>+0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our school’s data teams have written goals.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>+1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders regularly examine data teams’ progress toward goals.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>+0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders collect and review minutes and notes from PLC collaborative team and data team meetings to ensure that teams are focusing on student achievement.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>+0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5**
PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively Pre and Post Results

Data represents the number of participants in the focus group rating the indicators at each level. An “X” represents a participant’s response for baseline data. A “Y” represents a participant’s response in the post-implementation data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Implementation</th>
<th>Post Implementation</th>
<th>Pre-Implementation</th>
<th>Post Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-initiating</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>YYY</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>YY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>YYY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YYYY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Research Question 1

The data analysis for research question 1 focused on how the implementation of professional learning communities impacted the culture at Hancock County High School. The School Culture Triage Survey and indicator 1.4 of the High Reliability Schools Level 1 Leading Indicators for Staff focused on this question.

Overall, on the School Culture Triage survey, the pre-implementation score was a 61, which falls in the score range of 60-75, and is described on the survey as monitor and maintain making positive adjustments. The post-implementation score average was 60.67, which is a -0.33 difference, and falls into the same score range as the pre-implementation average. When examined as subcategories, the average score for Professional Collaboration increased 0.95 from pre-implementation to post-implementation. Table 7 illustrates the average ratings of the descriptors within the professional collaboration.

[continued...]

24
subcategory. The greatest rate of change occurred in the descriptor, “teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule,” although the score stayed within the *sometimes* rating score of three. The descriptor, “teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues, increased 0.45 from 3.86 to 4.31, moving the average rating from *sometimes* to *often*.

**Professional Collaboration Pre and Post Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2 - Rarely</th>
<th>3 - Sometimes</th>
<th>4 - Often</th>
<th>5 - Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to PLC Implementation</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 32 Weeks of PLC implementation</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Change</td>
<td>+0.45</td>
<td>+0.53</td>
<td>+0.39</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

The descriptors in the subcategory of affiliative collegiality, or how teachers perceive the extent to which they communicate, collaborate, and celebrate with one another, are shown in Table 8. Four of the six descriptors shows a negative change from pre-implementation to post-implementation in the average ratings, but remain within the *sometimes* rating. One descriptor, “teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of school to enjoy each other’s company,” produced a 0.43 change, moving the rating from 2.57, *rarely*, to 3.00, *sometimes*. 
**Affiliative Collegiality Pre and Post Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate of Change</th>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2 - Rarely</th>
<th>3 - Sometimes</th>
<th>4 - Often</th>
<th>5 - Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to PLC Implementation</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 32 Weeks of PLC Implementation</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Change</td>
<td>+0.11</td>
<td>+0.43</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

The rates of change in *Self-Efficacy/Determination* were mostly negative as seen in Table 9. As with most of the other descriptors in the previous categories, the average ratings did not change from pre-implementation to post-implementation. There were only slight changes, the greatest of which being, “members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done,” beginning at 3.86 and in the post-implementation survey, receiving an average rating of -0.48.
Self-Efficacy/Determination Pre and Post Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 - Never</th>
<th>2 - Rarely</th>
<th>3 - Sometimes</th>
<th>4 - Often</th>
<th>5 - Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When something is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not working in our</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school, the faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and staff predict</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and prevent rather</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>than react and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repair.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School members are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interdependent and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value each other.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of our</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seek alternatives</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to problems/issue</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>s rather than</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repeating what we</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have always done.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of our</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seek to define</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the problem/issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>s rather than</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blame others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school staff is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empowered to make</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decisions rather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than waiting for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervisors to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell them what</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People work here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because they enjoy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and choose to be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to PLC</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 32 Weeks of</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Change</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

The descriptors for indicator 1.4 of the *High Reliability Schools Level 1 Leading Indicators Survey for Staff* also contribute to research question 1. The comparison of the average rating from pre-implementation to post-implementation is shown in Table 5. Six of the nine descriptors exhibited positive change, and five moved up on the Likert scale. The most significant change occurred in the descriptor, “Our school’s data teams have written goals,” with a change of 1.10, and moving from a 2 - disagree to a 3.10 - neither disagree nor agree. The most negative change, -0.35 occurred in the descriptor, “our school’s PLC collaborative teams have written goals,” moving from 3.97 to 3.62, both still in the neither disagree nor agree rating. Overall, most of the descriptors, in the post-implementation survey, produced average ratings in the 3 rating, neither disagree nor
agree. The first descriptor, “a PLC process is in place in our school,” was rated a 4-agree, and that rating did not change from pre-implementation.

Research Question 2

Data analysis for research question 2 focused on evaluating the degree to which the roles of school leaders impacted the school culture through the PLC implementation process. Ratings from indicator 1.3 and the accompanying descriptors, along with a few of the descriptors of indicator 1.4 from the High Reliability Schools Leading Indicators Survey for Staff along with the data collected from the focus group using the PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively rubric correlate to research question 2.

The indicators and descriptors, with accompanying average ratings, from the High Reliability School survey are shown in Figure 5. Indicator 1.3, “Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives,” directly connects to the role of school leaders as the descriptors ask participants to rate the extent of ownership they are provided by leaders as part of the collaborative PLC process. Of five descriptors in this indicator, all resulted in increased average ratings, although none were statistically significant, with the greatest rate of change being 0.59 for “Notes and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions.” This particular descriptor did move from a rating of 2-disagree to a 3-neither disagree nor agree. “Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis,” was another descriptor and increased on the Likert scale from neither disagree nor agree to agree. All other descriptors remained in the 3-neither disagree nor agree rating.
Three descriptors in indicator 1.4, “Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students,” also provide data for research question 2. “School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals,” resulted in an average rating change of -0.04, and remained in the 3- *neither disagree nor agree* rating. A 0.89 average change was observed for the descriptor, “School leaders regularly examine data teams' progress toward goals,” moving from a 2-disagree to a 3- *neither disagree nor agree*. Similarly, “School leaders collect and review minutes and notes from PLC collaborative team and data team meetings to ensure that teams are focusing on student achievement,” moved from a 2.67 to 3.52 average rating, again shifting on the Likert scale to an increased rating.

Further, the participants in the focus group reported on the *PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively* (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 16-17) rubric (Appendix C) and were asked to provide their reasoning for their ratings. The pre and post-implementation data is shown in Table 6. There are two indicators on the rubric. The first, “The school has established a clear purpose and priorities that have been effectively communicated. Systems are in place to ensure action steps aligned with the purpose and priorities are implemented and monitored,” correlates to how school leaders communicate and monitor systems and priorities. Of the six participants who responded before implementation, four rated this indicator as “Initiating - Key leaders may have reached agreement on general purpose and priorities, but people throughout the organization remain unclear. Furthermore, if asked to explain the priorities of the school or the strategies to achieve those priorities, leaders would have difficulty articulating
specifics. Staff members would offer very different answers if pressed to explain the
priorities of the school.” Post-implementation data, represented by a “Y” in Table 6,
shows three of the participants rating the indicator as “Implementing - There is a general
understanding of the purpose and priorities of the school, but many staff members have
not embraced them. Specific steps are being taken to advance the priorities, but some
staff members are participating only grudgingly. Fifty percent view the initiative as
interfering with their real work,” and 50% rated the indicator as “Developing - Structures
and processes have been altered to align with the purpose and priorities. Staff members
are beginning to see benefits from the initiative and are seeking ways to become more
effective in implementing it.” This data suggests a significant shift in the perception of
school leaders’ impact.

The second indicator resulted in a similar data trend. “The leaders in the school
communicate purpose and priorities through modeling, allocation of resources, what they
celebrate, and what they are willing to confront,” was rated in pre-implementation by
50% of participants as “Initiating - Leaders can articulate the purpose and priorities of the
school with a consistent voice, but their behavior is not congruent with their words. The
structures, resources, and rewards of the school have not been altered to align with the
professed priorities.” Thirty-three percent rated the indicator as “pre-initiating.” Post-
implementation data resulted in a shift of 66% of participants reporting a rating of
“Developing - People throughout the school are changing their behavior to align with the
priorities. They are seeking new strategies for using resources more effectively to support
the initiative, and are willing to reallocate time, money, materials, and people in order to
move forward. Small improvements are recognized and celebrated. Leaders confront
incongruent behavior,” and the remaining participants giving a rating of “implementing.” These qualitative results indicate a shift of an average of two levels on the rubric.

Focus group participants were also given the opportunity to explain their ratings on the rubric, and they responded via email. Three of the six participants chose to offer explanations. Participant 1, who rated both indicators as “initiating,” before implementation, and indicator 1 as “implementing,” and indicator 2 as “developing,” wrote, “School leaders have provided consistent guidance in PLC sessions toward student success and teacher balance. Leaders have maintained a variety of agendas that address school culture, curriculum, and student success. Moving forward, leaders could provide PD style sessions for curriculum development or possibly set up peer observations and mutual mentor programs.” Participant 2 also rated the indicators as “initiating,” before implementation, and rated both indicators as “developing,” on the post-implementation rubric. This teacher said:

School leadership has impacted my classroom because they are involved with PLCs and typically lead the discussions. Communication has improved since we receive information straight from leadership in a timely manner. PLCs have positively impacted the professional culture in our building because we are all held to the same standards and equally informed of those standards. Overall, PLCs provide a time for deep collaboration amongst departments which greatly impact instruction and professional growth.

(Focus Group Participant 2)
The third participant who chose to offer an explanation gave a pre-implementation rating of “implementing” for both indicators, and a rating of “developing” in post-implementation. Participant 3 stated:

Most of us see administration and the PLC movement as beneficial. However, teachers submitted to modifying control of how their classrooms operate and now feel overrun with students abusing privileges. A common feeling is there is so much to do few things are done well. From the perspective of teachers: School leadership is making it a priority to ‘give students what they want,’ but it seems too much too soon. Weekly round table discussions have impacted my teaching but not as much as quietly sifting through data and making changes accordingly. (Focus Group Participant 3)

With less than half of the participants in the focus group choosing to offer a rationale for their ratings, these data points are limited, but may be beneficial to school leaders moving forward in the PLC process, as well as for developing further study and questions on the topic.
Chapter 5

Discussion

This study was conducted in order to evaluate the extent to which implementation of professional learning communities could positively impact school culture, as well as to measure how school leaders impacted the culture through involvement in PLCs. Hancock County High School underwent a leadership change very suddenly in August 2016 after having had the same principal for twelve years, and previous to that, a school leader with a tenure of more than fifteen years. School leadership is “uniquely situated to change the culture of their schools,” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 97), and implementing a professional learning communities model can be a strong strategy to produce a collaborative culture among faculty, (Eaker & Keating, 2008, p. 15). All certified faculty at the school were selected to participate in the study and 100% consented to be part of the study, although only 90% participated in the post-implementation survey. Prior to beginning the study or implementing PLCs, the faculty at Hancock County High School had never been given any formal time to collaborate or practice collegiality. Discussions around student needs, instructional practices, assessment, planning, or preparation were relegated to informal conversations among small pockets of effective practitioners, with more than 70% of the faculty never engaging in these conversations. Previous to the current school leadership and this study involving PLC implementation, the faculty had never participated in a professional learning community model.

The overall data suggests little to no change in the school culture through implementing the PLC model at Hancock County High School. The pre-implementation score on the School Culture Triage survey was an average of 61 from all participant
which falls in a good range, 60-74 on the scale, which suggests only monitoring is needed. The post-implementation score actually declined to 60.67; however, this still falls within the 60-74 range. The indicators and descriptors from the HRS survey also show little to no change from pre-implementation to post-implementation.

The absence of any dramatic shift on any of the surveys suggests little to no change perceived by the faculty. The reporting indicators for the roles of school leaders show similar results, except for the focus group responses. Those participants responding to *The PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively* rubric (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 16-17) report a shift of at least one rating for indicator 1 and two ratings for indicator 2; however, only 75% of the invited focus group responding and only provides qualitative data.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question sought to determine whether implementing a PLC process at Hancock County High School would shift the culture to a more positive, collaborative culture. Ultimately, this question cannot be accurately answered using the data analyzed, because of a strongly balkanized school culture prior to PLC implementation. Fullan and Hargreaves defined balkanization as “a culture of separate and sometimes competing groups, jockeying for position and supremacy,” and went on to discuss that balkanized cultures can also be characterized by a fear of accurately reporting the challenges in a school or giving honest feedback (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 66). Responses from the pre-implementation surveys pointed to a significant concern to the researcher in that faculty were reporting collaboration and PLC work that had never occurred at Hancock County High School. Table 10 illustrates the indicators on
which teachers inaccurately reported collaboration through PLCs, which lead the researcher to recognize that the culture of the school before PLCs was indeed balkanized due to the limited collaboration among small subgroups of faculty, and the hesitance to accurately respond when asked to give feedback even when reassured that it was vitally important to respond accurately.

**HRS Level 1 Indicator 1.4 Pre-Implementation**

According the directions given in the surveys, the following rating scale should be used:

1: Strongly disagree  
2: Disagree  
3: Neither disagree nor agree  
4: Agree  
5: Strongly agree  
N: N/A or don’t know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>A PLC process is in place in our school.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>Our school's PLC collaborative teams have written goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

Noting the descriptors in Table 10, faculty on average had reported very high ratings for a PLC process that did not, in fact, exist. Additionally, on the *School Culture Triage Survey*, under the sub-category of Professional Collaboration, the average score was 17.43 out of 25, meaning faculty on average, rated the indicators in this category between a three and a four, when, in the absence of any formal collaboration, one would predict ratings between a 1 and 2. Even further evidence of the struggling culture before PLC implementation is the fact that 85% of participants rated the first indicator, “Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues,” as a 4 or 5 on the Likert
scale. Seventy percent reported a 4 or a 5 for the indicator, “The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals,” which is something that had never occurred in the history of the school, more than 40 years. This suggests that faculty may have been afraid of additional expectations and work load, again lending to the balkanized culture, possibly even hinging on toxicity at the outset of the PLC process. As can been seen in Figures 5-9, all average ratings for both the School Culture Triage Survey and the HRS Level 1 Leading Indicators Survey for staff were higher than expected given the absences of any formal process before this study.

Post-implementation results on the surveys raise more questions than assist in drawing conclusions for this research question. While not statistically significant, fourteen indicators and descriptors illustrate a negative change in the average ratings given by participants. For example, the descriptor for indicator 1.3, “Our school’s PLC collaborative teams have written goals,” received an average rating of 3.97, very close to 4-agree before PLC implementation, and decreased to 3.62 after implementation. The post-implementation rating is likely most accurate as goals for PLCs were communicated by school leaders weekly throughout the implementation process, but PLCs had not yet moved to developing their own goals; yet, the pre-implementation rating of near a 4-agree is completely inaccurate. This suggests a strong perception among faculty before PLC implementation that they were in fact engaging in behaviors and practices when they were not - lending to the conclusion that before PLC implementation, the faculty truly did not know what professional learning communities were, or why they were necessary to a successful school.
This assumption could also account for the changes in the ratings under the subcategory of Self-Efficacy/Determination on the School Culture Triage Survey shown in Figure 9. This illustrates that five of the six indicators in this category presented a negative change in the average ratings. One particularly interesting indicator with negative change was “members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.” In pre-implementation, the 3.86 average rating was close to an “agree,” rating, and at post-implementation, dropped 0.48 to a 3.38 rating, in the “neither disagree nor agree,” rating. Through the PLC implementation process, teachers shared new instructional strategies and discussed the results of those strategies in relation to student performance. They engaged in discussions about new strategies and tasks that were helping students and were encouraged to try new practices and bring back results to their PLCs. They had never engaged in this systematic approach before, which raises questions about previous perceptions of their teacher efficacy. Perhaps teachers felt more efficacy before the PLC process because they were ignorant of ineffective versus effective practices and throughout the process have come to feel less efficacy than they originally perceived.

It is also important to note that in relation to this particular research question, factors outside the parameters of the study may have impacted participants’ responses to the post-implementation surveys. During the sixteenth week of the study, school leaders met with staff, discussed the current vision for the school, set further instructional expectations, and implemented a new informal observational tool to gather instructional data and provide individual teacher feedback. Then, approximately four weeks before the post-implementation survey, the faculty met to review the progress of data collected from
the informal observational tools, including classroom expectations that were not being met. Additionally, poor student achievement data was confronted at that time. Therefore, lowered morale following this discussion may have contributed to the responses on the post-implementation surveys producing the slight negative changes in the ratings from the surveys.

Participants responses seem to have become more honest and accurate in their perceptions of school culture, but due to such inaccurate beginning data, few conclusions can be drawn for this question, and further research may to be necessary to accurately determine whether implementation of the PLC process has shifted the school culture.

**Research Question 2**

This research question sought to evaluate how the role of school leaders in PLC implementation might impact the school culture. A school leader’s role in promoting professional collaboration is incredibly important (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 98). However, as noted above, few conclusions can be drawn as to the shift of school culture as the data suggests no shift occurred, although the pre-implementation data seems to be inaccurate, though possibly less so than the data related to research question 1.

Indicator 1.3 along with some descriptors from 1.4 of the HRS survey lent data to this question. The response trend for these descriptors fell within the 3, “neither disagree nor agree” rating for all except one descriptor, which seems consistent for a group of participants unfamiliar with the expectations of a PLC process. One descriptor, “Note and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions,” was rated 2.83, which falls into the “disagree” rating; thus, participants seemed to know this type of documentation was not present even if they were less sure of the other statements.
In the post-implementation surveys, all descriptors for indicator 1.3 show an increase, and although not statistically significant, the minor shift suggests some positive impact from leadership in the PLC process. “Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis,” increase 0.38 to an average rating of 4.05 which moved into the “agree” ranking. This is likely to the influx of surveys like those used in this study, as well as the informal feedback tools mentioned above.

Another description that increased 0.56 was “Groups of teachers are targeted to provide input regarding specific decisions,” but still remained in the 3 ranking. This might still represent a slight shift in how teachers perceive their thoughts and ideas are valued by school leadership. In indicator 1.4, for the descriptor, “School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals,” it is worth noting that the average rating dropped from 3.94 to 3.90. The pre-implementation average, while still in the 3 rating was very close to the 4 or agree rating, again noting that a PLC process had not been implemented. Thus, it is striking that in the post-implementation survey, the average essentially remained the same. This again raises questions about participants’ level of knowledge about PLCs, particularly effective PLCs, and how growing knowledge may have informed the post-implementation surveys to result in more accurate responses than the heavily skewed pre-implementation responses.

The focus group responses from the **PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively** rubric provide more clarity around this question. For both indicators, 50-75% of the participants who chose to respond to the rubric rated school leaders as “initiating” before PLC implementation and then two levels higher as “developing” in the post-implementation response. For the first indicator, “The school has established a clear
purpose and priorities that have been effectively communicated. Systems are in place to ensure action steps aligned with the purpose and priorities are implemented and monitored,” 33% of the responses were outliers, in “pre-initiating,” and “implementing,” with the higher rating of “implementing,” staying true to the pattern of higher than realistic ratings, but in this case, only one participant of six responded in that pattern. The same participant also rated the second indicator, “The leaders in the school communicate purpose priorities through modeling, allocation of resources, what they celebrate, and what they are willing to confront,” as “implementing,” while other participants chose “pre-initiating,” or “initiating.” It is important to note that Dufour and his colleagues emphasize that school leaders must exhibit parallel words, expectations, and actions during PLC implementation in order for the process to be successful (Dufour et al., 2016, p. 14-15), and the responses on this rubric seem congruent with school leaders providing communication and support that led teachers to perceive a positive shift, or a move up the scale as far as leadership is concerned. When the majority of respondents are reporting the “developing” stage, they are agreeing that “structures and processes have been altered to align with the purpose and priorities. Staff members are beginning to see benefits from the initiative and are seeking ways to become more effective in implementing it,” and “People throughout the school are changing their behavior to align with the priorities. They are seeking new strategies for using resources more effectively to support the initiative, and are willing to re-allocate time, money, materials, and people in order to move forward. Small improvements are recognized and celebrated. Leaders confront incongruent behavior.” The initiative in this case is the PLC process, and the specific behaviors are those related to professional collaboration. These descriptors suggest that
school leaders indeed made some impact through the PLC process to shift collaborative culture, even though teachers’ perceptions of their school culture do not seem to have been altered in a significant way. Because teachers in a balkanized culture traditionally do not accurately respond when asked about their own self-efficacy, it may be that they can accurately articulate the actions and behaviors of others. In other words, teachers may have accurate perceptions of school leaders even when they do not yet have the knowledge or experience to perceive their own actions and behaviors accurately. Then, as teachers learn and their knowledge of the PLC process increases, their perceptions may grow more accurate, both toward their own behaviors, and those of school leaders.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to show a positive impact and correlation between the implementation of professional learning communities and a collaborative and more positive school culture. While many of the individual indicators in the data show a positive rate of change, overall the growth or positive shift in school culture cannot be determined as significant, and in some instances, the data illustrates there has actually been some negative change, particularly in self-efficacy/determination. Participants consistently reported that school leadership has improved their role through the PLC process as evidenced in the communication rubric; a significant contributing factor of this data is likely the presence of school leaders in the PLCs during implementation as was noted by at least one participant when offered the opportunity to explain the rating. The PLCs created time for teachers to collaborate for the purposes of improving instruction and assessment, but the impact on the overall culture seems to have been minimal.
The data from this study indicates that the school culture at Hancock County High School continues to be balkanized and fragmented. While some data suggests marginal improvement in collaboration, overall the culture presents as unchanged. Much of this may be contributed to the inaccuracy of reporting in the pre-implementation survey; for example, faculty reported a PLC process at a high rating when in fact no PLC had even existed in the school. Further study and investigation into these facts might reveal that the faculty at Hancock County High School, because no member of the faculty had ever been involved in a PLC, did not have sufficient knowledge to accurately report data. Because of the negative state of the existing culture, fear of change may also have played a role in this inaccurate reporting.

This data will be used by school leaders to review and revise the PLC process to address the needs illustrated through the data, including providing faculty the opportunity to be less isolated in content area teams, which may be contributing to continued balkanization. There are several implications for future research, including the possibility of a study into the nature of faculty to inaccurately report pre-implementation data as well as continued misconceptions around developing effective professional learning communities to impact teaching and learning.
References


Appendix A

School Culture Triage Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring:</th>
<th>1 = Never</th>
<th>2 = Rarely</th>
<th>3 = Sometimes</th>
<th>4 = Often</th>
<th>5 = Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Collaboration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliative Collegiality</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school reflects a true &quot;sense&quot; of community.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Determination/Efficacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When something is not working in our school, the</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School members are interdependent and value each other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issues rather than blame others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring the School Culture Triage Survey**

17-40 Critical and immediate attention necessary

41-59 Modifications & Improvements are necessary

60-75 Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments

76-85 Amazing! We have never had a score higher than 75.
### HRS Level 1 Long-Form Leading Indicator Survey for Teachers and Staff

1: Strongly disagree  
2: Disagree  
3: Neither disagree nor agree  
4: Agree  
5: Strongly agree  
N: N/A or don’t know

#### 1.3 Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is clear which types of decisions will be made with direct teacher input.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Techniques and systems are in place to collect data and information from teachers on a regular basis.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes and reports exist documenting how teacher input was used to make specific decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic tools (for example, online survey tools) are used to collect teachers' opinions regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of teachers are targeted to provide input regarding specific decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1.4 Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A PLC process is in place in our school.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our school's PLC collaborative teams have written goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leaders regularly examine PLC collaborative teams' progress toward their goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school's PLC collaboratively create common assessments.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school's PLC collaborative teams analyze student achievement and growth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data teams are in place in our school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school's data teams have written goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leaders regularly examine data teams' progress toward goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leaders collect and review minutes and notes from PLC collaborative team and data team meetings to ensure that teams are focusing on student achievement.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

PLCs at Work Continuum: Communicating Effectively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-Initiating</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Implementing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The school has established a clear purpose and priorities that have been effectively communicated. Systems are in place to ensure action steps aligned with the purpose and priorities are implemented and monitored.</em></td>
<td>There is no sense of purpose or priorities. People throughout the school feel swamped by what they regard as a never-ending series or fragmented, disjointed, and short-lived improvement initiatives. Changes in leadership inevitably result in changes in direction.</td>
<td>Key leaders may have reached agreement on general purpose and priorities, but people throughout the organization remain unclear. Furthermore, if asked to explain the priorities of the school or the strategies to achieve those priorities, leaders would have difficulty articulating specifics. Staff members would offer very different answers if pressed to explain the priorities of the school.</td>
<td>There is general understanding of the purpose and priorities of the school, but many staff members have not embraced them. Specific steps are being taken to advance the priorities, but some staff members are participating only grudgingly. They view the initiative as interfering with their real work.</td>
<td>Structures and processes have been altered to align with the purpose and priorities. Staff members are beginning to see benefits from the initiative and are seeking ways to become more effective in implementing it.</td>
<td>There is almost universal understanding of the purpose and priorities of the school. All policies, procedures, and structures have been purposefully aligned with the effort to fulfill the purpose and accomplish the priorities. Systems have been created to gauge progress. The systems are carefully monitored, and the resulting information is used to make adjustments designed to build the collective capacity of the group to be successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The leaders in the school communicate purpose and priorities through modeling, allocation of resources, what they celebrate, and what they are</em></td>
<td>There is no sense of purpose and priorities. Different people in the school seem to have different pet projects, and there is considerable infighting to</td>
<td>Leaders can articulate the purpose and priorities of the school with a consistent voice, but their behavior is not congruent with their words. The structures,</td>
<td>The school has begun to alter the structures, resources, and rewards to better align with the state priorities. Staff members who openly oppose the</td>
<td>People throughout the school are changing their behavior to align with the priorities. They are seeking new strategies for using resources more effectively to support the</td>
<td>The purpose and priorities of the school are evident by the everyday behavior of people throughout the school. Time, money, materials, people, and resources have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
willing to confront. acquire the resources to support those different projects. resources, and rewards of the school have not been altered to align with the professed priorities. initiative may be confronted, but those confronting them are likely to explain they are doing someone else’s bidding. For example, a principal may say, “The central office is concerned that you are overtly resisting the process we are attempting to implement.” initiative, and are willing to reallocate time, money, materials, and people in order to move forward. Small improvements are recognized and celebrated. Leaders confront incongruent behavior. been strategically allocated to reflect priorities. Processes are in place to recognize and celebrate commitment to the priorities. People throughout the school will confront those who disregard the priorities.
Appendix D

Improving Teaching and Learning Meeting

Date: __________ Time: __________

Team ________________________________

Members present:

*Norm Reminder  *Purposeful Meeting  *Timer set (Values)

Promises to check on:  What should be seen in every classroom:

Group exploration and discovery notes:

*******************************************************************************

STUDENT awareness and needs:
Appendix E

July 20, 2018

To whom it may concern,

Currently, Ashley Gorman is serving as the Principal at Hancock County High School and is enrolled in courses at WKU. She has the permission of Hancock County Public Schools to use school and/or district data for her action research project toward the completion of Level 2 Programming. If you have any questions or feel the need to contact me personally, I can be reached at 270-927-6914.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kyle Estes,
Superintendent
Hancock County Schools
Appendix F

6. Refusal/Withdrawal:
   Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

   You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

   [Signature]
   [Date: 8/5/18]

   Witness

   [Signature]
   [Date: 8/5/18]

   THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD.

   Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
   TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

(Revised August 2017)
6. Refusal/Withdrawal:
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Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

(Revised August 2017)
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[Signature of Participant]

Date: [8-5-18]

Witness

Date: [8-5-18]

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Moore, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (859) 745-2129

(Revised August 2017)
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Signature of Participant: [Signature]

Date: 8-5-18

Witness: [Signature]

Date: [Signature]

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Fax: Mooney, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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Christina Hawkins
Signature of Participant

Witness

Date 8/15/18
Date 8/5/18

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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Cindy Harrison
Signature of Participant

Date 8-5-2018

Melanie Adams
Witness

Date 8-5-18

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[Signature]
Date 8-5-2018

Witness

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TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2139

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Date

Witness

Date

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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   Signature of Participant: __________________________  Date: 8-5-18

   Witness: __________________________  Date: 8-5-18

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129
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Signature of Participant

Date 6/5/18

Witness

Date 5/15/18

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THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3129

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[Signature of Participant]

[Signature of Witness]

[Date 8/5/15]

[Date 8/5/18]

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THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Moner, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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**Signature of Participant**

**Date:** 8/5/2018

**Witness**

**Date:** 8/5/2018

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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[Revision: August 2017]
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Signature of Participant

Witness

Date 8/5/2018

Date 8/5/2018

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Paul G. Moneer, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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   Signature of Participant
   Michele North 8-5-18
   Date

   Witness
   Susan Durley 8-5-18
   Date

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2199

(Revised August 2017)
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[Signature of Participant]
[Signature of Witness]
Date: 08/05/2018
Date: 08/05/2018

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
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Signature of Participant: [Signature]
Date: 8-5-2018

Witness: [Signature]
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Signature of Participant:

Date: 8/5/2018

Witness:

Date: 8/5/2018

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3129

(Revised August 2017)
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Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

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Signature of Participant

Witness

Date 5-5-18

Date 5-5-18

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Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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[Signature]

[Date]

Witness

[Signature]

[Date]

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Paul Moneary, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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Signature of Participant: [signature]
Date: [date]
Witness: [signature]
Date: [date]

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Signature of Participant 8/5/2018
Christina Hawkins
Witness 8/5/18
Date
Date

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[Signature of Participant]

[Signature of Witness]

Date: 8/5/19

Date: 8/5/19

(The Dated Approval on This Consent Form Indicates That This Project Has Been Reviewed and Approved By The Western Kentucky University Institutional Review Board. Paul Mooney, Human Protection Administrator Telephone: (270) 745-2129)

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[Signature]
Signature of Participant

[Signature]
Witness

8-5-18
Date

8-5-18
Date

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THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD:
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TELEPHONE: (279) 745-2129

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   Signature of Participant
   [Signature]

   Date: 8/5/10

   Witness
   [Signature]

   Date: 8/5/10

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   TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

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Signature of Participant: 

Emily Shaw 

Date: 

8/5/2018 

Witness: 

Elizabet Helm 

Date: 

3/5/2018 

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD. Paul Meany, Human Protections Administrator. TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2159
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[Signature]
Signature of Participant

[Signature]
Witness

[Signature]
Date

[Signature]
Date

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TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3126

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[Signature]
Witness

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Signature of Participant

Date 8-5-2018

[Signature]
Date 8/5/2018

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(Revised August 2017)
6. Refusal/Withdrawal:
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Signature of Participant

Witness

Date

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Meoney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

(Revised August 2017)