What is a “Professional Learning Community”?  
Richard DuFour Ed Leadership May 2004 Vol 61 Number 8 Schools as Learning Communities p. 6-11  

- A professional community of learners is one in which the teachers in the school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act upon what they learn.

- The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so students benefit.

Core Principals of Professional Learning Communities

1) *Ensure that each student learns*— (shift in focus from ensuring what taught)
   - 3 critical questions that drive the work of PLC’s
     - What do we want each student to learn?
     - How will we know when each student learned it?
     - How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
   - The answer to the third question separates learning communities from traditional schools.

2) *Culture of Collaboration*
   - systematic process working together to analyze and improve classroom practice
   - focused efforts on school improvement
   - crucial questions related to learning and generate products that reflect that focus (essential/target outcomes, different kinds of assessments, strategies for improving results)

3) *Focus on continual improvement and results*
   - PLC’s judge effectiveness on the basis of results
   - common formative assessments—student performance on skills compared with other students
   - takes persistence and commitment of staff
   - Professional Learning Communities are key to school improvement.

Why the Need for a Collaborative Culture

Throughout our 10 year study, whenever we found an effective school or an effective department within a school, without exception that school or department has been a part of a collaborative professional learning community.  
*Milbrey McLaughlin*

Improving schools require collaborative cultures…Without collaborative skills and relationships; it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as you need to know to improve.  
*Michael Fullan*
Creating a collaborative culture is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives and the first order of business for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their schools.  

*Eastwood and Lewis*

If schools want to enhance their capacity to boost student learning, they should work on building a collaborative culture… When groups, rather than individuals, are seen as the main units for implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they facilitate development of shared purposes for student learning and collective responsibility to achieve it.  

*Fred Newman*

Competence in a school is too often divided among different people. Teaching is regarded as an individual practice, which is in strong contrast to other professions. When a school achieves a balance between individual autonomy and collaborative work, it can harness all its intelligence, creativity, and leadership to solve problems and be successful.  

*Thomas Sergiovanni*

Competence in any organization can rarely be traced to a single individual. Organizational competence is the sum of everything everybody knows and used that leads to increased learning.  

*Wilkins*

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