



Superintendent's HOPE Note - November 2023

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.

— Robert Louis Stevenson

The Facilitator's Dilemma:

The Case for Professional Learning Communities

Four Critical Questions of Learning in a PLC at Work

First detailed in: DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R. & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

1. **What knowledge, skills and dispositions should students acquire as a result of this unit of instruction?**

Teachers work together to develop a guaranteed and viable curriculum that ensures all students have access to the same essential outcomes.

2. **How will we know when each student has learned the knowledge, skills and dispositions we identified as essential?**

Teachers work together to design common formative assessments that they can use to (1). Identify students in need of intervention/extension and (2). Identify and amplify highly effective instructional practices.

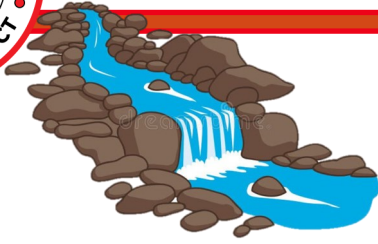
3. **How will we respond if students don't learn the knowledge, skills and dispositions we identified as essential?**

Teachers work together to plan and provide additional time and support to students who struggle to master essentials.

4. **How will we extend learning for students who are already proficient with the knowledge, skills and dispositions we identified as essential?**

Teachers work together to plan and provide rigorous opportunities to move beyond simple mastery of grade level essentials to students who are excelling.





Swimming Upstream

Dr. Rishi Manchanda, a physician and public health innovator, is known as a “upstreamist”. In his TED Talk entitled *What makes us sick? Look upstream*, Dr. Manchanda shares the parable in which three friends observe babies floating downstream in a river. The first friend immediately begins to grab the babies from the river, vowing to save those in immediate danger of going over a nearby waterfall. Despite this friend’s efforts, many babies continue to escape his grasp. The second friend weaves a network of branches to build a raft, pulling even more babies to safety but long term, still unable to pull every child from the rushing river. As the first two friends work feverishly to save precious lives, they look to their third friend to join their efforts, but soon find that she has left the area. Finally, they spot her swimming upstream and yell, “Hey, where are you going? We have lives to save here!”, to which the third friend replies, “I’m going upstream to find out who or what is throwing these babies into the water”.

For some, our learner-centered approach may bring the frustration felt by the first two friends when watching the third swim upstream as they scurried to pull children from the water. However, as Dr. Manchanda notes, we must look upstream to identify the core of the academic challenges within the district. In the spirit of full transparency, I know that there will be times when members of our team will long to seek refuge on the shore, exiting the river altogether.

Systems change is not for the faint of heart, and we have made some mistakes along the way! However, our motives are pure, and I have witnessed first-hand what this transformation can mean for learners when we stay the course and continue to learn from each other.

Piece of the Puzzle



Please join me in recognizing Mr. Brandon Popp at Thomas Holtzman Elementary as this month’s Piece of the Puzzle. Mr. Popp is a teacher leader, confidant, and coach for his peers as they navigate the new year. He has also been an advocate, helping to funnel necessary support to his fellow teachers and our learners. Thank you, Mr. Popp, for being an invaluable member of the Holtzman Team!