MENTORSHIP:
COULD IT BE THE KEY TO MAINTAINING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITY?

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ABSTRACT

Education is a profession which grows and changes with increasingly diversifying communities. Educators have experienced a long history of well-intentioned improvement efforts that have not had the opportunity to be institutionalized in their schools and this can lead teachers to believe that school improvement may be out of reach. With a backdrop of constantly changing initiatives and goals in schools, teachers have started to take charge of their own improvement and have gathered in communities that improve professional practice. One of these kinds of communities, simply titled a Professional Learning Community, has shown considerable effectiveness in improving teaching practice and maintaining changes. With so many well-documented benefits, school divisions have a desire for these communities but have not been able to foster them within their divisions. Therefore, this paper adds recommendations for schools and school divisions to incorporate a mentorship aspect to their induction programs which can help integrate newcomers into a community that already has established practices and norms of professional learning.

Key words: Professional Learning Community, Teacher Mentorship, Teacher Professional Development,
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DEDICATION

For the many people who helped guide me in this process, believed in me from the beginning, and found countless ways to support me in making this dream a realization. My loving wife, Shalene, whose patience and hard work continually inspires me, my colleagues whose wisdom and experiences continue to improve my ideas and my practice, and David Schuchardt who helped read and revise my work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is a Journey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is Complicated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is Necessary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Professional Learning Community</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures of Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE PROCESS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Initiation Phase of Cultural Change</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation Phase of Cultural Change</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Phase of Cultural Change</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization Phase of Cultural Change</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCING MENTORSHIP</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUSTAINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering Teacher Growth</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering Mentorship</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering Induction Programming</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering Monitoring of Program Efficacy</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is Possible</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: B (IF I SHOULD HAVE A DAUGHTER) POEM 59

APPENDIX B: CULTURAL SHIFTS FOR PLC SUCCESS 60

APPENDIX C: CONTINUUM OF TEACHING PRACTICE, SAMPLE 63

APPENDIX D: CALIFORNIA STANDARDS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION, SAMPLE 64
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHANGE

Change is a Journey

One need not look too far to find many who would agree that life is a complicated journey. Trying to navigate through life’s many stages alone is far more difficult than if the journey has companionship. What may even prove more helpful would be someone who has already gained experience and can help by providing vision and support, hints and tips for the journey to come. Sarah Kay (2015) wrote about one such support system in her poem which describes a heartfelt message from a mother to a daughter:

Instead of “Mom”, she’s gonna call me “Point B.” Because that way, she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me. And I’m going to paint the solar system on the back of her hands so that she has to learn the entire universe before she can say “Oh, I know that like the back of my hand.” (See Appendix A for complete poem).

Kay continues to describe many ways her future daughter, though she may feel prepared for this world, will experience struggle and heartbreak. Through life her mother will be the kind of support her daughter can seek refuge in, one that will guide her daughter as she has learned from her “momma” before. Though Kay is illuminating the relationship between a mother and daughter, her poem also provides rich insight into what a mentor-protégé relationship can look like: One in which a mentor brings new insights, shares visions, heals wounds, and helps the protégé realize their dreams for their lives.

I want her to see the world through the underside of a glass bottom boat, to look through a magnifying glass at the galaxies that exist on the pin point of a human mind. Because that’s how my mom taught me. That there’ll be days like this, “There’ll be days like this
my momma said” when you open your hands to catch and wind up with only blisters and bruises. When you step out of the phone booth and try to fly and the very people you wanna save are the ones standing on your cape. When your boots will fill with rain and you’ll be up to your knees in disappointment and those are the very days you have all the more reason to say “thank you,” ‘cause there is nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline no matter how many times it’s sent away. (Kay, 2015, p. 1)

As in life, the life of a teacher has many phases that can be overwhelming to navigate. With more than one stage of teaching described by several researchers as “survival,” it is becoming clearer that a support person is necessary to help teachers survive, particularly as they work toward moving from novice to expert (Bartell, 2005; Jones, 1996; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). One researcher even documented the lament of a first year teacher who ended up in an emergency room from the stress due to the demands of first-year teaching (Johnson, 2011). When a profession is characterized by surviving and stress, it can be daunting for any teacher to step foot into a classroom and begin their career as educator. It leads one to ask what is going on? Perhaps further: What needs to change to help employees navigate through the seemingly harsh reality of surviving into a career of success and expertise?

Change is Complicated

To begin, education is rife with elaborate and complex changes (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). New and experienced educators face contemporary and age-old problems that require expedient and complex solutions. These problems demand attention and can create an overwhelming workload for teachers which can cause feelings of loneliness, immense stress, and eventual burnout (Gold, 1996). Initiatives aimed at improving this situation
have run a gamut of changes such as new building layouts, new and creative programming, teacher accountability initiatives, government policies, alternative instruction practices, and the integration of many and more sophisticated technologies. These and many other change initiatives are instigated by a variety of factors such as ability, poverty, racial adversity, political agendas, and organizational aims (Gunn, Pomahac, Striker, & Tailfeathers, 2011; Hampton & Roy, 2002). Unfortunately, too many changes begin, gain a bit of momentum, and then become a part of the unfulfilled educational change milieu. And while the overall aim is to improve the lives of students through improving education, the rapid and unpredictable culture that has emerged can be characterized as an onslaught of changes, eroding the professional lives of teachers and consequently the outcomes of their students (Fullan, 2016; Gold, 1996).

However, one initiative in particular tends to have a high degree of effectiveness for students and teachers, that of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Harris & Jones, 2010). PLC’s, which can be found in several iterations, are a type of community sought after by many school divisions, though it has been found to only be successful in pockets (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). In part, this is due to the complexity of what it means to be teachers as professionals, teachers as learners, and teachers as community. Creating a common understanding of these facets that comprise the PLC is an important undertaking in moving toward implementing one. Then, as the goal is to change a community, it is important to grasp how complex that type of change will be. For instance, even a minor change such as how staff meetings are conducted may require deep and thorough changes to the cultural fabric of the school. Leaders and those they lead need to know how to develop a community, in particular one that continually and systematically supports and expands the skills of its members. Therefore, following the brief development of what PLC means, there is a brief
examination of cultural change theory which would help support leaders through the successful implementation of a PLC and teacher-mentorship to help institutionalize that change (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Schein, 2004).

First, an understanding of PLC is established to provide a common reference point. There is need to establish a conceptualization of the purpose, characteristics, and structures of a PLC. If change is needed in a school, PLC's can be a promising way to ensure that those changes are brought to successful resolutions, and ultimately institutionalized in a school or school division (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Harris & Jones, 2010; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2006). However, in order to get to a successfully institutionalized change, especially in regards to PLC's, changes in school culture must occur (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994). The culture of schools has many marked practices and deeply engrained rituals that slow the change process or halt it completely. Therefore, an understanding of cultural change theory will be presented as a way of clarifying how change can happen in a school through four phases of pre-initiation, initiation, implementation, and institutionalization, focusing on the overall theme of PLC's and peer mentorship.

Further, this paper explores how teacher-mentorship has been proving successful in training and retaining highly effective teachers. I provide a few suggestions for leaders to initiate PLC's and to utilize a mentorship program that reinforces the culture for those entering the community (Bartell, 2005; Bennett, 2013; Harris & Jones, 2010). Research in the area of distributive leadership, understanding and using data, and teacher-coaching / mentoring could provide leadership the means for moving from vision to institutionalization more effectively (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Johnson, 2011; Kirtman, 2014; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Schmoker,
1999; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012). For teachers, there is reason to believe that ownership in their professional learning, with minor but deliberate guidance in collaboration and communication with their colleagues, will help bridge the gap between identifying problems and putting practices into place to create for positive, long-lasting change (Blankstein, 2004; Easton, 2009; Greene, 2015; Harris, 1998; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). As well, providing nervous or stressed beginning teachers a reliable support structure, such as a mentor would provide, could reinforce skills and dispositions and make them stronger professionals quicker, readying them to solve more complicated educational dilemmas.

Teaching in a school is difficult. Changing the way teaching is accomplished in school is even more difficult (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Finding a way to support students in a society of high-paced change requires educators and leaders to focus their energies collectively and cooperatively to find solutions that will last (Kirtman, 2014). These solutions will require that educational institutions experience profound changes to some of the most deeply held beliefs and practices. Mentor programs for beginning teachers strategically develop specific practices and expertise that become norms in their schools at a faster rate than without such programs. Mentorship could be a bridge in which new teachers quickly become part of a community that has established support structures, reflection, and best practices as expectations; a community which can transform schools into the kind of institutions that meet the demands of sustainable change (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Street, 2004).

Change is Necessary

Schools operate in a complicated, constantly shifting and diversifying environment (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). This presents a challenge to educators and their leadership who are in a profession that works toward creating a better world
for all students. Increasing racial, gender, and ability diversity within schools presents further challenges, so the need for understanding, implementing, and continuing an improvement strategy becomes evident (Kirtman, 2014; Levin, 2008). Teachers, regardless of whether they have 20 years of experience or are new to the field, are presently expected to meet a variety of demands for stronger instruction with increasing amounts of differentiation (Crawford, 2005; Gunn, Pomahac, Striker, & Tailfeathers, 2011; Hampton & Roy, 2002). Leadership is expected to provide a wider variety of support and to cast a compelling vision that will motivate their teams into well-orchestrated, action (Kotter, 1996; Levin, 2008; Schein, 2004). Further, teachers and leaders are expected to make improvements even though evidence that sustaining changes in schools yields significantly underwhelming results (Fullan, 2016).

To begin, as societies change and diversify in race, culture, religion, gender expression, and the further layering of technology throughout peoples’ lives, those changes begin to materialize in the school context (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Students who have been traditionally left out of classrooms are finding their places within them (Ball, 2004) and students who have been marginalized in traditional instruction practices or educational policy are finding their voice and demanding teachers change to rectify prior injustices (Carr-Stewart, 2006; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). Students needing physical, mental, and emotional support now have their place in the mainstream classroom. Teachers, regardless of their years of teaching experience, are expected to be capable of providing instruction that maintains high expectations and academic rigour for students with a wider range of abilities and needs than ever before (Crawford, 2005; Zaretsky, 2005).

Further, there is a mounting expectation for leadership to initiate, support, and follow through on school improvement initiatives (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Though the definition of
leadership is complicated and there are a variety of opinions of what leadership is expected to do, understanding school leadership is further complicated (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Fullan 2001). Administrators need to be adept in balancing the needs of multiple stakeholders (Fullan, 2016) while coming up with solutions to the inevitable challenges. Once change initiatives have been prioritized, leaders are expected to deploy their staff individually and in teams which can further increase the demand on leadership (Kirtman, 2014).

Unfortunately, even supposing the change initiatives are well directed and adequately supported, these initiatives become successful for short times, slow in momentum, and eventually morph back into former practices (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Louis & Kruse, 1994). School improvement initiatives often change many surface level structures without going deeper into the culture of the school to alter the underlying values and beliefs of the school system and the community within which it operates (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). For this reason, among many others, improvement efforts that have attempted to address the challenges facing schools today frequently have little to no lasting impact on the culture of schools (Fullan, 2016; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

To exemplify this, Canadian education systems have experienced many changes in an attempt to address public demands for better education, and yet the problems remain unsolved today. A good example is the difficult historical challenges that exist between K-12 education and First Nations people. These include addressing issues involving the atrocities of education with First Nations people (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1). In light of the horrific history of First Nations education in Canada, there are now increasing demands from First Nations communities to have their culture restored in the classroom.
Another issue pertains to people of differing ability being pushed out of the classroom (Crawford, 2005; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Zaretsky, 2005) and a willingness to allow students to fail (Blankstein, 2004). Because people with different abilities have been segregated, ignored, or marginalized in the classroom, human rights activists demand to have students of all abilities permitted to receive the best education meaning they remain in the classroom with their peers. Moreover, there is a desire that no students be left as failures (Ball, 2004; Blankstein, 2004; Crawford, 2005). It is imperative that a new culture within schools be fostered which can focus on improving teacher practice in ways that rectify the mistakes and shortcomings of former practices. However, many attempts from teachers and administrators to support these students through their transitions from the fringes of education to meeting their needs in full have gone unresolved and the problem persists today (Carr-Stewart, 2006).

Perhaps the central reason for these problems continuing today is that teachers are expected to perform and garner results without a support structure in place that observes and provides feedback on teacher performance (Johnson, 2011). New teachers enter the profession and are expected to provide the same level of expert instruction as the teacher who has been practicing for their entire career, even though many teachers describe their practice as solitary and disjointed from the rest of their colleagues (Algozzine, Greter, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007; Bartell, 2005; Gold, 1996; Jones, 1996; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Unlike some other sectors, teachers are not given an entry-level position from which they can hone and sharpen their practice and gradually take on more responsibilities; rather they are expected to work to the full potential of the most seasoned professional from day one. These factors all build into an unmanageable working environment which, in the United States, has seen a turnover rate of approximately 50% leaving the profession within the first 3-5 years (Gilles, Carrillo, Wang,
Mentorship and PLC

Stegall, & Bumgarner, 2013; Kane & Francis, 2013). While the turnover is not so stark in Canada, somewhere between 5-40% (Clandinin et al., 2015; Kutsyuruba, Godden, & Tregunna, 2013), it still needs to be asked what sort of culture can be expected to develop, let alone sustained, under such transient conditions? New teachers are in need of support and are ready for some kind of positive change.

As it becomes clearer that changing these conditions is necessary, the depth of change required becomes further evident. Making changes at a surface level, such as changing program names but leaving practices in place, or increasing the demands of a goal without also providing supports, is wasteful of time and resources and can ultimately endanger the lives of students (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). As such, more meaningful changes are necessary and Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) tend to drive change that supports student learning and professional development. PLC’s support teachers in making and reinforcing changes, especially if there is a mentorship aspect in the first year or two of a teacher’s career (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Supporting a teacher in becoming part of a PLC through mentorship could be the key to developing and sustaining such a community (Bartell, 2005; Harris & Jones, 2010; Kane & Francis, 2013). Research in this area has suggested frameworks for the mentoring process as well as the parameters for PLC, and if properly implemented these communities can become characterized by continually supporting teachers and improving practice. Change in schools is necessary, and mentoring teachers could help build PLC’s that have the potential to sustain those changes (Fullan, 2016; Street, 2004).

Community

“She’s gonna learn that this life will hit you, hard, in the face, wait for you to get back up so it can kick you in the stomach. But getting the wind knocked out of you is the only
way to remind your lungs how much they like the taste of air. There is hurt, here, that cannot be fixed by band-aids or poetry, so the first time she realizes that wonder-woman isn’t coming I’ll make sure she knows she doesn’t have to wear the cape all by herself.”
(Kay, 2015)

As schools work toward sustaining changes promised by PLC’s, the term has become a relatively commonplace term in many educational settings. As the body of research regarding change or innovation in schools grows, there has also been a correlation between PLC’s and positive school innovation (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Fullan, 2016). PLC’s are often both the initializing force of change, as well as the means to see the change through, boasting collaboration, inquiry, team support, and focus on learning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2016; Louis & Kruse, 1994). To understand how a PLC might be operationalized within a school context, I examine the purpose of a PLC, the defining characteristics, and a set of requirements within the PLC and in the broader context.

Purpose of Professional Learning Community

The initial focus here is developing a common understanding of what professional learning community means and what its purpose is. Groups of similar nature to the PLC have developed in schools as teachers keenly work to solve some of the most difficult problems facing them today. One such rendition of these groups that has also become the focus of researchers is the Critical Friends Group (Fahey & Ippolito, 2015) who describe such groups as purposed for more structured and meaningful conversations. Their theory is that teachers should talk less about immediate problems and more about student learning, teacher practice, and pedagogy to make improvement in school. “Critical friend” is also a term used in mentorship research as
similar to a mentor (Bartell, 2005). Another structure similar to the PLC, the Community of Practice gathers like-minded teachers to discuss similar interests with the hopes of sharing ideas and strategies that have worked in their classrooms (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Brouwer, Brekelmans, Nieuwenhuis, & Simons, 2012). PLC's tend toward more intentional structure than Critical Friend Groups, Communities of Practice, as well as other variations, with a clear focus of improving teacher planning, instruction, assessment, and leadership practices in an effort to sustain positive change (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994).

At this point it is important to note that while the purpose of many PLC's is similar—improving teacher planning, instruction, assessment, and leadership practices—PLC's of one place may not be identical to PLC's in another. This means that ascribing a common definition to PLC has been difficult. It is made further difficult as the terms professional, learning, and community are relatively expansive concepts each in their own so it would be prudent to ascribe a working definition to each when attempting to determine a purpose for PLC (Louis & Kruse, 1994).

First, with regards to professional, teaching is considered a professional endeavour, which means their work goes beyond repetitive tasks to be completed and requires a significant amount of judgment using abstract knowledge to be successful. Louis and Kruse (1994) describe professionals as those who use language and meaning developed by themselves and specific to their profession. Professionals find purpose and are often guided by a higher calling than income (e.g., doctors, teachers, lawyers, etc.) and are expected to work to the greater good of the community over the betterment of themselves. Because of the complicated nature of a professional’s work, they are typically responsible for the regulation of the conduct of their peers, as well as studying and pursuing ways to enhance the operation of their profession.
Next, including the term *learning* in the name emphasizes the nature of inquiry, research, and reflection being crucial to the purpose of a PLC. Those who continue to research PLC’s (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Easton, 2009; Harris & Jones, 2010) unanimously agree that meaningful examination of personal and peer practice better positions teachers to investigate root causes of, and solutions to, the problems facing schools today. As an example, Blankstein (2004) examines many characteristics of the PLC as identified by prominent researchers, and then articulates them in six principles that summarize their work. These principles are demonstrative of the amount of learning that is necessary as half (three of the six) of the principles engage PLC members in some form of active learning. Therefore, focusing on learning is vitally important in establishing the PLC’s purpose.

Finally, *community* was included to retain focus on collective interests rather than individual interests. Professionals, and the notions of profession with regards to a specialized language, highly self-regulated work force, and self-determined management structure, can become egocentric and exclusive. Essentially, there can be a tendency for collections of professionals to frame people as insiders and outsiders. Community needed to be included in the development of PLC’s as it opens their purpose toward including others in the process and the goals (Stoll et al, 2006). When establishing an understanding of the purpose of PLC's, the term “community” holds teachers to the social call of this profession (Bennett, 2013; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Louis & Kruse, 1994; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Louis & Kruse (1994) said it best when they were unpacking the terminology of the professional learning community:

The new emphasis on community is, at its essence, an attempt to move beyond the articulation of individual rights and prerogatives that has dominated contemporary liberal philosophy. The focus on community argues that excessive individualism results in many

Continuing beyond the name, it is crucial that the overall goal of a PLC has been identified to establish their purpose. While it has already been noted that PLC's vary from context to context, certain themes tended to recur throughout the research. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) have been studying PLC's and determined its purpose as an “ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for … students … the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators” (p. 14). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) consider PLC’s to be a community “where diverse people have a shared commitment to a common purpose, to each other as people in pursuing that purpose, and to acknowledgement and inclusion of minority views in collective decision making” (p. 126). Furthermore, Fullan (2001) describes PLC’s as a knowledge system that embeds professional development and continued growth in the school as it “changes the individual and the context simultaneously” (p. 126).

Regardless of the many variations that could occur throughout the many educational contexts, the purpose of a PLC is exactly that—professionals learning in a community. While it may sound simple, the implementation of one is no easy task. There are a few characteristics that should any one of them be missing the entire structure is in danger of break down. Leadership needs to be skillful in fostering these characteristics should they wish to see successful PLC.
Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities

Following are the characteristics which are necessary in order for structuring a professional learning community. In case studies presented by researchers, the successful change initiatives had all characteristics of a PLC working in tandem. However, should implementation of PLC’s miss even one of the characteristics the entire change initiative would likely fail. (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour 2002; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2006). Kruse, Louis, & Bryk (1994) describe five critical elements of strong professional communities as being (1) reflective dialogue, (2) deprivatization of practice, (3) collective focus on student learning, (4) collaboration, and (5) shared norms and values. As mentioned earlier, other researchers have determined characteristics espoused as being vitally important for this type of community. The five noted here are the ones that tend to describe and include all of the significant characteristics from other research most succinctly. Further, these characteristics continue to be determined by researchers as highly crucial for likely success of PLC’s (Annenberg Institute, 2004; Stoll et al, 2006).

Structures of Professional Learning Communities

Equally important as the characteristics of the professional learning community are the structural conditions necessary for success. Some structures are external to the group and include time to meet and talk within the workday, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment, and school autonomy. As well, some structures are more descriptive of the people within the group such as social and human resources which, when present, can support PLC success. For example, openness to improvement, trust and respect, cognitive and skill base, supportive leadership, and socialization of newcomers (to be explored further later) are some examples of internal structures that support
the continued growth and improvement of the professionals within the community (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Other researchers have found similar structural requirements for PLC’s that seem to be critical for success. These structures are regular and substantial time to meet and collaborate, close physical proximity to team, relationship structures, safe spaces to hold meetings, supportive leaders, and a focus on student learning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Louis & Kruse, 1994). Alignment with adult learning theory and opening the door to examining teacher practice (Annenberg Institute, 2004), trust relationships (Bennett, 2013), and autonomy in self-organization, self-management, and self-regulation further clarify the making of a PLC. Louis & Kruse (1994) found that PLC’s are especially significant in developing intrinsic reward structures which can help with retaining great teachers. Supovitz and Christman (2003), however, caution that unless there is conversation regarding teacher planning, instruction, and assessment and there is an effect on student achievement, it is not truly professional learning. They assert that a PLC only exists if there is opportunity for professionals to learn. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) take it one step further and profess that student learning should be the one constant, in any PLC noting that if instructional support and time are constant then learning is variable, but if learning is the constant, then time and instructional support can be creatively variable to meet the learning needs.

A shift in views on learning is an example of the kind of cultural shifts necessary to provide the structure for PLC (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). This and other shifts tend to take time and require broad support throughout an organization. Another example of a shift in educational cultures that provide structure for a PLC include shifting views in a teacher’s fundamental purpose, such as a shift from teachers covering curriculum to students
demonstrating proficiency. Or the shift from using assessments to determine which students
failed to learn by the deadline to using assessment to identify which students still need more
time. There are other shifts, and DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker (2008) have put together a more
comprehensive list for educators to start to build a philosophy that prepares their environment for
PLC (Appendix B).

As it becomes evident that aligning the purpose, characteristics, and structures of PLC's
can result in longer lasting change efforts, more schools and school districts seek to implement
these communities. Unfortunately, in their endeavour to build PLC's, schools and districts often
merely apply the PLC label to a groupings of individuals rather than making the in-depth
organizational and cultural shifts necessary for PLC's to provide maximum effect (Bennett, 2013;
DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). This can leave educators and researchers wondering if PLC's
are worth the hype and attention they have received (Fullan, 2016). For this reason, research into
the organizational construct and culture which fosters continued PLC's has grown over the years
(DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). To this end, the connection
between successful implementation of PLC and cultural change theories could be further
explored as a change process from pre-initiation of PLC to PLC as an institutionalized practice.

CHANGE PROCESS

Prior to beginning the change process at pre-initiation, it needs to be noted how difficult
change will be in schools. Changing a culture is immensely complicated, and has been best
illuminated in a story by Kotter (1996):

Now imagine going into [an] office where a series of ropes, big rubber bands, and steel
cables connect the objects to one another. First, you’d have trouble even walking into the
room without getting tangled up. After making your way slowly over to the chair, you try
to move it, but find that this lightweight piece of furniture won’t budge. Straining harder, you do move the chair a few inches, but then you notice that a dozen books have been pulled off the bookshelf and that the sofa has also been moved slightly in a direction you don’t like. You slowly work your way over to the sofa and try to push it back into the right spot, which turns out to be incredibly difficult. After thirty minutes, you succeed, but now a lamp has been pulled off the edge of the desk and is precariously hanging in midair, supported by a cable going in one direction and a rope going in another. (p. 135)

Organizations are coming to look more and more like this bizarre office. Few things move easily, because nearly every element is connected to many other elements. You ask Mary to do something in a new way. Nothing happens. You ask again. She budges an inch. You put pressure on her. Maybe you get two inches. You become furious at Mary, making all sorts of unkind inferences about her character and motivation. But the main problem is that, just like the chair and sofa, a dozen different forces are holding Mary’s behavior in place. (p. 135)

Herein lies the problem and the promise of the culture of professional learning community—it pervades nearly all aspects of the educational institution and requires constant shuffling and shifting to change a culture that is so deeply embedded in every facet of a teacher’s daily routine. As Kotter’s (2006) illustration demonstrates, changing small aspects of culture towards a PLC will have effects in places that may not be evident at first. Kotter (2006) further suggests that a change in one practice may require changing many other practices which seemed completely disconnected at first. Further, what seems like reluctance to change may more accurately be due to a difficulty in balancing all the connected responsibilities—so much so that a seemingly small change becomes a nearly insurmountable ordeal. All changes, both minor and major, are
susceptible to the dominance of the traditional culture such that caution and care in moving through change is necessary or few changes will last.

Consequently, bringing about cultural change can be exceedingly difficult, most notably because different researchers call for different work to be done. Some research demonstrates eight stages (Kotter, 1996), or five components of leadership necessary for change (Fullan, 2001). Other research espouses six secrets for changing organization culture (Fullan, 2008), the four levels of culture that one must have a vision and a strategy to change (Schein, 2004), or another suggesting all changes should be based only on two criteria (Levin, 2008). With the many variations for how cultural change might be led, it is no wonder administrators and educators often make a simple structural change within a school. This is an area for other research, but it is worth noting that when administration moves they take their change initiatives and inspiration with them if they have not embedded those changes in the culture they leave behind (Fullan, 2016). Administrators bring a vision for supporting, leading, and changing their staff and students and if they are unable to maintain their placement long enough for new practices to transform into the way things are done here then staff and students are likely to revert back to whatever was habit or lose faith in the change process and do as they have always done (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). If leadership in schools plays a significant role in student achievement along with teacher success, we can assume it would be wise for leaders to have a clear understanding of how change might be approached.

However, with many different guiding strategies on working through change, most change inevitably goes through three phases: initiation, implementation, institutionalization (Fullan, 2016). The following discussion will attempt to clarify cultural change within a school context as categorized through these phases, though I will also add “pre-initiation” (DuFour,
DuFour, & Eaker, 2008) as an earlier exploration of the cultural context is necessary prior to initiating a change.

Pre-Initiation Phase of Cultural Change

To begin developing a strong understanding of a given school context it is important to know that cultures differ depending on where they exist (Schein, 2004). This is to reiterate that communities are, by their very nature, different in every context: so too are PLC’s. Therefore, an important first step in making lasting changes in culture is for a leader to be knowledgeable of themselves and of those they lead (Kirtman, 2014). Knowing how social and political factors might be influencing student achievement, or what kinds of socio-economic status are present in a community, and the sorts of social capital, in the forms of social and human resources, are available can help begin to lay the foundation for understanding what sorts of changes are necessary. It is important to survey and take interest in the cultural groups present, the businesses of the community, and what their shared history is (Hampton & Roy, 2002; Louis & Kruse, 1994; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012).

Before initiating cultural change it is also important to know who will be involved in the change and to what aspect. Will there be individuals with whom the leader can work as a “guiding coalition” (Kotter, 1996) and who might those individuals be? Bolman and Deal (2003) attempt to clarify the difficult research of leadership styles by examining it from their four “frames” of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic leadership. Each leadership frame offers a way of seeing or understanding contexts that would provide an administrator desiring to change culture some readily applicable insights. Knowing how to apply these frames of leadership to move cultural change through many different processes is necessary considering Kotter’s (1996) story of changing the office mentioned earlier. There will be a lot of people and
resources to deploy in order to meet the goal, and leadership who are attuned to these frames can be better prepared for successful changes.

As there are differences in leadership styles, so too research also draws distinction between leaders and managers. While leaders are often seen as visionary, creative, and challenging to the status-quo with a certain unnamable quality, managers have a predetermined list of functions, such as planning work flow activities, organizing employees, providing direction to their teams, and evaluating employee effectiveness (Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 2004; Steen, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhardt, & Wright, 2009). Schein (2004) suggests that both are necessary because though leaders are the ones who change cultures, managers are the people do the work within the culture. Kotter's (1996) work demonstrates agreement, noting that “the job of management is to win in the short term while making sure you’re in an even stronger position to win in the future” (p. 125). In the pre-initiation phase it would be prudent to identify leaders who will espouse the vision, mottos, and commitments necessary to change, and the managers who might be able to organize and work those changes into the organization.

Initiation Phase of Cultural Change

Moving into the initiation phase requires leadership, and leadership can take many forms, but it is the orientation a leader takes towards authority which can have a profound influence in terms of the style of leadership they will provide. Leaders who have an orientation toward distributing their leadership authority have demonstrated highly effective in bringing about complex and far-reaching changes (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mascall, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012). Distributed leadership is leadership that extends responsibility throughout the organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) have produced a list of cultural changes that need to be undergone for PLC
success (Appendix B) which includes a shift in leadership that is no longer centered in a few individuals, but is diffused throughout the organization. Leadership becomes further successful if it takes on a role-model style, becoming the lead learner and contributor to teams who are exercising their leadership autonomy over areas they are working to improve (Bennett, 2013; Fullan, 2016).

Leadership that permeates through the organization should have a well-described model that can support leaders in making the most of their employees and build potential leaders along the way. A strong approach to leadership that tends to duplicate well through an organization is that of the coach approach as described by Hancox, Hunter, and Boudreau (2010). Their approach to leadership views employees as capable of taking on leadership and teaches leaders how to construct coaching conversations. Coaching conversations are structured around an issue the “coachee” would be having and the coach, showing no judgment or superiority, asks questions of the coachee that guide them in thinking about “the future [they] want to create, and how we can learn from what’s already going well to create a path to get there” (Hancox, Hunter, and Boudreau, 2010, p. 51) then preparing for follow up later to review how successful the coachees ideas were. The most notable benefit of this is how it trains employees to think about solutions and how they may result during conversations with the hope that this kind of external discussion will eventually become internalized and used on the floor before requiring the help of leadership. Further, as it becomes an internalized process it also becomes a modelled leadership style and thus the duplication throughout the organization, potentially reaching and identifying more sources for leadership.

Once leaders have been identified and leadership begins to permeate through an organization, it is important to identify what hurdles may present themselves that could quickly
become pitfalls. Kotter (1996) identifies eight errors made in organizational change efforts with insights on how to avoid them. These become the premise for his eight stages for change which establish urgency for change, build a team and sharing power to lead the change, develop a vision and a strategy, communicate the change vision, get rid of obstacles and encourage new ideas and risk taking, plan for short term wins, build momentum, and anchor new approaches in the culture. Though these stages are not all contained in the initiation phase of change, they are relevant to examine because the initiation phase requires leaders to set priorities (Blankstein, 2004; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour 2002). Knowing early what obstacles will arise can give a leader a clearer picture of what the priorities will be based on what sorts of activities will produce the most return for their efforts.

After priorities have been determined, the initiation phase is where successful leaders begin to set ambitious goals. Both long term and short term goals are necessary, the latter especially, for generating early momentum and gaining supporters who may be resistant early on (Knight, 2009). Successful organizations also build measurement strategies and tools into their goals to find early markers of success with a clear frame of reference (Schmoker, 1999). Getting commitment from all stakeholders is important though not everybody will support the changes in the beginning (Knight, 2009; Kotter, 1996). Collective commitments that students, parents, teachers, administration, and other stakeholders agree to can prove helpful in creating an early accountability structure that is clear from the beginning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). It is worth noting that the leaderships’ commitment to provide support is critical as ambitious goals met with no support often turns to cynicism (Levin, 2008). Further, “the absence of shared values will produce, instead, misunderstanding, conflicts, and may also lead to interpersonal mistrust” (Louis & Kruse, 1994, p. 39).
One final note on initiating cultural change is that the likelihood of success is greater if a common language has been created around what sorts of things were old and unwanted and what sorts of things will be new and accepted. Groups and teams will need to have their boundaries identified, their roles clarified, and their identities reinforced. Definitions need to be determined regarding staff responsibilities and what sorts of behaviours will be rewarded and what will result in discipline. As well it is important to determine what and how much power will be distributed among the staff (Schein, 2004)

Implementation Phase of Cultural Change

“Talking about instructional change is not enough; the climate to support instructional change has to be built” (Levin, 2008). Implementing cultural change is not about gravitating toward educational trendiness or contemporary bandwagons. Contextual understanding from the pre-initiation phase requires leaders to intentionally set ambitious goals, organize teams, and develop and plan for research and training. Many researchers have described a plan in which the implementation phase can unfold, however Blankstein (2004) has said it most succinctly with his guidelines: Organize teams, work with teams to make decision, manage meetings, share the workload, get commitment from members, communicate protocols, and monitor team progress. Implementation of an established plan begins with teams (or as has been established here, communities) and then throughout the entire process of implementation the leaders distribute their leadership responsibility and autonomy to their staff (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012). Leaders in the implementation stage have sustained success if they are able to build in group autonomy—emphasizing group as opposed to individual autonomy (Fullan, 2001; Levin, 2008).
The work of teams is difficult, and leadership plays a key role in guiding effective teams. It is important that teams not be left to establish themselves, but rather people should be called upon to work collaboratively (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2002). In early stages, it has been shown effective to build in group bonding experiences for teams, especially if they will be expected to work close together for extended periods of time (Kotter, 1996). Professional development in the early stages of changing the culture of schools shows greater holding power when staff experience group building activities as their first set of professional development together, and then focus on training teachers to utilize data in their planning and instruction later (Supovitz & Riggan, 2012). This is similar to the findings about creating a guiding coalition, as Kotter (1996) calls it, a group of people who are empowered to lead and make changes.

As a coalition of leaders begin championing changes in schools, it is important to recall Kotter’s (1996) changing office illustration from earlier to imagine the impacts that changes could have on all the people this change will involve. Schein (2004) found there is a way to create safe change among people, likening the experience of change to an experience of loss. Understanding change in this way can help leadership and leadership teams work carefully through the interconnectedness of change initiatives and be cautious when they notice causes in one place have effects in another. Schein has developed a process for this which includes eight steps that help set up the learners with formal training, understanding the changes that will be happening, and setting up role models and support groups. He also suggests having a reward and discipline structure that will help keep people on board by providing consistency. To continue to support changes, researchers have found that building short term wins into a change process will support continued successful change, even if it is difficult or demanding (Kirtman, 2014; Kotter, 1996; Schmoker, 1999). Building in measurable success that can be celebrated early in the
change process will spur people, such as educators, into further acceptance of the vision for change. Having teachers motivated to take steps toward a goal can be complicated but very rewarding as it creates momentum toward institutionalizing sought after changes.

Institutionalization Phase of Cultural Change

Continuing to build on early successes while moving people forward spurs others to join in. Then changes need to be pushed deeper, institutionalized into the culture (Kotter, 1996). Teachers have experience with changing environments as children are set up to learn new things. Rearranging desks, changing out anchor charts, and putting up new focus terminology on the bulletin boards help reinforce the learning that students will be engaging with and can help serve as a way for teachers to reiterate what they want students to learn and to value. These surface changes move from lesson to lesson or unit to unit while maintaining the culture of the classroom, whatever that culture may be. Changing the culture is often approached this way and is doomed to fail. Changing the building or moving the stuff around within a building is not necessarily going to address the deeply held beliefs and the rituals that have been in practice throughout the organizations history (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Schein (2004, p. 236) again provides insight at this stage of cultural change by drawing our attention to things leaders do to embed culture in more clear and immediate (primary) ways and then in peripheral and longer developed (secondary) ways. What leaders pay attention to and measure, how they react, how they allocate resources and rewards, how they foster skill development and coaching, how they hire, promote, and fire are all immediate indicators to the followers of what kinds of things will be acceptable within the organization, how they are expected to work and work together. Organization structure, systems, procedures, rites, rituals, design of building and furniture, organizational stories, and creeds or commitments also serve as
anchors and reminders to the staff of what kind of culture they are part. Leaders need to have systems in place, beginning with a change and then making it routine (Levin, 2008). Schmoker (1999) suggests, with regards to seeing change begin to take root in the culture, that it is best sustained if it is systematically recognized, celebrated, reinforced, and rewarded.

Another way to deeply embed cultural change is finding leadership who will continue to make meaningful progress toward your vision. Kotter (1996) theorizes that leadership needs to be cultivated in a culture that is designed to develop leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) promote sharing and distributing leadership (breadth of leadership) as a way to encourage change that lasts beyond a leader and finds roots in more places than just the visionary at the helm. Supovitz and Riggan (2012) further support this in their research on distributed leadership saying that, “Distributed leadership is best thought of not as a reform itself, but as an effective means of more deeply implementing reform” (p. 48). Principals would find it wise to move away from the role of central decision maker in the school to a contributing decision maker, one who supports the development of leadership by distributing their leadership to others and thereby expanding how much leadership they exercise (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) require this culture of professional learning to be deeply embedded into the culture of schools or it will be fragile and doomed to fail (Bennett, 2013). The Annenberg Institute (2004) found that if embedded in the context, PLC's had greater impact and were able to continue to adapt to meet the needs on an ongoing basis. They have this power because culture has norms, rites, and a certain “how we do things around here” that makes peer support and peer pressure very real to conform (Fullan, 2001). It could be said that they indoctrinate new members into the culture of the school in ways they agree upon and prevent gaps when leaders are away or change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). It is here where a
seemingly necessary first-step to PLC’s has been overlooked and may likely prove to be the key to unlocking the potential schools have been seeking: well-designed and implemented mentorship programs. In considering a mentorship program, it would be wise at this point to develop an understanding of what mentors and mentorship is.

INTRODUCING MENTORSHIP

Mentorship has been a process for passing on craft, trade, skill, or knowledge from an experienced practitioner to a newcomer for centuries. This passing down occurs from many sources such as parents to kids (as in the poem above), experts to students, kings to princes, or war heroes to new recruits. Homer (1946), however, is who many researchers identify as the original author of the term “mentor” in his work “Odyssey” which he used as the name of the character who would be the guide and teacher for Odysseus’ son Telemachus while Odysseus was away. More recently, mentorship has become a more formal part of the professional world as a means of training and engaging new employees and meeting their needs as they learn a new profession (Kram, 1983). Research, though limited, has identified mentorship that ranges from informal, such as that which might occur situationally as a skilled professional might help out when novice shows need, to formal, whereby mentors are selected, trained, and a set agenda and time period are scheduled for novice employees (i.e.; protégés) (Bartell, 2005; Gold, 1996; Kram, 1983). While some researchers, such as Kram (1983) prefer mentorship to occur organically and informally to reduce complications with personality conflicts, there is significant value to deliberate and structured mentorship programs to alleviate the struggles experienced by novice teachers (Algozzine et al, 2007; Bartell, 2005; Gilles et al, 2016; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).
Ralph and Walker (2013) have attempted to alleviate such struggles by constructing models for which varying degrees of mentoring can be applied to any situation: Should someone new to a job need to learn from someone highly skilled in that particular job these models can serve as guidance for what kind of mentorship would be necessary as they develop their skills. Since teaching is, in many aspects, a career based on educators mentoring students in the process of education, it is ironic how relatively narrow the study of teacher-mentoring has been (Noe, 1988). Mentoring, if conceptualized clearly and implemented effectively, can move teachers from isolated novice to integrated professional colleague in a relatively short time and what follows attempts to outline that process (Gold, 1996).

As stated earlier, the term mentor comes from Homer’s *Odyssey* (1946). The relationship between Mentor and Telemachus may be a basis for what organizations emulated in an attempt to meet the needs of new employees, and a mentorship structure developed. Mentorship serves in such a way that a more experienced employee would meet the needs of a novice employee (often referred to as a protégé) and train them on the way things are to be done (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Noe’s (1988) definition of the mentor provides a concise understanding of an often ambiguous term, and a starting place for this exploration of mentorship. He defines the mentor as “usually a senior experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities” (p. 458). Bartell (2005) further expands the definition of a mentor, though more specifically to the teaching profession saying a mentor would “understand and represent a vision of teaching that is consistent with an explicit vision of
teaching. They know how to describe, model, assess, and give feedback to new teachers about achieving that vision” (p. 74).

With a general definition of what a teacher-mentor might be described as, it is important to note the benefits mentors can provide and what mentorship strategies best achieve results. Generally, mentors provide benefits to novice employees in what Kram (1983) terms career and psychosocial functions. Career functions are those which are primarily concerned in the daily doing of job-related tasks. These include coaching, protecting, challenging, exposure-and-visibility (to decision-makers) and sponsorship. Psychosocial functions of mentorship include role-modelling, acceptance and confirmation, counselling, and friendship and are more concerned with the protégé’s sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness. Her research also identifies the stages of mentorship that effectively socialize a new employee into an organization beginning with initiation where the relationship starts to form, through cultivation, separation, and finally redefinition, whereby the protégé has acquired necessary skills and eventually departs from the mentorship relationship into a more “collegial” or peer relationship (Kram, 1983).

First, it is important to draw a distinction between mentorship and coaching. Earlier coaching was described as a means for distributing and expanding leadership within an organization. It serves to honour colleagues as professionals and outlines a means of identifying and clarifying issues whether with students or between staff in a manner that draws out the expertise from staff and promotes trust and respect among employees (Hancox, Hunter, and Boudreau, 2010). Mentorship, unlike coaching, assumes an experienced employee will be sharing their experience and expertise with a recruit of limited teaching experience. Mentorship does not assume the new teacher to have no experience, nor that they come with nothing to offer. Rather, a mentor serves as one who has the benefit of being in the education field and having
received some induction training who can guide a new hire into becoming an expert through a progression of professional development tailored to their needs. Coaching tends to support trainees in clarifying issues at hand then thinking about solutions in an attempt to become independent problem solvers, whereas mentorship assumes a novice will acquire skills and begin to follow in the example of the mentor as they learn to perfect and hone their teaching techniques (Kram, 1985). Mentorship, then, can use coaching conversations, as described by Hancox, Hunter & Boudreau (2010), which would help support continuing the development of new hires into potential leaders. Mentor, however, is preferred to coach here as the intention is to establish and maintain effective PLC’s whose focus and goal is professional development and the unique attributes of mentorship can help role-model and intentionally support and build that type of community.

More specifically, mentorship as part of a robust induction program can support teachers in developing the skills and dispositions necessary to support them through the early years, sometimes termed the sink or swim years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The teaching profession has an attrition rate that sees new teachers leaving the profession at rates as high as 30% in the first 3-5 years, and mentorship has been showing impressive results in reducing the amount of skilled teachers looking for more satisfying and manageable careers elsewhere (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Johnson, 2011). Stansbury & Zimmerman’s (2000) research suggests successful teacher-mentorship provides teachers with support in the areas of personal and emotional, task- or problem-focused, and critical reflection on teaching practice. They also found that successful mentorships are those which support the novice teacher in maintaining a focused workload by “protecting” them from the many demands that are extraneous to classroom teaching which might be appealing for new teachers as they start to get their reputation built in their
organization. Further, trained mentors can provide skill development and feedback through observing and role-modelling for new teachers to move quicker from novice to expert, making the job of teaching more satisfying and rewarding earlier in a teachers career (Gilles et al, 2016).

Finally, due to the many supports, the enhanced functionality of the employee, and employee socialization process as described by Kram & Isabella (1985), a well-designed mentorship program has the potential to open the world of teaching from isolated to communal. It can support transferring consolidated leadership to leadership that is diffused throughout schools. It can bring long time expert teachers together with novice teachers, moving the profession from one filled with overwhelmed individuals to active and collegial learning communities. If mentorship is a successful socialization method for inducting new employees, it stands to reason that it could be utilized by leaders to create and maintain an effective PLC by ensuring the cultural identity and practices are reinforced given that the program is well structured (Dollansky, 2017). What a program may look like depends on the leadership, the culture, the values, and the changes that are imperative in improving education in a given context. What will follow is a set of recommendations that will hopefully provide a foundation for leaders to build a PLC that is sustained through a well-designed mentorship program.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUSTAINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY THROUGH A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Overview

Developing and maintaining foundational Professional Learning Community (PLC) requirements as set out in this paper is, as stated earlier, complicated, far-reaching, and involves a lot of early planning and foresight. It has been suggested that mentorship can play a vital role in establishing role models and early leaders who will help to reinforce the culture in which PLC
will be sustainable. It is here that I set out to provide some recommendations that will help leadership set the ideal conditions in which Professional Learning Community can be established through a strong mentorship program.

Generating and sustaining a PLC that supports and mentors new employees requires some onerous attention at the initiation stages. To begin, I discuss the issue of standards for teaching and designing a continuum that describes growth in abilities and attitudes from beginning teacher to established professional and will set the stage for how the mentorship program will begin. Identifying what established teaching looks like supports a focus for teacher development and can provide a clear starting point for new teachers and their mentors, particularly in their first two years of teaching (Kane & Francis, 2013; Noe, 1988). Utilizing a set of continuums that establish and track a teacher’s development is an important first step in designing a program of worthwhile rigour, one that can set a high bar for those who will be selected and trained in mentoring others through the continuum.

Following the establishment of a continuum of teacher development come recommendations for creating a program which will identify, select, train, and support mentors who can help move teachers through the continuum of teacher standards (Jonson, 2002). It is likely there would be teachers within school divisions who are readily identified by their colleagues as role models who would be well-suited to mentoring their peers, so in keeping with current mentorship research it would be wise to equip these teachers with training in working with adult learners (Gold, 1996). It would also be prudent at this stage to consider if these teachers will be asked to mentor in addition to continuing to teach in a classroom, or if mentoring teachers would be their sole duty—either option will determine what sort of training the mentor receives and what sort of mentor work-load they are able to bear (Bartell, 2005; Jonson, 2002).
Last, it is assumed that mentor-protégé relationships inherently reduce formal support over time and eventually turn into a relationship of colleagues on equal footing-lending itself to a focus on growth as opposed to supervision. As such the type of support mentors receive and training they require will differ as each stage of mentorship is achieved, as the once ‘beginning teacher’ moves to a more established professional.

Since this system is fluid and requires attention to individual needs throughout the program, it is wise to have a system of reflection and oversight to this type of program. Mentors would be equipped and expected to answer corporate questions such as division goals, student achievement, progress plans, and division or school specific protocols or procedures. Therefore, it is wise to ensure mentors provide this information accurately when needed and in the interest of meeting the needs of schools and those they serve. For a mentor-training program to be complete it would be best to include training on mentorship and reflection of practice with built-in oversight from the division or other governing body (Bartell, 2005).

Once a program is established for the mentors, an induction program can be designed by school divisions to give new employees an understanding of the culture in which they have been hired and a picture of the division goals with means for achieving them. New teachers can then be matched with mentors who will be their support in the complex and difficult first years of service in education (Kram, 1983; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). A high quality induction program would have the parameters that enable a division to clearly communicate and reinforce the importance of their values, mission, and long-term and short-term goals. Such a program would also communicate value in their professionals who are able to work with their mentors following the induction program to guide their professional development over the early years of their career (Jonson, 2002; Kram, 1983). Other aspects that would serve an inductee well as they
transition into a new school division with mentorship would be team building, understanding collective commitments, and practice building collaborative skills such as using conversation protocols, (Easton, 2000; DuFour, DuFour & Eaker). An induction program that best supports teachers typically supports them through their first two years, so outlining what those two years will look like and providing a schedule of milestones new teachers can expect to be working toward helps to maintain focus on growth and development of professional skills and attitudes. The early years are tough for teachers, so seeing progress in their early years can provide teachers with motivation to continue as it builds in them the necessary skills to be successful earlier in their careers.

Finally, it would be important to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the professional organizations in Saskatchewan as to how each would support and monitor teacher development / mentorship. Continuous research and ongoing data-gathering regarding the successes and short-comings of the program through some measure of monitoring can give meaningful insights to strengthen the program. This would include research on the mentor-protégé relationship, teacher impression of the programs, which outcomes were met, how success is demonstrated, and areas for improvement of the program itself (Algozzine et al, 2007). Without monitoring the program for success internally and externally there is surely to be faults in the program that could make it another change initiative that lacks follow-through. Surveys and data records would provide valuable information to human resource departments for further improvement to their induction program and strengthen their new staff and mentors.

It seems clear by this point that a well-designed and implemented induction program is important to building a successful organization, that professional learning is crucial for improving and maintaining excellent teachers, and that mentorship can make significant,
deliberate progress toward the community in which improvement efforts will be sustained (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lemov, 2014). It is my hope that my following recommendations will provide some direction for those invested in developing excellent teachers.

Considering Teacher Growth

The principle issue to focus on in setting teachers up for success in their early years would be addressing the feelings of stress or anxiety that come when new teachers are under immense pressure to perform as master teachers while having their professional needs largely unsupported (Johnson, 2011; Jones, 1996). Having learning goals visible and laid out in front of new teachers with continuums (that describe beginner to expert teacher), growth timelines, and anticipated supports would concretely demonstrate that new teachers can expect meaningful guidance early in their careers. By outlining teaching standards (especially in areas of instruction and assessment), observation and assessment guidelines, and the induction and mentorship program, teachers receive a clear message that they are becoming a part of a professional learning community which supports them in their growth (Bennett, 2013; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002).

Early in this profession, it is important for new teachers to feel as though their instruction makes a difference in student learning, that they are meeting their student needs (Kane & Francis, 2013). As a means of documenting whether teachers are meeting student needs, school divisions often require teachers to make a professional growth plan that reflects school goals and that uses assessment tools as indicators for both student achievement and teacher efficacy. While having goal alignment from division to school to teacher to student makes for clear demonstration that a school division has a focus, these goal structures tends to limit teacher effectiveness (Bartell, 2005).
One example of such a goal would be when a school division decides something like 90-95% of students at a given grade level will be reading at or above grade level expectations by the end of the school year. This would be similar to a carpenter’s boss asking that 90-95% of the shelves installed in an apartment complex are, in fact, shelves by the time they are completed. Is this to say that the boss would be satisfied if five to ten percent of the carpenters work ended up as something other than shelves, perhaps chairs? Teachers are hired to teach children to read: each child, every day. Setting a goal to teach children to read is not a goal it is reiterating what teachers have been hired to do. As such, these goals limit the teaching and learning experience and do nothing to support a teacher in developing their craft.

Rather than making division goals about reiterating a teachers job, divisions should work toward providing clear descriptions of what expert teachers do and how expert teachers act that provides new teachers with clear and actionable goals they set for themselves and then aspire toward—goals that improve teacher practice and help them become more effective in their planning, instruction, and so forth (Bartell, 2005; Lemov, 2014; Schmoker, 1999). Teachers already know their job will be difficult, which includes teaching reading, and that some of the things teachers do are effective while others are ineffective. What can support new teachers is if a school division plans for teachers to improve their practice and work toward evidence they are being effective. With a clear set of teaching standards and a continuum that describes the pathway toward achieving those standards (see Appendix C) new teachers have guidance on whether or not they are engaging in activities as effective teachers would (Jonson, 2002; Cole, 2012; CTC, 2012). Teacher professional growth plans would then begin to exemplify teacher professional growth and reflection on a teacher’s learning would be more about professional abilities and development of those abilities over their course of the year—which is a better
indicator of their growth than whether or not 90-95% of their students are reading at grade level. Further, school divisions demonstrate they expect all teachers to be effective as well as monitored and supported.

As teachers are able to demonstrate their efficacy, the ministry of education, professional associations, school divisions, and even school boards would be wise to document, or research, the needs of their staff to determine the structures for support going forward. This kind of work would be difficult on the front end, but once established would be responsive and self-regenerating. As an example, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in California has their California Standards for the Teaching Profession, a portion of which can be seen in Appendix D (CTC, 2009). These standards are designed to be capacity-building, reflective, and can serve as a guiding point for divisions to strengthen and support their work force. It is at this point where diffusion of leadership becomes so valuable. Identifying and supporting the needs of new staff and connecting them with their broader community can help in reducing their initial anxieties and stresses. So, providing a mentorship element to induction will serve many purposes early in a teacher’s career and should be considered the next important step in teacher induction.

Considering Mentorship

Including mentorship for new teachers serves many roles. Mentors serve as a primary means for school divisions to inform and motivate their new staff. They also serve as a primary contact for new teachers to have their questions answered. Further, mentors act a liaison between new teachers and their colleagues, helping build a system of support that can be utilized on a new teacher’s path toward increasing their effectiveness. In this way, mentors are a means for leaders to distribute their leadership throughout the organization, they demonstrate servant leadership in
supporting those they are mentoring, and they foster community focused on professional learning and development (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001).

As established earlier, teachers desire to work in community and will often naturally provide support to new teachers, much of which may be loosely termed mentorship. While some of this informal mentorship may be positive and spur teachers into new and engaging teaching practices, some of this informal mentoring can be damaging, reinforcing negative assumptions, habits, or teaching practices (Bartell, 2005). With so much to lose or so much to gain, it only seems wise to create a program which selects, develops, and deploys mentors to avoid potentially damaging mentorship and foster the growth of high-quality mentors. Such a program intended to develop mentors would keep in mind the trajectory mentorship will take (Jonson, 2005; Kram, 1983). Mentors will provide for the varied and changing (hopefully reducing) needs of a protégé so the needs of mentors will be in constant flux and should be attended to by a training regimen. Mentors will require training in skills such as supporting leadership goals and coaching staff, how to observe, provide feedback, and build support networks and teams for those in their care, and finally in the area of providing general support such as answering logistical questions or helping new teachers maintain a work-life balance.

First, training mentor-teachers in supporting leadership goals will help leadership become further diffused in the organization helping to deepen the change initiative into a cultural practice (Kotter, 1996; Supovits & Riggan, 2012). Mentors will need training in leadership orientations and coaching in order to become coachable leaders who can in turn coach new teachers (Knight, 2007). Coaching and mentorship strengthen employees as it is readily duplicated through all levels of leadership when leaders model these orientations in their interactions with staff (Hancox, Hunter & Boudreau, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Mentor selection and training is
MENTORSHIP AND PLC

important in gaining emphatic supporters of the lofty educational and reform objectives for schools. Leaders in schools and school divisions can coach mentors to support the institutionalization of change objectives and foster the appropriate professional learning that helps new teachers become active participants in those change initiatives (Bartell, 2005; Fullan, 2008; Jonson, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 2004).

New teachers, then, can be brought into a PLC by their mentors, which means mentors will need training in the area of team building and connecting. Exemplary teachers, professional development opportunities, classroom observations (of the mentor and of the protégé), and other sharing of practice all become a set of support tools which can be employed by the mentor to provide support for the new teacher (Jonson, 2002). In this way, mentoring teachers demonstrates many of the aspects of PLC’s and is a well-suited approach to building and institutionalizing PLC’s for divisions that tend to struggle in doing so (Blankstein, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Jonson, 2002; Louis & Kruse, 1994; Newman & Wehlage, 2002). Playing such a crucial role in establishing community and the growth of employees can be difficult, but it is important, then, that mentors know what their role is and what their role is not in order to provide maximum benefit without over-stretching the mentor into too many non-mentoring roles.

The role of a mentor is best described by Kram’s (1983) career and psychosocial functions of mentorship and by the stages of mentorship (initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition). She describes the mentor’s role as not evaluating their protégé, prescribing professional development, or participating in determining contracts between new teachers and school divisions. Rather, mentorship is more about feedback and support and less about evaluation and hiring or firing. Such decisions are best left to principals and superintendents.
Good mentors, according to Kram, will fill the role of supporting protégés by coaching, challenging, and sponsoring them, and exposing them to superiors or change-makers in schools. Instead of new teachers taking on unbearable extracurricular activities to get their name known, mentors play a role of liaison between new teachers and their superiors promoting positive work-life balance for the new teacher. She further asserts that good mentors have a role in supporting the emotional aspects of teaching for beginning teachers, garnering them acceptance, a sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness, ever more necessary for teachers today (Gold, 1996; Jonson, 2002; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Defining the exact role of a mentor may look different for each division, but bearing these functions in mind when describing that role will make for a more effective mentorship program which can foster a stronger PLC and strengthen a schools resolve toward achieving its goals.

Considering Induction Programming

Following a good mentorship program, divisions would be wise to develop an induction program which provides an overview and timeline of the training activities a new hire would have the opportunity to be a part of as they enter their new career. Not all new hires are brand new teachers, so induction programs may look different for those who are just entering the teaching profession versus those who have been in education for several years but are moving school divisions. However, teachers are part of a profession, and as such are required to support their peers and regulate each other’s conduct. Therefore, however the induction program looks, the aim would be to bring new hires into a PLC. This process can be hastened with a mentorship element as mentorship utilizes many of the successful cultural change elements discussed earlier (Bartell, 2005; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 2004). Mentorship would not be the only means to welcome and train new staff, rather a training program for new staff
(which we will assume are new teachers for the purpose of these recommendations) should be given clear direction about the milestones they can be expected to work toward on their journey in the first two years. Such an induction program would include team building, formal training on division-specific goals and job-related functions, training on the standards and continuums of professional learning, practice with collaboration strategies, and a generation of collective commitments for staff invested in the success of the new teacher (CTC, 2012; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Kram, 1983).

Beginning an induction program that welcomes people into a new organization, it is wise, according to the cultural change theory, to spend time establishing teams and doing team building exercises (Kirtmann, 2014; Schein, 2004). Especially important would be developing a close working relationship between the mentor and those they will be mentoring. Leadership in this area from a cultural perspective can help create opportunities for connection between mentor and protégé that provide the basis for trust and empathy early on (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Some organizations have traditions that develop teams from early on which may include outdoor trips, weekend retreats, or movement activities which allow trust and communication to be established. Though these activities can be complex and often require debriefing sessions, the benefits outweigh the costs and participants look back on these activities as some of their most fond memories (Bartell, 2005). Establishing trust and communication is a necessary first step toward inviting someone into a new community and should happen early and potentially periodically throughout the induction process.

Once teams have been established and trust and communication are built, the next step would be to introduce a new employee to some of the basic division information and help give a clear understanding of the organization and job expectations. Employees who have a clear
understanding of what the goals and purpose of the organization are can easily identify how they will be able to use their skills to contribute to the overall goal (CTC, 2009). In education this is especially important as the goals, as noted earlier, are often complex and require overcoming rather complex obstacles. The induction program should also help new employees understand what sorts of activities are part of their job and what activities are someone else’s job. Few things are more defeating than working countless hours on activities that are not part of a teachers’ primary contributions to the overall organization goal: educating the children in their care. There are many professionals in the educational community, and if a teacher knows who plays what roles in their organization they are better able to do the best in their job and look to others who can help by doing the best in their job (Algozzine et al, 2007; Kane & Francis, 2013).

Beyond knowing what their job is, it is important that the induction program give a new teacher some guidance in what the program will look like beyond the first couple of days. The standards and continuums discussed earlier give new teachers some indication that not only will they be expected to teach, but what sorts of teaching attitudes and aptitudes are successful (CTC, 2009). These can also provide teachers with a sense of relief in their transition to a new career because of the clear indication of support they will be getting and a set of milestones to judge their own performance by (CTC, 2012). It is beneficial when the standards by which employees will be judged are clearly visible for both supervisors and employees (Bartell, 2005; Jonson, 2002). While the continuums and standards may be given and have concise definition of teaching mastery, the timeline and professional development activities can be more flexible, allowing for the mentor and new teacher to exercise and train their professional judgment. This will be an ongoing task for the mentor as they observe their new hire and suggest future professional development activities through their feedback.
As the induction program continues through the new teachers first few months into their first year of teaching, the mentor will schedule opportunities to observe and provide feedback for their protégés. These observations are best if planned with the new teacher working toward outcomes as described by the established master-teaching standards. This will give mentors the opportunity to help train the inductees in areas such as improving instruction, classroom management, assessment and data use, collaboration, identifying student concerns for the purpose of accessing supports, work-life balance, and more. All this training may not necessarily be the responsibility of the mentor, but the mentor can help the new teacher seek out and get involved in professional development seminars or even observing fellow teachers to see specific teaching methods in action. The induction program continues with the support of a mentor who has a greater corporate knowledge and can act as a liaison between the new hire and all the sources of support in their community. In this way, the mentor creates opportunities for the connections to happen that introduce and reinforce a growing PLC.

As the new hire will be part of a PLC, many people will be involved in the success of the new teacher. This means many contact points throughout the schools and school division will have opportunities to provide leadership and coach the new teacher toward stronger instruction and teaching mastery. Developing general collective agreements that dictate who will be responsible for which type of support for the new teacher can help those involved be clearer about what their role will be (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Schein, 2004; Supovitz & Riggan, 2012;). Knowing the responsibilities of the principal, vice-principal, human resources administrator, mentor, or any other involved staff keeps everybody in check with staying accountable for their role in the development of the new teacher (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). It also establishes trust between each committed member as they follow through on their
commitments and growth can be seen in the practice of the new teacher (Street, 2004). With so many people involved in the hiring and early growth of the new teacher the next step would be to monitor progress and keep records of what happens with such a program to see if it is delivering results acceptably proportionate to the investment. Therefore, an element of research would further benefit an induction program by providing clear insight into which induction activities garner results and which are a waste of resources.

Considering Monitoring of Program Efficacy

Inducting new employees involves a significant amount of effort and resources, many of which are being depleted in the education sector (Martin, 2017). Within a division there are human resource staff, superintendents, administrators, and other educators who all have, somewhere in their job description, the support of new teachers in learning their craft. Beyond the school division there are other stakeholders such as businesses, religious organizations, parents, politicians, and professional organizations who often have opinions and varying degree of power when it comes to what will be expected of new employees. With so many voices and agendas weighing in on the issue of what teachers should do and how they should do it, induction programs can be unending in scope and timeline. Answering the question of what activities will be meaningful in developing an effective teacher in the first two years is difficult. It would require constant monitoring and reflection on the part of the administration, the mentor and mentee, and finally the division and other professional organizations. Gathering data and researching new teacher needs can be done throughout the organization, but wherever it starts induction programs should involve research and data gathering at various levels such as in-school administration, at the mentor-protégé level, and potentially into teaching federations or ministries.
Beginning with monitoring from in school administration is a natural starting point as administrators are often charged with helping teachers plan for and assess their professional growth. The joy here comes with knowing that nothing new will be added to the already busy schedule of a school administrator. The change, though, is that administration is no longer concerned with whether or not the scores in, say, reading or math are changing, but rather that the professional is demonstrating effective teaching skills (Cole, 2004; Knight, 2007). This cannot be reliably found in improved student scores alone as improvement in test scores can be swayed if pressure to improve is greater than desire for teacher integrity (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Therefore administration will need to have the same list of teaching standards and the continuum their new hires will be working toward and use that as the basis for their individualized and professional goal-setting and coaching conversations. Then, administration should be given the opportunity to report on the progress of the new teacher before and after the induction program using evidence that has been gathered and reflected on by the mentor and protégé during their time together.

Therefore, the mentor and protégé are the next meaningful data collection points for this program. Without adding too much to their workload beyond the induction program already described, having periodic check-ins where division staff survey both the mentor and protégé can help continue to improve the induction experience. Bartell (2005) offers suggestions on ways to gather data about items such as how effective the mentor is, how personable they are, what sorts of professional development opportunities were organized, where there were struggles, what were most valuable experiences, and whether or not the program proved to be an effective diversion from your teaching time as well as many other items. These sorts of conversations would not need to be too difficult, especially considering the mentor and protégé should already
be keeping track of these items for reflection as they coordinate professional growth opportunities during induction process. Whether examining assessment data, unit or lesson or day plans, professional growth records or notes, or even exemplary student work or test results, all these items can prove useful for the new teacher to grow and for the division to hone and refine their induction program.

Finally, further scrutiny of induction programs should occur at the professional organization and even ministry level as they stand to benefit from highly trained and well-supported staff (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). Though substantial evidence to support this is lacking, it would stand to reason that professional organizations, such as teachers unions or federations and regulation boards, which already provide professional development opportunities and other supports for staff, would be remiss in not researching or reflecting on the efficacy of their programming. Ministries are highly concerned with the effectiveness of their educators and ensuring they are getting maximum benefit for money invested. It seems odd that at this point very few of these organizations know how many of their new staff attend professional development opportunities or how those opportunities are reflected in improved teaching. These stakeholders have a lot to gain from knowing what sorts of efforts are being made at improving teacher effectiveness and whether or not those efforts are garnering results. With the continued growth and reflection that is made an integral part of the induction years, this kind of data will become more accessible which could in turn result in stronger professional development delivery models. As stronger professional development yields a higher likelihood of improving practice, the next logical result would be improved student outcomes. Keeping data of induction programs and teacher growth toward a set
of standards based on a continuum from novice to expert teacher stands to make a positive change for a lot of people.

CONCLUSION

Change is Possible

The world of education is getting increasingly complicated. Changes in society have instigated changes within schools in the way teaching and learning is happening. This has made the job of teaching increasingly more challenging. The diversity of needs among students must be attended to and teachers may not always be equipped or trained to be able to meet those needs (Crawford, 2005; Hampton & Roy, 2002).

To this end, something has to change for teachers to provide high quality education for their students. Education plays an important role in society, and teachers are positioned to be important forces in that role. Unfortunately, beginning classroom teachers have been largely left to fend for themselves with little guidance in important areas such as classroom management, discipline, assessment, data, and planning (Algozzine et al, 2007; Gold, 1996; Johnson, 2002).

Should teachers be provided the leadership and support from their organizations the changes can have a strong impact on student learning, and on their lives—leadership which provides a clear vision and plan for their schools and support that helps teachers through the change from where they are to what their leader wants them to achieve (Levin, 2008; Fullan 2008).

Change will be difficult for leaders because schools tend to have deeply engrained values, rituals, and practices that hinder or halt change initiatives before they can sustain the effects they set out to achieve (Kotter, 1996). Professional Learning Communities (PLC) have shown evidence of making lasting changes. Teachers tend to value PLC's and the important role they play in their professional lives, but PLC's tend not to last beyond changes in leadership, teaching
cohort, or teaching assignments (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). The problem of short-lived PLC’s could potentially be solved by a well-structured induction program, particularly one that involves mentorship.

Mentorship may work well to assist in the development and continuation of professional learning communities as the systems of mentorship can work in tandem with the earlier described definition of PLC. This is to say that teachers are demonstrating professionalism in maintaining and monitoring the teaching profession, they are keeping the focus is on learning, especially as it pertains to student learning but also for their own professional development, and they are working at explicitly training and acclimatizing new recruits into an already established community. Further, mentoring has historically proven effective in showing new recruits the way things are done here and then reinforcing practices and values from one generation to the next (Kram, 1983; Noe, 1988). This can help in creating various levels of leadership which spreads throughout the organization and can further empower the PLC to induct new members and provide them with support and encouragement through the most difficult times of their careers: the early years. Mentorship can alleviate the pressure that teachers feel in isolation by providing them with career and psychosocial support (Kram 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Assisting teachers in this way can help them move from novice to expert with the skills and aptitudes that make them a ready contributor to a professional community earlier in their careers (Bartell, 2005).

To support teachers in becoming a part of a professional community it seems prudent to use an induction program with a mentorship element. By developing standards of what educators should strive toward to be effective teachers can get teachers started on a clear path of professional learning. Having continuums that have clear indicators of progress toward teacher
effectiveness as well as questions for reflection on practice is another way of demonstrating to teachers that growth is to anticipated and supported (Bartell, 2005; CTC, 2009). Further, mentorship in induction helps alleviate many stresses from first year teaching. Mentors can help new teachers organize their professional growth, seek out professional development opportunities, reflect on practice, and introduce them to colleagues who can help new teachers gain momentum early in their career. They also serve as a role model of what PLC's do and how they coordinate their efforts to support student learning. This could make the life-cycle of a teacher more meaningful to both the employee and the employer as well as all the lives that teacher will encounter (Bartell, 2005; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

A final quote from Sarah Kay’s poem is one that lets her daughter know that no matter the circumstance, whatever the heartbreak, whoever stands to let her down her mother will come to her side. In reading it, the final word could just as easily be substituted for “mentor” instead. No matter what aspect of the career is difficult, no matter who is trying to take away your hope, your strength. Whatever the battle of the day, the week, the year, your mentor stands in your corner with you, ready to find a way for you to thrive. “Your voice is small but don’t ever stop singing and when they finally hand you heartbreak, slip hatred and war under your doorstep and hand you hand-outs on street corners of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that they really ought to meet your mother.” (Kay, 2015) Teaching is a career that lends itself to mentorship—leaders to staff, staff to students. Now I would suggest it is time to practice that skill in support of our colleagues.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: B (IF I SHOULD HAVE A DAUGHTER) POEM

Instead of “Mom”, she’s gonna call me “Point B.” Because that way, she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me. And I’m going to paint the solar system on the back of her hands so that she has to learn the entire universe before she can say “Oh, I know that like the back of my hand.”

She’s gonna learn that this life will hit you, hard, in the face, wait for you to get back up so it can kick you in the stomach. But getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way to remind your lungs how much they like the taste of air. There is hurt, here, that cannot be fixed by band-aids or poetry, so the first time she realizes that Wonder-woman isn’t coming, I’ll make sure she knows she doesn’t have to wear the cape all by herself. Because no matter how wide you stretch your fingers, your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal. Believe me, I’ve tried.

And “Baby,” I’ll tell her “don’t keep your nose up in the air like that, I know that trick, you’re just smelling for smoke so you can follow the trail back to a burning house so you can find the boy who lost everything in the fire to see if you can save him. Or else, find the boy who lit the fire in the first place to see if you can change him.”

But I know that she will anyway, so instead I’ll always keep an extra supply of chocolate and rain boots nearby, ‘cause there is no heartbreak that chocolate can’t fix. Okay, there’s a few heartbreaks chocolate can’t fix. But that’s what the rain boots are for, because rain will wash away everything if you let it.

I want her to see the world through the underside of a glass bottom boat, to look through a magnifying glass at the galaxies that exist on the pin point of a human mind. Because that’s how my mom taught me. That there’ll be days like this, “There’ll be days like this my momma said” when you open your hands to catch and wind up with only blisters and bruises. When you step out of the phone booth and try to fly and the very people you wanna save are the ones standing on your cape. When your boots will fill with rain and you’ll be up to your knees in disappointment and those are the very days you have all the more reason to say “thank you,” ‘cause there is nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline no matter how many times it’s sent away.

You will put the “win” in winsome… lose some. You will put the “star” in starting over and over, and no matter how many land mines erupt in a minute be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life.

And yes, on a scale from one to over-trusting I am pretty damn naive but I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar. It can crumble so easily but don’t be afraid to stick your tongue out and taste it.

“Baby,” I’ll tell her “remember your mama is a worrier but your papa is a warrior and you are the girl with small hands and big eyes who never stops asking for more.”

Remember that good things come in threes and so do bad things and always apologize when you’ve done something wrong but don’t you ever apologize for the way your eyes refuse to stop shining.

Your voice is small but don’t ever stop singing and when they finally hand you heartbreak, slip hatred and war under your doorstep and hand you hand-outs on street corners of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that they really ought to meet your mother.
APPENDIX B: CULTURAL SHIFTS FOR PLC SUCCESS

Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A shift in Fundamental Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From a focus on teaching…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From emphasis on what was taught…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From coverage of content…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From providing individual teachers with curvature documents such as state standards and curriculum guides…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Shift in Use of Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From infrequent summative assessments…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From assessments to determine which students failed to learn by the deadline…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From assessments used to reward and punish students…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From assessing many things infrequently…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From individual teacher assessments…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From each teacher determining the criteria to be used in assessing student work…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From an over-reliance on one kind of assessment…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From focusing on average scores…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Shift in the Response When Students Don’t Learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From individual teachers determining the appropriate response…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From fixed time and support for learning…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From remediation…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From invitational support outside of the school day…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From one opportunity to demonstrate learning…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Shift in the Work of Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From isolation…</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From each teacher clarifying what students must learn…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From each teacher assigning priority to different learning standards…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From each teacher determining the pacing of the curriculum…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From individual teachers attempting to discover ways to improve results…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From privatization of practice…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From decisions made on the basis of individual preferences…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From “collaboration lite” on matters unrelated to student achievement…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From an assumption that these are “my kids, those are your kids” …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Shift in Focus**

| From an external focus on issues outside of the school… | to an internal focus on steps the staff can take to improve the school |
| From a focus on inputs… | to a focus on results |
| From goals related to completion of projects and activities… | to SMART goals demanding evidence of student learning |
| From teachers gathering data from their individually constructed tests in order to assign grades… | to collaborative teams acquiring information from common assessments in order to (1) inform their individual and collective practice, and (2) respond to students who need additional time and support |
| From independence… | to interdependence |
| From a language of complaint… | to a language of commitment |
| From long-term strategic planning… | to planning for short-term wins |
| From infrequent generic recognition… | to frequent specific recognition and a culture of celebration that creates many winners |

**A Shift in Professional Development**

| From external training (workshops and courses)… | to job-embedded learning |
| From the expectation that learning occurs infrequently (on the few days devoted to professional development)… | to an expectation that learning is ongoing and occurs as part of routine work practice |
| From presentations to entire faculties… | to team-based action research |

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### Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From learning by listening…</td>
<td>to learning by doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From learning individually through courses and workshops…</td>
<td>to learning collectively by working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From assessing impact on the basis of teacher satisfaction (“Did you like it?)…</td>
<td>to assessing impact on the basis of evidence of improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From short-term exposure to multiple concepts and practices…</td>
<td>to sustained commitment to limited, focused initiatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Standard 1 CSTP: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning

#### Evidence of Practice: Understanding that the levels become increasingly complex and sophisticated while integrating the skills of previous levels, what examples from your teaching practice and students' performance inform your self-assessment? 1) List evidence in the first column 2) Assess level of practice 3) Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element: Using knowledge of students to engage them in learning</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Integrating</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learns about students through data provided by the school and/or through district assessments.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathers additional data to learn about individual students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses data from a variety of formal and informal sources to learn about students and guide selection of instructional strategies to meet diverse learning needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses data from multiple sources to make adjustments to instruction and meet individual identified learning needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses comprehensive knowledge of students to make ongoing adjustments and accommodations in instruction.</td>
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**Evidence:**

- Some students may engage in learning using instructional strategies focused on the class as a whole.
- Students engage in single lessons or sequence of lessons that include some adjustments based on assessments.
- Students actively utilize a variety of instructional strategies and technologies in learning that ensure equitable access to the curriculum.
- Students take ownership of their learning by choosing from a wide range of methods to further their learning that are responsive to their diverse learning needs.

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APPENDIX D: CALIFORNIA STANDARDS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION, SAMPLE

Organization of the Standards
The CSTP are organized around six interrelated domains of teaching practice. The following are the six standards:

- Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
- Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
- Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning
- Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students
- Assessing Students for Learning
- Developing as a Professional Educator

Together these six standards represent a developmental, holistic view of teaching and are intended to meet the needs of increasingly diverse teachers and students in California.

Standard 1
Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
Teachers know and care about their students in order to engage them in learning. They connect learning to students’ prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests. They connect subject matter to meaningful, real-life contexts. Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies, resources, and technologies to meet the diverse needs of students. They promote critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving, and reflection. They monitor student learning and adjust instruction while teaching.

1.1 Using knowledge of students to engage them in learning
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
- know my students as people and as learners?
- understand reasons for behavior?
- recognize atypical behavior in students?
- build trust with students and foster relationships so that students can thrive academically?
- adapt my teaching to reflect knowledge of my students?
- differentiate instruction based on what I know about my students' strengths, interests, and needs?
- get to know parents and connect with the community where I teach?

1.2 Connecting learning to students’ prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences and interests
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
- help students see the connections between what they already know and the new material?
- connect classroom learning to students’ life experiences and cultural backgrounds?
- support all students to use first and second language skills to achieve learning goals?
- open a lesson or unit to capture student attention and interest?
- build on students’ comments and questions during a lesson to extend their learning?

1.3 Connecting subject matter to meaningful, real-life contexts
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
- establish a connection between subject matter and purpose for learning?
- make connections between the subject matter and real-life contexts?
- seek feedback from students regarding relevance of subject matter to their lives?
- engage all students in a variety of learning experiences that accommodate the different ways they learn?
- provide opportunities for all students to acquire and practice skills in meaningful ways?

1.4 Using a variety of instructional strategies, resources, and technologies to meet students’ diverse learning needs
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
- select and utilize a range of instructional approaches to engage students in learning?
• use a variety of strategies to introduce, explain, and restate subject matter concepts and processes so all students understand?
• help all students learn, practice, internalize, and apply subject-specific learning strategies and procedures?
• use differentiated instruction to meet the assessed learning needs of students and increase active participation in learning?
• adapt materials and resources, make accommodations, and use appropriate assistive equipment and other technologies to support students’ diverse learning needs?
• utilize and use resources that minimize bias?

1.5 Promoting critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving, and reflection
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
• encourage students to use multiple approaches and solutions to solve problems?
• encourage students to ask critical questions and consider diverse perspectives about subject matter?
• provide opportunities for students to think about, discuss, and evaluate content?
• ask questions to facilitate discussion, clarify, and extend students’ thinking?
• support students to think and communicate with clarity and precision?
• help students apply previous learning to new situations?
• encourage students to create, imagine, innovate?
• help students to develop and use strategies and technologies for accessing knowledge and information?

1.6 Monitoring student learning and adjusting instruction while teaching
As teachers develop, they may ask, “How do I…” or “Why do I…”
• systematically check for student understanding and revise plans accordingly?
• incorporate a variety of strategies in a lesson to check for student understanding?
• monitor the learning of students with limited English proficiency or of students with special needs?
• adjust the lesson plan to accelerate instruction when I determine that the pace of the lesson is too slow?
• make “on the spot” changes in my lesson based on students’ interests and questions?
• provide additional support and opportunities for students to learn when some students have mastered the lesson objective(s) and others have not?
• adjust my lesson when I don’t have enough time to complete everything I planned to do?
### Levels of Teacher Development Across the CSTP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTP</th>
<th>Emerging Level 1</th>
<th>Exploring Level 2</th>
<th>Applying Level 3</th>
<th>Integrating Level 4</th>
<th>Innovating Level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning</td>
<td>Expands awareness of curriculum and instructional practices to support understanding and engage students in learning.</td>
<td>Explores use of additional instructional practices to teach the curriculum and support student understanding and engagement.</td>
<td>Implements the curriculum using a variety of instructional practices and supplemental resources selected to improve student understanding and engagement.</td>
<td>Integrates extensive knowledge of curriculum, instructional practices, and supplemental resources to enhance and deepen student understanding and engagement.</td>
<td>Designs and implements comprehensive curriculum with multiple and varied instructional strategies and resources to support in-depth studies of content and promote high levels of student understanding and engagement.</td>
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<td>Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning</td>
<td>Recognizes the importance of building a positive learning environment that is focused on achievement.</td>
<td>Guides the development of a respectful learning environment focused on achievement.</td>
<td>Maintains a respectful and supportive learning environment in which all students can achieve.</td>
<td>Provides a respectful and rigorous learning environment that supports and challenges all students to achieve.</td>
<td>Facilitates a learning environment that is respectful, rigorous, and responsive in advancing student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning</td>
<td>Demonstrates knowledge of teaching as described skills as described in the California Standards for the Teaching Professional (CSTP).</td>
<td>Expands knowledge of related understandings of effective instruction, learning goals, assessments, and content as informed by the CSTP.</td>
<td>Utilizes knowledge of CSTP to make connections between elements of effective instruction, learning goals, assessments, and content standards.</td>
<td>Articulates knowledge of the instructional relationships between elements of effective instruction, learning goals, assessments, and content across the CSTP.</td>
<td>Applies in depth knowledge of the CSTP to interconnect effective instruction, learning goals, and assessment within and across content areas.</td>
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1. You Continuum of Teaching Practice is not designed for use as a stand-alone observation or evaluation instrument.
2. Developed in collaboration with the CTC, CDE and New Teacher Center. Revised June 2012.

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