Methods for Improving Program Quality

Creating Successful Professional Learning Communities within your School

Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina
Schools for South Carolina's Future

Desired Results

- Identify the function, purpose and value of professional learning communities as a setting for professional development that translates into improved programs and services

- Understand the use of formative assessments of student work to guide the work of a professional learning community.

- Identify methods for assessing and improving upon programs and services within professional learning community

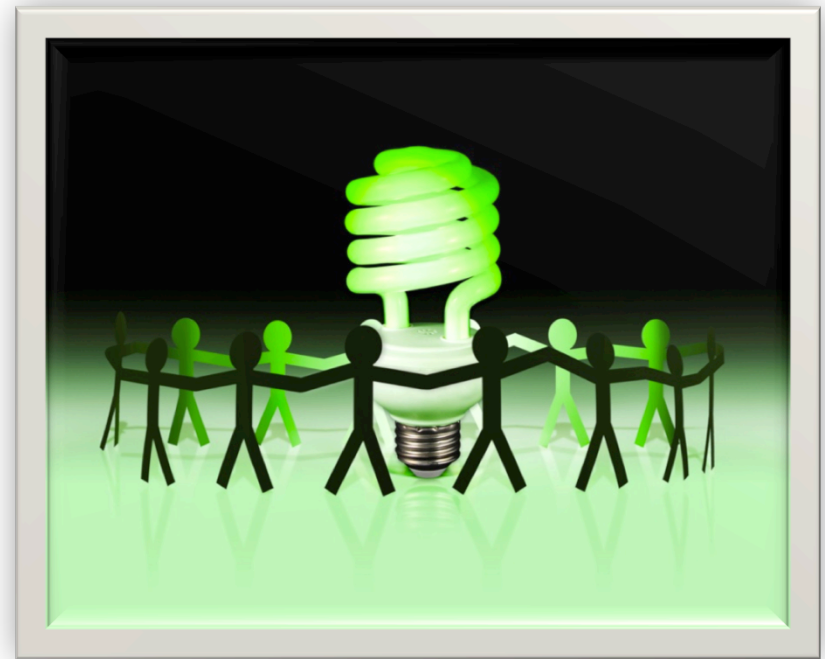# Professional Learning Communities

"A small group of committed people can make a difference and change the world."
~Margaret Mead

Professional Learning Communities
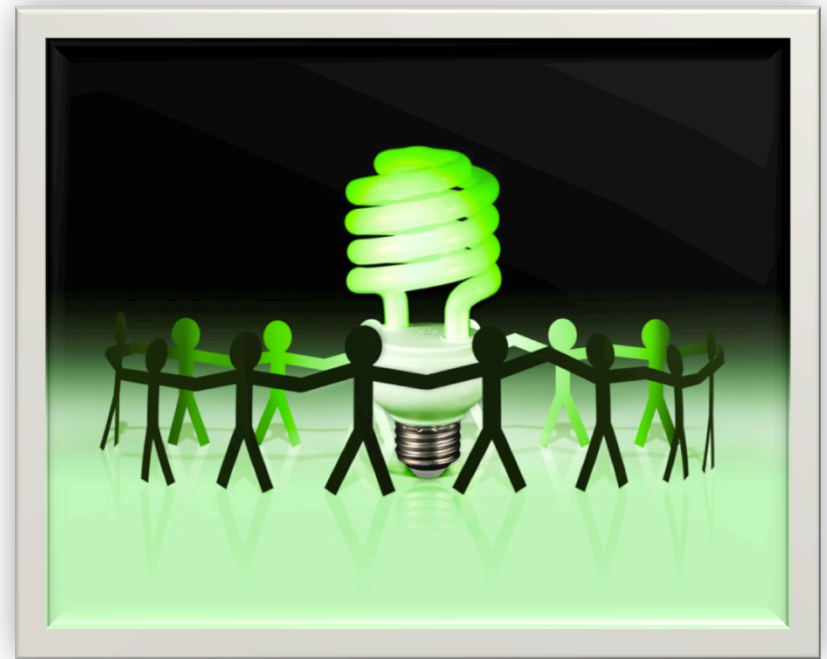
Why are they important

- An opportunity to ensure that all school functions are staying aligned with the mission, vision, and goals of the school.

- Increased teacher motivation & Success.

- Student success

- Several formats/systems for successful PLC

Other PLC Systems

- TAP

- YPQA/I

- Others?

Professional Learning Communities

Key Points

- Focus should be on student learning

- Effective teams are clear on their purpose and they follow key processes that enhance their ability to work efficiently

- PLCs are not a program or a "one and done" meeting

- "An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (Durfour, 2010b, p. 4).

Common Formative Assessment: A Tookkit for PLCs at Work Bailey & Jakicic 2012

Critical Friends Groups® (CFG)

- Developed in the field by educators affiliated with the National School Reform Faculty

- Purpose is to provide professional development that translates into improved youth learning and services

- Online resources are Free

- Affordable training
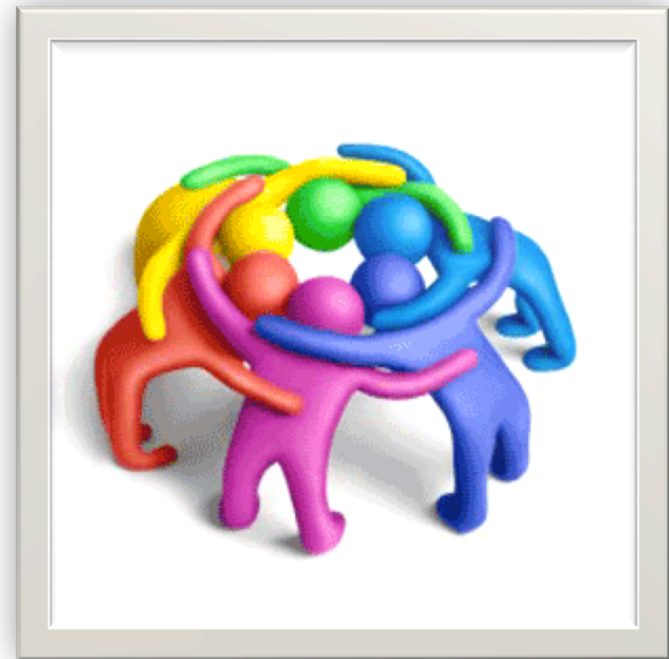
Critical Friends Group®

- Formal, ongoing interactions of small groups of staff that participate voluntarily

- Lead by trained CFG coach

- If engaging & effective=increase in youth development, contributes to participants' professional growth, strengthens organizations' capacity to function as learning communities, encourages focus on mission, vision, and goals.
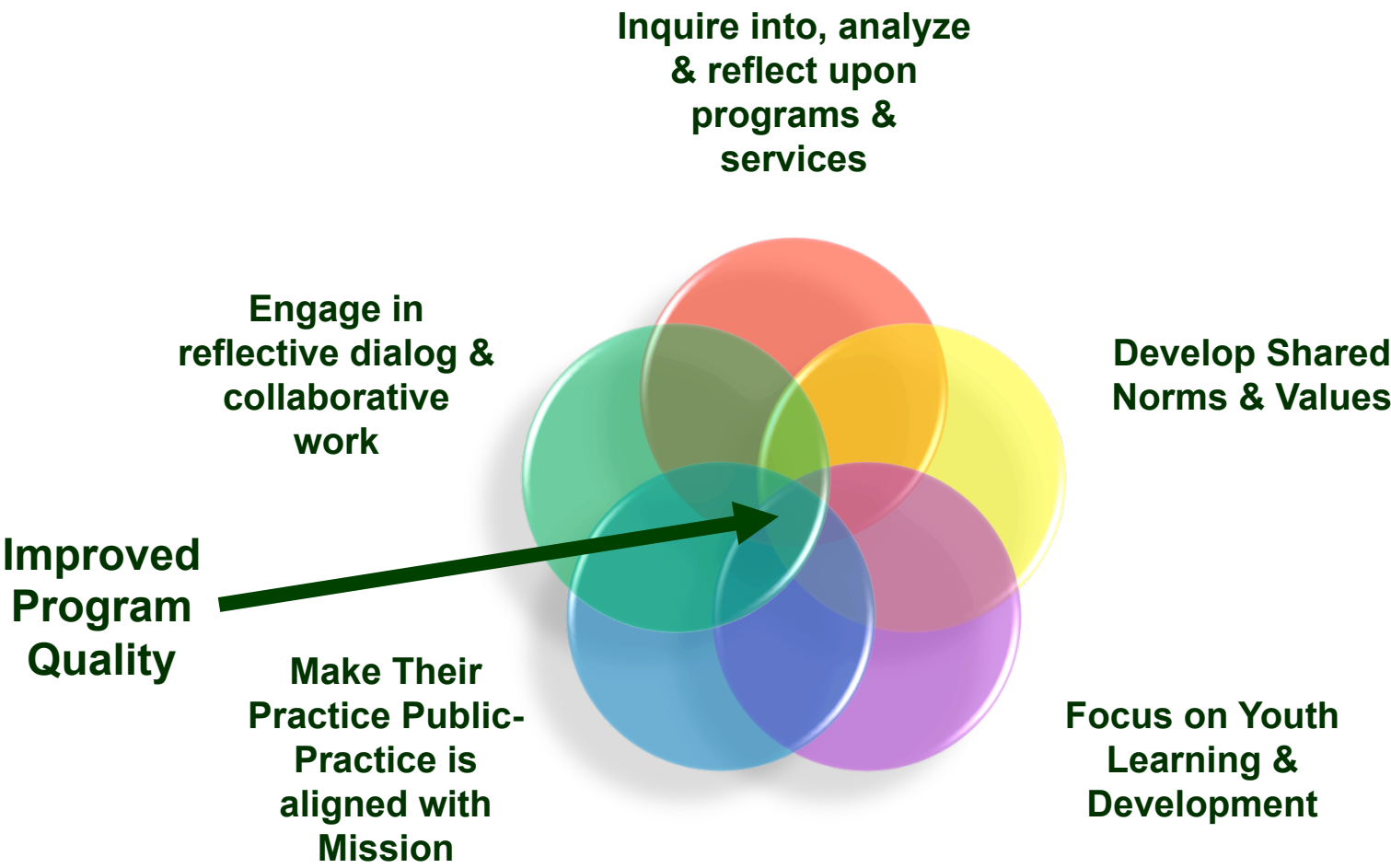
CFG Value

- Deal with issues & dilemmas related to youth development

- Look closely at and learn from program data & outcomes

- Peer observations and debriefing

- Look at and reflect upon service provider work

Professional Learning Communities

Inquire into, analyze & reflect upon programs & services

Engage in reflective dialog & collaborative work

Develop Shared Norms & Values

Improved Program Quality

Make Their Practice Public- Practice is aligned with Mission

Focus on Youth Learning & Development

Common Formative Assessments

The test of a good teacher is not how many questions he can ask his pupils that they will answer readily, but how many questions he inspires them to ask him which he finds it hard to answer.

-Alice Wellington Rollins

Value of Data to Education

- Allows teachers to meet students where they are
- Informs instruction
- Create new education models
- Engage & inform parents
- Accountability

Types of Assessment

Summative Assessment

- Occurs after learning is complete

- Used to give grade or provide final measure of student

- Written around more complex standards or multiple standards.

Formative Assessment

- Used to advance and not merely monitor each student's learning

- Informs the teacher regarding the effectiveness of instruction and the individual student regarding progress in becoming proficient

- Written around learning targets (specific skills & strategies)

Major Difference: not in what the assessment looks like but in how the teachers respond to the results. Ex, to make a summative assessment formative, teacher can use an assignment to determine which students were not able to complete the task and then provide additional instruction as a result of the information .

What does *Common* Mean?

- Collective responsibility for the learning of a group of students who are expected to acquire the same knowledge and skills
- No teacher can opt out of the process
- Common to all teachers who teach that course or grade level
- Teachers work together to develop the instrument (ex. Rubric)

Benefits of Common Assessments

- Promote efficiency of teachers
- Promote equity for students
- Provide an effective strategy for determining whether the guaranteed curriculum is being taught and learned
- Inform the practice of individual teachers
- Build a teams capacity to improve its program
- Facilitate a systematic, collective response to students who are experiencing difficulty
- Offer the most powerful tool for changing adult behavior and practice

Balanced Assessment System

- Use both formative and summative information to make short and long term decisions to help students
- Ex, classroom assessments, common formative assessments, interim or benchmark assessments, external summative assessments.
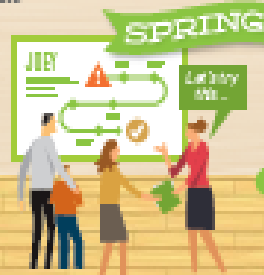
Ms. Bullen's Data-Rich Year

When teachers are empowered with data, students do better

Teachers have access to more quality data than ever, on factors like student performance, behavior, attendance, and more. When used along with pedagogy, content knowledge, and professional judgment, these data can be used to improve outcomes for kids. Follow one teacher, Ms. Bullen, and one of her students, Joey, through the school year to see how data help teachers, parents, and others make sure students are meeting education goals.

Let's get started!

FALL

Who are my students? · What's the history? · How do I prepare for them?

What is the one thing that's holding Joey back?

WHO'S INVOLVED?

MS. BULLEN · JOEY · PARENTS · PRINCIPAL · TUTOR · TRAINERS

1 Before school starts, Ms. Bullen looks at her students' past performance and sets goals and makes working groups for all of her students—including Joey.

2 She connects performance data with test items and standards to see where Joey has excelled or fallen behind, and designs an instructional plan just for him.

3 In the classroom, Ms. Bullen observes Joey's interactions for more information, and adjusts instruction on the fly.

4 Ms. Bullen gauges Joey's progress with her formative quizzes, which show what Joey learned that day or week, and her summative tests, showing how he's improved over time.

5 She goes over all Joey's data with his parents, and explains what they show about his current performance and how he may do over time if he stays on track.

6 Joey and Ms. Bullen meet to discuss his performance, behavior, and attendance data—and what Joey's parents want for him—setting goals for the year.

WINTER

HOW TO:

7 Throughout the year, data coaches and teachers work together to better understand and use different types of data.

8 The principal reviews performance data with Ms. Bullen, using data to support and empower, not admonish. They note areas of strength and for improvement.

9 Since Ms. Oswalt excels in an area where Ms. Bullen struggles, she observes her class.

SPRING

10 Teachers use data together to solve problems and identify promising practices. Recurring meetings are set up by grade level, subject matter, or other useful ways.

11 An early warning system flags Joey and tells Ms. Bullen that he is at risk of getting off track, falling behind, or even failing.

12 Ms. Bullen meets with Joey's parents to discuss how he is struggling and works with his other teachers to prepare a plan.

13 With his parents' approval, Ms. Bullen reviews Joey's performance data with his after-school tutor. Together, they note areas for improvement.

14 Ms. Bullen meets with Joey to discuss how he needs to improve and set clear goals.

15 By the end of the year, grades and summative assessment data show Joey is back on track—though he will continue to need support in the future.

SUMMER

DATA → RECOMMENDATIONS

16 Ms. Bullen uses Joey's data to support her recommendation for his class placement next year. Her conclusion is based on objective—and accurate—data.

17 After meeting with her principal, Ms. Bullen studies her own value-added score and evaluates how she did with different students, standards, and concepts.

18 During the summer, Ms. Bullen and other district teachers meet to solve problems using data. They identify trends and promising practices from around the district.

Improving Program Quality- PLC in Action

"Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable." ~ William Pollard

- When PLCs engage in collective inquiry-they learn together
- Equity for students throughout school
- Corrective instruction-teachers can effectively respond to student deficiencies
- Growth for Teachers

- Consultancy

- Tuning

- Charette

- Issaquah

Consultancy

Focus: On a dilemma faced by an individual or group

Function: Helps the presenter think more expansively about a problem/dilemma s/he is facing.

When to use:
- Dilemma is an important issue
- Presenter thinks a solution is possible but doesn't know what it is
- Presenter is willing to change his/her own practice to resolve dilemma
- "Probing Questions" will help presenter identify solutions

Tuning

Focus: On assignment, assessment, and samples of youth/ student work

Function: To help educators figure out why student work doesn't reach predetermined goals or standards.

When to use:

- Goals or standards are clearly defined & all of the students' work does not reach those goals
- The focus question is clear
- The participants give substantive "warm" & "cool" feedback

Charette

Focus: A project in the middle of development

Function: To improve a project while it is still in the development process.

When to use:

- Designer is stuck at a particular point in the development process & needs colleagues to get past the stuck place
- Colleagues are willing to take the work on as their own to help the presenter move forward.

Issaquah

Focus: On a dilemma faced by an individual or group

Function: Helps the presenter think more expansively about a problem/dilemma s/he is facing. Also models the developmentally appropriate order for questioning in coaching situations.

When to use:
- Same as consultancy
- Major difference is the clear rounds that lead from "what" to "so what" to "now what"

Exploring the Issaquah Protocol
An interactive exercise

Connections

- A time for individuals to "claim the space" within the context of a group.

- The tone of the session is marked by:
  - thought
  - story
  - insight
  - question
  - Feeling

- Comments are connected to the work one is about to do.

How it works

- Speak if you want to
- Don't speak if you don't want to
- Silence is ok
- Speak only once until everyone who wants to speak has had a chance
- Listen and note what people say, but don't respond-not a time to engage in conversation
- Shouldn't be more than 20 minutes

Intended outcomes of Connections

- A way for people to build a bridge from where they are or have been (mentally, physically, etc) when entering the group to where they will be going and what they will be doing within the group.
- Creates environment for
  - Trust
  - Open dialog
  - Creates some understanding of knowledge others are bringing to the group
  - Makes it easier for session leader to manage group

Other Opening Activities

- Silent Chalk Talks

- Walk the Line

- Skittles

- Movie Titles

For more see www.nsrfharmony.org
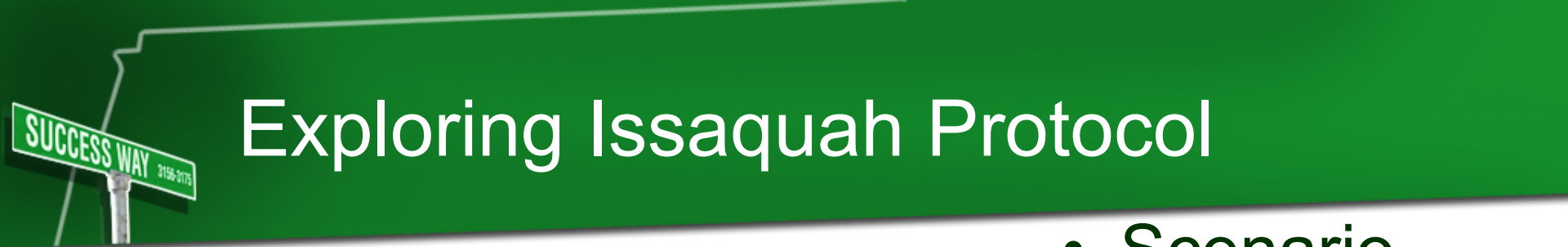
Exploring Issaquah Protocol

- ## Scenario

You are the director of an after school program that meets Monday – Friday for approximately 2 ½ hours. You serve K-5th grade students. School is released at 3:30 and you've noticed it takes students at least 15 minutes to arrive in the cafeteria. Your program requires you to serve snack in the cafeteria following specific guidelines. There are about 150 students who come to the program each day. Even with 10 employees, you don't finish snack service until about 4:05. In addition, your program is designed to provide homework assistance but also ensure youth have an opportunity to participate in fun and enriching activities such as art, dance, photography and sports. While you know 45 minutes to an hour would be best for homework you only provide 30 minutes because of time constraints. Homework time follows snack time, however it takes about 5-10 minutes for the students to transition into their homework rooms and groups. They typically begin homework around 4:15. And although your program isn't scheduled to end until 5:30, nearly half the participants ride the bus. The bus drivers and the school insist the bus riders are released no later than 5:15. Overall your biggest problem is time. How can you provide effective and quality programming in such a short amount of time?

Reflection

The Body Chalk Talk

Reflection-The Body Chalk Talk

- Chalk talk is a silent way to do reflection, generate ideas, check on learning and develop projects or solve problems

- Gives groups a change of pace and encourages thoughtful contemplation.

The Body Chalk Talk

Please write your answers next to the corresponding part of the body.

- **Head**: What implications come to mind as you consider the process of using CF groups to improve program quality?

- **Eyes**: What parts of using professional learning communities do you see as exciting?

- **Ears**: What did you hear about the methods presented that raises questions for you?

- **Mouth**: Is there anything that took place during this exercise you would like to tell someone about?

- **Arms**: Which method(s) would you like to hold on to? In other words, which method seems to be the most valuable to you?

- **Heart**: As it relates to this exercise or program development/ improvement; what are you passionate about?

- **Feet**: Are there any parts of this exercise/presentation you would like to walk away from? Or Are there any parts you would like to run with and explore further?

References

Baily, K. & Jakicic, C. (2012). Common formative assessment. Solution Tree Press: Bloomington, IN.

A large part of this presentation draws upon knowledge and skills gained from Critical Friends Group ® training facilitated by the National School Reform Faculty. To learn more about NSRF contact:

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Thank you

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