

**EDLF 7140: Schools as Professional Learning Communities** 3 Credit Hours

Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy Summer 2017

May 24, 2017 June 10, 2017 July 8, 2017

May 31, 2017 June, 27, 2017 July 13, 2017

**Instructor**

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**The Reason for This Course**

The past decade has seen a proliferation of publications and resources devoted to the professional learning community (PLC) concept and its role in school reform and school leadership. However, despite ringing endorsements for the PLC concept from educational researchers worldwide as well as virtually every U.S. major educational organization, the implementation of the concept has been less than impressive. As Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012) have noted, the “all-too-typical implementation of PLCs in schools” has consisted of

places where “teachers are assigned to committees, given data to examine, and asked to come

up with improvements within a particular timeframe” (p. 231). As these researchers suggest in contrast to this typical implementation, PLCs “represent an organic configuration of trusting relationships” and where administrators and teachers share their knowledge to discuss

the “big questions about classroom practice” (231).

What is so hard about the PLC concept and its implementation? Although a variety of answers are possible, I am going to suggest two overarching reasons. First, educators attempting to build a PLC often do not understand that they are, in essence, doing what the first two words in the term says: engaging in professional learning. For many educators, professional learning is an activity that occurs on an “in-service” day or is something that an outside expert does to them. Educators fail

to understand or label the work they do in a professional learning community as “real”

professional learning.

Because educators do not fully appreciate that this concept is about actually doing professional learning while doing their jobs, they hold a second unstated misunderstanding. While the goal of

a PLC is always to improve student learning, improved learning for students cannot happen solely through putting people on teams and looking at student data. It takes more than that. What many educators do not understand is that, at its core, the PLC concept is about *transforming*

*adult behavior and practice*.

This course is designed to support you as an educator as you seek to understand, practice, influence, and lead other educators in a PLC culture with student learning at its core.

**Reference:** Leithwood, K. & Seashore Louis, K. (2012). *Linking leadership to student learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**Essential Questions**

When you have completed this course, it is my hope that you will have the knowledge to be able to answer the three essential questions listed below as well as methods and skills to apply in actually leading in a professional learning community culture. These questions are the focus of the course, and we will explore each in depth.

• How do people learn and what does this mean for teaching?

• What is a professional learning community and why does it matter for schools and school leadership?

• What leadership skills and abilities can be applied to foster and nurture learning communities?

**Instructional Methods**

I will use interactive methods involving all class members in individual, small group, and whole class reading, discussing, and presenting. You will be expected to use Collab to access materials

and to respond in an ongoing discussion to make sense of your reading.

**Course Texts**

*Required*

• DuFour, R. & Marzano, R. (2013). *Leaders of learning: How district,*

*school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree

• Hattie, J. & Yates, G. (2014). *Visible learning and the science of how we learn*. New

York: Routledge.

• Kruse, S. & Seashore Louis, K. (2009). *Building strong school cultures: A guide to leading change.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

*Instructor-Provided*

• Drago-Severson, E. (2007). Helping teachers learn: Principals as professional development leaders. *Teachers College Record, (109)*(1), 70-125.

• DuFour, R. (2011). Work together but only if you want to. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(5),

57-61.

• Elmore, R., ed. (2010). *I used to think…and now I think.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard

Education Press.

• Harris, A. (2011). System improvement through collective capacity building. *Journal of*

*Educational Administration, 49*(6), 624-636.

• Seashore Louis, K. & Kruse, K. (1993, April 12-16). *An emerging framework for analyzing school-based professional community.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

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American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

• Popham, J. (2009). Six curriculum mistakes. *American School Board*

*Journal*, November, 36-38.

• Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change, 7*(4), 221-258

• Timperely, H. (2011). Knowledge and the leadership of schools. *Leadership and*

*Policy in Schools*, 10: 145-170.

I reserve the right to add additional articles, as necessary.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topics | Preparation |
| May 24, 4:30-8:30 | *Overview of PLCs and Our PLC*  Reflective write: Interacting with others  Introductions  **Assessment: Quick Write 1 on “**“Work Together, But Only If You Want To”  (can be refined and turned in by 5/31)  Syllabus Review  Choose Learning Team Members for Assignment #5 | (May 31):  **Assessment: “What do I know about my own professional learning?”**  Complete and bring a copy to class.  Print and bring  Stoll, et al. article *pp.*  *231-243 only* to next class.  Read,print, and bring Seashore Louis article to next class. **Take notes for Quick Write Assessment to be done in class**  Read and bring  *Visible Learning*  *Chapters 1, 13, 24*  **Take notes for Quick Write Assessment to be done in class**  Print and bring Drago-  Severson article to next class. |
| May 31 – Class 2 (4:30-8:30p) | *How We Learn*  **Assessment: “What do I know about my own professional learning?”**  **Activity**  **Assessment: Quick Write 2**  Jigsaw: Drago-Severson article    Begin to develop PLC Norms  Save the Last Word for Me Process: Defining and deconstructing PLCs – Stoll | **(June 10)**  **Read:**  Kruse, Ch. 1-3  Conduct observation of your school or workplace culture using “A Morning Analysis, p.69 and respond to reflection prompts on pg. 70. Print and bring observation and reflections to class.  **Assessment –First Forum Post**  Post summary of observation along with responses to reflection prompts. Reply to one colleague’s post. |
| June 10- Class 3  (9 am-5 pm) | *Understanding School Culture;*  *Cultivating a Collaborative Culture*  **Assessment: Quick Write 3** | **(for June 27)**  **Read:**  Kruse, Ch. 4  DuFour, Ch. 1-4  **Collab**:  Print and bring DuFour article.  **Assessment: Second Forum Post**  – Complete “Assessing PCOLT” for your school or workplace  and post results. Respond to one colleague’s post. Print and bring PCOLT to class. |
| June 27 4-8pm | *The Importance of Leadership*  **Assessment: Quick Write 4** | **(for July 8)**  **Read:** DuFour, Chapter 9  Print and bring Timperely  Article and Harris articles  **Assessment – “I Used to Think”** essay in Collab before start of class on July 8  Continue preparation for  Assessment – PLC Development Workshop |
| July 8 9am-5pm | *PLCs and Student Learning* | **Read:**  Dufour, Ch. 5-8  Take Notes  **Assessment-Forum Post 3: TBA** |
| July 13 2pm-6pm | **Assessment-PLC Workshops** |  |

**Grading**

Students in Schools as Professional Learning Communities are expected to complete all

assignments and will be graded according to the following scale:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 100 A+ | 87-89 B+ | 77-79 C+ | 60-67 D |
| 95-99 A 83-86 B 73-76 C <60 F | | | |
| 90-94 A- 80-82 B- 70-72 C- | | | |

**Assessments**

A detailed description of each assessment, relevant criteria, and a rubric for that assessment can be found at the end of this syllabus.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Assessments | Due | Points Available |
| “Professional Learning” handout completion and other participation | May 31 | **5** |
| Participation and Completion and submission of minor in class assignments to Collab | ongoing | **5** |
| Quick Writes (4) | Completed in class TBA | **20** |
| Forum Posts (3) | Due by midnight:  June 10, 27 and July 12 | **20** |
| “I Used to Think”  essay | July 8 | **25** |
| PLC Development  Workshop | July 13 | **25** |
|  | **TOTAL** | **100** |

**Writing Expectations**

The ability to express ideas in writing with focus, clarity, logic, and appropriate depth is a

fundamental aspect of rigorous graduate education. Additionally, it is a critical skill for all leaders.

I expect that written work will reflect attention to the conventions of English and that errors will be minimal. I will take deductions if errors distract from meaning and/or represent unprofessional presentation of writing.

Please honor length requirements. Use either 11 or 12 point fonts with standard margins. For ease

of reading, please double-space between paragraphs

Use APA style format for citing and listing references. To help you with APA style, please see the instructor provided references in this syllabus as a guide, and find answers to your questions at this link: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

**Class Attendance and Excused Absences**

Regular attendance in all classes is expected. Absences traditionally excused are those that occur because of death in a student's family, important religious holidays, or authorized University

activities. Students who anticipate absence for cause should obtain permission from the instructor

in advance of the absence. Unforeseen absences resulting from sickness, or from other circumstances considered to be emergencies, may be excused by the instructor and arrangements may be made with the instructor to complete the assignments missed.

**Response Time**

During the work week (which I define as 8 am to 5 pm), I respond to all emails within 48 hours. You are free to leave a message on either my office or cell phone; however, email is the best way to reach me.

**Weather-related Schedule Changes**

In the event that that the University is closed to inclement weather, class will not meet. You will

be informed by email. If weather conditions cancel a class session and circumstances permit, we will meet virtually**.**

**University Email Policy**

Students are expected to activate and then check their official UVA email addresses on a frequent and consistent basis to remain informed of University communications, as certain communications may be time sensitive. Students who fail to check their email on a regular basis are responsible for any resulting consequences. You are encouraged to route your UVA email to an email account that you use regularly if that system works for you.

**Incomplete**

Should circumstances arise that prevent the student from completing the requirements by the due date, s/he needs to make arrangements with the instructor prior to the end of the course. An agreement should be in writing and include a time line for coursework completion. All incompletes must be completed by the end of the following semester. Students are advised to consult the Graduate Record for specific information on Incompletes.

**University of Virginia Honor System**

All work should be pledged in the spirit of the Honor System of the University of Virginia. The instructor will indicate which assignments and activities are to be done individually and which permit collaboration. The following pledge should be written out at the end of all quizzes, examinations, individual assignments and papers: “I pledge that I have neither given nor received help on this examination (quiz, assignment, etc.)”. The pledge must be signed by the student. For more information please visit [http://www.virginia.edu/honor/.](http://www.virginia.edu/honor/)

**Special Needs**

It is the policy of the University of Virginia to accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation (e.g., in arrangements for seating, extended time for examinations, or note-

taking, etc.), should contact the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (LNEC) and provide

them with appropriate medical or psychological documentation of his/her condition. Once accommodations are approved, it is the student’s responsibility to follow up with the instructor about logistics and implementation of accommodations.

If students have difficulty accessing any part of the course materials or activities for this class, they should contact the instructor immediately. Accommodations for test taking should be arranged at least 14 business days in advance of the date of the test(s). Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the LNEC*:* 434-243-5180/Voice, 434-465-6579/Video Phone, 434-243-5188/Fax. For more information, visit the UVA Special Needs website at <http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/lnec.html>.

**Students in Distress**

Services for students in various forms of distress are offered by Counseling and Psychological

Service[s (http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/caps.](http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/caps.html))html) in the Elson Student Health Center. During evenings and weekends, emergency crisis assistance (434-972-7004) is available. In addition, if you are concerned about another student, call 434-243-5150 during business hours, and request the consulting clinician.

**Classroom Civility Statement**

Students are asked to refrain from conducting private conversations (both in-person and

electronically) in class, and are requested to use appropriate language and behavior that are not demeaning or disruptive to either the instructor or the other members of the class. See <http://www.virginia.edu/president/speeches/12/message120621.html>

**Student Safety**

As members of the Curry School of Education faculty, we are concerned for your safety and

support a caring and violent-free environment on Grounds. We concur with the University’s intolerance of power-based violence and encourage all of us to maintain a safe community.

We care about your well-being. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or isolated, there are many individuals who want to provide help. You can make an appointment to talk with any of your instructors. Or the Student Health Center also offers Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for all students. Call 434-243-5150 or the after- hours number at 434-972-7004 to schedule an appointment. If you prefer to speak anonymously and confidentially over the phone, call Madison House’s HELP line any time of the day at 434-295-8255.

There is also support if you or someone you know experiences stalking, partner violence or sexual assault. Resources can be found at <http://www.virginia.edu/sexualviolence>and [www.virginia.edu/justreportit/confidential\_resources.pdf.](http://www.virginia.edu/justreportit/confidential_resources.pdf) We believe everyone in our community plays a role in preventing violence and isolation. We all need to make choices to reach out to others.

**Assignment #1 – Criteria for Assessment of Quick Writes**

Quick writes will be reflections written in answer to an instructor question about designated readings. Students’ responses will be done in class to simulate the real work of school administration. Students will write two quick writes, and will choose which quick write as the final point total.

**Criteria for Evaluation: Points**

Inclusion of major concepts and answers the question /10 **10**

Well-focused and well-organized /6 **6**

Clear explanation of concepts /4 **4**

**TOTAL Comments:**

**/20 20**

**EDLF 7140 – Schools as Professional Learning**

**Communities**

**Assignment #3 – Online Interactive Journal**

This assignment will act as a mini-online interactive journal. Interactive journals are designed to promote “sense-making,” providing space to reflect, write, and represent what makes sense to you as you read a text. Instead of focusing simply upon what is being said in a text, the reader uses the interactive journal to explore relevancy and pertinence.

Requirements and Grading:

• Post **one original response to chapters** as noted in the schedule below. Post a **minimum of one response** to your classmates. It would be helpful if original posts appear at **least two days** BEFORE the deadline; however, that is not a requirement.

• Posts have no prescribed look or length. You choose how to do this.

• Your postings will be holistically assessed using the rubric posted below on the next page.

Late postings or lack of postings will result in deductions despite the quality of other postings.

**Schedule for**

**Postings**

**(All postings must be made by midnight on the day indicated. See the course outline section for specific topics to be addressed in each post.)**

Forum Post 1 Post & respond to post by June 10

Forum Post 2 Post & respond to post by June 27

Forum Post 3 Post & respond to post by July 12

Name Total of 20 points

Online Interactive Journal Holistic Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Meets or Exceeds**  **Expectations** | **Partially Meets**  **Expectations** | **Does NOT meet**  **Expectations** |
| **Quality of**  **Information** | Information clearly  relates to the chapter(s) and adds interesting or relevant information with specific details. | Information relates to  the chapter. Provides some support and specificity in response and may lack depth. | Information has little  or nothing to do with the chapters under discussion. No depth of discussion. |
| **Critical Thinking** | Enhances the critical  thinking process consistently through reflection in response and by making connections. | Critical thinking and  reflection are occasionally demonstrated in responses (as appropriate). Some connections are made. | Does not participate  in discussion or provides a partial response. |
| **Participation** | Responds and encourages and/or facilitates interaction among class members. | Responds to other class members and instructor in a meaningful manner. | Makes bare minimum of attempt to engage with class members. |

Total of 20 points available – will be considered holistically

**Assignment #4**

**I Used to Think…and Now I Think.**

Using the various readings and activities as a guide, describe THREE things you used to believe about professional learning communities in schools and explain why you thought that. Then describe THREE things you now think about schools as professional learning communities and explain why you now think that. You may also choose to say that you used to think something…and now you still do. If you choose do that, be sure to fully explain why you have not changed your thinking.

In performing this task:

Using APA style citations, refer to the assigned readings, indicating how ideas from the reading support your description of your thinking around professional learning communities (or else why you reject ideas). Maximum length (excluding references): 8 pages, double-spaced.

Your paper will be assessed using the rubric on the next page.

**I Used to Think…and Now I Think – Rubric (25 pts)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Low**  **1-2 points** | **Medium**  **3-4** | **High**  **5** |
| **Mechanics**  Measures the level of mastery of APA format,  grammar, punctuation, and  spelling. | Frequent and serious mechanical errors that  hinder communication. | Some mechanical errors, but these do not seriously  detract from the general  effectiveness of the responses. | No errors or a few, minor errors. |
| **Focus**  Measures the clarity and cohesiveness of the central argument. | Addresses no or few course concepts with limited  consideration of these  topic(s) | Addresses most course concepts and maintains  focus generally. | Addresses all course concepts and remains on  topic; Strongly maintained  subject, purpose, and logic; Clear and insightful |
| **Development, Support, and Elaboration**  Measures the quality,  quantity,  and relevance of the evidence the writer presents to illustrate or explain the context **(Counted twice)** | Little to no development of points, evidence is vague,  redundant, or irrelevant | Development of most  major points with sufficient supporting evidence with at  least one point handled in  depth | Development of all major points; Use of in-depth  supporting evidence with  specific, accurate, and relevant detail at a consistent depth |
| **Critical Thinking**  Measures the degree to which the writer demonstrates higher-level thinking skills, sustained logical analysis, and integrative, synthetic thought. | Little, if any, evidence of higher-level thinking skills | Less evidence of higher- level thinking skills; some  analysis demonstrating  independent, synthetic, or integrative thought, but analysis may be uneven throughout the paper. Connections not made between and among disparate areas | Evidence of higher-level thinking skills through  sustained logical analysis  and independent, synthetic, or integrative thought; Connections made between and among disparate areas |

NOTE: These rubric criterion were developed drawing upon information at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria)**[SMART](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria)**[\_criteria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria) and <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_87.htm>

**Assignment #5**

**PLC Development Workshop**

Join together with 2 other colleagues- at least one with whom you have not collaborated with previously. The three of you have just been appointed as assistant principals. You are working as a leadership team to improve you school’s approach to professional learning communities.

Phase 1. **Deciding upon the school.** Take turns presenting an overview of each of your current schools:

Key strengths and challenges

The style and overall impression teachers have of your principal

The current state of your professional learning communities- share the results of PCOLT as an indicator but also provide other contextual nuance

The district context

Once everyone has presented, take time to deliberate and come to consensus about which school you will be leading. Once you decide, there will be one member who continues to provide the “inside perspective/scoop.” This person will be the AP who was “hired from within.” The other two colleagues will bring fresh perspectives just as a newly hired admin would.

**The End Goal:** You will work with your “admin team” to develop a 30-minute workshop/dynamic presentation on how you three plan to facilitate PLC in your school for the rest of the class, who will listen and provide feedback from various perspectives, including that of teachers and principals.

**Phase 2: Building the Plan**

**Drawing on:**

* the organizational analysis tools in Kruse & Louis (2009)
* interviews with staff,
* Chapter 4 in *Leaders of Learning*
* And at least 5 other sources of learning from this course (in class activities, readings, quick writes, forum postings)

**You are to:**

(a) identify and discuss 3-5 potential or actual strengths that support collaborative practice (~1 page of bullets with accompanying narrative for each);

(b) identify and discuss 3-5 barriers to the development of collaborative practice (~1 page of bullets with accompanying narrative for each);

(c) develop an overall approach to the improvement of collaborative practice at the school based on identified barriers and strengths; your experiences; your knowledge of course readings; and our class discussions, online and face-to-face;

(d) propose 4-6 key recommendations for leadership action that are aligned/linked to the analysis from a-c (~1 page of bullets with accompanying narrative for each, including overall approach from (c) );

(e) propose 4-6 non-negotiables of the PLC approach and how you will gain support from stakeholders for these non-negotiables (~2 pages of bullets with accompanying narrative for each)

(f) provide an actual *facilitators’ agenda* for your first “unveiling” of PLC. It is your team’s choice in terms of the level (whole school, grade level team, department). The *facilitators’ agenda* should be a detailed plan for the faculty’s introduction to PLC at your school. There should be a professional learning objective with aligned activities. Your principal has given you 6 hours. Think about how you can use activities to support the goals of 1) introducing the PLC approach, 2) expressing the rationale for your PLC approach, 3) demonstrating effective adult learning, and 4) facilitating collaborative culture and teacher input. These goals can be accomplished through norm development, text based discussion of relevant readings, chalk talk, varied groupings and individual reflections on readings and prompts, jig-saws, or other adult learning structures (length varies)

(g) prepare a group presentation to the class to present your analysis, recommendations, and facilitators’ agenda for how professional learning will occur in the school.

The discussion during the presentation with your colleagues should include an interactive protocol that will help your colleagues engage with the substance of your analysis and/or recommendations. Each group will have one hour to present.

Note: The forum for this week will be focused on groups sharing their work and gathering formative feedback from each other to enhance the final project. You can decide in class when you will post and provide responses to each other.

**Assessment, Assignment #5**

**PLC Development Workshop**

Name: Total: of 25 points

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criterion | Points |
| Clear presentation of context (strengths and challenges) and rationale for focus of improved PLC initiative. | /5 |
| Clear and compelling analysis of collaborative practice that draws on observations  and interviews and identifies existing and potential strengths and barriers. | /5 |
| High quality facilitators’ agenda | /5 |
| Engages colleagues in discussion and elicits perspectives on improvement through the use of an interactive and high quality presentation (see below)  protocol. | /5 |
| Appropriate use of prior experience, course readings, class discussions to support  analysis and align analysis with recommendations for improvement of practice.  practice. | /5 |
| TOTAL | /25 |

**COMMENTS:**

Quality of presentation criteria:

**READY TO GO JUST BEGINNING**

Organization of

Presentation

Well organized presentation with a well-defined introduction, middle, and conclusion. Main points easily identified and supported with smooth transitions between points.

Unorganized presentation with no introduction, middle, or end. Main points are not identifiable or supported. Transition between ideas is not clear or logical.

Presenter Knowledge Demonstration of understanding of selected topic by answering all audience’s questions with full and accurate explanations and elaborations.

Visual Aids Use of visual aids is appropriate and effective in communicating the main points of the presentation to the audience. All visuals are clearly directly related to the presentation content. Handouts are easily read and follow the flow of the presentation. All visuals and handouts are grammatically correct and have no errors in content or spelling.

Understanding of selected topic is not discernable based upon the lack of ability to directly and accurately address the audience’s questions.

There is no use of visual aids or handouts OR the visual aids are not sufficiently related to the presentation AND/OR handouts are not readable and do not follow the flow of the presentation. Visuals or handouts contain grammatical errors and/or typos that distract from the content of the presentation.

Evidence of Presenter

Interest

Presentation Skills (Timing, Pacing, Body Posture & Language, Eye Contact, Voice)

Use of a variety of elements to involve the audience. Such elements might include, but are not limited to, professional or personal experience related to the topic, humor, or enthusiasm.

Volume and tone appropriate for the setting with appropriately timed inflections; Posture, gestures, and facial expressions are appropriate and comfortable (natural, not overdramatic); within the time limits set by the faculty with 5 to 10 minutes left for audience questions; eye contact made with all of the areas of the audience and is sustained throughout; does not read from visuals.

No use of elements (professional or personal experiences related to the topic, humor, etc ) to involve the audience.

Volume and tone is too low or high and monotone; Posture, gestures, and facial expressions are stiff and overdramatic; too long a presentation with no time for audience questioning OR does not use allotted time for presentation; eye contact with the audience is not present, rarely occurs, or is foxed in one area of the audience.

Professional Protocol Use of professional language and manners, ethical and Inappropriate language and manners, unprofessional

appropriate discussion of research and/or authors. discussion of research and/or authors.