

Professional Learning Communities

RHS has based their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on the DuFour model. Thus, the information in this section comes from *Learning by Doing* (2006) written by Rick DuFour, Becky DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many. Numbers after quotations indicate which page the quote may be found on in this book.

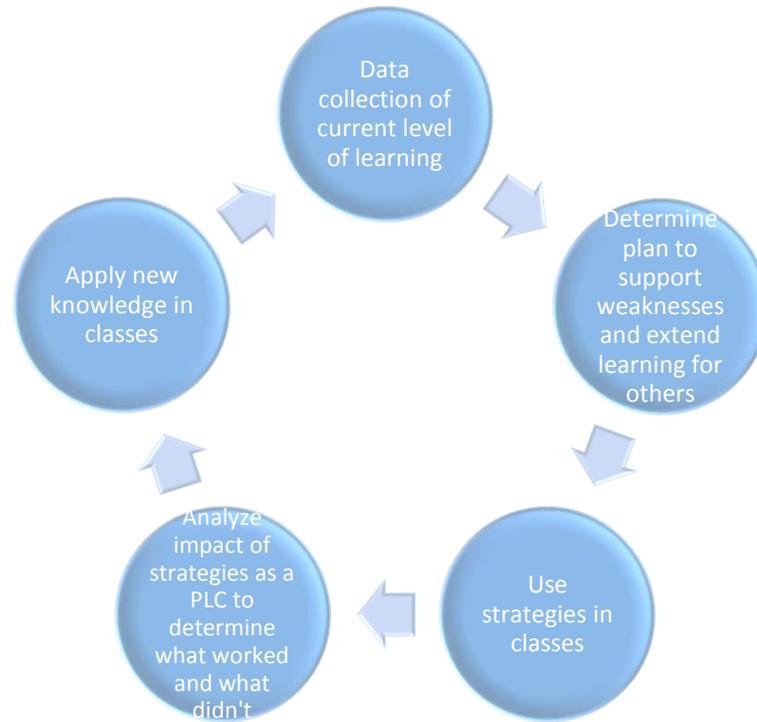
PLCs are **learning communities** that are focused on the learning of each and every student. We believe that all students can learn at high levels and that it is our responsibility to help all students learn. In PLCs, we work to articulate what knowledge, skills, and dispositions all students must learn in our classes. PLCs allow us to “monitor each student’s learning on a timely basis, provide systematic interventions that ensure students receive additional time and support for learning when they struggle, and extend and enrich learning when students have already mastered the intended outcomes” 3. This PLC work is embedded in teachers’ schedules, as they meet at least once a week to work formally on this process.

“A PLC is composed of **collaborative teams** whose members work *interdependently* to achieve *common goals* linked to the purpose of learning for all. The team is the engine that drives the PLC effort.... In a PLC, *collaboration* represents a systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently to *impact* their classroom practice in ways that will lead to better results for their students, for their team and for their school.... Members of a *professional* learning community are expected to work and learn together” 3-4.

There are 4 essential questions that are the foci of all PLC work:

1. What do we expect all students to know and be able to do (in terms of dispositions, character traits, skills, and content most essential for student success)?
2. How will we know when students have learned it?
3. How will we respond when they have not learned it? How will we support struggling learners?
4. How will we respond when they already know it? How will we provide enrichment?

PLCs are **action oriented** and based on a **continuous cycle of work**, much like action research. The circular flow chart that follows illustrates this. All of the work is collaborative, as members of the PLC help to analyze data and share ideas for improvement.



PLCs are **results oriented** and **based on best practices**. All of the effort put into the flow chart above must be evaluated based on the results and not just how well intentioned the changes were. “This focus on results leads each team to develop and pursue measurable improvement goals that are aligned to school and district goals for learning. It also drives teams to create a series of common formative assessments that are administered to students multiple times throughout the year to gather ongoing evidence of student learning. Team members review the results from these assessments in an effort to identify and address program concerns [and]... to identify students who need additional time and support for learning” 5.

“We want students to be actively engaged in hands-on authentic exercises that promote experiential learning” 1.

For more information on PLC beliefs and process, please refer to the RHS PLC manual or *Learning by Doing*.

Common Assessments

Much of the work RHS has done over the past 3 years on Common Assessments has been guided by Cassie Erkens. The information below comes from her presentations to the district and at PLC Conferences.

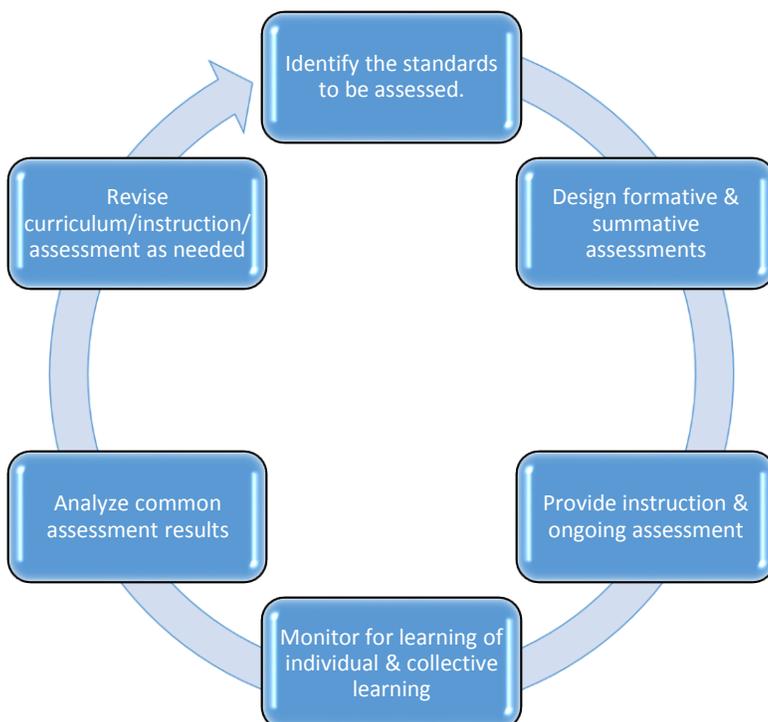
What are common assessments?

- Any assessment given by 2+ teachers, developed in advance of a unit
- Given with the goal of analyzing results to understand what students know and do not know based on established learning targets
- Used for shared learning about instructional planning, as well as a review of curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment
- Teacher-created and teacher-owned assessments

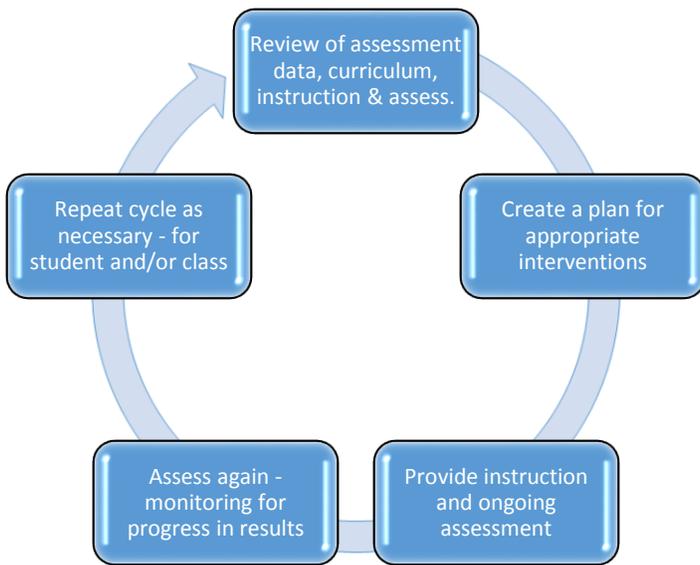
Why Team-Developed Common Assessments:

- More efficient than assessing by yourself
- Promote equity for students
- Monitor and improve student learning
- Provide effective interventions when students are not learning
- Inform & improve the practice of individual teachers and teams of teachers
- Increase collective efficacy

Process for Common Assessments:



Use these two cycles to develop and implement common assessments in the PLC process.



Learning Targets

A learning target is any achievement expectation for students **on the path** toward mastery of a standard.

- Clearly states what students should be learning
- Understood by teachers **and** students
- Should be formatively assessed to monitor progress towards the target before the summative assessment

Quality Indicators for Common Assessments

Design (accurate assessments)

- The assessment is *collaboratively* developed.
- The assessment is *aligned* with the priority standards.
- The assessment is tied tightly to clearly *identified learning targets* within the course goals.
- The assessment is designed for *accuracy*.
- The assessment is *formative* in nature, allowing students the opportunity to address their results and master the learning targets.

Delivery (effectively used)

- All staff members are aware of and *supportive* of the plan.
- The team delivers the common assessments in the same *time frame*.
- The team's focus is *results-oriented* by learning target to measure whether or not students are learning and the results empower learners in addressing their own gaps through the intervention strategies.
- All of the team's efforts – before, during, after assessment – are based on figuring out ways for teachers to identify students in need of *intervention*.

- The team uses tools, processes, and policies that allow for *student involvement* in responding to the results (data analysis, self-assessment, goal-setting, intervention planning, reflection, etc.)
- The team's assessment plan *promoted continued learning* with formative and more assessment chances.
- Staff and procedures are in place to *monitor* the execution of the plan.

Data (monitoring achievement)

- Practices and protocols are used to *guarantee common data* come from the common assessment (scoring must be calibrated).
- Data are gathered and analyzed in a *timely* manner.
- Data are arranged in a way that enables PLCs to *target appropriate interventions* for specific classrooms and students.
- Data are arranged so PLCs can identify appropriate *curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment* changes.
- The *data report* includes a display of the data, reflection of team learning, and a specific response plan to address the results and provide interventions.
- Data are used to monitor progress towards PLC *SMART goals*.
- Data are shared for *school-wide involvement* to support learning.

Data are monitored for *celebrations* of student and teacher learning.