

Professional Learning Communities at Work

Dr. Richard and Rebecca DuFour

2006 Charge Session

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Agenda

Overview - Murray

- **Implications and Ideas:**
 - **Elementary** - Loffek & Vaughan
 - **Middle** - Novelli
 - **High School** - Cool
- **Barriers/Solutions/Strategies** – Hall
- **Small Group Discussions** - All
- **Whole Group Wrap Up** - All

Characteristics of a Professional Learning Community

- ▶ Shared mission, vision, values, and goals
- ▶ Collaborative teams **FOCUSED ON LEARNING**
- ▶ Collective inquiry into “best practice” and “current reality”
- ▶ Action orientation/experimentation
- ▶ Commitment to continuous improvement
- ▶ Results orientation

Make a Shift---Power of PLCs

---All students **learn**

VS.

All students are **taught**

---The most promising strategy for **sustained, substantive school improvement** is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities.

Transforming Schools into Professional Learning Communities

Collaboration is the Key!

Collaboration

Fundamental Assumptions

- ▶ **If schools are to improve**, staff must develop the capacity to function as professional learning communities.
- ▶ **If schools are to function as professional learning communities**, they must develop a collaborative culture.
- ▶ **If schools are to develop a collaborative culture**, they must overcome a tradition of teacher isolation.
- ▶ **If schools are to overcome their tradition of teacher isolation**, teachers must learn to work in effective, high-performing teams.

Highly Effective Teams - How?

- ▶ Collaboration is embedded into routine practices.
- ▶ Time for collaboration is built into the school day and school calendar.
- ▶ Products of collaboration are made explicit.
- ▶ Team norms guide collaboration.
- ▶ Teams pursue specific and measurable goals.
- ▶ Teams focus on key questions associated with learning.
- ▶ Teams have access to relevant information.

Make a Shift

Traditional

- ▶ Statements are generic- all students can learn
- ▶ Willing to collaborate but not about student performance
- ▶ A “work group”

PLCs

- ▶ Clarify what students will learn.
- ▶ How will we know what students are learning?
- ▶ How will we respond when they do not learn?

Focus of Collaboration

Team Learning Process

Build Shared Knowledge- As a Team

All need to:

- ▶ Examine SSS/GLEs and engage in dialogue about what students should learn.
- ▶ Analyze data to make decisions.
- ▶ Clarify 8-10 essential common outcomes per semester by course/content area.
- ▶ Develop at least 4 common assessments per year.
- ▶ Establish specific measurable standards or goals.
- ▶ Analyze results.
- ▶ Identify and implement improvement strategies.

Cultural Shift: Curriculum

Traditional

- ▶ Primarily focus on teaching.
- ▶ Each teacher independently decides what to teach.
- ▶ Curriculum overload is common.

PLCs

- ▶ Primarily focus is on learning.
- ▶ Collaboratively agreed upon curriculum focuses on what students expected to learn.
- ▶ Reduced content means meaningful content is taught at greater depth.
- ▶ Assessment developed through collaboration.
- ▶ A plan is developed for students who are not responding.

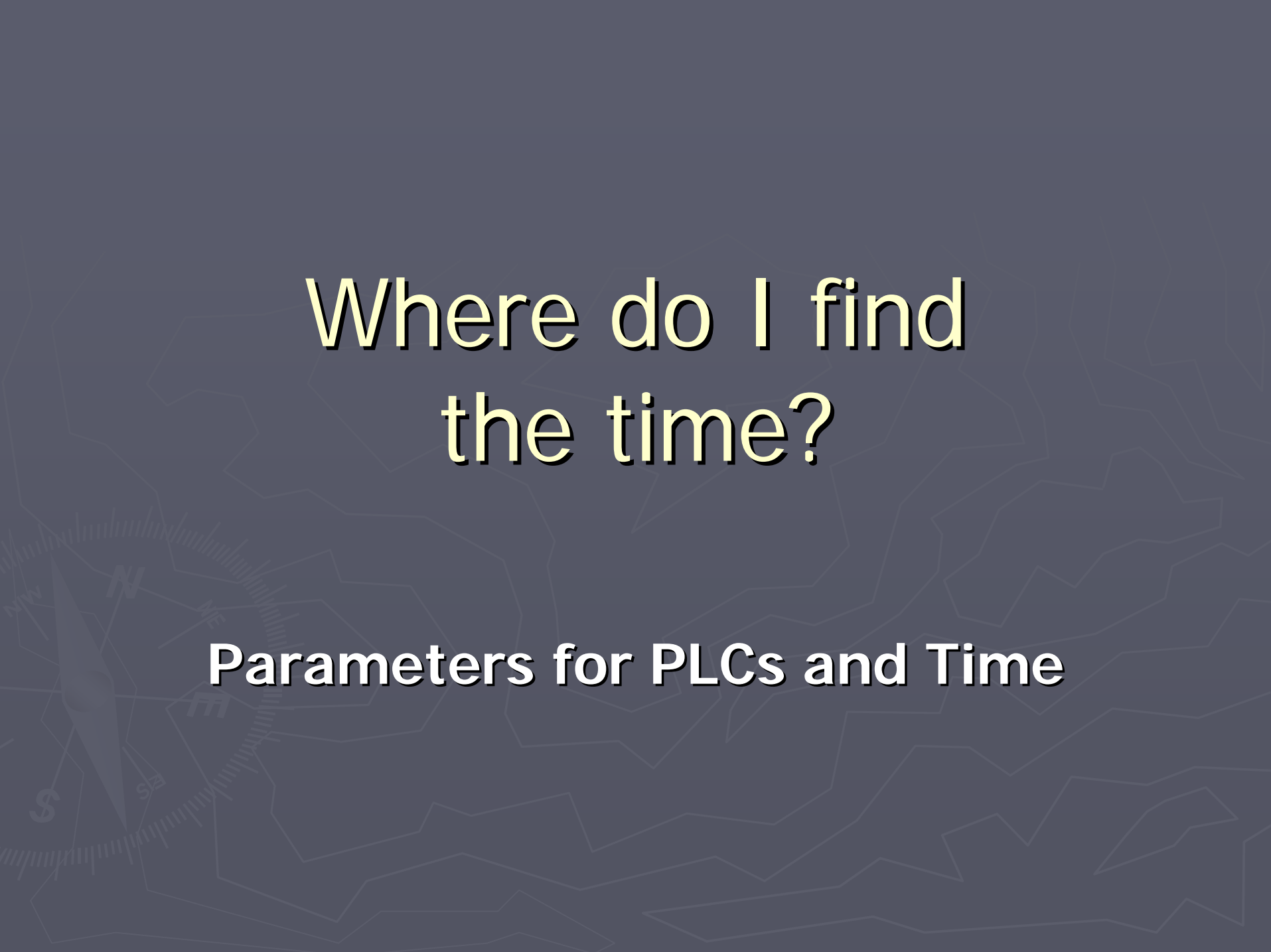
Cultural Shift: Research and Results

Traditional

- ▶ Effectiveness of improvement strategies is externally validated.
- ▶ Emphasis is placed on how teachers like various approaches.

PLCs

- ▶ Approaches are internally validated. Try various approaches that affect student learning.
- ▶ Effect of student learning is basis for assessing various improvement strategies.

The background features a faint, light-colored compass rose on the left side, with a needle pointing towards the top-left. To the right of the compass, there is a stylized, light-colored map of Europe. The entire background is a dark, muted blue-grey color.

Where do I find
the time?

Parameters for PLCs and Time

Get Rid of Excuses and Find the Time - Parameters

- ▶ Students must come to school-cannot stay home
- ▶ Cannot lose instructional time
- ▶ Cannot increase costs-salary
- ▶ Stay within contract
- ▶ PLCs should meet at least on a regular basis
- an hour at a time
- ▶ PLCs should be built into regular school schedule

Get Rid of Excuses and Find the Time - Ideas

- ▶ Adjust hours within work week
- ▶ Have large group activities/assemblies-others supervise so teachers can meet
- ▶ Give up faculty meeting time
- ▶ Fewer committee meetings
- ▶ Common planning time/parallel scheduling
- ▶ Use staff development or SAC funds for substitutes
- ▶ Give parameters for reporting outcome of meeting-help them stay on task!
- ▶ Make time!

High Performing PLCs

- ▶ Willingness to consider matters from another's perspective
- ▶ Accurate understanding of spoken and unspoken feeling and concerns of members
- ▶ Willingness to confront a team member who does not participate/contribute
- ▶ Communicate positive regard, caring and respect
- ▶ Willingness and ability to evaluate the team's own effectiveness

High Performing PLCs - Continued

- ▶ Seeking feedback about and evidence of team effectiveness from internal and external sources
- ▶ Maintaining a positive attitude and outlook
- ▶ Solving problems-be proactive
- ▶ Awareness of how group contributes to the purpose and goals of the larger organization
- ▶ Establishes own protocols-reviews and addresses violations

Leadership and PLCs

Traditional

- ▶ Administrators viewed as leaders and teachers as followers.
- ▶ Improvement efforts frequently shift as new fads or trends come along.

PLCs

- ▶ Administrators are viewed as leaders of leaders. Teachers are viewed as transformational leaders.
- ▶ Leader protects, promotes and defends school vision and values and confronts behavior that is incongruent with school's vision and values.

Professional Learning Communities Key to Improved Results

Powerful, proven structures for improved results already exist. They begin when a group of teachers meet regularly as a team to identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative assessments, analyze current levels of achievement, set achievement goals, and then share and create lessons and strategies to improve upon those levels.

Mike Schmoker, 2005

Implications and Ideas



“God didn’t create self-contained classrooms, fifty minute periods, and subjects taught in isolation. We did-because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together.”

(Barth 1991)

Research SAYS...

- Collegiality is also important for teachers. Collegiality can be expressed through experiencing challenging and stimulating work, creating school improvement plans, and leading curriculum development groups. The literature suggests that collegiality is directly linked to effective schools (Johnson 1986; Glatthorn and Fox 1996), where "teachers valued and participated in norms of collegiality and continuous improvement (experimentation)" (Little 1982, 1).

Sabal's Professional Learning Community

- ▶ Sabal
- ▶ Educators
- ▶ Evolving through
- ▶ Discussion

- ▶ Once a month,
Tuesday meeting

- ▶ To meet teacher's
need for **autonomy**
and collegiality!



Research SAYS...

- Feedback is the factor most strongly related to job satisfaction, yet teachers typically receive very little accurate and helpful feedback regarding their teaching.



SEED Recognition of Best Practices

- ▶ SEED recognizes its highest achievers by starting each meeting with staff recognition for best practices witnessed during Classroom Walk-Throughs.
- ▶ Teachers are given small tokens of appreciation or recognition in front of peers for a job well done.

Research SAYS...



- Find the time to build professional development into the life of schools.
- Reorganize the school day to enable teachers to work together as well as individually, both daily and weekly, and throughout the year.
- Redefine the teaching job to include blocks of extended time for teachers' professional development.

SEED Time

- ▶ Traded one faculty meeting for a SEED meeting per month



SEED Agendas

- ▶ Looking at item specifications
- ▶ Discussing ideas from recent trainings
- ▶ Best Practices discussion
- ▶ Connecting with Activity Teachers
- ▶ Bending rules for student success
- ▶ Giving input for the School Improvement Plan
- ▶ Problem-solving safety issues
- ▶ Cross-curricular planning

Research SAYS...

- **Autonomy** is strongly related to **job satisfaction** for many, but not all, teachers. Autonomy is not necessarily defined as freedom from interference in the classroom; rather, **the majority of teachers view autonomy as freedom to develop collegial relationships to accomplish tasks.**

SEED Meeting Division

- ▶ Teachers hold the key leadership positions at the meeting by facilitating the discussion groups.
- ▶ Agendas are created by teachers and their identified needs in the classrooms.
- ▶ Teachers collaboratively agree upon curriculum focuses on what students are expected to learn.

Small SEED Groups

- ▶ Reading Group
- ▶ Math Group
- ▶ Science Group
- ▶ Writing Group

- ▶ These groups are composed of a representative from each grade level so there is vertical articulation.

- ▶ Activity Group
- ▶ Ex. Ed. Group

SEED Activity Group

- ▶ All grade level chairs are responsible for completing the Monthly Curriculum Update to share with Activity Teachers.
- ▶ This update helps Activity Teachers align their curriculum to extend what the teacher is teaching in the classroom.

SEED Ex-Ed Group

- ▶ This group provides another opportunity for the ex-ed support team to plan and identify needs with our two Autistic Units.
- ▶ All other self-contained teachers are spread among different curriculum areas so they are aware of best practices in the different content areas.

Research SAYS...

- ▶ Help teachers to assume responsibility for their own professional development based on an analysis of the needs of students in their own schools. Professional development goals, standards for student learning, and standards for professional practice should be decided locally by the school community of teachers, administrators, and parents. In addition, teachers and administrators should collaborate in each district to create peer assistance and review to nurture the practice of all teachers.

Plant the SEED at your school



Vertical Articulation Committee Port Malabar Elementary School

*A Professional Learning Community
that makes a difference.*

What are Professional Learning Communities?

- ▶ Teachers and administrators in a school continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. (Richard-Rebecca DuFour)
- ▶ The goal of our Vertical Articulation Committee (VAC) is to enhance effectiveness as professionals so that student achievement improves.

Close the Achievement Gap

Challenge to Port Malabar Teachers

August 2005

- Are our students moving beyond average test scores? (Student Desktop data)
- Do we have high expectations for our students? (Daggett, Harris Seminar, May 5, 2005)
- Are we using professional learning communities and promoting teacher collaboration? (Daggett, Harris Seminar, May 5, 2005)

Sunshine State Standards

- ▶ “Florida has more standards than most other States” ...2/3 of our Sunshine State Standards are not tested at all” ... Dr. Willard Daggett
- ▶ “Florida has a huge number of standards spread all over the place” ...Dr. Max Thompson
- ▶ Port Malabar Teachers..... “We don’t have enough *time* to cover all of the standards”.

Vertical Articulation Committee - Where Do We Begin?

- ✓ Veteran Teacher from each Grade Level & ESE.
- ✓ Three 8-hour days.
- ✓ Reviewed all school data together.
- ✓ Reviewed "***BIG 9***":
 - ✓ Reading-Words & Phrases, Main Idea, Compare-Contrast, Reference & Research.
 - ✓ Math-Number Sense, Measurement, Geometry, Algebraic thinking, Data Analysis-Probability





FCAT Reading School Achievement Levels

Port Malabar Elementary

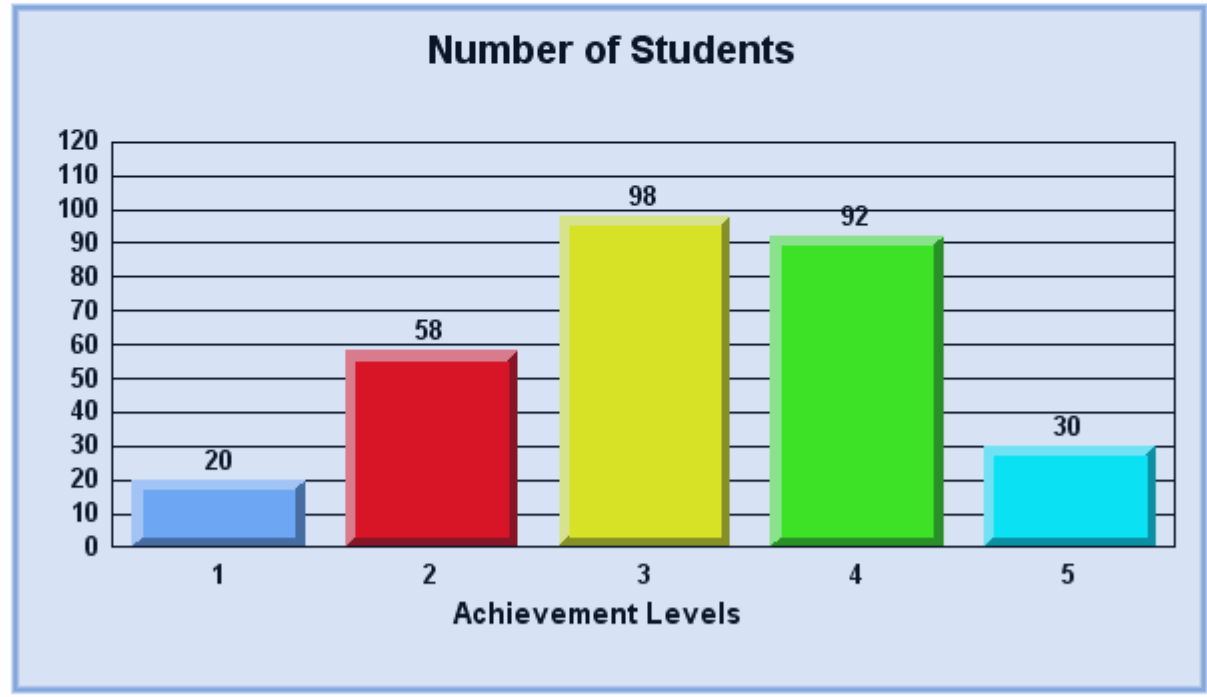
Number of Students





FCAT Math School Achievement Levels

Port Malabar Elementary



L37 fx

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
	6th Grade Reading					6th Grade Math											
		Words/Phrases	Main Idea Purpose	Comparison	Reference/ Research		# Sense	Measurement	Geometry	Alg. Thinking	Data Analysis						
Teacher A																	
2001		64	78	70	70		63	46	77	53	65						
Teacher B																	
2001		69	78	69	65		57	44	70	47	65						
2002		69	79	69	67		62	45	75	57	60						
2003		84	81	82	70		77	72	85	79	71						
2004		79	78	83	70		75	70	84	78	74						
Teacher C																	
2001		70	79	70	69		67	53	78	59	70						
2002		66	74	62	59		67	68	57	79	66						
2003		77	77	76	67		71	81	87	76	65						
2004		80	83	81	74		70	63	81	66	76						
2005		83	84	84	80		73	66	83	69	72						
Teacher D																	
2001		68	81	73	71		62	49	72	61	71						
2002		65	72	68	60		65	54	64	59	54						
2003		74	72	71	66		66	72	86	63	63						
2004		81	83	72	71		63	58	71	64	66						
2005		83	82	68	71		60	60	71	64	77						
Teacher E																	
2001		63	71	66	64		56	46	74	51	53						
2002		64	73	62	61		59	36	74	53	50						
2003		77	74	73	67		65	75	80	76	57						
2004		79	80	75	69		58	53	71	55	74						
2005		74	80	73	69		56	52	71	55	72						



VAC Questions

- ▶ What do we expect students to know as a result of being in our class?
- ▶ How will we know when they have learned it?
- ▶ How do we provide support for the students who haven't learned it yet?



VAC Learnings & Findings



- ❑ Teachers enjoyed the collaboration & wanted more time to do this type of work together.
- ❑ Teachers were surprised at some of the data findings.
- ❑ K-2 teachers felt as if they were off-track in regards to the priorities of 3-6.
- ❑ Teachers recognized the need to reduce the Standards to recover more classroom time.

VAC Curriculum Findings

- ❑ Curriculum does not reflect enough of tested FCAT.
- ❑ Anthology stories not challenging enough.
- ❑ Leveled readers too low. Most 1.5-2.0 below.
- ❑ Not enough practice of the BIG 9 in workbooks and resource materials.
- ❑ Weak vocabulary and spelling.
- ❑ Story assessments not aligned with the BIG 9.
- ❑ Skills are not revisited.



VAC Action Items

- ❑ Identified depth and quality of tested item covered.
- ❑ Noticed the frequency of all SSS relationship to FCAT. Changed the way we track & monitor SSS.
- ❑ Eliminated many SSS not tested so more time could be spent on higher impact items.
- ❑ Developed weekly assessments for each grade level covering the BIG 9.



VAC Action Items

- ❑ Aligned K-2 Curriculum with FCAT Big 9.
- ❑ Teacher faculty meeting presentations on Big 9 strategies to do with your class.
- ❑ Developed (developing) Strategy Notebook for each teacher targeting weak curriculum areas.



PLCs-VAC Conclusion



We have agreed on essential outcomes of each unit of instruction, develop common assessments, and establish the performance level that would indicate mastery.

We have a clearer picture of our curriculum grades K-6 and the relationship of our SSS to the FCAT. **VAC has given us a clearer and more defined focus.** We have found out we can't create more time, but we can **choose our focus.**

We **won't just teach, test, and hope for the best.** We will set the bar, look at the data, and adjust **our** behavior.



Professional Learning Communities

Southwest Middle School

Creating a Culture

- ▶ Scheduling Time – Flexing Hours & Common Planning
- ▶ G.I.V.E. – Garnering Inspirations & Visits of Encouragement
- ▶ C.O.L.T. – Celebrating Outstanding Learning & Teaching
- ▶ Empowering Exceptional Teachers
 - Curriculum Leaders (a.k.a. Department Heads)
 - Interdisciplinary Team Leaders
 - Intra-disciplinary Team Leaders
 - National Board Certified Mentors
 - Faculty Meeting Presenters
 - Professional Training Cadre Leaders
 - SAC Leadership

Examples of Professional Learning Communities

- ▶ Interdisciplinary Curriculum Guidebook
- ▶ Professional Training Cadres
- ▶ Intra-disciplinary Common Assessments
- ▶ 7th Period vs. Block Schedule Ad Hoc
- ▶ Team Data Analysis and Team Plan
- ▶ Reading Leadership Cadre

The Power of Professional Learning Communities

- ▶ The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. **The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities.**

Definition

- ▶ Groups are considered professional learning communities if they:
 - identify new programs or topics to investigate
 - gather research and studies on new approaches
 - share their findings or implement and study the effects of new practices and share these results with other faculty in the school.

Characteristics of a Professional Learning Community

- ▶ Shared mission, vision, values, goals
- ▶ Collaborative teams
- ▶ Collective inquiry into “best practices” and our “current reality”
- ▶ Action orientation/experimentation
- ▶ Commitment to continuous improvement
- ▶ Results orientation

Proposal to Consider

- ▶ Organize into collaborative teams on the basis of common courses, vertical teams, or interdisciplinary teams
- ▶ Each team will 1) clarify essential outcomes per semester; 2) develop common assessments; 3) establish standards of mastery for each assessment; 4) analyze results; 5) develop and implement strategies to improve results

Building Blocks to Consider

- ▶ Student Achievement Data – FCAT
- ▶ Discipline Data
- ▶ Satisfaction Data
- ▶ Demographic Data

How Can I Implement This In My School?

- ▶ Teams
- ▶ Academies
- ▶ ?????

Group Processing

- ▶ Get in groups:
 - 2 district level groups
 - 2 elementary groups
 - Secondary schools
 - Charter schools
- ▶ School-based groups – “What is something new you heard today that you could incorporate into your school using PLCs?”
- ▶ District-based groups – “How could you incorporate PLC concepts to improve the quality and services of your departments?”
- ▶ Report out/group memory