

Session Title:

The New Type of PLC - a CCOL

MSP Project Name:

Promoting Excellence in Arizona Middle School Mathematics

Presenters:

Trey Cox, CGCC

Scott Adamson, CGCC

Authors:

Trey Cox, CGCC

Project Session**Strand 2****Summary:**

There are many different professional development models that are currently referred to as professional learning communities. Initiating our project we knew that many of the teachers we would be working with would have prior experiences – both positive and negative – with PLCs. Consequently, we chose to define the work we do with teachers outside of the project Saturday workshops and summer institutes as Collaborative Community of Learners (CCOLs). By choosing the name CCOL, we placed the heaviest emphasis on the notion of being “learners”. Building and supporting learners is the emphasis of our MSP including the project leaders, the CCOL facilitators, the participating teachers, the school administrators, the parents and school board members, and most importantly the students.

Section 1: Questions framing the session:

Our session will be built around five questions including:

1. What is a CCOL and why include them?
2. What is the Mission & Vision of the CCOLs?
3. What is the Framework and Logistics of the CCOLs?
4. What are the Early Results?
5. What are the Future Plans?

Section 2: Conceptual framework:

Our work with CCOLs in the context of our overall AMP project is focused around the “Different Perspectives on Implementation” strand. The CCOLs are an integral part of our overall effort to provide professional development for the teachers involved in our project as well as their administrators. In addition to summer institutes and Saturday workshops that focus most intensely on building up the content knowledge of middle school math, the CCOLs are designed to concentrate on pedagogical content knowledge and pedagogy. In intimate setting of 4 – 6 teachers from the same school/district with one trained facilitator is a much safer environment to work on real change in the classroom.

In addition, the CCOL is well equipped to deal with specific teacher needs by helping to intervene directly in their classrooms upon invitation. Facilitators observe and look for Common Core Standards in the teachers' instruction and even will teach a lesson upon invitation and allow the teacher to observe and critique him or her. This presentation will explain the intricacies of these and other aspects of the CCOLs.

Section 3: Explanatory framework:

Since this project has not even completed its first year, most of the results come from anecdotal evidence including self-reporting at this point but is still important to report. Teachers have been open to suggestions to improve their instruction, asked for activities or lessons to use in their classes, and they have been very welcoming in their willingness to allow facilitators full access to their classrooms. Furthermore, some have taken advantage of asking the facilitator to teach a particular lesson so they can "see" what CCSS-type instruction looks like and participated in post-instructional discussions to understand the "why's" and "how's" of both lesson design and implementation.

Section 4: Discussion:

Reviewing what has transpired so far, the CCOL facilitators see teachers making their practice public by freely opening up their classrooms to observation and critique. Instructional Rounds will be introduced in Spring 2013 to further this process along by inviting administrators to join the facilitator and colleagues to watch lessons and then be part of discussions in CCOL sessions to improve instruction. A "Show-and-Tell" event is being planned for the Summer Institute whereby each CCOL will report on a few things they have learned this year to all of the teachers and project leaders in a public setting. Participating teachers have already presented to their school boards and will be encouraged and supported financially to present at conferences alongside project leaders. It is the intention of the CCOL facilitators to continue to build content, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge in their community as well as begin to engage parents and the community through events planned for them as well.

What we have learned about CCOL implementation can be very valuable to other MSPs because we believe that we have generated a model along with the content knowledge focused workshops and summer institutes that are being quite successful in beginning the change process. We believe that aspects of our approach can be readily incorporated into other projects to enhance their efforts and success rate.

Section 5: How will you structure this session? What is your plan for participant interaction?

We plan to begin with a presentation of the aspects of what, why, and how of CCOLs with the inclusion of teacher video and/or communications to give examples of what we are seeing in our teachers. We will provide CCOL agenda frameworks that others can use in their projects. Finally, it is our hope that other MSP projects that are further along in the process will have valuable input for us as we hope to benefit them too by sharing what we believe to be a different approach to PLCs than what we have seen or read about in other settings.