

**Session Title:**

Being Responsive to Partnership Need While Maintaining Fidelity of Implementation

**MSP Project Name:**

College Ready

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**Project Session****Strand 1****Summary:**

This session describes three implementation adjustments experienced during the life of the College Ready in Mathematics and Physics Partnership. In preparation for the Common Core State Standards, all curriculum in the Mathematics Master Teacher sequence has been aligned to CCSSM since the initial draft was released. In the Physics Master Teacher sequence, two primary changes were made based on partner need: the development of curriculum wrappers for workshop activities and a shift to primarily utilizing grade-band groups. A third adjustment has been the expansion of training in developing and facilitating Professional Learning Communities. This session will explicate data that indicated these adjustments were merited, as well as how changes have enhanced the implementation of College Ready constructs across the Partnership.

**Section 1: Questions framing the session:**

How can MSPs respond to partner need while maintaining fidelity to the original mission, vision, goals, and strategic plan of the partnership?

**Section 2: Conceptual framework:**

The College Ready in Mathematics and Physics Partnership is a targeted MSP that spans multiple geographical regions in Arkansas and Oklahoma and includes 39 core partner districts, ranging in size from below 300 to above 18,000 students, two university core partners, and numerous supporting partners in both industry and education. The mission of *College Ready* is “to enhance mathematics and physics learning for all students in its partner districts and teacher-preparation programs in partner institutions, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students for success in mathematics, science, and teaching careers. This will be achieved by building learning communities of 7-12 teachers and college faculty that foster and nurture smooth access to, productive disposition toward, and preparation for success in college.”

The primary constructs utilized to achieve this mission are the development of master teachers in mathematics and physics, and the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across core partner districts, schools, and institutions of higher education. The master teacher sequence consists of a three-year series of intensive summer professional development coupled with mid-year follow-up workshops and on-going support throughout the academic year. The vehicle for institutionalizing the content and pedagogical changes intended through *College Ready* is the implementation of PLCs between and among the core partner schools and institutions. This proposal fits within Strand 1: Life Cycle of Implementation, as the following discussion describes specific examples of how *College Ready* has responded to the needs of core partner teachers and administrators within these specific areas.

### **Section 3: Explanatory framework:**

#### *Mathematics Master Teacher Workshops*

Given *College Ready's* inception in 2009, the original Strategic Plan provided for alignment of professional development activities to the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks and Oklahoma PASS Objectives. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics (CCSSM) by Arkansas and Oklahoma, as both states are members of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), provided *College Ready* the opportunity to be at the forefront of preparing to implement CCSSM. As the CCSSM were in development and under review, *College Ready* began incorporating the proposed *Standards for Mathematical Practice* and *Standards for Mathematical Content* into all Mathematics Master Teacher (MMT) workshop activities.

The strong vertical alignment across content levels of the CCSSM allowed *College Ready* to adjust components associated with the MMT sequence. The original plan was to develop the vertical articulation of content within workshops independent of MMT sessions. Because vertical articulation is such a strong feature of the CCSSM, workshop facilitators were able to reconfigure MMT workshops to capitalize on this strength by grouping workshop participants in vertical teams to develop lessons for their content area that could be scaled up or scaled down for utilization in higher- or lower-level content areas. By requiring teams to align lessons with both current state standards and the CCSSM, MMT participants examined the content knowledge students should acquire along the K-12 continuum in order to meet the more rigorous requirements associated with the CCSSM. According to feedback provided by MMT participants, *College Ready* has been the primary resource related to implementing CCSSM, as the majority of participants indicate they are prepared for the challenges associated with the transition to CCSSM thanks to their involvement in the MMT sequence.

#### *Physics Master Teacher Workshops*

The first year of the Physics Master Teacher (PMT) workshops resulted in several major adjustments to the original Strategic Plan. One of the initial findings related to the PMT was the lack of content knowledge that many participants demonstrated during the first week-long summer workshop. The recognition of these deficiencies resulted in an increased focus on deep conceptual understanding of the content, through modeling the

entire intellectual process of the learning cycle, instead of presenting activities with discussion of how they would be situated within the learning cycle for students. “Wrappers” for each major activity were prepared. Not only were these wrappers designed to help better engage teachers in their learning, but they also provided guidance on how to use the materials in PLCs. These wrappers have continued to be a staple of workshop activities as new cohorts of participants have progressed through the three-year workshop sequence.

An additional adjustment stemming from year one PMT workshops was the configuration of groups in subsequent years of workshops. During the first-year PMT workshops, participants indicated that the sessions would be more effective if a horizontal teaming approach was utilized throughout the majority of activities during the workshop. In response to this feedback, the PMT workshops were reorganized for the second summer of professional development to allow junior high school and high school teachers to work primarily with instructional experts in their grade bands for most of the week-long workshop. However, vertical teaming activities were also included in which all participants explored the content progression along the arc of grades from junior high to high school. This adjustment was well-received by participants and has remained a productive component of all PMT workshops over the course of the Partnership.

#### *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)*

Within *College Ready*, PLCs have been the structure under which all Partnership activities have been unified. Although PLC concepts and practices for effective implementation have been emphasized across master teacher workshops, administrators’ workshops, Steering Committee meetings, and university faculty workshops, it became evident through feedback from participants that more direct, formal training in PLCs was needed. In response to recommendations from school partners, *College Ready* re-allocated resources during 2011-2013 in order to conduct a series of workshops related specifically to PLCs.

The first PLC workshops were held in summer 2011, as these two-day sessions consisted of the “nuts-and-bolts” aspects of developing new or enhancing existing PLCs in core partner schools. These workshops were intentionally designed to focus on the important roles both administrators and teachers have in developing a school culture where PLCs can flourish. During these workshops, participants were introduced to effective PLC practices through the use of two components: video vignettes and a *PLC Efficacy Rubric* that were developed in response to a dearth of resources available for this type of workshop. The primary objective of using the video vignettes with the PLC Efficacy Rubric was to actualize PLCs, which can be a fairly ubiquitous concept, while engaging participants in learning how to observe, critique and provide feedback (administrators) or self-assess (teachers) the efficacy of individual PLCs. Based on the positive feedback and success of this workshop, this workshop was held in summer 2012 as well.

Throughout the Partnership’s existence, a commonly-recurring theme has been the lack of specific training available for how to effectively facilitate PLCs at the macro (campus/administrative) and micro (group) levels. To meet this need, two sessions of the

*PLCs: The Facilitators' Role* workshop were conducted during summer 2012 with the primary purpose of equipping administrators and teachers from partner schools with knowledge of how to facilitate PLCs that are effective in enhancing teacher content and pedagogical content knowledge that will increase student learning and achievement. This workshop provided PLC teams the opportunity to function as a high-performing collaborative unit within a structured environment to develop implementation plans for the new school year while receiving immediate, contextualized feedback from the workshop facilitator. During summer 2013, the final year of the Partnership, four PLC workshops are scheduled that will combine the content of the two independent workshops into three-day sessions that will be designed for core school partners who are still in the earliest stages of PLC implementation.

#### **Section 4: Discussion:**

The previous section discusses how we have responded to the findings as we have progressed through the life of the Partnership. During the past four years *College Ready* has benefited from the experiences of other MSPs that have overcome challenges associated with achieving the goals of the Partnership. The findings and subsequent adjustments to professional development offerings presented in this proposal can inform other MSPs by providing exemplars of how to respond to partner needs and feedback while maintaining fidelity of implementation as it relates to achieving the mission, vision, and goals outlined in the original strategic plan of the Partnership.

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

This session will be structured to encourage participants to ask questions related to our implementation while addressing concerns or needs they have observed in their own MSP. The session will include a presentation of each of the areas addressed in this proposal, which will be followed by an open floor session for discussion.