Protocol for Establishing PLC Norms

Purpose

This protocol guides professional learning community (PLC) teams in creating shared norms that promote a respectful, productive, and collaborative environment. Establishing these norms helps ensure that all meetings are effective, focused, and aligned with the team’s goals.

Suggested Time: 60–90 minutes

Protocol

Step 1: Establish Roles and Set Norms (3 minutes)

1. The facilitator
2. Ensures that each role for the session is filled: facilitator, timekeeper, notetaker
3. Reminds the group of meeting norms: pausing, paraphrasing, posing questions, putting ideas on the table, providing data, paying attention to self and others, and presuming positive intentions
4. Clarifies the session’s purpose: to establish or reset group norms for the PLC

Step 2: Reflect on Past Practices (10–15 minutes)

1. The facilitator
2. Asks team members to reflect on past PLC or teacher meetings and to identify and write down behaviors, decisions, or actions that have done the following:
* helped meetings be effective and productive
* hindered meetings from being effective and productive
1. Asks team members to share their ideas, beginning with what has helped
2. The notetaker captures notes on chart paper or a whiteboard for the group to see.

Step 3: Review Existing or Baseline Norms (5–10 minutes)

1. The facilitator shares a set of baseline norms and asks the team to review.
2. If this is the first time the team has set norms, the facilitator should share a sample set of norms.
3. If teams have already established a set of norms for their PLC, these should be shared and made visible to the team.
4. After the team has reviewed the norms that have been shared, the facilitator asks for and answers any clarifying questions.

Step 4: Crosswalk Norms With Reflections (10–20 minutes)

1. The facilitator
2. Asks team members to individually identify norms from the current draft that do the following:
* promote helpful behaviors
* mitigate behaviors that hinder productivity
1. Asks members, after they have had time to reflect, to share and discuss their ideas

Step 5: Revise and Add Norms (15–25 minutes)

1. After team members have discussed how the current norms help to promote desired behaviors and mitigate undesired behaviors, the facilitator asks team members to silently consider and record the following:
2. Norms from the current set that should be kept, removed, or revised
3. New norms to add to the current set
4. Consider using an anonymous “sticky note” activity (physical or digital) whereby team members can suggest norms to keep, remove, or revise. This approach can encourage open and honest input.
5. Once team members have had enough time to record their ideas, the facilitator uses the following process to revise the current set of norms:
6. Asks for a volunteer to propose one idea (e.g., a norm to revise, keep, remove, or add)
7. Asks the team to discuss the idea and decide whether they want to make the change
8. Once the team has decided, asks another volunteer to share until all ideas have been heard
9. The notetaker keeps track of the discussion and records all norms that are agreed upon by the group.

Step 6: Prioritize and Finalize New Norms (10 minutes)

1. Once the new set of revised norms has been established, the facilitator asks team members to review the final list. If the list is very long, team members may be asked to determine which norms could be removed.
2. Once everyone has had time to review, the facilitator leads a discussion to ensure all team members agree with the final set of norms.

Step 7: Document and Display the Norms (3 minutes)

1. The notetaker documents the finalized norms in a clear and concise format.
2. The facilitator asks the team to consider creating a visually appealing poster or digital graphic of the norms for easy reference during meetings. Displaying these norms in the regular meeting space can serve as a reminder for the team to uphold them consistently.

Step 8: Prepare Next Steps (2–3 minutes)

1. The facilitator asks each team member to share one specific way the team member will personally uphold the norms in future meetings, reinforcing accountability.
2. Plan a check-in during a future meeting to review and reflect on the norms’ effectiveness, adjusting as necessary to support continued productivity and respect within the PLC.