

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, June, 2016

Professional Learning Communities

During the 2015-16 school year, teachers throughout the Plainville Community School District have met in Professional Learning Communities. These teams met six times during shortened school days to discuss how to improve student learning. Elementary teachers met in grade level teams, while secondary teachers met with colleagues who teach in the same or similar disciplines.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) are a process whereby teachers work collaboratively to look at student work and assessment results in order to achieve better results for the children they serve. PLC's operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. During PLC meetings teachers look at student work to determine if they have met the teaching standard. Educators discuss what to do for students who have not yet met the standard as well as for those students who have surpassed the standard.

This past year our teachers have read the book by Michael Fullan entitled, Cultures Built to Last, which gave the entire school district a common understanding of why we need to make teaching as collaborative as possible. As we head into the 2016-17 school year, we want to expand our work in this regard. To that end, we will increase our shortened days dedicated to PLC work from 6 days to 11 days. Surveys given to teachers in January of this year indicate that they have found great value in the PLC process, but need additional time to make it even more effective. In order to make it as predictable as possible for families, all shortened days in the upcoming school year will fall on Wednesdays. I have attended PTO meetings throughout the district to speak to

parents about this work and have alerted area daycares to the additional shortened days.

Plainville Community Schools are very fortunate to have universal support for this PLC work from the Board of Education as well as teachers and administrators, who understand that student learning is the most fundamental purpose of our schools. All of our teachers have already done an amazing job of examining their practices and cultivating a collaborative culture of high-performing teams. The additional time next year will only enhance their work on behalf of our students and insure that Plainville continues to “get it right.”