

Is This Candidate a Good Fit for Our PLC?

Questions to assess if the candidate is a good fit with the big ideas of a PLC:

1. The purpose of our school is to ensure that all students learn, rather than to make sure they are taught.
I'm going to present you with four statements. Please tell me which statement is closest to your personal philosophy and elaborate on your thinking.
 - a. "I believe all students can learn based on their ability."
 - b. "I believe all students can learn if they take advantage of the opportunities we give them to learn."
 - c. "I believe all students can learn something, but it is more important that we create a warm and caring environment than fixating on academic achievement."
 - d. "I believe all students can learn and we should be committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure all students learn at high levels."
2. If, at the end of the first semester, you discovered that 50 percent of your students were failing, would it trouble you? (*Then drop the percentage:* How about 25 percent? 15 percent? 10 percent?)
3. We have all encountered a student who simply does not want to work, but is not a behavior problem and is not interfering with the learning of others. How have you responded to such a student?
4. One of your colleagues states that there is little a teacher can do to help a student who is just not interested in learning. Would you respond, and if so, how would you respond?
5. How would you respond to this assertion: "The major causes of learning do not fall within the teacher's sphere of influence. Student learning will be determined primarily by factors such as innate ability, parental support, the socioeconomic conditions in which the student lives, and the beliefs and behaviors of the student's peer group."
6. If we are to help all students learn, we must work collaboratively and collectively. How would you respond to the following statement:
"A teacher is a professional who deserves wide-ranging autonomy regarding what to teach, how to teach, how to assess, and how to run his or her classroom. I would not presume to advise another teacher how to run his or her classroom, and I would not be receptive to a teacher offering unsolicited advice to me."
7. Think of a time when you were part of a group or team that led to better results for its members and a more satisfying professional experience. Think of another time when you were part of a group or team and it was a negative experience. What factors contributed to the difference?
8. Imagine you are on a team that is experiencing significant conflict. How would you respond?

1. If you were assigned to a teaching team and encouraged to collaborate, on what questions or issues do you believe the team should focus its efforts?
2. "Do you want to be the teacher with the highest student achievement in our school or a member of a team whose students all achieve at high levels?" (Smith, 2015, p. 6).
3. We say in our vision statement that we will work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the success of our students. What does that phrase mean to you? Can you give me examples of how a staff might take collective responsibility for student success?
4. It is important to focus on results, rather than intentions. What is your understanding of the terms *formative assessment* and *summative assessment*? Can you cite examples of when and how you have used each of these assessments in your teaching experience? What do you feel is the primary purpose of assessing students?
5. What is your reaction to this statement: "Teachers of the same course or grade level should use common assessments so each member of the team can determine the achievement of his or her students compared to other students attempting to acquire the same knowledge and skills."
6. What is your reaction to this statement: "Teachers and students benefit when evidence of student learning is easily accessible and openly shared among members of the teaching team."
7. It has been said that in most schools the quality of a student's work is assessed primarily upon the idiosyncrasies of the teacher to whom that student is assigned. What is your reaction to that statement? Can you think of steps a school might take to provide more consistent feedback to students?
8. It's the end of your first year. I ask you to provide me with evidence you have been an effective teacher. What will you give me?

Other important questions to explore:

1. What is your understanding of the term *professional learning community*? How would you explain that term to someone completely unfamiliar with it? In what ways, if any, is the PLC process different from traditional schooling?
2. I'm a student in your class the first day. Help me understand your expectations regarding the classroom environment.
3. I'm one of your students. Help me understand the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions I will acquire as a result of being in your classroom.
4. What does the research tell us about effective teaching strategies?
5. What should I have asked you that I didn't, a question you would want to ask a teaching candidate?
6. If you are offered this position, what could we do to make this a great school year for you?
7. What questions do you have for me?

References

Smith, W. R. (2015). *How to launch PLCs in your district*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.