

Is This Candidate a Good PLC Fit?

Effective PLCs exist because staff members share a common commitment to the key qualities of a PLC: a commitment to the success of all students, a belief in the power of collaboration, and adoption of an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning. When hiring new staff members, the following questions (DuFour, 2009) can help determine a candidate's commitment to PLC principles.

The Purpose of Our School Is to Ensure That All Students Learn, Rather Than Are Taught

1. Which of the following statements is closest to your personal philosophy?
I believe all students can learn . . .
 - Based on their ability
 - If they take advantage of the opportunities we give them to learn
 - Something, but it is more important that we create a warm and caring environment than fixating on academic achievement
 - 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 run into a student who simply does not want to work but does not have a behavior problem and is not interfering with the learning of others. How have you responded to that 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 do 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."

If We Are to Help All Students Learn, We Must Work Collaboratively and Collectively

1. Which of these statements is closest to your personal philosophy?
 - 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.
 - The challenge of helping all students learn demands a collaborative and coordinated effort. Teachers need to stop thinking in terms of "my kids" and "your kids" and work interdependently to promote the success of "our kids."
2. 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?

3. 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?

It Is Important to Focus on Results, Rather Than Intentions

1. What is your understanding of the term *formative assessment*? Can you cite examples of when and how you have used formative assessment in your teaching experience?
2. What is your reaction to the 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"?
3. What is your reaction to the statement "Teachers and students benefit when evidence of student learning is easily accessible and openly shared among members of the teaching team"?
4. Have you ever participated in a process where teachers worked together to establish the criteria by which they would judge the quality of student work and then practiced applying the criteria to examples of student work until they were certain they were providing consistent feedback? What is your reaction to that process?