

Table 7.1: Questions and Answers Related to Team Lesson Planning

Common Questions	Answers to Common Questions
Who is at the early childhood lesson–planning table?	The team should include all classroom teachers for one grade level plus those who support the daily learning for students in that grade level, including specialists, English language teachers, special education teachers, instructional coaches, and so on. If specialists are not able to be at the table, there is an expectation that they communicate with team members and access the documents and resources created during the collaborative planning time.
How can early childhood teams remain productive and efficient during their designated collaborative team planning time?	<p>To support productivity and efficiency, team members collaboratively decide who will fulfill certain roles for the team and for what duration (some teams rotate roles monthly or quarterly), such as the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Creates an agenda with topics and times, supports the team in sticking to team-designated agenda items, and poses important questions to the team to ensure current work leads to fulfilling long-term goals • Timekeeper: Helps keep the team on track by monitoring the designated time the team allots to each agenda item • Recorder: Captures important ideas, notes, and dates and ensures all team members have centralized access to the information discussed and recorded during the meeting; may also be the communicator of these ideas with administration, vertical teams, and specialists, as needed • Best-practice seeker: Poses questions to the team and looks for opportunities for the team to embed specific discipline-related best practices into lessons
Who facilitates the early childhood collaborative team planning meetings?	<p>Team members can take turns facilitating meetings. Just because your school doesn't have a designated facilitator, instructional coach, or content specialist to lead the meetings does not mean they won't be every bit as effective as long as the person serving as facilitator keeps the team focused on the right work of answering the four critical questions of a PLC. The following reflects this decision based on the participant's primary role.</p> <p>Teachers: All teachers can take turns facilitating meetings. Teams decide if this role will rotate monthly, by unit of study, or so on. Once a team clearly defines the expectations and duties of the facilitator, then teachers know which aspects of the role are tight and may facilitate differently based on individual styles. Being the facilitator does not mean being the rule maker or the only person who can speak. The facilitator is like a point guard in basketball or a conductor of a music ensemble. They make sure all participants are involved.</p> <p>Content specialists: A reading or mathematics specialist or instructional coach can support facilitation of meetings (if your school has one). In some instances, when schools are just beginning their learning journey of becoming a school that functions as a PLC, an administrator may facilitate meetings as a model for the teams.</p> <p>Cofacilitation: A content specialist and grade-level classroom teacher could meet briefly to set the agenda, each drawing on his or her background knowledge and strengths and then sharing the role of cofacilitator at the meeting. Teams can also share this collaborative effort between a grade-level classroom teacher and a special education or English language teacher, or so on.</p>
Who creates the early childhood team-meeting agendas for lesson planning?	The team can decide on topics for the next week's agenda at the end of every weekly team-planning meeting; or, the person facilitating the meeting can initially create a draft agenda, send it out in advance of the meeting, and ask the team members to add other agenda items or give feedback before the meeting.

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<p>How can the early childhood team capture and save shared ideas for lesson plans and instructional resources discussed in the team meeting?</p>	<p>It is extremely important to the collaborative process that resources created for use across the team are not housed on any one person's device but stored in a common drive or folder. As teams take collective responsibility for planning, it does not matter who actually creates a document or resource; rather, it needs to be saved electronically in a way that everyone has immediate and ongoing access to it without having to track down the person who made it, asking them to email it to them or print it out. There are several electronic tools available so teachers can have a common place to house lesson plans and instructional resources (assessments, learning tasks, student activities and games, pacing guides, and so on). Electronic tools that provide access for all teachers to edit and view the documents simultaneously is important. Educators all process information differently, so some team members may need time to go back and look at the ideas and tools discussed during the meeting. If a teacher is unable to attend a team meeting, it's also important for him or her to review what the team discussed and what lessons and resources the team will use with students for the week.</p> <p>While many teachers choose to use lesson-plan books or even sticky notes for their personal planning, weekly team planning (including agendas, notes, and resources that connect to the planning) should all be digital so team members can build on the ideas working for students year to year. Teams can also make electronic folders available to all other grade-level teams and specialists, so any teacher can view and use the instructional learning resources to either support or extend the students he or she is working with.</p>