



Birth-to-College

COLLABORATIVE TOOLKIT

How do program and school leaders support the early work of PLCs within a BTC approach?

Action Plan for Implementation for School and Program Leaders: Initial Implementation

HOW TO USE THE ACTION PLAN

An action plan accompanies each Birth-to-College (BTC) Implementation Guide for school and program leaders. This tool is intended to provide a place to document your school's process of exploring, installing, and implementing birth through 3rd grade alignment. Ideally, this tool is to be used in a group setting such as an alignment leadership team meeting. To use the action plan, first identify up to five (5) priorities out of the key decisions and strategies for implementation listed below for which you and your colleagues would like to focus. Once you have identified priorities, follow the instructions on page 4 for completing the action plan.

KEY DECISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Orient Staff Members to BTC PLCs:** Prepare staff members for working outside of their established silos (e.g., grade, age, discipline, classroom) by orienting them to the BTC model and how it can be advanced through the adoption of BTC PLCs. Orientations should illustrate that the framework for BTC PLCs is actually very different from other, more traditional forms of professional development. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that BTC PLCs are a more effective form of professional development that is inquiry-based, peer-led, collaborative and job-embedded. Moreover, orientations should also involve exposure to models, namely, successful professional learning communities in action. Exposure can occur in many ways, including shared readings, site visits to other schools for observation and outside speakers (e.g., teachers) who can describe their positive PLC experiences.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Site leaders must help facilitate staff participation in PLCs. However, members must trust one another before they will actively engage in the work of the PLC. Therefore, school and program leaders must create a safe space for members to share ideas, beliefs, thoughts and best practices with one another in a way that respects members' knowledge and professional expertise. Leaders should also provide guidance on the progress of PLC work in a supportive, constructive manner.

- **Cultivate Relationships:** PLC members will need to spend a significant amount of time getting to know one another’s practices by becoming acquainted with each other as well as with each other’s curricula and approaches to teaching and family engagement. Leaders can assist PLCs in these efforts by providing ample time and helping members establish trust and learn about each other’s school cultures, priorities, policies and practices through school visits, classroom observations and informal presentations. These activities are important because they allow members to see each other in their individual contexts and in action, providing a glimpse into daily work life as well as instructional approach. Leaders should anticipate that PLCs will not gel into cohesive groups overnight and that initial meetings will more than likely focus exclusively on relationship cultivation and development of trust.

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- **Nurture Relationships:** If alignments around professional development are to be successful over the longer term, fellowship between BTC PLC members will need to be prioritized and protected. Fledgling relationships can be insecure and will need to be nurtured for quite some time. Leaders should be aware that relational trust might have to be reaffirmed after long stretches between meetings (e.g., after summer break). Additionally, any changes to PLC membership will more than likely impact the dynamic of the group, and leaders will need to help PLCs weather these changes in a way that does not sacrifice a group’s established cohesion.
- **Support PLC Leaders:** PLC leaders will need continual guidance and support. Guidance may be provided through ongoing leadership training, especially relevant for those who have not had previous experience with practitioner-led exploration and learning. Support may come in the form of open channels of communication by which site leaders regularly touch base with PLC leaders. This may occur through face-to-face check-ins with those in your school building, brief written updates via email or simple reports to jointly fill in and share after each meeting. Ideally, communication channels will be bidirectional so that PLC leaders feel empowered to provide feedback just as they receive it.

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- **Identify Benchmarks:** Site leaders should expect to help PLCs set realistic short-term benchmarks for their work based on the longer-term goals of the partnership. Once in place, these benchmarks should stimulate potential paths of inquiry, allowing PLC members to self-direct their learning using research-based literature, learning standards and examples of best practice in the field.

- **Guide Inquiry:** Consider providing a process or sequence to guide PLC members' inquiry. For example, they may need assistance in backward mapping the necessary steps for reaching each benchmark, identifying appropriate deliverables and establishing realistic timelines for the completion of those deliverables. Ultimately, however, BTC PLCs are meant to be a rewarding experience for teachers and staff. Site leaders should be mindful that PLC members are not only accomplishing something that moves the schools toward alignment but are also benefitting from their experience as professionals. Specifically, PLC members should feel that they are engaging in a process that will strengthen not only their own knowledge base but also their classroom practices.

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- **Provide Opportunities for Cross-Pollination:** Leaders must recognize that cross-pollination of ideas, beliefs, thoughts and best practices will drive the adoption of a line-of-sight perspective from birth through college that is unique to alignment work. Therefore, leaders should seek to provide PLC members with many and varied opportunities to share with one another new ideas and lessons learned. For example, many K–12 practitioners would benefit from exposure to a social-emotional development perspective, a core tenet of the early childhood approach to education. PLC members might (1) review the literature on the contribution of social-emotional skill sets to later academic achievement, (2) observe early childhood education classrooms to see firsthand how social-emotional skills are fostered by teachers, or (3) brainstorm on how social-emotional competencies might contribute to later classroom success.
- **Be Actively Involved With Your PLCs:** Your role as a site leader in the development of PLCs is to mentor and support PLC leaders. Plan to monitor meetings periodically throughout the school year. This will give you insight into your staff's strengths and needs around each PLC topic area. Other benefits include (1) learning about the interaction styles and collaborative abilities of each PLC, (2) seeing firsthand strategies, solutions and innovations being explored by PLCs that might be likely candidates for schoolwide adoption, and (3) ensuring PLC work aligns with other ongoing professional development and standards for learning and practice.

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ACTION PLAN

From the list of Key Decisions and Strategies for Implementation, identify no more than 5 priorities, for which you and your colleagues would like to focus using the template below. For each priority, write in activities related to the priority, what types of tasks are related to the activity, who will be involved in the activity, when the activity will be completed, what supports and resources are needed to complete the activity, and next steps. Print action plans to organize and document priorities and activities as needed.

PRIORITY #__:				
ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PRIORITY #__				
ACTIVITY #__				
Tasks (list creation of "products" or "what to do" to meet activity/outcome)	Who (list all staff involved and lead)	By When	Supports/Resources Needed	Next Steps