



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: Exploration and Adoption

HOW TO USE THE ACTION PLAN

An action plan accompanies this Birth-to-College (BTC) Implementation Guide for teachers and staff. This tool is intended to provide a place to document your school's process of implementing professional learning communities (PLC) for birth through 3rd grade alignment. Ideally, this tool is to be used in a group setting such as a teacher planning meeting or a staff meeting. This action plan was intended as a guide for PLC members and leaders in getting started implementing a PLC.

KEY DECISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

GETTING STARTED FOR BTC PLC MEMBERS

- **Commit to a Regular Meeting Time and Location:** Having a set meeting time and place ensures meetings begin and end on time and provide members with a sense of stability. Bear in mind that PLCs that meet during the contractual work day, not necessarily during the instructional day, have been shown to be the most effective.
- **Assign BTC PLC Roles:** Determining roles for BTC PLC members provides continuity and a sense of shared responsibility. The roles listed below are commonly assigned in traditional PLCs. A BTC partnership should decide during installation whether these roles are permanent or are rotated among PLC members on an annual basis.
 - *Leader:* responsible for coordinating with a co-leader on creating an agenda, assigning homework and assessing progress on PLC work, as well as providing content expertise and guidance to the work of the PLC. In addition, the leader acts as a liaison between the PLC and the BTC Alignment Leadership Team.
 - *Notetaker:* responsible for documenting discussions and decisions made on agenda items.
 - *Timekeeper:* responsible for keeping members on task so the meeting starts and ends on time.

NOTES:

- **Create Norms:** BTC PLCs should develop norms (e.g., ensure equity of voice; communicate with members in a timely fashion outside of meetings; create relevant, open, flexible and available agendas) in their first meeting and revisit the norms at each meeting. Norms provide clear expectations for the group, but more importantly they provide a foundation for building relational trust and respect.

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- **Develop Shared Values:** BTC PLC members share values (e.g., treat teaching not as a job, profession or career but as a mission; have a vision for what to expect students to achieve; strive to inspire students daily) to improve and align curricula, instruction and/or family engagement practices, which enhance children’s academic achievement. Having a cross-age/grade/discipline group of professionals develop consensus on shared values will take time. Through this process, BTC PLC members reveal differences in knowledge and pedagogical dispositions, learn from each other and develop relational trust

NOTES:

- **Create Goals:** BTC school leaders should provide PLCs with content areas prior to initiating the first PLC meeting. Examples of potential content areas could be language and literacy, math, family engagement, assessment or school-improvement priorities such as strengthening routines of collaboration or home-school connections. School leaders should also help to create short- and long-term goals for each BTC PLC that align with existing school improvement goals and a BTC alignment work plan. The BTC PLC goals should be data driven and identify areas of need for improvement in practice that span the age and grade range. PLC members work toward the stated goals by developing teaching/ family engagement strategies, reading articles and trying out shared or evidence-based techniques discussed in meetings.

NOTES:

- **Expect Strong Leadership Support:** School leaders should provide positive support and clear expectations for BTC PLC members. A cross-school shared calendar for BTC PLC meetings should be created at the beginning of the school year. School leaders should ensure substitute teachers are provided on BTC PLC meeting days if they occur during the instructional day. Stipends for BTC PLC leaders and facilitators should be considered for the work these members do above and beyond the PLC meeting time.
- **Instill Collective Responsibility:** All members are responsible for the functioning of the group. Members should have roles assigned and rotate those roles on a periodic basis. Moreover, BTC PLC members are collectively responsible for maintaining the BTC vision and mission and advancing the work plan for BTC alignment.
- **Assess What You Learn:** Part of the work of BTC PLCs is to assess practices—including teaching effectiveness, student achievement and family engagement—as they pertain to alignment in ways that provide real-time feedback. Periodically, PLCs should assess whether what they are learning and developing is appropriate for the students and families they serve. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as videotaping/observing instruction, attending family events and creating gallery walks that display lesson plans and student work.
- **Reflect Regularly:** Set aside time for reflection at the end of each meeting. BTC PLC members should also bring reflections on one’s practice to PLC meetings that are relevant to the inquiry process.
- **Document the Process:** Thoroughly document PLC meetings to keep a running log of work for reference. Documentation provides momentum to a task. It also facilitates continuity in between meetings and provides a focus for each meeting. Having a written log of the PLC process makes it easy to share progress periodically with leaders and the larger BTC partnership community.
- **Share and Learn Between Meetings:** Being part of a PLC facilitates continuous learning. PLC members are often inspired by the work done in PLC meetings and continue to learn and share outside their PLCs. Try out techniques, strategies or ideas learned in your PLC. Read articles of topics discussed in your PLC. Discuss ideas, techniques or strategies shared in PLCs with non-PLC colleagues.

GETTING STARTED FOR BTC PLC MEMBERS

- **Know Your Role:** Be clear on your role as the PLC leader, each member’s role and the role of the PLC in BTC Alignment. When everyone on the team knows his or her role, the overall goal of the PLC and how that PLC goal fits within the broader vision, mission and strategic plan for BTC alignment, the focus of the PLC can be on the work at hand. Leaders are responsible for producing an agenda, communicating with school/program leaders and managing between-meeting communication (via email, text, social media or program-management platforms such as Evernote) among PLC members.

- **Build Relationships:** Manage the process of inquiry while building trust and cooperation. Since BTC PLCs are cross-age/grade/discipline, building trust among PLC members is critical. Relationship building in BTC PLCs may take more time than in a traditional PLC setting where professionals work in the same building, same grade and/or discipline. A BTC PLC leader should provide activities that facilitate trust and cooperation while acknowledging and addressing the differential knowledge between professionals working with infants and toddlers and professionals working with elementary school children. When members of the PLC trust each other and trust the process, the important work of inquiry can happen.
- **Obtain Agreement:** Get agreement from fellow PLC members on a workable agenda and the processes/protocols used during meeting time. The first meeting should be devoted to establishing a set meeting structure. Processes/protocols for group discussion, sharing practices and reflecting on work completed should be established early on (see the BTC PLC Toolbox for ideas).
- **Engage Members:** Find ways to keep members involved, share the floor and intervene when necessary. Try to gauge the moods of group members periodically to uncover any underlying assumptions or conflict. Use already established protocols for group facilitation and conflict resolution.

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- **Seek Support:** Know who the members of the BTC Alignment Leadership Team are in your school. If you encounter roadblocks or challenges within your PLC, you should contact them as soon as the roadblock or challenge arises. They can offer support or guidance on how to handle the situation effectively. Waiting to see if the challenge “plays itself out” may backfire, or it become more entrenched, and therefore hinder the work of the PLC and/or undermine the relationship-building work you have done.
- **Update Leadership:** Inform school leaders of the PLC’s progress regularly. Keeping leaders up to date on the work of the PLC will help them provide support and guidance along the way. Potential options for providing leaders with regular updates are through email, internal meetings or attending the BTC Alignment Leadership Team meetings.
- **Develop Strategies to Advance Goals:** BTC PLC leaders should work with school leaders on strategies to encourage PLC members to brainstorm potential paths of inquiry in relation to the research-based literature, learning standards and examples of best practice in the field. BTC PLC leaders should expect to be responsible for facilitating a process or sequence to guide PLC members’ inquiry. PLC members should work together to backward map the necessary steps for reaching each goal, identifying appropriate deliverables and establishing realistic timelines for the completion of those deliverables. When encountering roadblocks to these tasks, PLC leaders should consult school leaders or members of the BTC Alignment Leadership Team for guidance.

- **Restate the Why:** Revisit the purpose, mission and goal of the PLC regularly within the overall BTC alignment work plan. Doing so will help keep PLC members on track toward completing the stated goals and will instill a sense of purpose to the work of the PLC.

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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