**Elgin High School**

**PLC Site Exception Proposal**

***Introduction:***

As we move swiftly into the implementation of Common Core State Standards, standards based grading, RtI and PBIS initiatives, it is difficult for teachers to meet the demands of these new initiatives without the support of colleagues. The intent of dedicated PLC time is to offer teachers collaborative time which will allow them to meet in PLCs to meet the instructional demands of these initiatives while also discussing and analyzing data that drives decisions in improving teaching and learning.

PLC time will provide recurring blocks of time within the school calendar for teams of teachers to work to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, and support for students. Staff may choose during this time to combine PLCs for meetings if mutual interests or student needs are involved, such as teachers meeting because they teach freshmen and there are issues particular to freshmen that need to be addressed or if an entire department would like to meet in order to do vertical alignment of curriculum.

The plan allows all students to arrive late once per week during the school year 2014-2015[[1]](#footnote-1). The plan calls for no change to transportation and no cost to the district. On days when students arrive late, teachers will be able to meet both in curricular teams and cross-curricularly. Students will be supervised in common areas by administrators and other non-instructional staff.

***Benefits to teaching and learning:***

· Students will receive aligned lessons and assessments from teachers in common courses

· Students will actively participate in engaging, highly-effective instructional units/individual lessons that are reviewed and/or authored by individual PLCs

· Teachers will participate in professional development and teamwork

· New teachers will have more consistent contact with fellow teachers regarding curriculum and course structure

· Teachers will have more consistent exposure to curriculum changes (i.e. Common Core State

 Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, PAARC Assessments, and ACT College Readiness

 Standards)

· Teachers will strengthen, discuss, review, and implement instructional strategies

· Teachers will have time to develop common assessments and analyze student data

· Teachers will be able to create common, skill-based rubrics and discuss grading practices

· Teachers will work together to continue to develop a culture of collaboration

· Teachers will have time to troubleshoot standards based grading and align teaching and grading

***PLC Structure and Goals:***

Structure of PLCs: Teachers who teach the same course (e.g. freshman English or economics) will form teams[[2]](#footnote-2). The team will work, with SIP team support and guidance, to establish a goal, develop an action plan, support each other through implementation, review data, and communicate the product/outcome. Individuals who do not have a PLC can form interdisciplinary teams. Each PLC team will select a facilitator to organize materials and communicate what the PLC is working on/has accomplished with staff. Dependent on the needs determined by PLCs, multiple PLCs may decide to meet in vertical teams.

Overview of PLC Work: A major focus of the work will be curricular alignment and review of student work to determine student needs. In this process, teachers would work in teams to:

* Align Common Core State Standards with goals, instructional activities, and assessment;
* Establish criteria, proficiency standards, and rubrics to measure progress toward agreed upon learning goals;
* Develop interventions by reviewing student work/products, analyzing the results, identifying and assisting students who need additional support to reach the goal, and discussing ideas to improve on the collective level of achievement of all students.

PLC Goals: To foster collaboration, promote ownership and enhance communication of best practices across curriculums, PLCs will create and share products developed during PLC time[[3]](#footnote-3). Products may include (but are not limited to):

* A gap analysis of curriculum (what do the standards require that we do not address) and apply to the Standards for Transitions as proposed by CCSS
* More effective curriculum mapping and/or common instructional units and assessments such that students will receive more consistent feedback and aligned expectations across grade levels
* A review of and alignment to district curriculum or AP curriculum to ensure all standards are covered
* Methodologies (Best Practice) for engaging students
* Formative and summative assessments which format questions to the PARCC exam and/or AP exam
* Plans to make constructive use of test results
* Conclusions from student assessment data: data analysis with the use of standardized test data, and school- and classroom-level assessments

As PLCs work toward self-directed goals, the list of products/outcomes will change and grow based on PLC identified teacher and student need. The goals should be aligned with the building/SIP goals but tailored to the subject area, age of students and needs demonstrated by student performance.[[4]](#footnote-4)

***Data-driven decision evidence***

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ807003.pdf>

1. While there is no universal definition of a professional learning community, an international review of the literature indicates that PLCs appear to share five key components: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, professional collaboration, and promotion of group and individual learning (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

2. Schools where these components are combined to focus on student learning are more effective in sustaining improved student achievement (Bredeson & Scribner, 2000; Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999).

3. The third organizational characteristic of a school , capacity-building, is key not only to implementation but the sustainability of professional learning communities (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). King and Newmann (2000) as well as Mitchell and Sackney (2001) have defined school capacity in terms of individual, collective (or interpersonal), and organizational factors. Individual capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual teachers in a school, while collective or interpersonal capacity is associated with the quality of collaboration among members of the teaching staff. Organizational capacity stems from structural factors that can help or hinder a school’s growth as a learning community. Massell and Goertz (2002) contended that capacity building provides consistency and focus, but it requires sufficient time and support to change teachers’ practices. This support must be developed through human resources and structural support from within the school (Bryk et al., 1999), within the district (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2002; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Chau, & Polhemus, 2003), and through networks beyond the district (Rusch, 2005).

***Assessing the Impact on Student Performance***

<http://www.centerforcsri.org/plc/literature.html>

Improvement in student performance is at the center of PLC work. However, it can be challenging to show direct relationships between PLCs and student outcomes. Part of the difficulty lies in being able to first determine the presence of a PLC and then show that the work of the PLC resulted in improved student outcomes. Several studies have attempted to study this relationship. Researchers (Hughes & Kritsonis, 2007) selected a sample of schools from a database of schools with staff who had attended PLC workshops and that were possibly implementing PLCs. The mean length of time that sample schools (n=64) reported functioning as a PLC was 2.5 years. During a three-year period, 90.6 percent of these schools reported an increase in standardized math scores; 81.3 percent reported an increase in English/language arts scores between 5 points and 26 points.

· Case studies of three elementary schools showed that during a five-year period, students from minority and low-income families improved their scores on state achievement tests from less than 50 percent proficient to 75 percent proficient. Strahan (2003) conducted interviews to examine the role of a collaborative professional culture on instructional improvement and found that working collaboratively in PLCs was a characteristic of these schools.

· Using multiple sources of data from a four-year evaluation of PLCs in an urban district, Supovitz (2002) found that an explicit focus on instructional improvement is necessary for PLCs to have a positive impact on improving teaching and learning. (Supovitz & Christman, 2003).

***Vote Results***

 \_\_\_95\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_103\_\_\_\_ in favor of the site exception.

***Contract Language***

The portions of the contract being broken are as follows:

6.5 CLASS LOADS

“Beginning with the 2012-2013 school term, the following teacher collaboration time shall be implemented for the months of September through May: two hundred forty (240) minutes per month which can include SIP, RtI, PBIS, Grade/Dept./articulation committee meetings, and faculty meetings; with the exception of December which will be one hundred twenty (120) minutes. Informal collaborative meetings between two or more teachers also will be included. Collaborative time can be done during the work day when feasible. Collaborative time shall be a minimum of 30 minutes. Meetings may include, but are not limited to face-to-face, conference calls, interactive webinars and video conferencing. One (1) meeting will be led jointly by a site administrator and a teacher. This jointly-led meeting shall not exceed 75 minutes in length. All other meetings will be teacher-led. Teacher-led is defined as setting agendas, content, and delivery to colleagues. Evidence of work shall be recorded on a standardized time reporting form.”

The discrepancies between the present contract language and the PLC Proposal are as follows:

· The required 240 minutes per month include the meeting time that occurs during the PLC meeting time[[5]](#footnote-5).The PLC meeting time will be designated solely for PLC meetings; the monthly faculty meeting will not be affected by the proposed change.

· Evidence of work done by PLCs will be extended to a product that is tangible and therefore can be shared: this may include, but is not limited to, PLC meeting minutes and/or a product (e.g. an assignment, an assessment, a lesson plan, etc.)[[6]](#footnote-6). Products are defined as items that communicate or assess relevant standards to students. The products themselves will be determined by teachers but guided by SIP and building goals which specifically address student needs and achievement. The scope and frequency of the products will be determined by the individual PLCs and shared with the SIP team when evidence is needed to support the school SIP plan[[7]](#footnote-7).

· Note: To differentiate for individual needs, PLC groups will be determined by teachers in their respective departments. Teachers may choose to participate in multiple PLCs, and teachers will determine the arrangements for PLC meetings - e.g room location, coordination to avoid conflicts if on multiple PLCs. All teachers are expected to participate in at least one (1) PLC[[8]](#footnote-8). Support will be available to PLCs and individual teachers from SIP reps if managing multiple PLCs is cumbersome.

***Accountability for Teacher Attendance/Product (who "owns" it? how is it monitored?)***

Individual teachers will maintain a running record of attendance at PLC Days through the “U-46 Certified Staff Member Collaborative Conversation Log,”which will be available upon request to building administrators. The document will be available via a GoogleDoc to all teachers so that live updates can be made to the log. PLC meeting products will be shared amongst PLC members via GoogleDrive and therefore can be easily accessed by PLC members or shared with instructional chairs and the building principal if needed[[9]](#footnote-9). One of the benefits of the PLC schedule is the built-in dedicated time for teachers to meet with colleagues systematically and not just with those who share a planning period.

***Plan for Students (how will families/communities "see" the benefit of lost instructional time?)***

Parent stakeholders will be oriented to the benefits of PLC Days in a number of ways before implementation. Once final approval from the district and ETA is secured, SIP team representatives will present at at least one Parent University during the Fall of 2014 to reiterate the purpose and use of PLC time to families with a succinct comparison of present instructional minutes versus PLC Days minutes. Parents will also be educated as to the benefits of PLC collaboration time in relation to Common Core Standards, PAARC assessments, Next Generation Science Standards, district grading initiatives, and the growth measures needed for teacher and administrator evaluation.

***Formation of PLCs***

The structure of PLC Days will be clear and consistent. Each PLC team will be determined by courses taught and have a designated teacher leader[[10]](#footnote-10), as chosen by the PLC, to set agendas, provide work products, and provide assistance in maintaining the Collaboration Log. The teaching, learning, assessment and grading goals for each quarter will be central to PLC discussion and goals, and will be driven by both district and building goals. PLCs will set their own norms and discussion protocols to ensure maximum use of collaboration time.

***Accountability Goals aligned to CCSS, DIP, Destination 2015, College Readiness, Equity, etc.***

The accountability goals for PLC Days are as follows:

· Common Core Standards- PLC Days will facilitate progress toward full implementation of Common Core Standards by the target dates set by the district. For science, PLC Days allow for continued progression toward implementation of the Next Generation Science standards. Content areas outside the scope of either the Common Core or Next Generation Science Standards will be able to ensure fidelity of their curriculums to the Illinois Learning and ACT College Readiness standards.

· Assessment-PLC Days will facilitate the development of Type 2 and Type 3 Assessments for the growth model portion of the Illinois Teacher Evaluation system.

· Instructional Strategies PLC Days will foster the development of instructional strategies to improve student achievement toward closing the achievement gap. This collaborative time will also allow for professional development for continued integration of RtI and PBIS within classes.

· Standards Based Grading Initiatives- PLC Days will permit teachers to continue work on the 7 Guiding Grading Principles toward the goal of standards based grading full implementation in 2016-2017.

 ***Structure of PLC Days***

7:40-8:30 am every Tuesday

***Addressing Needs of Teachers***

1. Traveling ETA members: Teachers who are assigned to multiple buildings can attend the PLC meetings at the teacher’s discretion. They will still be responsible for the 240 contractual minutes of collaboration.
2. Part-time ETA members: Teachers who are only part-time will be allowed to participate in the PLC meetings at the teacher’s discretion.
3. Dissenting teachers: Are responsible for the 240 minutes of collaboration per contract agreement, but must submit a plan to the divisional/building principal explaining how the time allocated for PLC time will be used in lieu of participating in a PLC.
1. Students will receive 344 minutes of instruction which still exceeds the 300 minute minimum required by state code. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The composition and structure of the PLCs will be determined by teachers. In order for teachers to collaborate, they need not be part of a PLC. Dissenting teachers can opt out of PLCs but are still required to abide by the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Creation and dissemination of materials will be decided upon within PLCs and overseen by PLC leaders. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. While aligned with building/SIP goals, the PLCs are not being dictated what to do by building administration or SIP team, this provision is to allow PLCs to work with larger building goals in mind, not just subject-specific needs. Dissenting teachers can opt out of PLCs but are still required to abide by the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The difference between the contractual 240 minutes and the extended time commitment via the site exception is 30 minutes.Dissenting teachers can opt out of PLCs but are still required to abide by the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Any product created by the PLC or record of PLC meeting discussion will only be made available upon request and is not intended to be a monitoring tool to keep track of PLCs and their work. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. There must be an express need from SIP for evidence to support the SIP plan and provision of evidence is voluntary from the PLCs. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. While participation is expected, if there are dissenting teachers, they may opt out of being in a PLC but are still obligated to fulfill the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time per month. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The scope and frequency of the creation and dissemination of the product will be decided upon within the PLC, with the PLC leader serving as the point person for communication of materials if needed. Dissenting teachers can opt out of PLCs but are still required to abide by the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Teachers have the option to choose, dissolve and create PLCs as the needs of teachers and students change over the course of the year. Dissenting teachers can opt out of PLCs but are still required to abide by the contractual 240 minutes of collaboration time. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)