

This selection of research excerpts was created to support participant and table group reflection. We suggest writing some reflective notes on the right about how the research matches or addresses the status of PLGs in your district.

Research Bite	Connecting Research to My Setting
<p>“... unusually high degree of "relational trust" among their administrators, teachers, and parents. Five organizational features contributed to this success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective system to improve professional capacity by providing ongoing support and guidance for teachers, including opening teachers' classroom work for examination by colleagues and external consultants.</li> <li>• A student-centered learning climate that identified and responded to problems individual students were experiencing.</li> <li>• Leadership focused on cultivating teachers, parents, and community members so that they became invested in sharing responsibility for the school's improvement.</li> <li>• [and two others]</li> </ul> <p>These ... features tended to reinforce one another; a significant weakness in any of them could threaten progress. Schools with strong rankings on all five criteria were 10 times more likely to improve than schools that were weak in the majority of the areas.</p> <p>Bryk, A., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., &amp; Easton, J. Q. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p>	
<p>Administrators and teachers in the effective schools worked closely together in developing and selecting instructional materials, assessments, and learning strategies. Teachers had time set aside each week to work with one another to systematically improve instructional practices. Administrators and teachers carefully monitored test data to identify where students and teachers needed additional support.</p> <p>National Center for Educational Achievement. (2009). Core practices in math and science: An investigation of consistently higher performing school systems in five states. Austin, TX: Author.</p>	
<p>The power of collective capacity is that it enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things—for two reasons. One is that knowledge about effective practice becomes more widely available and accessible on a daily basis. The second reason is more powerful still—working together generates commitment.</p> <p>Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C., &amp; Barber, M. (2010). How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. Washington, DC: McKinsey and Company. P. 72</p>	

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<p>A PLC is more than simply a collection of teachers working together or a social network of educators who share stories, materials, and advice</p> <p>(Coburn &amp; Russell, 2008; Protheroe, 2008). In fact, the PLC concept often is misused to describe committees, grade-level teams, and/or weekly planning meetings in which the participants undertake data-based decision making (DuFour, 2004; Jessie, 2007).</p>	
<p>To build cultures of collective responsibility for student learning, educators must overcome a common tendency to attribute students' difficulties largely to conditions beyond the school— especially the family, peers, and neighborhood. While these influences are real, teachers in a strong school community feel significant individual responsibility to maximize student success, regardless of student social background.</p> <p>Newman, F. M. (1994). School-wide professional community. <i>Issues in Restructuring Schools</i>, #6, pp. 1-2.</p>	
<p>Structural conditions—including time to meet and talk, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures and teacher empowerment—are important, to be sure. But if a school lacks the social and human resources to make use of those structural conditions, it's unlikely that a strong professional community can develop. This finding adds weight to the argument that the structural elements of restructuring have received too much emphasis in many reform proposals, while the need to improve the culture, climate and interpersonal relationships in schools have received too little attention.</p> <p>Kruse, S., Louis, K. S., &amp; Bryk, A. (1994). Building professional community in schools. <i>Issues in Restructuring Schools</i>, #6, pp. 3-6.</p>	
<p>Louis and Kruse (1995) identified the supportive leadership of principals as one of the necessary human resources for school-based professional communities referring to them as "post-heroic leaders who do not view themselves as the architects of school effectiveness" (p. 234). Prestine (1993) defined three factors required of principals in schools that attempted essential school restructuring: the ability to share authority, the ability to facilitate the work of staff, and the ability to participate without dominating.</p> <p>In <i>Attributes of Professional Learning Communities</i>, SEDL. <a href="http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/4.html">http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/4.html</a></p>	

[All Things PLC](#)

[National Staff Development Council](#)

[SEDL \(formerly the Southwest Educational Development\) Laboratory](#)

[Teacher Leaders Network](#)

[Effective Professional Learning Communities](#)

[The School Reform Initiative](#)

[Harnessing Teacher Knowledge: Using PLGs to Accelerate School Improvement](#)