## Research-based characteristics of professional learning communities

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<tr>
<th>Frequent interaction among educators (frequent as agreed upon by educators on staff, enough to satisfy meeting other types of interaction and work)</th>
<th>Practice-based discussions moving toward high-risk conversations, including discussion of instruction, using artifacts of classroom practice (high-risk conversations have teachers taking intellectual risks by opening up their teaching practices with colleagues and discussing these; some discomfort is common; artifacts of classroom practice include lessons, assessments, tasks, project overviews, student work, observation and discussion of on-site instruction, e.g.)</th>
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<td><strong>Job-embedded interaction</strong> (occurs during the contracted work day, often before or after school with late start or early dismissal, or on scheduled professional learning days, e.g.)</td>
<td><strong>Educator actions based on shared purpose, planning, and preparation</strong> (Emphasis is on shared: processes are in place to 1) mutually articulate what philosophies toward learning are shared among staff, and 2) ensure shared planning and preparation for instruction happens)</td>
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<td><strong>Ongoing interaction</strong> (no definite “end”; closer to “continuous improvement” that begins and has no end)</td>
<td><strong>Workplace relationships promoting collegial work and reciprocal coaching</strong> (collegial work means learning–focused work; reciprocal coaching—when colleagues offer descriptive feedback within peer coaching situations without evaluation or judgment)</td>
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<td><strong>Inquiry-driven interaction</strong> (teachers are not given one right way to practice their craft; teachers ask questions about their classroom practice and pursue answers collaboratively)</td>
<td><strong>Shared decision making, including nonlinear shared leadership, among designated building leaders and teacher leaders</strong> (Building leaders create conditions for shared decision making, fostering a decision-making web of leadership over linear, hierarchical decision making)</td>
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<td><strong>Collective responsibility for student learning</strong> (educators take joint responsibility for student learning in their building, not simply in their individual classrooms)</td>
<td><strong>Focus on learning and results through collegial action</strong> (Educators have learning—adult and student—as their focal point each time they collaborate; educators continuously look at classroom &amp; school data and results to drive their decision making, goal setting, and goal meeting)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Specifically, characteristics drawn from these studies:

- Frequent, job-embedded, ongoing, and inquiry-driven interaction among educators (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Louis, Kruse, et al., 1995; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1994);
- Collective responsibility for student learning (Kruse & Louis, 1995; Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1997; Little, 1990; Marks, Louis, & Printy, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995);
- Practice-based discussions (Horn & Little, in press; King, Newmann, & Carmichael, 2009) moving toward high-risk conversations (Joyce & Showers, 2002), including discussion of instruction, using artifacts of classroom practice (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007);
- Educator actions based on shared purpose, planning, preparation, and decision making (Curry, 2008; Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Szabo, 2002; King et al., 2009; Lee et al., 1997; Louis et al., 1994; Newmann et al., 1996; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002a, 2002b); and
- Workplace relationships promoting collegial work and reciprocal coaching (King et al., 2009; Louis & Marks, 1998; Marks & Louis, 1997; Newmann et al., 2007); and focusing on learning and results through collegial action (Kruse & Louis, 1995; Louis & Marks, 1998; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1994).

References


Kruse, S., & Louis, K. S. (Spring, 1995). Teacher teaming—opportunities and dilemmas. Brief to Principals, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Brief No. 11, 2-7.


