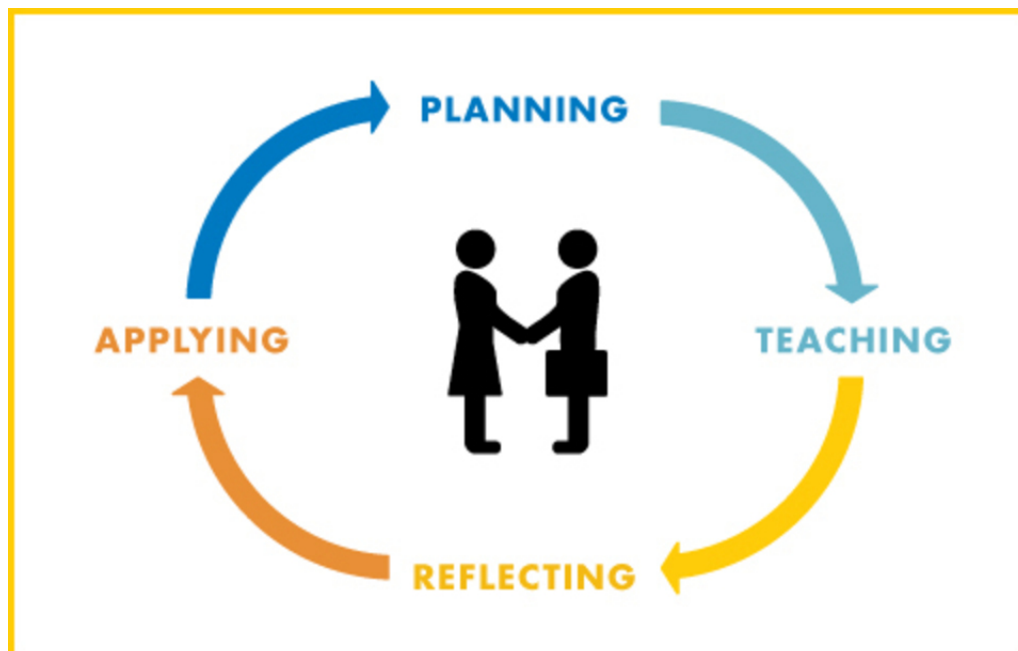


## Literacy How-To: Building Professional Learning Communities



Professional learning occurs when teachers are supported and coached while they implement newly acquired content knowledge and skills with their own students. **That's the Literacy How model.**

### What is Professional Learning?

The concept of professional learning focuses on “ownership over compliance, conversation over transmission, deep understanding over enacting rules and routines, and goal-directed activity over content coverage” (Martin et al., 2014, pg. 147). Effective professional learning is not "dump and run," but sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. Literacy How's professional learning approach includes in-depth, evidence-based professional development in the core components of comprehensive literacy instruction and embedded coaching with a gradual release of responsibility. Literacy How Mentors work with teachers and students in their own classrooms and support teachers in using data to improve outcomes.

## Tips for Administrators

- **Make mandated training relevant.** Be transparent with your teachers about the requirements and encourage their input for ways to make it relevant. Would breaking the staff into groups based on prior knowledge be helpful? Can you seek teacher leaders to facilitate sessions about how the initiative relates to specific content or pedagogy?
- **Give teachers a voice in their professional learning.** Have conversations with both individuals and teams of teachers to help them develop meaningful learning goals for the year. Support those goals in any way you can and check in frequently to encourage and provide assistance.
- **Honor the expertise in your building.** Tap teachers to share their knowledge, experiences, and successes during staff meetings. Asking a different teacher to share for even five minutes each week can help build a climate of trust, collaboration, and growth.
- **Model professional learning.** Network with other leaders. Share your learning with your staff. Ask questions, investigate, reflect. In short, continue to grow in your own knowledge and skills the same way you expect your staff and students to!
- "Improving practice can only be done by teachers, not to teachers." (Foltos, 2013, p. 27).

## Tips for Teachers

- **Be a researcher.** If you want to know if something will work for your classroom or for your kids try it out! Take risks and push yourself as a professional if you think it will benefit your students. Not everything you try is going to work well 100% of the time, but doing what you have always done will not help you or your students grow. Like any good researcher, make sure you share your results with your colleagues.
- **Reflect and record.** Many good teachers are experimenting, learning, growing and changing each and every day. Most good teachers, though, are often too busy caring about their students' learning to stop and take stock of their own. Reflection can happen in many forms – blogging, doodling, jotting a list of positives and negatives, snapping some photographs of the day's activities, taking a moment to audio record your thoughts at the end of the day. Whatever works for you, stop and take note of the ways you are growing as a professional and the areas in which you want to get better.
- **Make learning relevant to your own areas of need** and weakness as you grow your knowledge and practice. "Evidence shows that teacher involvement in creating knowledge, help in leading the change, participation in outside as well as inside groups, and learning from others must be a significant part of professional learning" (Martin, et al., 2014, pg. 19).

## Learn More about Professional Learning Communities

- Tips adapted from Professional Development vs. Professional Learning, Mattson's Musings,

2014.

- Martin, L.E., Kralger, S, Quatroche, D. J., & Bauserman, K.L (2014). *Handbook of professional development in education: Successful models and practices, Pre-K-12*. New York: Guilford Press.
- [A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams.](#)

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