



# The Northbridge Public Schools Town of Northbridge

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**AUGUST 31, 2009**

## **Moving Toward a Professional Learning Community**

The Northbridge school district is breaking away from the traditional teaching community and moving toward a process that promotes continual learning. Moving toward a Professional Learning Community (PLC) will result in meaningful collaboration that defines good teaching and classroom practice and that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Professional Learning Communities are derived from the work of Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour and Robert Eaker. They describe it as a “systematic process which teachers work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results”.

The PLC is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement. As the school moves forward, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community: What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? (DuFour, 2004) This systematic process pushes educators to work collaboratively, focus on learning rather than teaching, and hold all accountable for results.

There is no one "look" for PLCs. They can be large or small. They can work within formal settings and structures or can operate more loosely. Professional learning communities can be school-based, district-based, cross-district, or national. Whatever the “look” and whatever the membership, the work of a professional learning community is data-informed, standards-driven, and focused on instruction, equity, and results. The work of the professional learning community expands the knowledge and skill of participants while encouraging innovation and excellence. (Martin-Kniep, 2004)

The Professional Learning Community model is a grand design—a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement (DuFour, 2004). With this comes hard work and commitment—the type of commitment the Northbridge faculty has for their students.

For additional information please contact: Northbridge Public School Principals or Superintendent Gorky.