



For master teachers
of math and science

$$4 \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{(-1)^{k-1}}{2k-1}$$

ANCHORING CHARACTERISTICS

ANCHORING CHARACTERISTICS OF PLTs AT MfA

There is a **specific focus** on student learning, teaching, and the relationship between the two.

There is **equitable engagement** among all members of the PLT.

Multiple sources of expertise are brought to the surface, discussed, and considered.

Teaching practices are **made visible, discussed, and questioned**, and members are encouraged to experiment with and grow within their practice.

All members of the team are **committed to improving** their practice.



“PLTs create opportunities for teachers to deepen knowledge, refine and expand skills, and examine the best ways to teach each and every student.”

- MfA Master Teacher

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) are small teams of teachers, co-facilitated by MfA Master Teachers, who meet monthly to collaboratively learn, investigate, and implement best practices.

Through our work with MfA Master Teachers, we have developed five anchoring characteristics. Attending to these throughout a PLT cycle supports meaningful learning for all teachers engaged in the PLT.

There is a specific focus on student learning, teaching, and the relationship between the two.

In PLTs, teachers come together with a specific focus that pushes their understanding of student thinking, their understanding of pedagogy specific to their content and how these are deeply connected. There are shared learning goals among all members of the team and a determination to work towards that goal.

There is equitable engagement among all members of the PLT.

The conversation in PLTs must be real, where teachers are responding to, questioning and challenging each other's ideas. Every voice in a PLT must be heard from and must be valued. Since the work of PLTs requires teachers to put themselves in vulnerable positions, the team must create a deep level of trust and support. Often, PLTs use protocols to conduct intentional conversations.

Multiple sources of expertise are brought to the surface, discussed, and considered.

PLTs "honor both the knowledge and experience of teachers and the knowledge and theory generated by other researchers." In PLTs, teachers come together to discuss their own perspectives about teaching and student learning and share their own experiences so that each member is learning in a way they could not without the rest of the group. PLTs also position teachers as experts in what they need to improve their own teaching, using outside perspectives including current research. These collected views are openly discussed and considered within the PLT. These multiple perspectives support the work of teachers in making thoughtful decisions for themselves and their students upon returning to their classrooms.

Teaching practices are made visible, discussed, and questioned, and members are encouraged to experiment with and grow within their practice.

Teaching can be very isolating. As a way to break this, PLTs offer teachers opportunities to bring their classrooms into the space of the PLT to make it visible. This includes sharing lesson plans, student work, and sometimes, classroom video. These artifacts can then be analyzed, discussed, and questioned, allowing teachers to consider what they might change in their practice. Through this process, PLTs offer opportunities to focus on improving teaching and not teachers.

All members of the team are committed to improving their practice.

The work of PLTs is complicated and requires all members of the team be committed to the idea of perpetual learning, where innovation and experimentation are encouraged. This dedication to improving practice deepens over time and must be sustained.

Selection of Cited References

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