PLC+

BETTER DECISIONS AND GREATER IMPACT BY DESIGN

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Thank you

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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *PLC+: Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design*. In this excerpt, the authors discuss factors that can contribute to an individual teacher's success, including credibility and efficacy, and how, through PLCs, these strengths can become **collective** to benefit the school as a whole.

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TEACHER CREDIBILITY AND EFFICACY: THE FOUNDATION OF THE STRONG PLC+

We all know that amazing teacher down the hall who continually gets impressive results from students. Some colleagues might say it's because the principal favors that teacher and gives her the highest-performing students. Others say it's because she works all day and night and doesn't have a life outside of school. Still others say that she was "born to be a teacher" and she doesn't have to work that hard at all. But, in our hearts, we know none of those claims are true. We recognize that this particular teacher is talented and has developed a skill set that results in better learning for her students.

There are probably several factors that contributed to this teacher's success, including her credibility and efficacy. We'll explain each of these in the sections that follow. But remember that our focus is on the collective, not solely on the individual. We're exploring these two concepts because we believe that individual teacher credibility and individual teacher efficacy can become **collective** credibility and efficacy when teams of teachers engage in learning together.

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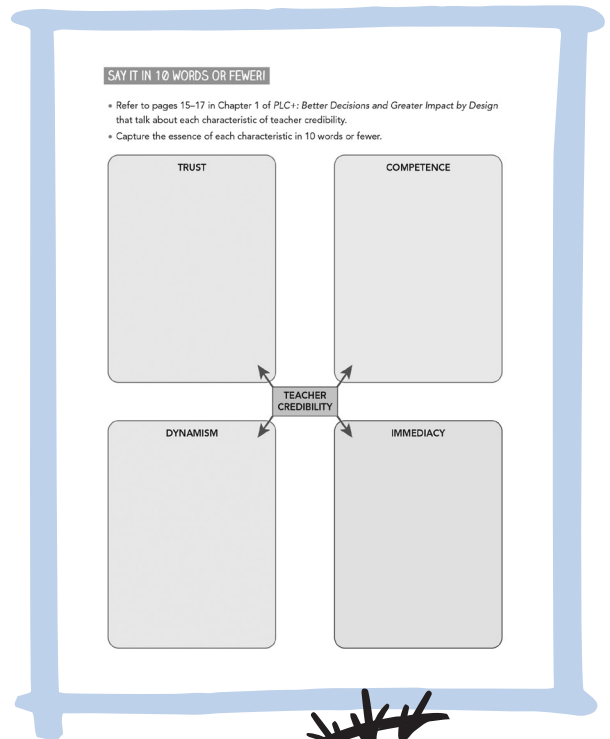
Teacher Credibility

Teacher credibility is the belief held by students that they will learn from this adult because this adult is competent, trustworthy, dynamic, and responsive. It has a strong impact on student learning, with an effect size of 0.90. That's far above the average impact on student learning for all actions and influences, which is 0.40 as measured by Hattie (2012), and should result in a significantly higher rate of learning for students. To put it in perspective, teacher credibility has twice the impact of student motivation on student learning. That's powerful. But the question is, what can you do to enhance your credibility?

Students are perceptive about knowing which teachers can make a difference in their learning and, quite frankly, their lives. We believe that "the dynamic of teacher credibility is **always** at play" (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016, p. 10). For example, teacher credibility

has unique challenges as well as enhanced benefits in the establishment of trust within a classroom community. To be very direct, teacher credibility is a major factor when the learners in the classroom do not look like the teacher that greets them at the door as they enter.

There are four components of teacher credibility outlined in the research: trust, competence, dynamism, and immediacy. We briefly describe these below. We took the time to discuss individual teacher credibility and self-efficacy because they are critical ingredients to the work that a professional learning community needs to do, not to make this a self-help book for current collaborative teams. For detailed suggestions to cultivate each of these components, see Bandura (1997).

SAY IT IN 10 WORDS OR FEWER!

• Refer to pages 15–17 in Chapter 1 of *PLC+: Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design* that talk about each characteristic of teacher credibility.
• Capture the essence of each characteristic in 10 words or fewer.

TRUST

COMPETENCE

TEACHER CREDIBILITY

DYNAMISM

IMMEDIACY

ON YOUR OWN

Module 3:
Teacher Credibility
page 22 in
The PLC+ Playbook

1. **Trust.** Students want to know that their teachers really care about them as individuals and have their best academic and social interests at heart. Students also want to know that their teachers are true to their word and are reliable. Teachers need to come to know their students as people and learners to build relationships. Relational trust is the on-ramp to learning. Students learn best from teachers who they feel care about them.

2. **Competence.** In addition to trust, students want to know that their teachers know their stuff and know how to teach that stuff. They expect an appropriate level of expertise from their teachers in terms of delivery and accuracy of information. A well-paced lesson with accurate information contributes to teacher credibility.

3. **Dynamism.** This aspect of teacher credibility focuses on the passion teachers bring to the classroom and their content. It's really about the ability to communicate your enthusiasm

TEACHER CREDIBILITY AND ITS INTERSECTION WITH CROSSCUTTING VALUES

The values woven into the fabric of a PLC+ are evidenced in the actions we take, the decisions we make, and language of learning we use with students and colleagues. Teacher credibility is influenced by the crosscutting values of equity, high expectations, individual and collective efficacy, and activation.

EVIDENCE WITH STUDENTS	I ENHANCE MY TEACHER CREDIBILITY WHEN I . . .	EVIDENCE WITH COLLEAGUES
	Address equity	
	Establish high expectations	
	Build efficacy	
	Activate learning for myself and others	

(Continued)

ON YOUR OWN

Module 3:
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for your subject and your students. And it requires developing dynamic lessons that capture students' interest.

4. **Immediacy.** This final construct of teacher credibility focuses on accessibility and relatability as perceived by students. Teachers need to move around the room and be easy to relate to. Students want to get to know their teachers. Teachers with high credibility make themselves accessible and yet communicate a sense of urgency in the lesson that signals to students that their learning is important.

Before a PLC can develop into the most impactful group possible, it takes everyone on that team to be the best teachers they can be. The PLUS is you, and having credibility with your students isn't a nice-to-have, it's a must!

Teacher Self-Efficacy

In addition to being credible, we believe that the effective teacher we described at the outset of this section also likely has high self-efficacy. At a basic level, self-efficacy is our individual beliefs that we can reach our goals. It's not self-esteem, which is the worth we place on ourselves. And it's not confidence, as we can be highly confident that we will fail miserably. Instead, as Bandura (1982) noted, self-efficacy is a personal judgment about "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). People, including teachers, who have high levels of self-efficacy exert sufficient energy to accomplish their goals. In contrast, people (including teachers) who have low self-efficacy tend to give up and do not accomplish their goals. Bandura identified four factors that impact self-efficacy: experiences of mastery, modeling, social persuasion, and physiological contributors.

1. **Experiences of Mastery.** The experience of mastery is the single most important factor in developing and reinforcing a

person's self-efficacy. When teachers practice together actions and strategies to promote development of mastery, they can determine where their strengths and weaknesses lie. This is one of the most powerful sources of efficacy information (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). When we experience success, or accomplishments, we begin to attribute those successes to our actions rather than outside forces. In other words, success breeds success. We look for situations in which we believe we will be successful, because each success in each such situation reinforces our self-efficacy. Conversely, we tend to avoid situations in which we believe we will fail. Or, if we already have low self-efficacy, we look for confirming evidence that we are not going to be successful.

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2. **Modeling.** When we see others succeed, especially when we perceive them to be about the same as ourselves, our self-efficacy increases. To a large extent, people say to themselves, "If they can do it, so can I."

3. **Social Persuasion.** To a lesser extent, encouragement from others builds self-efficacy. We say to a lesser extent because the previous two factors are very powerful. But we don't want to ignore the power of peer support. When we trust the person who encourages us, we can increase our self-efficacy. If the person is honest with us and we believe that that person has our best interests at heart, social persuasion can serve as a tipping point.

4. **Physiological Contributors.** There are a number of physical and biological contributors to our self-efficacy. When we experience stress, our self-efficacy is generally reduced. That is, unless we learn to recognize that stress as part of a natural process. Similarly, when we are frightened, it's hard to maintain self-efficacy. Instead, we move into a flight, fight, or freeze situation. People with higher levels of self-efficacy recognize these physiological factors and understand that they are natural biological responses to situations that do not necessarily signal failure.

The six characteristics of an effective PLC identified by Hord (2004) are built on a strong foundation of credibility and efficacy. Without these two important ingredients, there will be limited capacity for establishing Hord's characteristics: structural conditions, supportive relational

ON YOUR OWN

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Teacher Self-Efficacy

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The PLC+ Playbook

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and Its Intersection With
Crosscutting Values

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conditions, shared values and vision, intentional collective learning, peers supporting peers, and shared and supportive leadership.

But it is a community, not individuals, who need to engage in the work if all students are going to learn at high levels. The answers are in the room. But getting to those answers requires creating systems and supports to unleash potential. In order to move from potential to action, we need to move from the individual to the collective. Together, we are stronger. None of us can individually meet the needs of all of the

students in our schools. But together, we can. The PLC+ model is a vehicle for harnessing this strength.

The move to a collective requires, in part, a shared understanding of certain beliefs and norms. This leverages the individual credibility and efficacy of each teacher and is the path toward a collective. It is not "groupthink." There should be room for disagreement and different perspectives about data analysis and action steps, as well as a culture that supports and even promotes dissonance that promotes overall growth. We believe that teams should work to establish their own beliefs and norms. If these beliefs are not present or developed in your current PLC, the *PLC+ Playbook* will support you and your team as they establish beliefs and norms.

FACILITATING COLLABORATION: MAKING THE PLUS COUNT

It is important to note at this point that we believe the collaborative work of professional learning community members should be enabled by people who have developed and practiced their facilitation skills, such as rapport building, communication, listening, questioning the commonplace, and keeping the conversation focused on the goals. We've all been in meetings in which there was no facilitator, or an unskilled one, and we were left feeling frustrated by the experience of having no one to activate the collaborative process. Some of us have this memory fresh in our minds because it has happened recently. In fact, these are the specific experiences and meetings that contribute to our sense that the whole process is pointless and that negatively impact our collective efficacy (Donohoo, 2016). But we hope that the person or persons who facilitate the team also participate in the discussion, so we call them activators rather than facilitators. Elisa MacDonald (2013) identified several hurdles that hinder and even impede what she refers to as a "high-functioning, high-impact, collaborative team" (p. 33). These hurdles include the following:

- One or more of the team members are unable to get along.
- Team members are responsible for meeting the same goals with the same group of students, but they work independently on instruction.

- The team works very well together but has minimal impact on student learning.
- The team lacks leadership, and there is no designated activator to facilitate dialogue.
- The team is focused on tasks—just get it done—but not on professional learning.
- Assessments are viewed with skepticism, and the team focuses on blame and excuses.
- The team meetings are mandated and not wanted by the members.
- There is misalignment between the intentions of the team and their actions.

Our experience shows that individuals or entire collaborative teams may erect hurdles due to issues with teacher credibility, individual efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy. These issues are often rooted in one or more of the crosscutting values that we introduced in the introduction (equity, high expectations, individual and collective efficacy, and activation of groups). For example, a team member may be resistant to changing course in teaching, because he or she is more conditioned to assign blame to certain learners for not benefiting from his or her instruction. Another example might be that a team does not have an individual willing to step up and take the lead, engaging in tough dialogue. For effective facilitation practices for going around, climbing over, or removing each specific barrier, see "15 Barriers and How to Overcome Them" in the *The PLC+ Facilitation and Activator's Guide* by Dave Nagel.

Activators Do Not Need to Be Administrators

All PLC+ teams need to have a strong activator. To be clear, we are not saying that the PLC+ activator must be an administrator. Activators are often teachers who work on the team being facilitated. It's just that the activator needs the skills to lead the group and activate the learning. When there are strong activators, the impact on teachers' teaching and students' learning increases. Without such leadership, "groups may quickly hit a plateau, maintaining a technical focus that prevents them from digging down into and possibly disturbing the assumptions of teaching and learning that maintain the status

quo in schools" (Charner-Laird, Ippolito, & Dobbs, 2016, p. 993). For support and guidance on how to be an effective activator, please see *The PLC+ Facilitation and Activator's Guide* by Dave Nagel.

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The PLC+ Books

PLC+
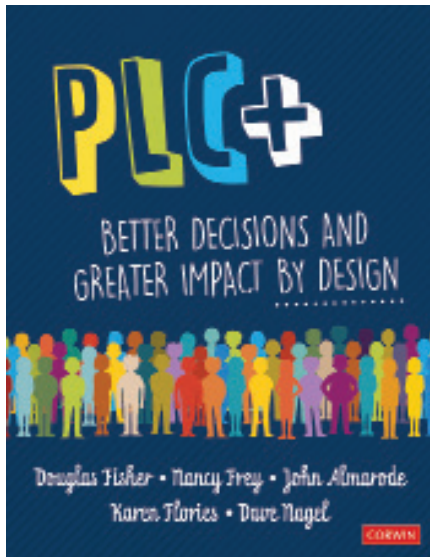
Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design

What's this book about?

- Provides a brief history of PLCs
- Introduces the PLC+ framework questions and crosscutting themes
- Shows the PLC+ in action in various settings

When do I need this book?

- You want to understand the purpose of PLCs
- You want to learn a new framework for effective PLCs
- You want to reinvigorate and increase the impact of your existing PLC
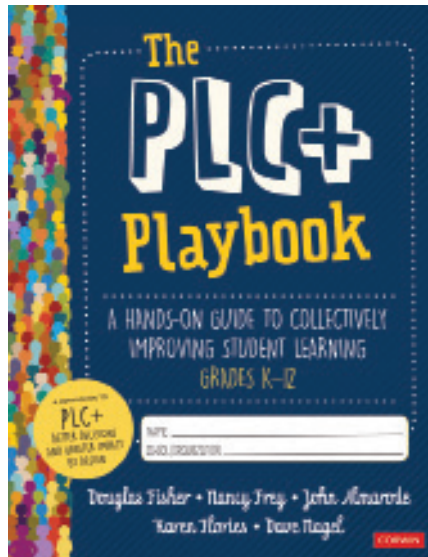
The PLC+ Playbook

A Hands-On Guide to Collectively Improving Student Learning

What's this book about?

- Provides a practical, hands-on guide to implementing the full PLC+ cycle
- Guides PLC+ group members through 22 modules as they answer the five guiding questions and focus on the four crosscutting themes
- Offers modules comprising an array of tools that support implementation of the PLC+ framework

When do I need this book?

- You want to plan and implement the PLC+ framework in collaborative settings
- You want to implement the PLC+ model step by step in your own PLC
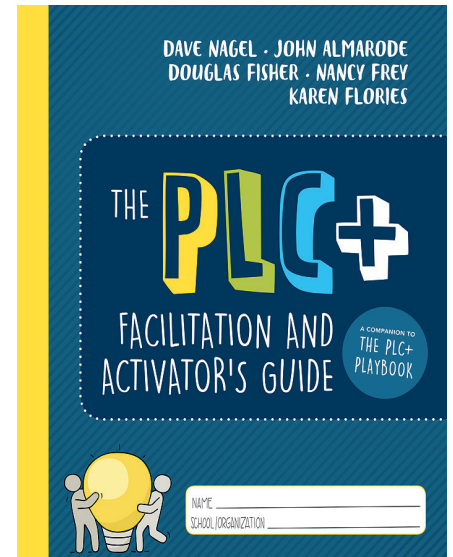
The PLC+ Facilitation and Activator's Guide

What's this book about?

- Provides guidance for the PLC+ team activators

When do I need this book?

- You are a PLC+ activator and want to do the best possible job for your group
- You are an activator and want to pre-plan the implementation of your PLC+
- You need help to guide the group in overcoming obstacles or having difficult conversations

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