THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST
IN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

by

Leslie E. Brantley

ABSTRACT

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The Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept has been adopted by school

districts as a model for professional development. A PLC requires strong leadership to

function. The library media specialist is a natural servant-leader in school districts. The

problem under study is what leadership role does the library media specialist play in a

PLC? This is a review of the literature of PLC leadership and the role of the library media

specialist in the PLC. The research demonstrates how the library media specialist fulfills

a servant-leadership role in the daily structure of the school. The adoption of the PLC

concept provides an opportunity to elevate the servant-leadership role of the library

media specialist through collaboration, instructional leadership, and in the creation of a

learning commons.

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The professional learning community (PLC) is a professional development method with the desired outcome of creating the highest possible levels of student learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). The adoption of a PLC requires fundamental changes in student learning, school culture, and a focus on results. In order for the PLC to thrive, all educators create, model, and sustain shared and supportive leadership by actively participating and believing in the work of the PLC. Collaborative teams, with a leadership team at the helm, are the fundamental building blocks of the PLC and are formed to support the work of the PLC. Strong leadership is required to ignite the required change.

The library media specialist is a natural leader, filling a servant-leader role. The term servant-leader was defined by Robert K. Greenleaf and applies to leadership in the form of service (Heaphey, 2006). According to the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, servant-leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf, n.d., What is Servant Leadership? section.). A servant-leader leads by meeting the needs of others first. As a servant-leader, the library media specialist has the opportunity through the PLC process to elevate the servant-leadership role, making the work of the library media specialist more visible by guiding the work of collaborative teams. In addition a position on the PLC's leadership team allows the library media specialist to integrate and interact

with teachers in the collaborative process, providing awareness to the servant-leadership

role currently held by the library media specialist (Yukawa & Harada, 2011).

By taking a leadership role in the PLC process, the library media specialist

overcomes roadblocks to create a collegial, collaborative culture with the driving force to

ensure the highest level of learning for all students, which is the heart of the PLC

concept. Library media specialists "view their work as the school's work, not just

because the physical space and resources are shared by all, but because the significance

of the learning that is conducted in the library is at the heart of the school's purpose"

(Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008, p. 15). The library media specialist has an

opportunity to elevate the servant-leadership role with the adoption of the PLC concept to

make the library media specialist an "indispensable leader" in ensuring PLC and student

success (Pennell, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The library media specialist fulfills a servant-leadership role in school districts,

leading in a servant capacity by taking care of the needs of the educational stakeholders.

Many times the leadership power of the library media specialist is ignored. With the

adoption of the PLC concept in school districts, the library media specialist has an

opportunity to elevate the servant-leadership role into a visible leadership role as a PLC

leader who promotes his or her services, resources, and abilities to meet the PLC idea of

ensuring the highest possible learning for all students. The problem under study is library

media specialists and educators in general are not familiar with the leadership potential of

the library media specialists in schools. The research of this study provides guidance and

direction on how a PLC functions and how the library media specialist becomes a PLC leader, why PLC leadership is vital to further the work of the library media specialist in a school district, and how the work of the library media specialist in the PLC affects student learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the leadership role of the library media specialist in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Literature was reviewed regarding what a PLC is, how a PLC functions, and the leadership role of the library media specialist in a PLC. Particular attention is paid to the collaborative role the library media specialist fulfills in the PLC. The results of this study will demonstrate the elevated servant-leadership role the library media specialist plays as he or she and other educators create and sustain a PLC. Library media specialist leadership includes collaborating, becoming an instructional leader, and creating a learning commons.

Research Questions

Questions addressed by the research examined the PLC concept and what effect the PLC concept has on educational practices. The leadership role the library media specialist plays in a PLC was the second area investigated. The third area researched was how the creation of a learning commons supports the work of the PLC. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the process and function of a professional learning community?

2. What is the leadership role of the library media specialist in the PLC?

3. What role can a learning commons play in a PLC?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include limited existing literature and research on the topic of the leadership role of the library media specialist in a PLC. The topic is relatively new, with research currently emerging in the field. The availability of peer-reviewed journals and texts from individuals with professional development expertise was limited on the topic. The scope of data collection included journal articles, books, and websites dealing with the topic of PLC leadership. Much of the literature focused on school administrators. PLC leadership literature is beginning to emerge from the field of library science. The results of this study serve as guidelines for what library media specialists can do to elevate the servant-leadership role into a more visible PLC leadership role.

Definition of Terms

Collective inquiry cycle--The continuous cycle of reflection, discussion, assessment, and implementation of professional learning concepts to create high levels of student learning.

Learning commons --The idea that the library becomes a multi-resource facility bringing together a community of learners.

Professional learning community (PLC)--The concept of professional development built on collaboration and examination to ensure student learning.

Servant-leader--The concept of leading by serving with the outcome to meet the needs of others first and in turn create new servant-leaders (Black, 2010; Boyum, 2008; Heaphey, 2006).

Research Design

This study of the leadership role of the library media specialist in a PLC examined previously published information. No research experiments were conducted. This study is descriptive in nature, using published, and royalty free materials. Research questions were used to guide the development of the study. Articles were retrieved from the following databases: *Education: A SAGE Full Text Collection*; *Education Journals*; *Education Research Complete*; *ERIC*; *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts*; and *Library Literature and Information Science Full Text*. Search terms included "Professional Learning Communities," "librarians and PLC," "library leadership," and "servant-leadership."

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the problem and research questions of the leadership role of the library media specialist in a PLC. The second chapter is a review of the literature. The third chapter answers the questions presented in Chapter 1 and discusses the conclusions and recommendations for library media specialists who wish to pursue a leadership role in a PLC.

CHAPTER 2:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept has been adopted by school districts across the nation as professional development with the goal of improving student learning. When a school district adopts the PLC concept, fundamental changes in student learning and school culture and a focus on results are required. A commitment to change using the PLC concept begins at the top with leadership. In order for the PLC to thrive, leadership in the PLC process is shared among the teachers in a school. This shared leadership role opens the door for the library media specialist.

The library media specialist already fulfills a leadership role in school districts as a servant-leader. This term was first coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1969; it applies to leadership as a concept of service. Greenleaf believed the idea of a great leader began with leading as a servant. Servant-leaders are rooted in a people-first philosophy (Heaphey, 2006). A servant-leader leads in a service capacity and continues to maintain a servant role. The servant-leader focuses on meeting the needs of others first. Success is achieved when the needs of the served are met, allowing in turn for those served to adopt the servant role (Boyum, 2008). The adoption of the PLC concept in a school district provides the library media specialist with a visibly elevated servant-leadership opportunity in the PLC by leading collaboration, becoming an instructional leader, and through the creation of a learning commons.

The first section of this chapter explores the components of a professional

learning community (PLC). The term PLC will be defined with a description of the

history behind the concept, the use of collaborative teams, and the focus of PLC work.

Roadblocks that derail the PLC will be examined in the second section of research along

with ways to combat pitfalls. The second section also explores the leadership role of the

library media specialist in a PLC. The library media specialist visibly elevates a servant-

leadership role by embracing the PLC process.   The third section examines the role of a

learning commons that is the heart of a school.   Once the library media specialist

establishes the learning commons, collaborative opportunities for the PLC are created

with resources and technology. The definition of a PLC is first in order.

Professional Learning Communities

There is no one universal definition for a professional learning community (PLC)

(Cox, 2011; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Nor does a blueprint

exist for how to create one (LaFee, 2003). A PLC is rooted in the premise of professional

development that provides a model of "reflexive practice and teacher inquiry" according

to Cox (2011). The PLC concept provides continuous professional learning, moving

professional development beyond one-day in-service trainings, teacher book study

groups, or grade level team meetings (Hord, 2008; Pennell, 2008).

The PLC framework focuses on core beliefs in the areas of professional

development with the desired outcome to create the highest possible levels of student

learning. *Professional Learning Communities: Communities of Continuous Inquiry and

Improvement* by Shirley Hord, published in 1997, is credited with being one of the first

materials to outline the following key elements of a PLC: supportive, shared leadership; collective creativity; shared values and vision; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice (Cox, 2011). Over time, the educational community has developed new ideas from the basic premise provided by Hord.

The PLC framework currently used by many school districts comes from the work of Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker. DuFour added "characteristics that are more explicit about collaborative efforts between teachers and a clear focus on student learning and achievement" to the concept of a PLC (Cox, 2011, p. 35). DuFour identifies three ideas that characterize the basis of all professional learning communities: ensuring that students learn, building a culture of collaboration, and focusing on results (DuFour, 2004; Garrett, 2010; Lumpe, 2007; Pennell, 2008; Wells & Fuen, 2007). Fred M. Newmann reinforces the PLC idea of a learning community "as a group of professionals who possess a common vision for student learning and agreements that involve collaborating, sharing, and reflecting on their practice and who inquire into the teaching and learning process" (as cited in Kilbane, 2009, p. 186).

The adoption of the PLC name is not enough. When a school district adopts the PLC model for professional development, a fundamental, collaborative commitment to ensure the highest level of learning for every student is made, creating a strong PLC foundation (Pennell, 2008).   The creation of a true PLC is a process that relies on the following five research-based characteristics: shared mission, vision, value and goals; shared and supportive leadership; collective inquiry; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice (Hord, 2008; Lumpe, 2007).

Shared mission, vision, value, and goals need to be in writing and occur when the PLC school community creates and uses a collective written statement of commitment to govern actions and accountability. In order for the PLC to thrive, all educators need to create and sustain shared and supportive leadership by actively participating and believing in the work of the PLC. Each staff member has leadership potential to guide the work of the PLC. In the area of supportive conditions, PLCs need allotted time, a physical meeting location, and policies and procedures to make constructive use of PLC time.

Collective inquiry is used to seek and implement new methods of teaching and learning. A collective inquiry cycle measures the following four key questions of the PLC: what do teachers want students to learn, how will teachers know if students learned, what will be done if students didn't learn, and what will be done if students did learn? The collective inquiry cycle is continuous with reflection, discussion, assessment, and implementation of professional learning concepts to create high levels of student learning. Every team should identify and pursue specific, measurable goals to ensure the highest level of student learning and to meet the four questions of student learning. The four questions cannot be addressed until individual teacher isolation ends and a collaborative cultural shift occurs in collaborative teams.

After the implementation of new methods occur, results are examined to determine if student learning needs have been met. Shared personal practice creates a collaborative culture for PLC teams which have a common purpose and learn from each other to build improvement. Teachers take a coaching role, observing and offering

suggestions on what works and what isn't working in colleagues' classrooms. When a school adopts the PLC process, a commitment to continuous improvement is activated that questions the purpose, achievement, strategies, and assessments of student learning.

The required five PLC characteristics are implemented under the direction of collaborative teams. Collaborative teams are the fundamental building blocks of the PLC process and are formed to support the work of the PLC (DuFour et al., 2006). The professional learning community as a whole is broken into smaller, collaborative teams, with a leadership team at the helm. Collaborative teams consist of a group of professional people working together to achieve a common goal for which members are held mutually accountable.   Collaborative teams take in many forms, including course specific, grade level, interdisciplinary, vertical, or departmental. Every faculty member is part of a team.

A shift in school culture is also essential to creating and sustaining a PLC (DuFour et al., 2006; Pennell, 2008). The fundamental principle of ensuring the highest level of learning for all students needs to be adopted by the collaborative PLC team for the PLC process to succeed. The collaborative culture shift created by the PLC process moves teachers away from the isolated focus of "my students" and "my curriculum." No longer is the focus on the individual teacher, but instead the focus becomes the team, accountability, and student learning. For a PLC to work, all stakeholders, from top to bottom, are involved in joint planning, action, and assessment for student growth and school improvement (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). DuFour (2007) points out, "A school does not become a PLC by enrolling in a program, renaming existing practices, taking the

PLC pledge, or learning the secret PLC handshake. A school becomes a professional

learning community only when the educators within it align their practices with PLC

concepts" (p.4).

Trust is key for a collaborative climate to exist. Team members engage in

discussion when conflict arises and work to reach a shared consensus. In order to reach

consensus, all points and members of the group need to be heard; but in the end the will

of the group will prevail. When group members understand dissention is not personal

they develop deep trust. This leads to the type of conversations that create change.

Respect and strong leadership are needed to coach faculty in these deep examinations.

The building blocks of PLC collaborative teams rest on the foundation of the

leadership team. Members of the leadership team are trained to implement the

characteristics of a PLC. Leadership team members set the agenda and guide the work of

individual PLC teams, creating a culture of collaboration to ensure the highest level of

student learning. A position on the leadership team allows the library media specialist to

integrate and interact with teachers in the collaborative process, providing awareness to

the servant-leadership role currently held by the library media specialist (Yukawa &

Harada, 2011).   As a servant-leader, the library media specialist creates an environment

that views change as an opportunity, not a threat (Black, 2010). Leaders with this type of

vision are required for the PLC concept to thrive.

Once the PLC process is embraced, the door to collaborative opportunities opens.

The following roadblocks derail PLC effectiveness: time restraints, isolation, divergent

views, conflicts, and personal issues (Jessie, 2007; Lujan & Day, 2010). PLCs fail to

thrive when implementation of the process is uneven, and they fail to reach their full potential when there is a lack of focus, lack of data or the wrong data, exclusion of educators, such as the library media specialist, and using a one-size fits all option (Cox, 2011).

The PLC process cannot work without a fundamental commitment from all members. Teachers may refuse to collaborate because of time or trust issues. Teachers may feel threatened by the idea of collaboration and sharing teaching practices because they perceive a loss of control, division of power, and differences in personalities (Staenberg & Vanneman, 2009). The PLC process is overwhelming and daunting without a "right way" blueprint to create it. By providing a leadership role in the PLC process, the library media specialist can overcome roadblocks to create a collegial, collaborative culture with the driving force to ensure the highest level of learning for all students. The next section will show how the library media specialist can help overcome PLC roadblocks by embracing the PLC process.

The Leadership Role of Library Media Specialist in the PLC

The leadership role of the library media specialist in the PLC process starts with embracing the PLC concept, the use of the PLC vocabulary, and the application of concepts (Cox, 2011; Gamble, 2008). As a PLC leader, the library media specialist can guide the focus of DuFour's three big ideas: ensuring that students learn, building a culture of collaboration, and focusing on results by becoming a servant leader (DuFour, 2004; Garrett, 2010; Lumpe, 2007; Wells & Fuen, 2007). As a leader in the PLC, the library media specialist's role is to "find people's talents, aspirations, and skills and

showcase them," (Jessie, 2007). This is done by seeking and embracing a PLC leadership role, thus elevating the current servant-leader role as library media specialist to lead collaboration in the PLC.

Leading Collaboration

In order for the PLC process to work, strong, persuasive leaders who elicit cultural change and cooperation are needed (Garrett, 2010). Leadership begins from the top down; but in order for the PLC to grow, leadership must branch out. Many times the collaborative power and servant-leadership role of the library media specialist is overlooked because of lack of presence, perceived lack of contribution, and departmental isolation. However, the library media specialist steps forward as a servant-leader using listening skills, empathy, emotional support, empowerment, and coaching skills (Riggs, 2001). The skills as a servant-leader make the library media specialist an "indispensable leader" in ensuring PLC and student success (Pennell, 2008). Before collaboration can occur, relationships must be built on trust and collegiality that result in instructional conversations (Jessie, 2007).

"Collegiality denotes the ability of staff members to work with one another in the analysis of curriculum documents, assessment results and instructional strategies without getting mired in personal politics," (Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008, p. 17). As a PLC leader, the library media specialist has the opportunity to build on these strong, collegial relationships. The library media specialist in the PLC process provides a facilitator and coaching role that builds strong, collegial relationships between faculty and the library media specialist. Poglinco and Bach (as cited in Kilbane, 2009) defined

coaching as "'a process whereby seasoned teachers provide instructional support, professional development opportunities, feedback, and materials to classroom teachers" (p. 189). The responsibilities of coaches in a PLC include "(a) developing a collaborative culture, (b) improving teaching, learning, and assessment, (c) creating structures for high achievement, and (d) promoting decision making based on data-based inquiry," (Tung & Feldman as cited in Kilbane, 2009, p. 189). Coaching builds the supportive leadership needed to make a PLC successful. Once the library media specialist establishes a coaching role, the library media specialist can bring collaborative teams together to create inquiry-based learning units. The library media specialist has the collaborative expertise to guide the work of the PLC as a collaborative partner (Dees, Mayer, Morin, & Willis, 2010; Pennell, 2008; Staenberg & Vanneman, 2009). Collaborative expertise comes from planning and implementing lessons and assessments with teachers. The library media specialist also provides collaborative expertise by introducing new resources and technologies.

Once collaboration is built, the library media specialist has the potential to guide teaching, learning, and assessment. As a leader, the library media specialist guides a results-oriented agenda when working with teachers and in the PLC by analyzing test data, examining student work, scoring common assessments, creating effective lessons, and initiating conversations with other grade levels (Garmston, 2007). For instructional conversations to take place, the library media specialist leads the way by providing a variety of resources such as time, space, and supplies, including flip charts and electronic devices. Instructional conversations create the opportunity for the library media

specialist to engage in analyzing data with the classroom teacher to create and collaboratively teach authentic lessons. The library media specialist as a servant-leader is able to guide instructional focus, structures, and protocols for collegial conversations that are needed for PLC work to occur (Garmston, 2007).

The library media specialist fulfills the servant-leadership role of collegiality daily with characteristics, such as collaborative partnerships, information literacy skills, and creating inquiry-based resources that shape the library media specialist job, making him or her a natural partner (Zmuda & Harada, 2008), yet the skills of the library media specialist are not utilized to the fullest potential. Library media specialists make a difference in student achievement, yet they are not recognized for their skill (Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008; Zmuda & Harda, 2008). One way library media specialists achieve more visibility is by creating and presenting professional development opportunities to support student learning and create results. Another way is by providing supportive leadership by collaborating with teachers to create authentic student learning opportunities.

The library media specialist, as a PLC leader, uses a collective inquiry cycle, which requires the use of testing solutions through data and dialogue to guide the work of the PLC (Stoll et al., 2006). Collective inquiry feedback on instructional performance occurs when the library media specialist and teacher communicate during the planning process, communicate during the learning process, and meet again to reflect after the learning opportunity concludes (Pennell, 2008). When teachers engage in ongoing

collaborative inquiry focused on teaching and learning and making effective use of data, results are improved for students**.**

Instructional Leader

The library media specialist works with teachers as part of a team to analyze data and improve classroom practice in a culture of collaboration (DuFour, 2004). All members of the PLC share work critically, using formative and summative assessments of student work to examine best practices (Gamble, 2008; Servage, 2008). By being a leader of the PLC, library media specialists collaborate with teachers to meet the goals for all learners in the school (Johnson, 2008).

Curriculum in a school is not just the work of the classroom teacher, but extends to the library media specialist as well. As a leader, the library media specialist has the opportunity to work in collaboration with PLC groups, creating instructional opportunities to ensure student learning.   In the area of curriculum, the library media specialist has standards that are integrated through collaboration with all teachers in a school to meet instructional needs. The library media specialist does not abandon standards, but using the *American Association of School Librarian Standards for the 21st Century Learner* and the Missouri *Information and Communications Technology Literacy Course Level and Grade-Level Expectations* integrates these standards with classroom curriculum. PLCs reach the goal of adequately preparing students when the library media specialist collaborates with content area teachers to see all learning goals are met (Cox, 2011; Dees et al., 2010).

The library media specialist in a leadership role guides assessment strategies such as formative and summative assessments (Staenberg & Vanneman, 2009). In the area of formative assessments, the library media specialist takes a servant-leadership role by helping teachers plan formative assessments, such as quizzes, one-on-one tutorials, and rubrics to gauge student learning during instructional units. Summative assessments are used to gauge student achievement and curriculum effectiveness. Examples of summative assessments are benchmarks of mastery, such as common district-developed assessments and state End-of-Course testing. The library media specialist provides a leadership role in summative assessments by providing resources and data to help yield improved results.

The library media specialist provides collaborative learning structures and facilitates lessons that ban what Loertscher terms " bird" units (Koechlin, Luhtala, & Loertscher, 2011). Bird units are instructional activities where students are given assignments that simply require the regurgitation of material. No authentic, real-world application or skills are required. Instead, "bird" units can be replaced with learning activities that produce "active inquiry that engages, requires real investigation [and] that builds deep understanding in the content areas, critical thinking, and 21st Century Skills," (p.18). In order to move past the bird units, PLCs pair the four questions of student learning with data-driven decision making to design units and assessments that are authentic learning opportunities connected with student lives (Yukawa and Harada, 2011). Another way the library media specialist provides a PLC leadership role is with the transformation of the library into a learning commons.

The Learning Commons and the PLC

The library media specialist accepts a leadership role in the PLC process with the creation of a learning commons. The central message sent is that the library is more than just a place to find books. Library media specialists "view their work as the school's work, not just because the physical space and resources are shared by all, but because the significance of the learning that is conducted in the library is at the heart of the school's purpose" (Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008, p. 15). The library as a learning commons can bring together a community of learners and merge the old ways of the library, as the place to house books, with the technology of today to produce real-world learning experiences (Koechlin, Luhtala, & Loertscher, 2011).

The adoption of the learning commons creates a multi-resource facility that extends the collaborative efforts between teacher and library media specialist (Koechlin, 2010). In the collaboration of the learning commons, teachers and the library media specialist merge worlds to combine content, literacy skills, and learning. The overall goal of the learning commons becomes excellence for all in learning (Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008). Cicchetti (2010) describes the learning commons "as a model that embraces the programmatic and space changes required to support learning information skills, critical thinking skills, collaborative work, creativity, and the joy of reading. Most important, it is a model where student learning comes first" (p. 53).

The goal of the learning commons parallels DuFour's PLC focus of ensuring that students learn, building a culture of collaboration, and focusing on results. The learning commons brings all three ideas together in one place. A learning commons is "about

changing school culture and the way we do business in schools" (Koechlin, 2010). A

learning commons provides both physical and virtual space with resources and

technologies such as Web 2.0 tools and leadership support from the library media

specialist to meet constantly changing needs (Koechlin, 2010). In order to transform the

library into a learning commons the integration of resources and technology is required.

Resources

The library media specialist holds a key position by providing key resources to

meet the needs of the PLC.   In the learning commons, library media specialists lead the

PLC process by working with faculty to identify and provide resources to create and

sustain high-functioning PLCs (Pennell, 2008). The library media specialist can help the

PLC move the focus off teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning by

providing a variety of resources, such as print materials, electronic resources, and audio

sources to create a differentiated learning environment for students in accordance with

the goal of a learning commons.

Data is another resource provided by the library media specialist. PLC teams

need to examine a wide range of data. The library media specialist has the ability to

produce new data streams, such as circulation statistics, reading records, and student

interest surveys (Cox, 2011). The library media specialist needs to become a key data

resource expert, providing guidance and understanding when examining data. In these

two ways, providing resources and data, the library media specialist provides leadership

by bringing a fresh perspective in the area of resources to the PLC process.

Technology

The library media specialist provides a leadership role as an implementer of new technologies for student learning. The role of the learning commons opens the door to implementing technology applications that students are using outside of school by providing availability and applications in the learning commons for both teachers and students. The new technologies integrate authentic learning and skills for the 21st century learner (Cox, 2011).

One area is in the introduction and implementation of Web 2.0 tools (Dees et al., 2010; Johnson, 2008; Koechlin, Luhtala, & Loertscher, 2011) such as blogging, social networking, wikis, video editing software, and podcasting. Teachers might be afraid or unsure of how to implement current technologies into the classroom. The library media specialist can use the learning commons to help teachers move past technology-related fears, leading to high levels of implementation in the classroom. An example would be using a wiki for a classroom topic assignment. The library media specialist provides professional development for classroom technology integration, sharing information about new resources, and demonstrating innovative instructional tools (Dees et al, 2010). Teachers also use Web 2.0 tools in collaborative PLC efforts such as Google Docs for collaboratively creating resources. The library media specialist provides leadership in the PLC process by helping teachers introduce and implement technology in their lessons, thus creating an authentic, real-world learning experience for students.

The servant-leadership of the library media specialist nurtures a professional learning community. This happens when the library media specialist embraces the PLC

process, creates collaborative opportunities, and creates a learning commons. These three

things can help guide the cultural shift needed to become a PLC.

CHAPTER 3:
CONCLUSION

The use of a professional learning community (PLC) for professional

development is a concept that had been implemented by school districts nationwide to

ensure the highest level of student learning. The adoption of the PLC process by school

districts requires fundamental changes in school culture, student learning, and a focus on

the results of student learning. In order for these fundamental changes to occur, strong

leadership is needed to implement and sustain the PLC. The adoption of the PLC process

provides the library media specialist with an opportunity to elevate his or her servant-

leadership role in the PLC by leading collaboration, becoming an instructional leader, and

through the creation of a learning commons. In order for the library media specialist to

elevate the servant-leadership role, three questions are addressed in Chapter 2. The first

question is, what is the process and function of a professional learning community? The

second question is, what is the leadership role of the Library Media Specialist in the

PLC? The third and final question is, what role does a learning commons play in a PLC?

The Process and Function of a Professional Learning Community

There is no scripted design for a PLC. The concept started with the work of

Shirley Hord in 1997 and has evolved over time with additions from other leaders in the

field of education. The current framework comes from the work of Richard DuFour and

Robert Eaker. The fundamental concept of the PLC is a collaborative commitment from

all stakeholders to achieve the highest level of student learning. The PLC concept moves

professional development out of isolated training to a focus on student learning, a culture

of collaboration, and a focus on student learning results. The PLC concept is based on the five characteristics of shared mission, vision, value and goals; shared and supportive leadership; collective inquiry; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice. Collaborative teams using collective inquiry to examine teaching and learning practices to ensure the highest level of student learning is reached. The following four critical questions propel the commitment to student learning: what do teachers want students to learn, how will teachers know if students have learned it, what will teachers do if students don't learn, and what do teachers do if students have learned?

　　Teachers move out of isolation by becoming team members of the PLC. Trust is at the heart of creating and sustaining collaboration. Team members must have trust in each other and trust in the PLC leadership. Trust is key to build and sustain supportive conditions for the PLC to thrive.   Team members hold each other accountable for student learning, focusing on student learning for the whole school, not just "my" classroom. The road to becoming a successful learning community contains many roadblocks, such as time constraints, suspicion, fear, isolation, divergent views, and conflicting personalities. A successful PLC requires a commitment from all stakeholders. At the helm of the collaborative teams is the leadership team. A PLC is only as strong as the leadership team. A place on the leadership team creates a school-wide leadership opportunity for the library media specialist beyond the servant-leader role. This moves to the second question of how does the library media specialist create a leadership role in the PLC?

The Leadership Role of the Library Media Specialist in the PLC

The library media specialist elevates visibility and awareness of his or her servant-leadership role by leading collaboration and by becoming an instructional leader in the PLC. The library media specialist who embraces the PLC concept becomes a leader and helps focus the direction of PLC collaborative teams. The library media specialist has skills in collaboration, collegiality, and is a natural collaborative partner, viewing his or her work as the work of the school, finding ways to enrich and strengthen student learning. Many times the role of the library media specialist as a vital piece of the educational puzzle is overlooked. The library media specialist may not be viewed as a "real" teacher. The library media specialist may be working in isolation. Collaboration attempts by the library media specialist may have been met with opposition. PLC leadership provides an opportunity for the library media specialist to step forward as a servant-leader, guiding the work of the PLC with collaboration and collegiality.

As a leader in the area of collaboration, the library media specialist can create and present professional development opportunities, collaborate with teachers to create authentic student learning opportunities, and provide feedback on lessons. All of this occurs by building collegial relationships. By working with teachers during PLC time and in collaborative teaching efforts, the library media specialist is a servant leader by introducing and using a collective inquiry cycle to meet the three big ideas of a PLC.

As an instructional leader, the library media specialist analyzes data with team members to improve classroom practices and student learning. In the area of curriculum, the library media specialist has standards that are integrated into classroom curriculum.

All members of the PLC create and analyze assessments, both formative and summative. The library media specialist works with teams to create collaborative instructional designs to support both the curriculum and authentic student learning.

The Role of the Learning Commons in the PLC

Because teams working in collaboration need resources and space, this leads to the last question of what role does the learning commons play in a PLC? The library media specialist as a leader in the PLC has the opportunity to move the library beyond the idea of being a place for "just books" by creating a learning commons. The learning commons establishes the library as the heart of the school, creating a community of learners and integrating the "books only" library of old with new technologies and resources to create authentic learning opportunities. The role of the learning commons supports DuFour's PLC principles of ensuring students learn, building a culture of collaboration between all PLC stakeholders, and focusing on results by providing resources to support the work of the PLC.

In the PLC process, the library media specialist is the gatekeeper of resources, providing a variety of resources and creating instruction and collaboration to achieve the highest level of student learning. Using a results-oriented agenda, the library media specialist provides and guides resources for examining student work, scoring common assessments, creating effective lessons, and initiating conversations among grade levels. Resources for instructional conversations, such as time and space and supplies, such as flip charts and electronic devices, are readily supplied by the library media specialist.

PLC work cannot happen without the resources and leadership of the library media specialist.

Data is another key area where the library media specialist and the learning commons play an important role in the PLC. The library media specialist is a data resource expert, able to analyze data across curriculums to provide insight and support. The learning commons provides new data streams, such as circulation statistics, to help critically examine student learning.

Technology is another way the learning commons supports the role of the PLC. In the learning commons, the library media specialist implements and guides both students and faculty in using Web 2.0 tools. In the learning commons the use of technology helps breathe new life into old lessons and create news lessons that are authentic, preparing students for the world ahead. Students have a chance in the learning commons to acquire skills for the 21st Century, becoming skilled at how to find, evaluate, and ethically use resources and technology.

In conclusion, the adoption of the PLC process in a school district provides the library media specialist with the opportunity to elevate the servant-leadership role with the learning commons at the heart of the school. The role is more than being "just about the books." The work of the library media specialist is the work of the school, which is to improve student learning. With the creation of a learning commons to support the PLC, the library media specialist has an opportunity to lead in the professional learning community, creating and guiding high levels of student learning. The library media

specialist who is not willing to elevate the servant-leadership role by accepting a PLC

leadership opportunity runs the risk of being forgotten.

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