



2nd Edition
2020-2021



What was old is new again:

“In 2020, we educators need to draw upon all of our ingenuity to marry the old-fashioned style necessitated by COVID health protocols with the need to continue to develop creative 21st-century learners” – Anne Lefebvre, Author of “Bringing Back Old-School Teaching Has Benefited My Students This Year.”

Slow Progress So Far...

Where to start? When surveyed at our October meetings, approximately 50% of our GRACE teacher leaders had not had an opportunity to really engage in the PLC process this school year, yet.

Many schools shared exciting progress that they had made since the program's inception, and many more cited that they still believe that for this COVID world, the PLC process is imperative to ensure quality instruction and student growth.

The barriers to ensuring a consistent and thoughtful PLC process for this year has mostly been due to time constraints, initiative fatigue, and of course, ZOOM exhaustion. So where to go from here? Throughout this newsletter, I hope to share with you some strategies for self care, ideas for future PLC topics by month, as well as a really interesting article about teacher leadership and why it is absolutely crucial to having student-centered schools.

Whether you are in school or still teaching virtually, there is nothing more important in teaching than ensuring that students are learning, engaging, and feeling like a part of your school's community. Teachers have the awesome privilege and the awesome obligation of being mothers, fathers, big brothers, big sisters, instructional gurus, emotional counselors, content masters, and also, humans (when you have a moment.) Don't feel as though you have to continue to do all of the work yourself! PLCs are more than data circles – in this issue, we will explore the many wonderful purposes of PLC teams and your role as the GRACE Teacher Leader.

-JPK

sometimes the thing
YOUR STUDENTS
www.mrsdscorner.com
need most, *right now*, has
nothing to do
with what is on your
LESSON PLAN.

“May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart. May God bless with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace. May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them, and so turn their pain into joy. And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.” - Franciscan Blessing

GRACE Program Updates

JANUARY MEETING 2021 – RESCHEDULED – TAKE NOTE!

You spoke – we heard you! No more Friday afternoon meetings!

For January, in lieu of region-wide meetings, we will be having TWO separate Principal/GRACE TL Meetings (you choose!)

January 14th 2021 – 3:30-5:30pm (New or Newish GRACE TLs)

January 21st 2021 – 3:30-5:30pm (Seasoned or Seasoned-ish GRACE TLs)

Watch for new ZOOM invites in your email in the next month or so with ZOOM link info – please communicate with your principal to determine which meeting is right for you – agendas to come soon!

IDEAS FOR FUTURE PLC MEETINGS:

December – Social/Emotional Needs of Students and Teachers

January – Catholic Schools Week – How to Differentiate Our School’s Academic Program

February - Accreditation / WCEA work (annual progress report)

March – Equity Work - How are you supporting your most marginalized communities?

April – MAP Testing wrap around results

May – Catholic Identity and How it Fits into the Greater Vision for Your School

June – Celebrations and Future Planning – how to prepare for 2021-2022

Professional Learning Communities are NOT staff meetings – however, you can have topics that are not specifically “curriculum based” – they can be meaningful and useful for student growth if planned out carefully with student progress in mind!

TASK BAR – WHAT TO DO NOW IN THE GRACE PROGRAM

It's ok to not be ok. Let's start there – acknowledging that “being fine” does not mean we are all right. Teachers, just like regular humans, are entitled to feelings (believe it or not). We are entitled to having hard days, difficult days, annoying days. But teachers are also entitled to having days off—one of the hardest things for great teachers to do is to ask for help from their principals when they need it. And sometimes all that it takes is an hour off, or a class period off, or a day off for mental health and soulful rejuvenation. When asked about ways that teachers recharge, here are some of my favorite answers that high school teachers gave:

1. Cook! And eat everything whilst cooking.
2. Netflix – watch an entire season of something uplifting (warning: *The Walking Dead* is a bad choice right now)
3. Exercise (if you're one of those people)
4. Nap. Totally underrated and so decadent these days.
5. Read a book – yes! A physical book!
6. When all else fails, Amazon.com is there to lull you out of your consumerism coma.

NOVEMBER 2020

- MEET WITH YOUR PRINCIPAL TO ASK ABOUT LEADING ONE PLC THIS MONTH.
- **SUGGESTED TOPIC:** MAP TESTING OR ANY BASELINE ASSESSMENT TAKEN IN SEPT/OCT AND WHAT THE DATA SHOWED ABOUT STUDENT GROWTH
- REMEMBER IF YOU WANT CLOCK HOURS FOR THIS PLC, PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR PDENROLLER PAPERWORK TO LISA OLEARY AT THE OCS AT LEAST 10 DAYS IN ADVANCE. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, ASK YOUR PRINCIPAL, OR EMAIL ELIZABETH.OLEARY@SEATTLEARCH.ORG
- REFERENCE THE GRADE ALIKE TEACHER DATABASE IN TRELLO TO REACH OUT TO AT LEAST TWO OTHER GRADE-ALIKE TEACHERS IN THE DIOCESE – THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE FORMAL. JUST REACH OUT TO SAY HELLO AND ASK WHAT GREAT STUFF THEY ARE DOING.

DECEMBER 2020

- MEET WITH YOUR PRINCIPAL TO PLAN OUT A PLC MEETING FOR THIS MONTH. REMEMBER ABOUT CLCOK HOURS.
- **SUGGESTED TOPIC:** SOCIAL EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
- REACH OUT TO TWO MORE GRADE ALIKE TEACHERS, DIFFERENT FROM THE ONES IN NOVEMBER, AND DO A QUICK CHECK IN! MAKE CONNECTIONS!
- RELAX. USE THE BREAK TO TAKE A BREAK. BE A REBEL – LEAVE THE GRADING TILL JANUARY!

Teacher at the beginning of the school year



Teacher at the end of the school year



Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell on the Role of the Teacher Leader

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Irene Fountas (Lesley University) and Gay Su Pinnell (The Ohio State University) say they've been disappointed with recent attempts to address schools' literacy challenges. New standards, shiny curriculum packages, and rethought teacher-evaluation systems have not been effective levers for improvement, they believe, especially in raising the achievement of students with disadvantages.

Fountas and Pinnell believe school-based initiatives have real potential. If a school has common values and beliefs, an instructional leader in the principal's office, at least one instructional coach, and a culture of shared leadership (and support from the central office), a lot can happen. That's because "educators at the building level are in the best position to understand the causes and complexities of the problems to be solved, and to test and refine solutions based on evidence."

Local efforts are enhanced, say Fountas and Pinnell, when a few carefully selected teachers take on additional responsibilities as leaders. "If you are a principal or other school leader," they suggest, "think about the particular expertise of the teachers in your building and the potential for growing their leadership. If you are a coach, think about teachers who show interest and the ability to actively support the professional learning of their colleagues. If you are a teacher who is energized by your work, consider ways to expand your leadership skills and influence students' outcomes by contributing to the success of your team."

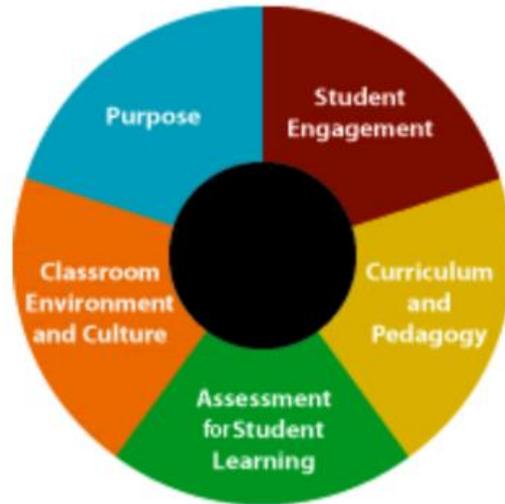
Fountas and Pinnell list some qualities and dispositions that make for an effective teacher leader:

- Being a reflective, continuous learner with a humble and tentative stance;
- Intellectual curiosity and openness to new perspectives;
- Strong content knowledge, particularly in language, reading, and writing development;
- A strong understanding of culturally relevant teaching;
- Evidence of effective language and literacy teaching;
- Belief in the competence of every team member;
- Interpersonal skills and the ability to help others build self-efficacy;
- The capacity to build trust, shared ownership, and teamwork;
- Strong classroom observational skills;
- Understanding why data-informed teaching is key to equitable student outcomes;
- A commitment to evidence-based decision making;
- An understanding of how school organizations work.

At their best, teacher leaders serve as researchers (working with teams as they analyze students' reading and writing work and its implications for teaching); inquiry facilitators (looking together at videos of lessons, discussing articles and books, and planning lessons); lead learners (attending conferences, convening discussion groups, and offering workshops); mentors (supporting new teachers and other colleagues); and "improvement science" leaders (identifying problems of practice and leading inquiry groups to formulate solutions and address issues of inequity).

["Literacy Leadership from the Classroom: Learning from Teacher Leaders"](#) by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell in *The Reading Teacher*, September/October 2020 (Vol. 74, #2, pp. 223-229); the authors can be reached at ifountas@lesley.edu and gspinnell@yahoo.com.

CEL 5 Dimension of Teaching & Learning Framework



CEL's 5D+ Teacher Evaluation Rubric

An evaluation system that truly builds the capacity of our teachers will lead to better practice, which ultimately will result in greater learning for all students.

CEL's Vision for Teacher Evaluation At the [University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership](#) (CEL), they believe that evaluation goes hand in hand with deepening the expertise of teachers to engage students in high quality learning while simultaneously increasing the expertise of school leaders to guide and support teachers in this improvement process. UW's current and past work has touched 110 school districts in Washington alone since 2001. CEL's teacher evaluation rubric was developed in collaboration with the Anacortes School District as part of the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Pilot and is based on their instructional framework, the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D).

The Instructional Framework

The work is built on an evidence-based instructional framework: the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D). The 5D was developed when CEL's faculty conducted a thorough review of the literature in both the learning sciences and effective teaching practices, and mined the instructional expertise from some of the very best teachers and school leaders in Washington and across the country. The 5D framework provides critical questions for school and district leaders to consider as they observe the teaching and learning process and builds on:

1. **Purpose:** Setting a clear, meaningful course for student learning
2. **Student engagement:** Encouraging substantive, intellectual thinking
3. **Curriculum and pedagogy:** Ensuring that instruction challenges and supports all students.
4. **Assessment for student learning:** Using ongoing assessment to shape and individualize instruction
5. **Classroom environment and culture:** Creating classrooms that maximize opportunities for learning and engagement

The 5D framework helps teachers and leaders develop a common language and a shared vision as they undertake the hard work of improving student achievement. The 5D is used by school districts in Washington and across the nation.

IS YOUR SCHOOL UTILIZING THE 5D FRAMEWORK??

NEED HELP??

Our GRACE Regional Teacher Leaders are individuals who represent the 9 regions in which our Archdiocese is divided: Southern, Northern, South Seattle, North Seattle, Pierce, Olympic, South King, Eastside, and South Sound. Feel free to reach out to any of our Regional Teacher Leaders if you need help, support, or have questions about the GRACE program! We're here for you.

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