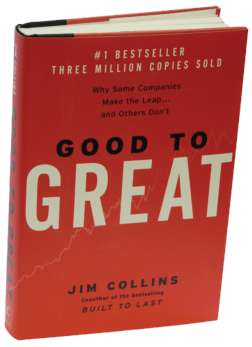
Solution Tree

Challenging Educational Mythology

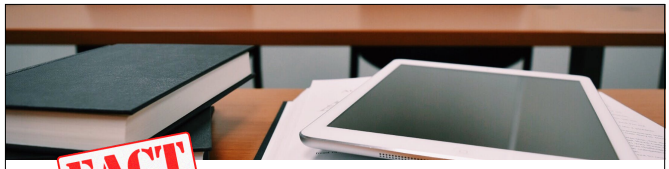
Proven Practices and Brutal Facts in Creating Great Schools

- We can't settle for being good schools for most students.
- We must become great schools for every student!



Greatness requires "the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

—**Collins**, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap … and Others Don't*, 2001



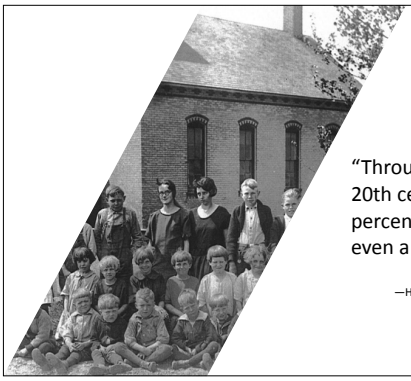
FACT

- Our traditional school system was never designed to have all students leave the K–12 system college-ready.

Harvard President Charles Eliot (1893)

"The main function [of secondary school] is to prepare for the duties of life that small proportion of all the children in the country—a proportion small in number, but very important to the welfare of the nation—who show themselves able to profit by an education prolonged to the eighteenth year, and whose parents are able to support them while they remain so long at school."

—**National Education Association**, *Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies* (1894), p. 51

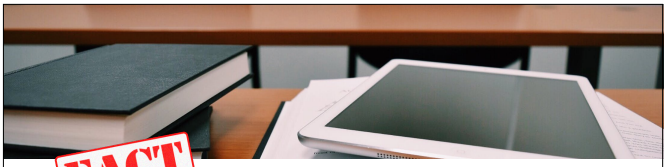


"Throughout most of the 20th century fewer than 20 percent of all jobs required even a high school diploma."

—Hagenbaugh, "U.S. Manufacturing Jobs Fading Away Fast," *USA Today,* (2002, December 12)

"The electric light did not come from the continuous improvement of candles."

—Oren Harari



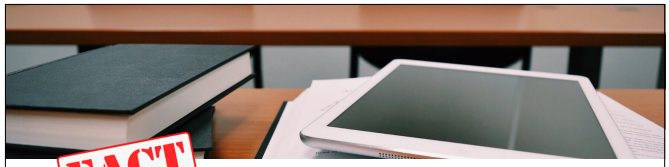
FACT

Comprehensive study of the world's best-performing school systems finds that these systems function as *professional learning communities*.

(Barber, Chijioke, & Mourshed, *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*, 2010)

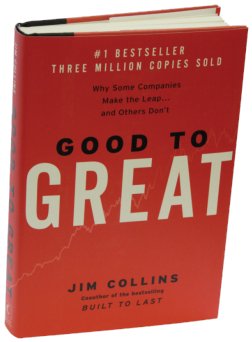
What We Are **Tight** About in the PLC Process:

1. Work in collaborative teams and take collective responsibility for student learning rather than work in isolation.
2. Implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum, unit by unit.
3. Monitor student learning through an ongoing assessment process that includes frequent, team-developed common formative assessments.
4. Use the results of common assessments to:
   - Improve individual practice.
   - Build the team's capacity to achieve its goals.
   - Intervene or extend on behalf of students.
5. Provide systematic interventions and enrichment.



FACT

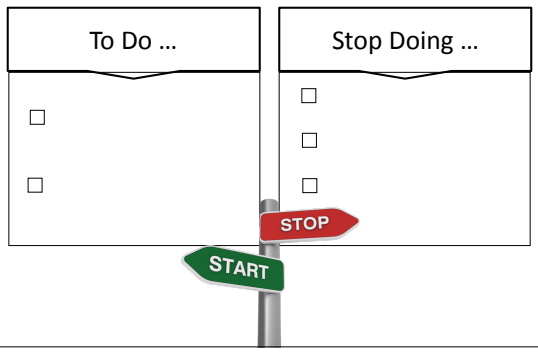
- While we know the proven practices to ensure student success, they are not the norm in most schools.

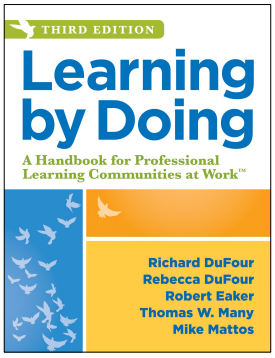


"We have ever-expanding 'to do' lists, trying to build momentum by doing, doing, doing—and doing more. And it rarely works.

"Those who built the good-to-great companies, however, made as much use of **'stop doing' lists** as 'to do.' lists"

—**Collins**, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap … and Others Don't*, 2001





A PLC assesses every policy, practice, and procedure with these questions:

Will doing this lead to higher levels of learning for our students?

Are we willing to revise or discontinue actions that fail to increase student learning?

Unfortunately, far too many schools cling to outdated **educational mythology** to justify outdated practices and resist change.

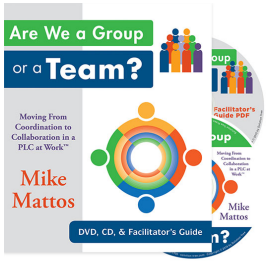
- A story that's told again and again and serves to explain why something is the way it is
- A widely held but false belief or idea

—Vocabulary.com

- Work in collaborative teams and take collective responsibility for student learning rather than work in isolation.

- Collaborative teacher teams are teams of educators whose classes share **essential student learning outcomes**.
- These teachers thus work collaboratively to ensure that their students master these critical standards.

Mike's 10 / 5 / 1 Activity



10 Team!

5 Group

1 Adult Drama

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Ensures that every faculty member is part of a collaborative team. ☐ Embeds time into the professional week for collaboration. ☐ Takes collective responsibility for every student's success.	☐ ☐

- Requiring teachers to collaborate takes away my professional autonomy.

What is a "profession"?

"

Profession:

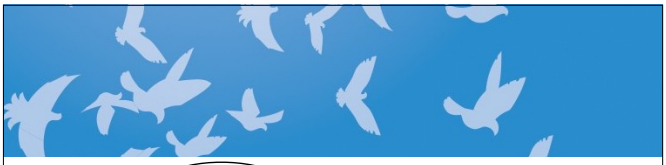
A vocation that requires specialized training in the practices deemed most effective in the field

"

—Dictionary.com

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Ensures that every faculty member is part of a collaborative team.	☐ Collaboration by invitation
☐ Embeds time into the professional week for collaboration.	☐ "My kids–your kids"
☐ Takes collective responsibility for every student's success.	

- Implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum, unit by unit.



- **What do we expect students to learn?**
- **How do we respond when they do not learn?**
- **How do we know they are learning it?**
- **How do we respond when they have already learned?**

PLC Critical Question 1

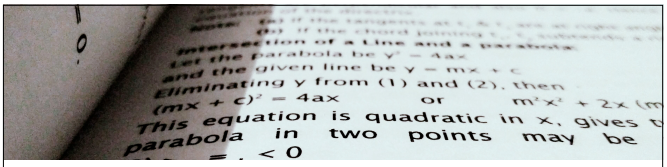
“

Creating a guaranteed, viable curriculum is the **number-one factor** for increased levels of learning.

”

—**Marzano,** *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action*, 2003

- Nice to know
- Got to know

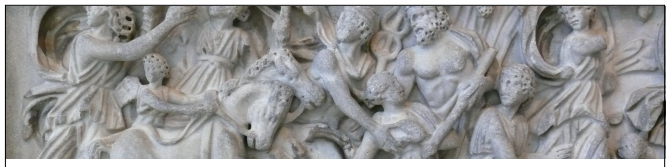


Critical Point!

- Essential standards do **not** represent all you are going to teach.
- They represent the minimum a student must learn to reach ***high levels*** of learning.

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Engages teacher teams in creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum. ☐ Ensures that all students have access to this curriculum.	☐ ☐ ☐

- We must cover everything because …
  - It is all essential.
  - It might be on our high-stakes exams.
  - The state says we must.



- Some kids are too low and can't learn grade-level curriculum.

The Impact of Tracking Students

Ability grouping, or tracking, has minimal effects on student learning, producing just a 0.12 standard deviation.

At the same time, this can have profoundly negative effect on equity, as students perceived to have the lowest ability are most often minorities, English learners, and students from poverty.

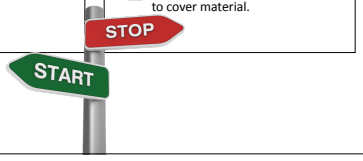
—**Hattie**, *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*, 2009

The Impact of Student Tracking

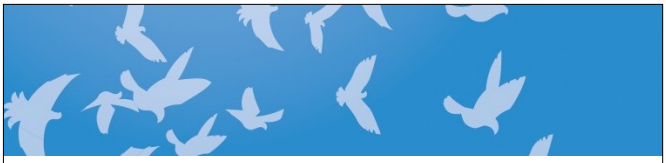
The normal curve is not sacred. It describes the outcome of a random process. Since education is a purposeful activity in which we seek to have the students learn what we teach, the achievement distribution should be very different from the normal curve if our instruction is effective.

—**Bloom**, "Mastery Learning" in Block (Ed.), *Mastery Learning: Theory and Practice* (1971), p. 49

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Engages teacher teams in creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum. ☐ Ensures that all students have access to this curriculum.	☐ Allowing each teacher to determine what is essential. ☐ Allowing instructional resources to determine the curriculum. ☐ Using rigid pacing guides designed to cover material.



- Monitor student learning through an ongoing assessment process that includes frequent, team-developed common formative assessments.



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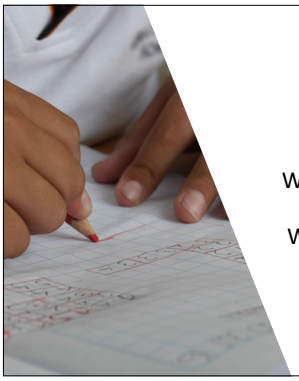


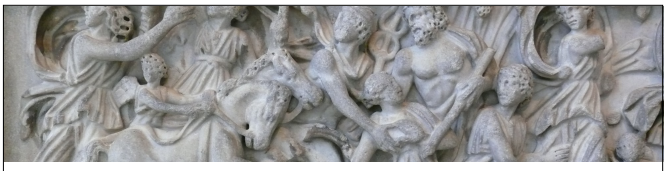
What is a **formative** assessment?

What is a **common** assessment?

Use the results of common assessments to:

- Improve individual practice.
- Build the team's capacity to achieve its goals.
- Intervene or extend on behalf of students.

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Ensures that team-created common formative assessments are the lynchpin to guide instruction and interventions.	☐ ☐



If we give students additional chances:

- They won't try the first time.
- It is not fair to the students who passed the first time.

“

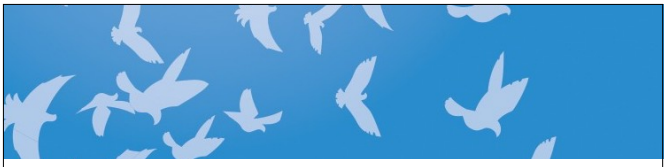
The student gains in learning triggered by formative assessment were amongst the largest ever reported for education interventions.

”

—**Black & Wiliam,** “Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 1998

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Ensures that team-created common formative assessments are the lynchpin to guide instruction and interventions.	☐ The exclusive use of summative assessments. ☐ Outdated grading practices, such as averaging grades, grading on a curve, 100-point scales, the use of zeros.

○ **Provide systematic interventions and enrichment.**



- What do we expect students to learn?
- How do we respond when they do not learn?
- How do we know they are learning it?
- How do we respond when they have already learned?

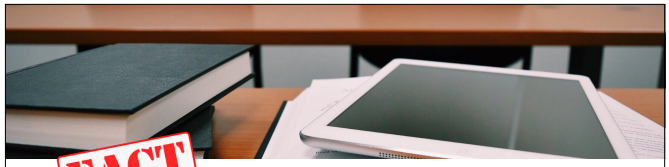
Can you make every parent this promise?

"It does not matter which teacher your child has at our school—if your child needs extra time and support to learn at high levels, we guarantee he or she will receive it."

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Embeds intervention time into the school week, where students can receive help without missing new essential curriculum.	☐
☐ Creates a systematic process to identify students who need additional time and support.	☐

MYTH

Providing all this help will not prepare students for the "real world."



FACT

The United States has the second highest collegiate dropout rate in the industrialized world.

(**Porter**, "Dropping Out of College and Paying the Price," *New York Times*, 2013)

A PLC …	A PLC stops …
☐ Embeds intervention time into the school week, where students can receive help without missing new essential curriculum.	☐ Leaving it up to each teacher to determine how to provide additional time and support.
☐ Creates a systematic process to identify students who need additional time and support.	☐ Relying on special education as the only systematic solution.

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This too shall pass!

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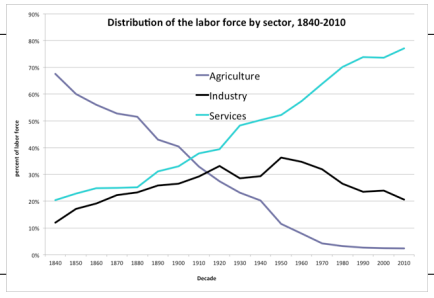

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(**Johnston**, "History Lessons: Understanding the Decline in Manufacturing," *Minn Post*, 2012)

There is a difference between simple and easy.

- There is a difference between uncomfortable and unreasonable.

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