

PLCs 101 – Pathways to Innovation and Creativity

John A. Carter
Westlake High School
Austin, Texas

1/14/2013

In our time together today...

- Identify how *professional learning* for educators connects with generalized learning processes
- Examine the continuum leading to authentic collaboration
- Connect the tenets of a PLC to the professional learning process

What is a PLC?

- An organizational ***mindset*** that promotes ***creativity and innovation*** as tools ***to learn about and solve*** the most perplexing ***problems*** a ***team of professionals*** faces.
- For educators, the problem solving focuses on improving student achievement.



Turn to a neighbor...

- First, introduce yourself if you do not know your neighbor's name.
- Second, share your first reactions to Robinson's claims about collaboration, imagination, and creativity as stated in the clip that you just watched.

Overcoming the Habits of Institutions

- Choosing to be a Professional Learning Community is a conscious decision to modify one of the longstanding *habits of schools*.
- Choosing to be a Professional Learning Community is a commitment to dialogue and conversation *between* teachers recognizing that collaboration is a key operating principle for the next phase of development in the 21st century.

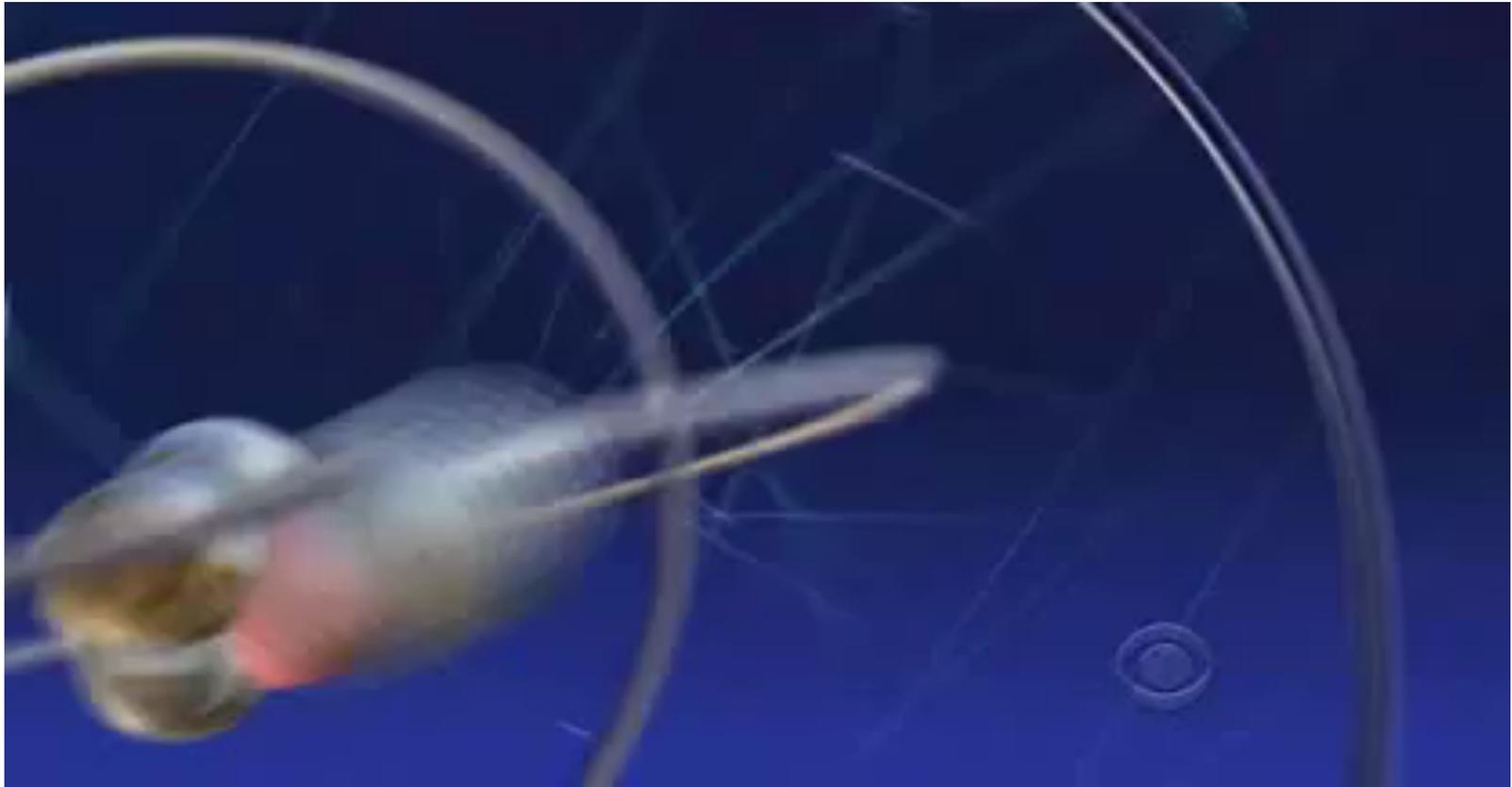
What is a PLC?

- PROFESSIONAL Learning Community
- Professional LEARNING Community
- Professional Learning COMMUNITY

What is LEARNING?

- “*I learned that yesterday!*”
- Think for a moment...
 - What conditions are necessary for learning to occur?
 - What evidence is necessary to confidently state that learning *has* occurred?

One Look at Learning...



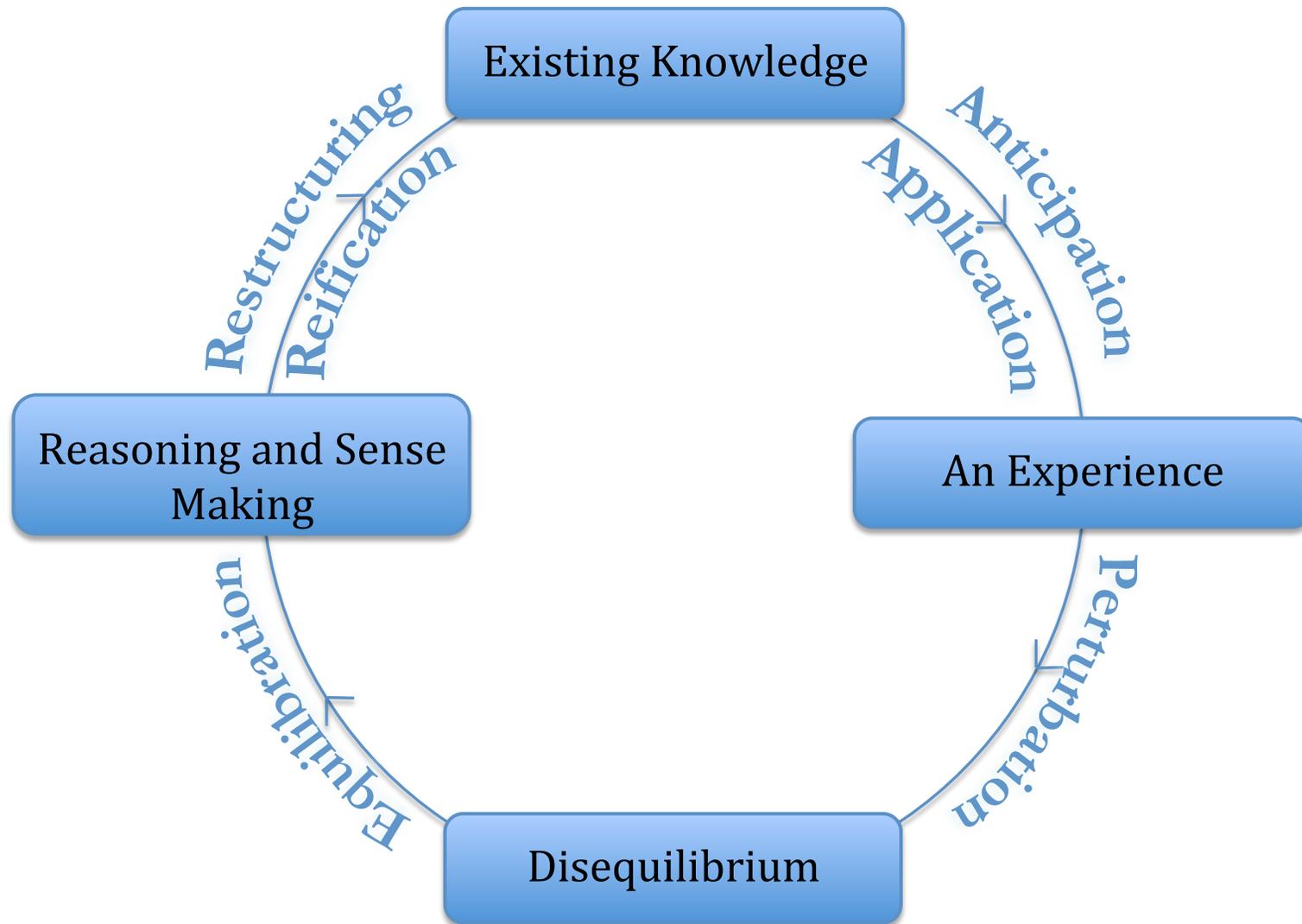
Did Penny Learn?

- Using the conditions you identified prior to the clip, discuss with your neighbor whether Penny *learned*.
 - Identify what she *learned*.
 - Identify the evidence you saw for her *learning*.

A Deeper Look at Learning

- Behaviorism – Watson, Skinner
- Cognitivism
- Constructivism – Bruner, Piaget, Vygotsky
- Situated Cognition and Learning – Lave and Wenger
- Transformative Learning Theory

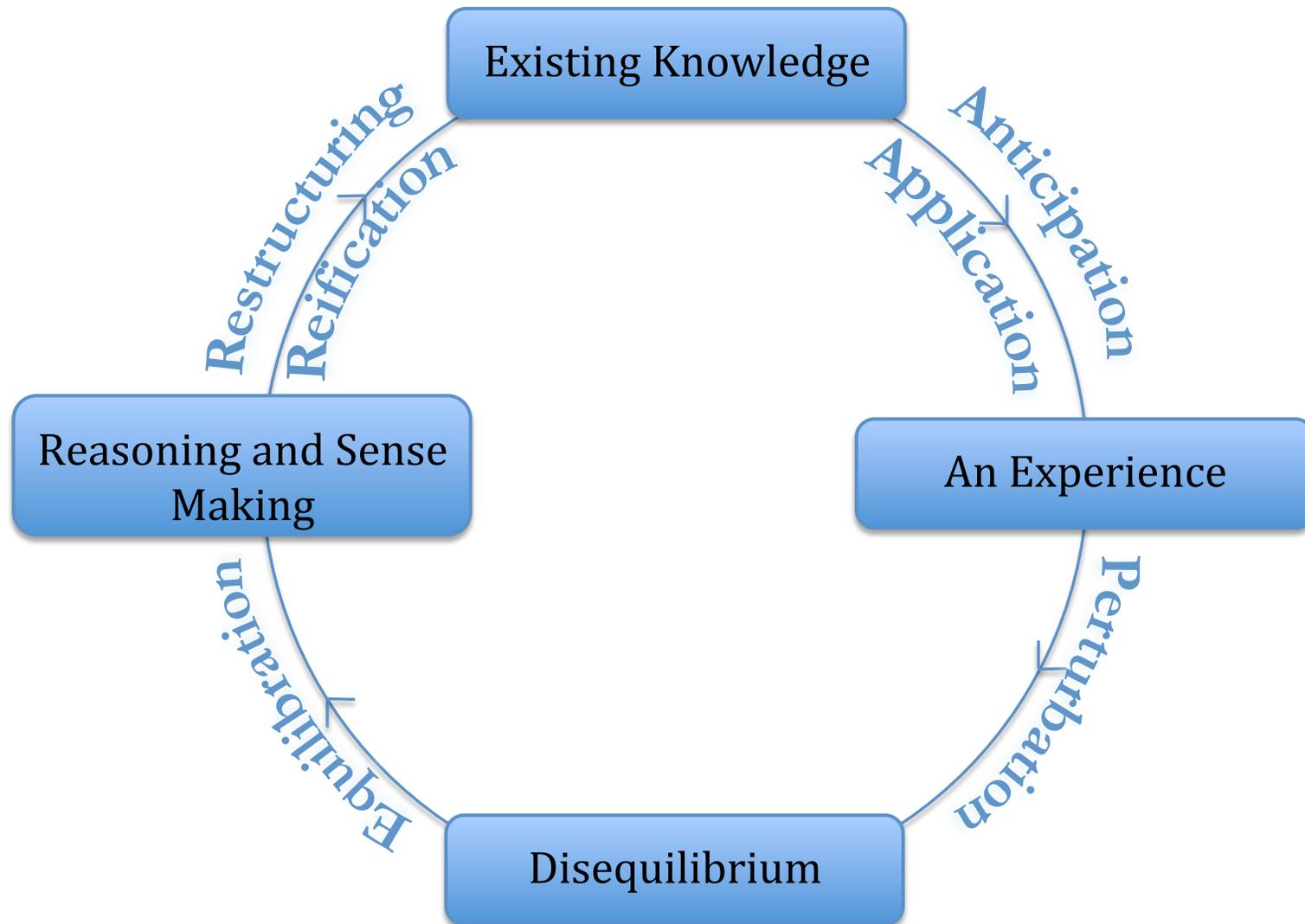
The Cycle of Learning



Teaching as the Induction of Learning

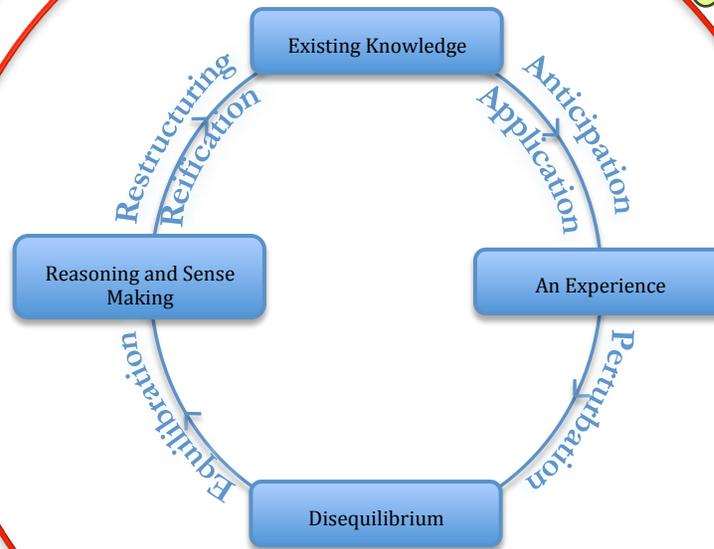
Our task each and every <time period> is to design instruction that artfully and skillfully guides our students through this process with attention to a variety of factors, e.g., readiness for learning, social and emotional skills, depth of learning, intervention, and established targets.

The Cycle of Learning

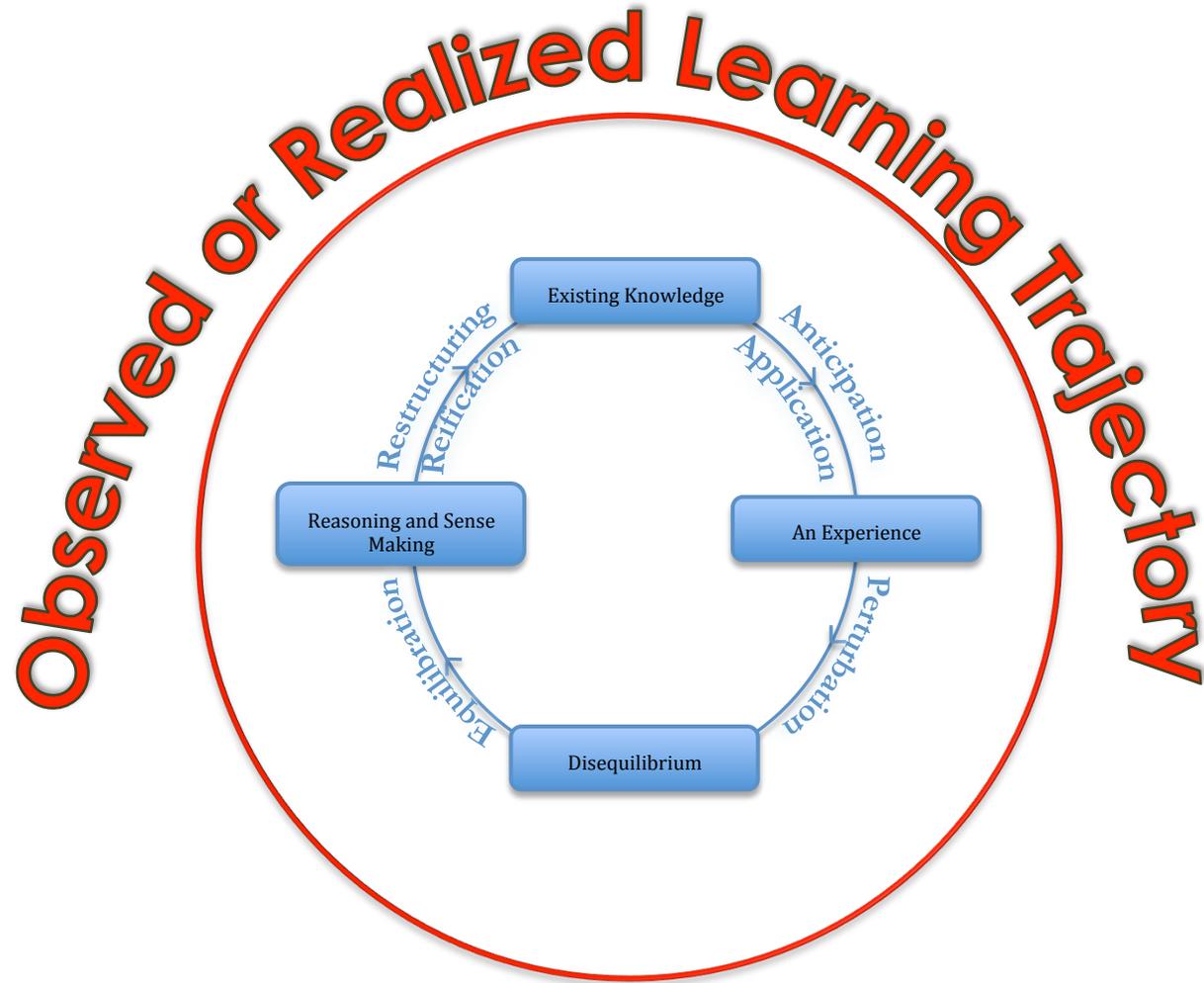


The Work of Teachers...

Hypothetical Learning Trajectory



The Work of Teachers...

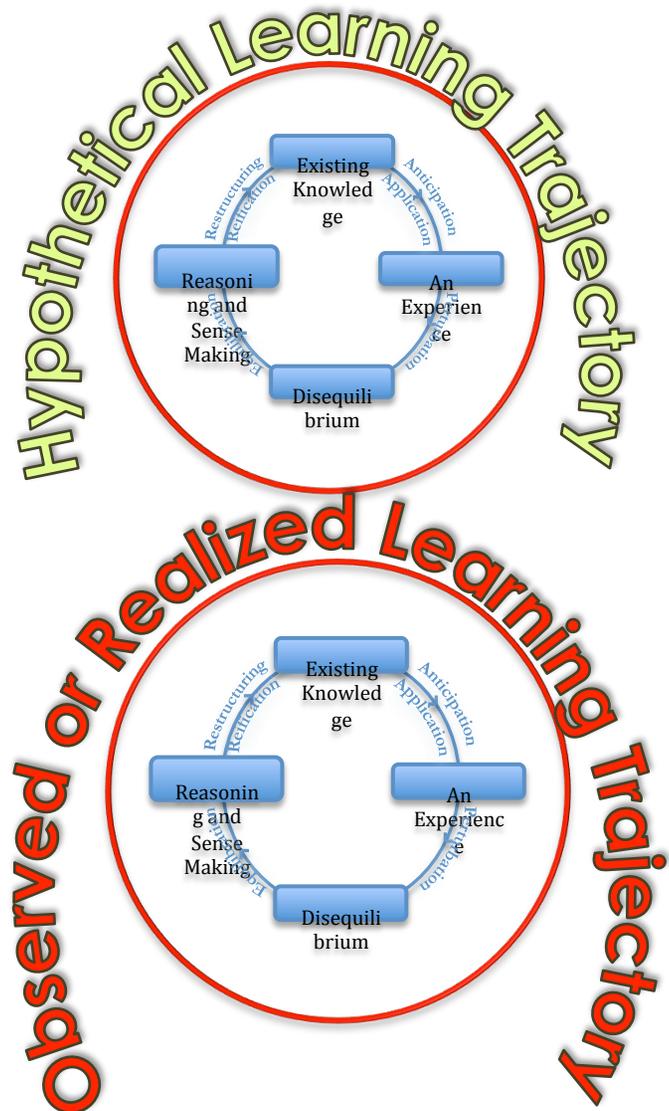


Professional Learning...

Existing Knowledge

Reasoning and Sense Making

Disequilibrium



Reflect on this model...

- Take a moment to think about a time when your
 - HLT aligned with your RLT and how that affected your “learning”
 - HLT conflicted with your RLT and the thinking and learning that occurred

In Community

- A PLC also encourages collective creativity and supportive conditions by reducing isolation and creating shared responsibility for students (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010).

Levels of Working Together

- Cooperation – operating together
- Coordination – ordinating/prioritizing together
- Collaboration – laboring together

Levels of Working Together

- **Cooperation** is informal, with no commonly defined goals or planning effort; information is shared as needed.
- *For example, when teachers in a cooperative relationship work loosely together, each works independently, but they come together briefly for mutual benefit.*

Levels of Working Together

- **Coordinating** suggests a more formal working relationship and the understanding of missions. Some planning is required and more communication channels are established.
- *For example, a team of teachers might make arrangements to plan and teach a common lesson or unit at the same time. In this situation, a closer working relationship is required and priorities are established.*

Levels of Working Together

- **Collaboration** is a much more prolonged and interdependent effort. Collaboration changes the way we work. Collaboration moves from competing to building consensus; from working alone to including others from different fields and backgrounds; from thinking mostly about activities and programs to thinking about larger results and strategies; from focusing on short-term accomplishments to requiring long term results.

Working Together

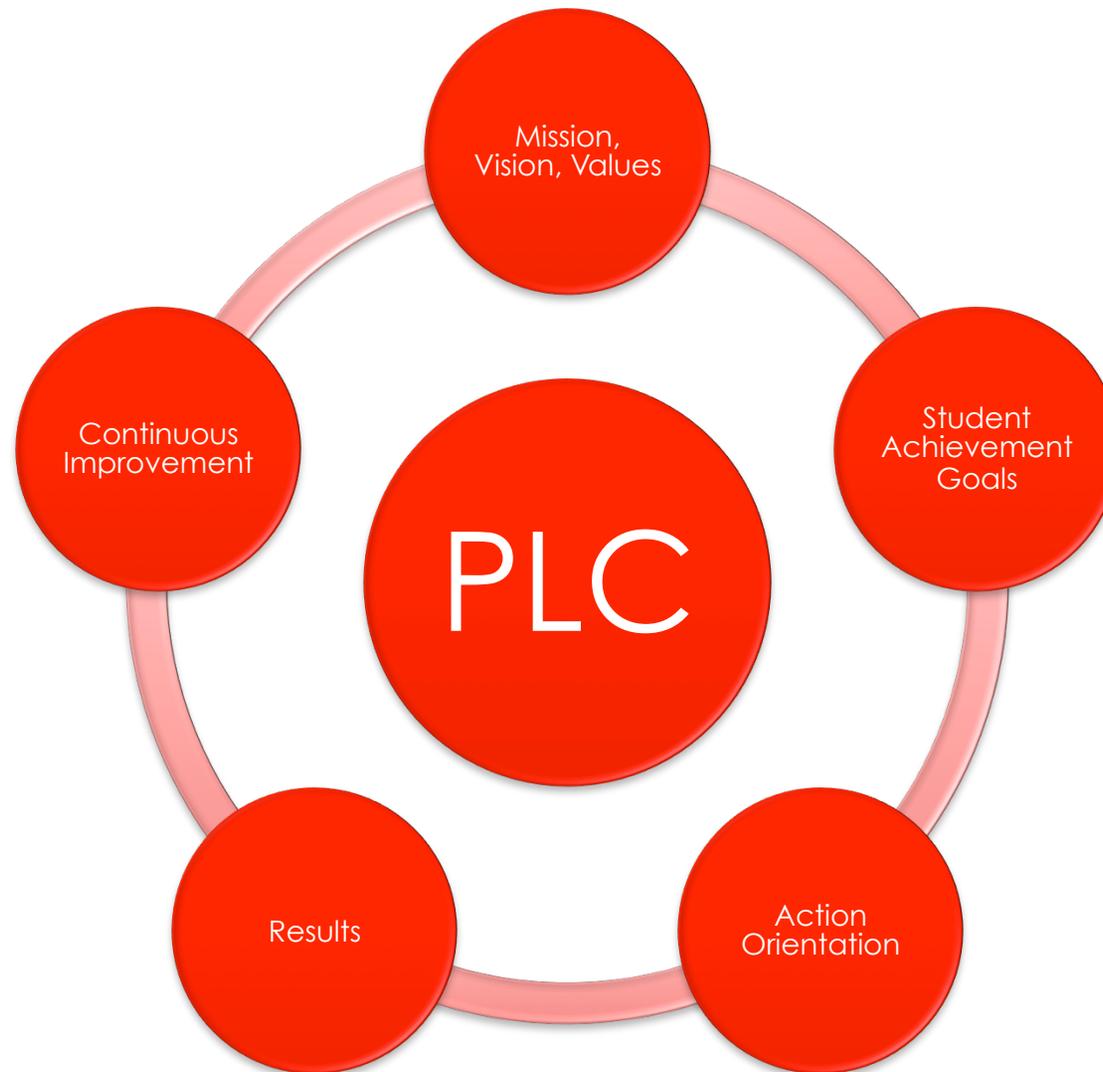
Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration
Short term	Longer term	Long term
Informal relationships	More formal relationships	More pervasive relationships
No clearly defined mission	Understand mission	Commitment to a common mission
No defined structure	Focus on a specific effort or program	Results in a new structure
No planning effort	Some planning	Comprehensive planning
Partners share information about the project at hand	Open communication channels	Well-defined communication channels at all levels
Individuals retain authority	Authority still retained by individuals	Collaborative structure determines authority
Resources are maintained separately	Resources and rewards are shared	Resources are shared
No risk	Power can be an issue	Greater risk; power is an issue
Lower intensity	Some intensity	Higher intensity

"Lessons Learned Series", American Association of School Librarians, Fall 1996.

Reflection...

- Where do(es) your team(s) fall in the continuum of cooperation-coordination-collaboration?
- Are there instances when you are in different places? What characterizes those situations?

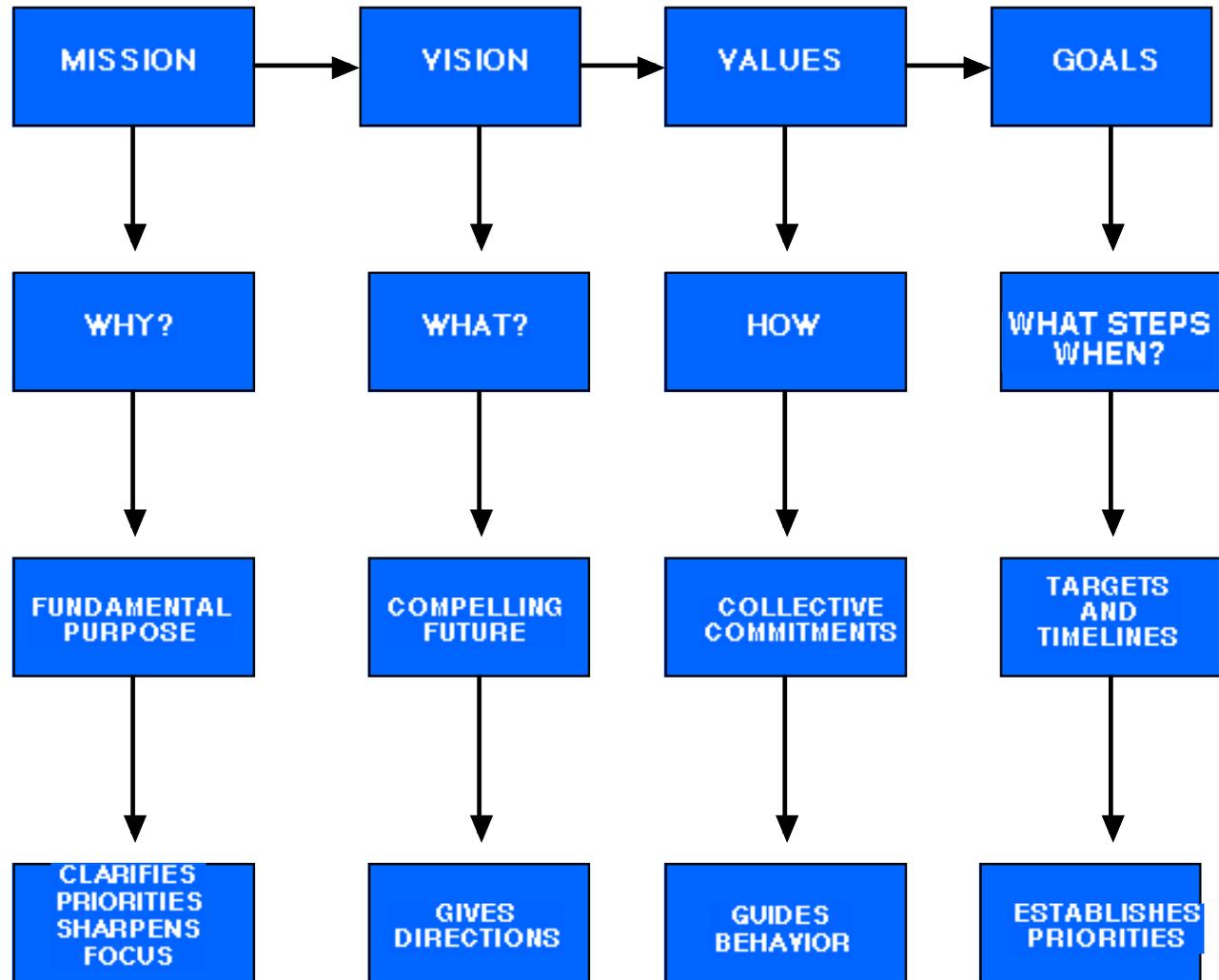
The PLC Process – Part 1



The PLC Process



Mission, Vision, Values, Goals



The Heart of the PLC Process

- Two years of working in a collaborative teams lead to no gains in student achievement.
- It was not until the teams
 - Established a guaranteed curriculum,
 - Monitored student learning through common assessments, and
 - Used the evidence of student learning to identify and problem solve through new [creative, and innovative] instructional strategies
- ...that student achievement soared.

(Gallimore, Emerling, Saunders, & Goldberg, 2009)

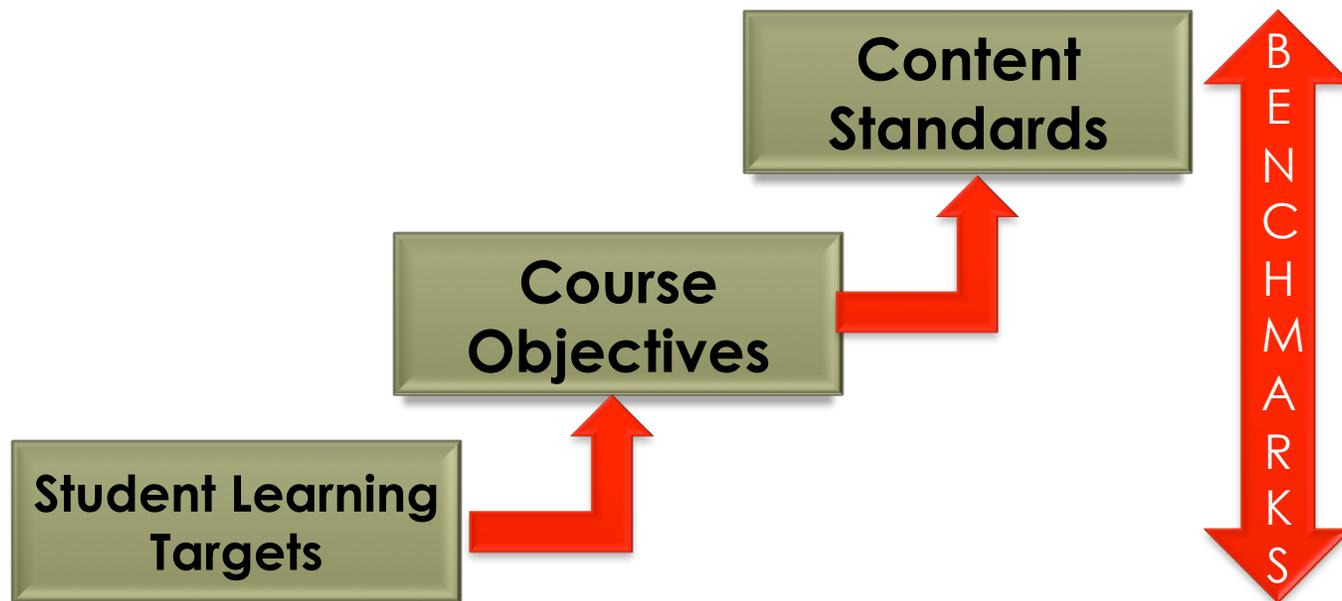
Student Achievement Goals

- Identify an area of learning on which to focus by analyzing student achievement results.
- Identify current achievement levels the team desires to improve.
- Identify the desired achievement level.
- Establish an action plan, timelines, and evaluation plan for determining progress toward goal.

Assessment FOR Learning

- Content Standards - A statement describing the knowledge or skills in a content area.
- Course Objective – A statement describing the knowledge or skills to be learned in a course.
- Student Learning Targets – The concepts or skills to be learned as a result of a specific lesson or a sequence of lessons.
- Benchmarks – Learning goals to be achieved at a particular point in time.

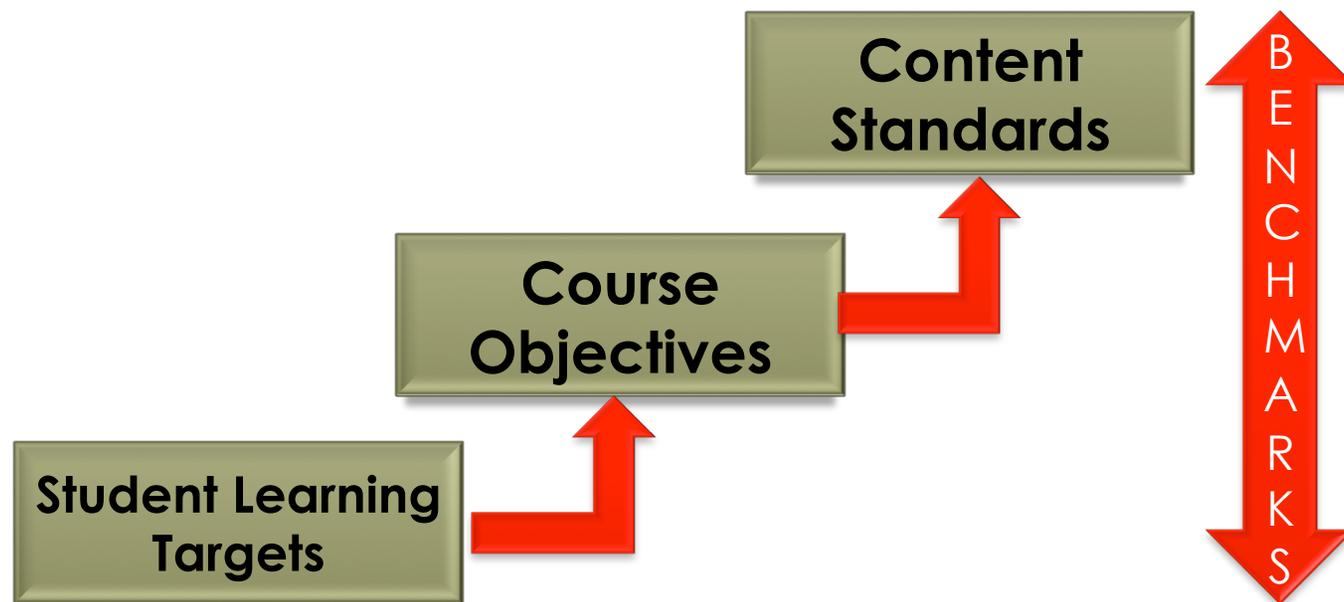
Assessment FOR Learning



4 Kinds of Learning Targets

- Knowledge – The facts and concepts we want students to know.
- Reasoning – Students use what they know to reason and solve problems.
- Performance Skills – Students use their knowledge and reasoning to act skillfully.
- Products – Students use their knowledge, reasoning, and skills to create a concrete product.

Assessment FOR Learning



5 Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment

Accurate Assessment

Clear Purpose

Why assess?
What's the purpose?
Who will use results?

Clear Targets

Assess what?
What are the learning targets?
Are they clear?
Are they good?

Good Design

Assess how?
What method?
How to sample?
How to avoid bias?

Sound

Communication

Communicate how?
How to manage information?
How to report?

Student Involvement

Students are users.
Students need to understand learning targets.
Students can participate in the assessment process.
Students can track progress and communicate.

Effectively Used

4 Kinds of Learning Targets

- Knowledge – The facts and concepts we want students to know.
- Reasoning – Students use what they know to reason and solve problems.
- Performance Skills – Students use their knowledge and reasoning to act skillfully.
- Products – Students use their knowledge, reasoning, and skills to create a concrete product.

Assessment Methods

- Selected Response and Short Answer
 - Students select the correct or best response from a list provided.
- Extended Written Response
 - Students construct a written answer in response to a question or task.
- Performance Assessment
 - Assessment based on observation and judgment
- Personal Communication
 - Find out what students have learned through interacting with them.

What does a unit assessment design look like?

- Clear, articulated, explicit plan for the whole unit.
 1. How we intend to use the assessment results (formative & summative).
 2. How are we going to assess it?
 1. Designing assessments to do what you want.
 3. What methods are we going to use?
 4. What will we do with the results from formative assessments?

Unit Assessment Plan

- Once completed discuss the following in your teams
 - What do you notice about the distribution and frequency of formative assessments? Is every learning target formatively assessed?
 - How might the unit assessment plan be useful to teams? To the division? To students?
 - How might the process of creating unit assessment plans be useful to teams? To the division?
 - Why might common formative assessments be useful to teams? To the division? To students?

Results

- Examine results collectively
 - As a team
 - As individuals
 - By sub-category

Action Orientation

- Put the action plan in place

An Aside about Common Assessments

- Designed collectively because they are used to gauge progress toward established targets or goals.
- Should inform team-level instructional decision-making
- We undermine the PLC process when...
 - We use common assessments to merely assign grades
 - Do nothing with common assessment results
 - Use textbook assessments or commercially developed assessments for this work

Continuous Improvement

- Take a moment to reflect on actions
- CELEBRATE successes and learning
- Re-visit MVV and establish goals and action plans

Collaborative Environment

- Establish norms for participation and expectations of each other.
- Re-visit norms periodically to ensure that the team is growing closer and established relationships are contributing to the functioning of a team.

Protocols

- There are established, research-based protocols that align with the PLC process and have helped teacher teams make substantive progress in reaching goals:
 - Action Research
 - Lesson Study
 - Peer Observation

Something that resonated with you?

- Inquiry frame: One oft-heard critique of moving to a PLC mindset is that it somehow limits creativity and could produce automatons. Based on what has been presented how does one prevent that thought from creeping in to our work?

Innovation as a Habit

- Make it systematic
- Greater degree of dialogue and conversation
- Cultivate your imagination
- Be creative – *process of having original ideas that have value*
- Do not rush to judgment



In our time together today...

- Identified how *professional learning* for educators connects with generalized learning processes
- Examined the continuum leading to collaboration
- Connect the tenets of a PLC to the professional learning process

My hopes...

- You come to value the processes of a PLC that promote creativity, innovation, improvement, and success
- Your teams can engage in authentic professional learning that improves student achievement.

Thank you!

- John Carter

Westlake High School, Austin, TX

Eanes Independent School District

jcarter@eanesisd.net