

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY:
A CASE STUDY OF ONE MIDWESTERN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The concept of school faculty collaborating as a professional learning community has garnered widespread support and is the subject of much research and discussion. This qualitative case study was designed for the purpose of providing deeper insight into the establishment of professional learning communities from the perspective of a school which had been implementing PLCs for several years. One middle school was selected for this study based on its appearance as a highly functioning PLC.

Data collected included observations of small group collaborative work sessions as well as whole faculty staff development, individual interviews with the principal and select teachers, a focus group interview with department chairs, and document analysis of related artifacts. Several themes emerged from the data, specifically regarding the school as a PLC and factors that impacted the implementation process. Barrett Middle School does appear to be a highly functioning PLC, characterized by embedded teacher leadership and focused, comprehensive professional learning, and a culture based on collaboration and student success. Factors contributing to this include involvement from the district level, including ongoing support and training, as well as efficacious principal leadership and a climate which favored implementation.

Implications from this study include the value of embedded teacher leadership, as well as the need to support and develop the skills of principals involved in such efforts. In addition, the value of district involvement should be given significant consideration. Finally, schools like

Barrett that seek to implement PLCs should consider the range and scope of the guidance they utilize.