

# *Professional Learning Community*

*Implementation Guide & Resource*

*Working Document*



## Table of Contents:

<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Understanding a Professional Learning Community</b>	<b>3</b>
Defining A PLC	3
Three Big Ideas of A PLC	3
Four Questions of A PLC	4
Tight Elements of A PLC	4
Tight Vs. Loose Elements	5
Understanding Rtl in The PLC Model	6
<b>A Culture of Collective Responsibility</b>	<b>7</b>
Action 1: Establish A Guiding Coalition	7
Action 2: Build A Culture of Collective Responsibility	7
Action 3: Form Collaborative Teacher Teams	7
Action 4: Create Time for Collaboration	7
Action 5: Commit to Team Norms	7
<b>Tier 1: Teacher Team Essential Actions</b>	<b>7</b>
Action 1: Identify Essential Standards for Each Grade Level or Course	7
Action 2: Create an Essential Standards Unit Plan	7
Action 3: Implement the Team Teaching-Assessing Cycle	8
Action 4: Give Common End-of-Unit Assessment For Essential Standards	8
Action 5: Identify Students for Tier 2 Support by Student, Standard, and Learning Target	8
<b>Tier 1: Schoolwide Essential Actions</b>	<b>9</b>
Action 1: Ensure Access to Essential Grade Level Curriculum	9
Action 2: Identify and Teach Essential Academic and Social Behaviors	9
Action 3: Provide Preventions to Proactively Support Student Success	9
<b>Tier 2: Teacher Team Essential Actions</b>	<b>9</b>
Action 1: Design and Lead Supplemental Interventions for Academic Essential Standards	9
Action 2: Consider Screening in Immediate Prerequisite Skills	9
Action 3: Monitor the Progress of Students Receiving Supplemental Supports	9
Action 4: Extend Student Learning	10
<b>Tier 2: Schoolwide Essential Actions</b>	<b>10</b>
Action 1: Schedule Time for Supplemental Interventions	10
Action 2: Establish a Process for Schoolwide Student Intervention Identification	10
Action 3: Plan and Implement Supplemental Interventions for Essential Social and Academic Behaviors	10
Action 4: Coordinate Interventions for Students Needing Skill and Will Supports	10
<b>Tier 3: Schoolwide Essential Actions</b>	<b>10</b>
Action 1: Identify Students Needing Intensive Support	10

Action 2: Create a Dynamic, Problem-Solving Site Intervention Team	10
Action 3: Prioritize Resources Based on Greatest Student Needs	11
Action 4: Create A Systematic and Timely Process to Refer Students to the Site Intervention Team	11
Action 5: Assess Intervention Effectiveness	11
<b>Tier 3: Intervention Team Essential Actions</b>	<b>11</b>
Action 1: Diagnose, Treat, Prioritize, and Monitor Tier 3 Interventions	11
Action 2: Ensure Proper Intervention Intensity	11
Action 3: Determine if Special Education is Needed or Justifiable	12
<b>A Summary Of Teams</b>	<b>12</b>
Teacher Teams/Collaborative Teams	12
Guiding Coalition/Building Leadership Team	12
School Intervention Team	12
<b>Supporting and Monitoring Implementation</b>	<b>12</b>
Hiring of New Staff	12
Coaching	12
Professional Learning	13
Annual Review of PLC Continuum	13
Team Observations	13
<b>Additional Resources</b>	<b>13</b>

## Background

The purpose of this document is to provide a general understanding of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model and how we are implementing this in the Beaver Dam Unified School District. It should be noted that our Response to Intervention (RtI) system and other student support systems (GT, ELL, Special Education, Student Services, etc.) are all a part of this model. We all operate as a growing PLC.

This guide provides specific information and resources. However, it is not meant as a replacement for handbooks such as *Learning by Doing, 2nd Ed* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, Mattos) and *Taking Action* (Buffum, Mattos, Malone).

## Understanding a Professional Learning Community

### Defining A PLC

- A professional learning community:
  - Educators who are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.
- A team:
  - Working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members of the team are mutually accountable.
- Collaboration:
  - A systematic process in which we work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results.

The whole district and school operates as a professional learning community. A professional learning community is not a small group of people, a time, or a meeting. Our strategic plan, school goals, professional learning, curriculum, teacher teams and more all connect to a professional learning community!

### Three Big Ideas of A PLC

What we do and how we are organized comes back to these three big ideas:

A Focus on Learning	A Collaborative Culture and Collective Responsibility	A Results Orientation
We accept learning as the fundamental purpose of our school and therefore are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.	We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose.  We cultivate a collaborative culture through development of high-performing teams.	We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions.  Individuals, teams, and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.

### Four Questions of A PLC

The four questions of a PLC frame the work of the schools and teams into easy to understand questions. These are the four things we can constantly be thinking about and working to answer.

- What do we want students to know and be able to do?
- How will we know if each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
- How will we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

### Tight Elements of A PLC

# Tight Elements in a PLC



1. Educators work collaboratively rather than in isolation, take collective responsibility for student learning, and clarify the commitments they make to each other about how they will work together.

2. The fundamental structure of the school becomes the collaborative team in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which all members are mutually accountable.

3. The team establishes a guaranteed and viable curriculum, unit by unit, so all students have access to the same knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned.

4. The team develops common formative assessments to frequently gather evidence of student learning.

5. The school has created a system of interventions and extensions to ensure students who struggle receive additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, diagnostic, and systematic, and students who demonstrate proficiency can extend their learning.

6. The team uses evidence of student learning to inform and improve the individual and collective practice of its members.



DuFour • DuFour  
Eaker • Many • Mattos

LEARNING BY DOING

*Tight Vs. Loose Elements*

The following are the tight and loose elements of a PLC. In italics, is clarification on the loose elements for our elementary level due to their being multiple buildings.

<b>Loose Vs Tight</b>	
<b>Tight Elements</b>	<b>Loose Elements (Elementary in <i>Italics</i>)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educators work in collaborative teams and take collective responsibility for students' learning rather than working in isolation. As members of a team, they work interdependently to achieve common SMART goals for which members are mutually accountable.</li> <li>2. Collaborative teams implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum, unit by unit.</li> <li>3. Collaborative teams monitor student learning through an ongoing assessment process that includes frequent, team-developed common formative assessments.</li> <li>4. Educators use the results of common assessments to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve individual practice.</li> <li>○ Build the team's capacity to achieve its goals.</li> <li>○ Intervene or extend on behalf of individual students.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. The school provides a systematic process for intervention and enrichment. Intervention is timely, directive (not invitational), and diagnostic (focusing on specific skills), and it does not remove a student from new direct instruction.</li> </ol>	<p>Teams of Teachers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish their own norms and SMART goals.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Each school collaborative team shares a SMART goal (SLO) to unify their overall learning and work for the SY. This is specific to the school and is tied to the school's goal.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Determine the specific knowledge and skills students must acquire in each unit.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>The district grade level team/department determines the essential standards and what units they are taught or emphasized.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Establish pacing for each unit (the length of time they will devote to each unit).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>The district grade level team/department determines the order of units and general unit pacing (Units taught per semester). School level teams determine specific unit pacing which includes time for re-teaching/extending.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Determine the standard of proficiency each student must attain.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>For essential standards, the district grade level team/department determines the proficiency students must attain.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Gather evidence of student learning through an assessment process that includes one or more common formative assessments the team creates for each unit.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>End of Unit and Interim Common Formative Assessments are common across the school level collaborative team. This allows for immediate analysis and adjustments.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Individual Teachers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use the instructional strategies that they feel work best for them.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Instructional strategies are aligned to district frameworks and high leverage practices.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Use their own ongoing assessments as they teach.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Teachers provide their own formative assessments to monitor their own instruction outside of common formative assessments.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Pace the content as they deem appropriate within the window of time the team has established for the unit.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Units end at the same time as other educators according to the pacing guide and common formative assessments are delivered on the same date (1 day difference if truly needed). However, educators can pace their lessons based on their professional judgement.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Understanding Rtl in The PLC Model

As collaborative teams monitor student success, some students will need extra time and support to learn essential targets or skills. Additionally, some students will need intensive support to learn universal skills. This is, essentially, Rtl. This is in line with the PLC questions: How will we respond when some students do not learn it? AND How will we extend learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

This guide provides information on each tier, but a summary can be found below. It should be noted that all students have access to all three tiers of instruction and Tier II/Tier III include enrichment or extensions of learning.



<p><b>Universal Instruction</b> <i>Core Program</i></p>	<p>Access to essential grade level standards and quality instruction for all students.</p>	<p>All students have access to grade level instruction and differentiated support to meet those expectations.</p>	
<p><b>Targeted Intervention</b> <i>Supplemental Program</i></p>	<p>Additional support to master essential grade level standards or prerequisite skills.</p>	<p>Students in need of additional supports beyond core instruction and differentiation to meet grade level expectations.</p>	
<p><b>Intensive Interventions</b> <i>Intensive Supports</i></p>	<p>Intense remediation in universal skills.</p>	<p>Students who need intensive remediation on universal skills are supported in Systematic and Intensive Interventions.</p>	

## **A Culture of Collective Responsibility**

### Action 1: Establish A Guiding Coalition

Each school, under the direction of the School Principal, has a Guiding Coalition (Building Leadership Team). This team meets monthly (at least). The tasks of this team includes ensuring that the structures and processes are in place to achieve the mission, vision, and goals.

### Action 2: Build A Culture of Collective Responsibility

Each building, as well as the school district, should take steps to ensure we are unified in our mission, vision, and collective commitments. Actions to do so can include assessing the current reality of the school, providing a compelling case for change or addressing needs, creating a doable plan, and building staff consensus.

In support of building a culture of collective responsibility, we utilize mission, vision, collective commitments and goals. Our district has established a mission, vision, and goals through our strategic plan. Each school also has related statements (collectively created) and collective commitments. Our schools also have an annual school success plan that includes goals. Teachers then utilize these goals to create SLOs which are likely to be team-based goals.

### Action 3: Form Collaborative Teacher Teams

Every certified staff member should serve on a collaborative team as a part of our PLC model.

### Action 4: Create Time for Collaboration

Each building or level establishes the frequency to which collaboration time can occur. We make our best attempts for grade level and core area teachers to have weekly collaboration time. Furthermore, we define the frequency of others based on our current ability for common plan times. Some teams may have longer stretches where there is not regular common plan time. These teams, however, work on a longer teaching-assessing cycle than those with more regular common plan time.

### Action 5: Commit to Team Norms

Annually, with as needed adjustments and affirmations, each collaborative team establishes team norms. These are the agreements the team makes to ensure productive collaboration and mutual accountability.

## **Tier 1: Teacher Team Essential Actions**

### Action 1: Identify Essential Standards for Each Grade Level or Course

Each course taught at BDUSD is to have essential standards determined by the teachers/department/team. These are to be identified on the public [course guide](#). The course guides can be found in the [curriculum warehouse](#).

### Action 2: Create an Essential Standards Unit Plan

Each course taught at BDUSD is to have an Essential [Standards Map](#). This lists the essential standards, associated learning targets, proficiency, and where the standards are taught. This is stored in a Google shared drive organized by administrators so the document is viewable to all.



### Action 3: Implement the Team Teaching-Assessing Cycle

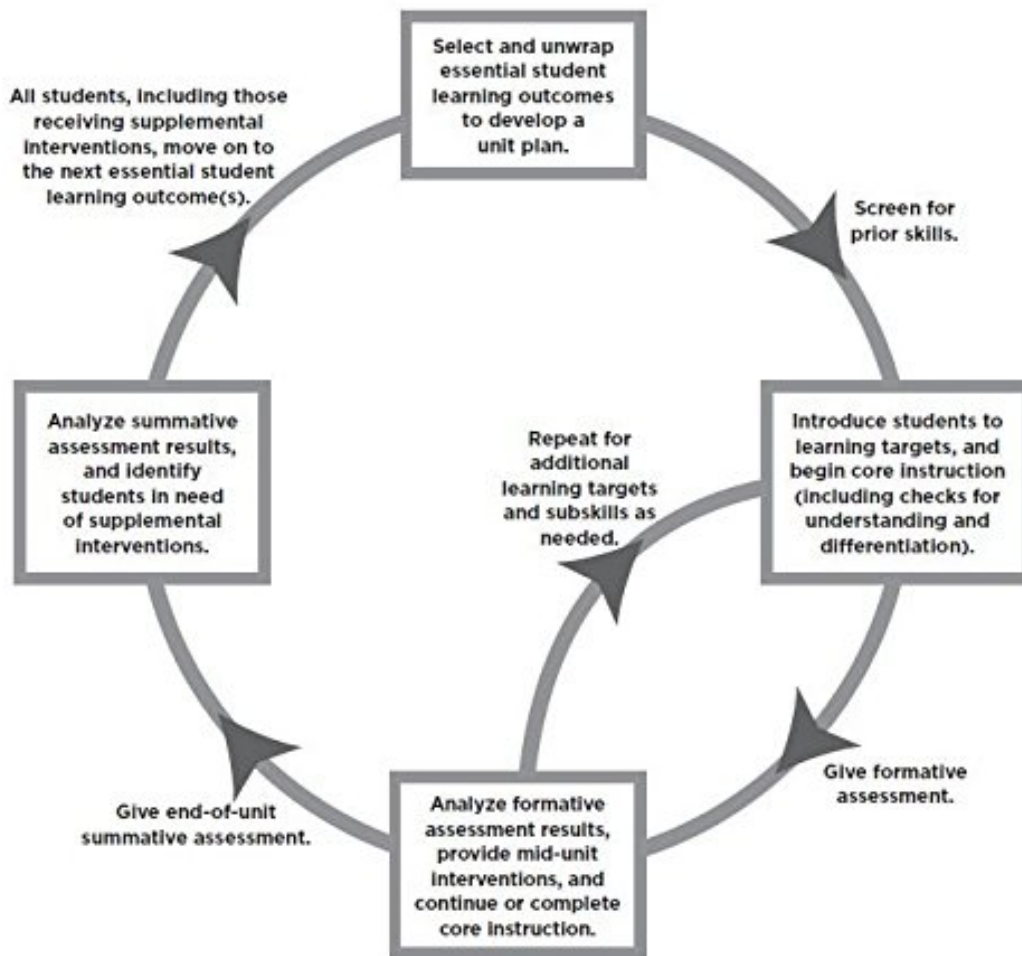


Figure 4.7: The team teaching–assessing cycle.

(From: *Taking Action*)

The basis of the collaborative team is operating on the Team Teaching-Assessing Cycle unit by unit. The team's year-long goal also operates on a similar cycle. A unit document can be found [here](#) that supports the cycle and can also double as the team's agenda.

### Action 4: Give Common End-of-Unit Assessment For Essential Standards

Each common course gives an end-of-unit assessment that is designed to determine proficiency by learning target or standard. These assessments should be common (the same), under similar conditions, and given on the same day (no more than 2 days apart if needed). Re-teaching time should be built into unit plans in order to allow for common pacing and still respect student instructional needs.

Action 5: Identify Students for Tier 2 Support by Student, Standard, and Learning Target

In analyzing assessments, the team analyzes which students need additional support for each standard / learning target expected. This is especially true for essential standards assessed. The team should also analyze their own instructional practices that are meeting the best results. Students who did not meet the desired level of proficiency should receive more time and support to be able to do so. This can be planned by the team.

**Tier 1: Schoolwide Essential Actions**

Action 1: Ensure Access to Essential Grade Level Curriculum

All students at BDUSD are entitled to grade level curriculum. Our schedules should be coordinated to support this. Students receiving interventions should not have their Tier I instruction compromised. We do not offer below grade level tracks for our students. We also use mixed ability grouping and non-static strategy grouping across Tier I.

We will have a very small percent of students who are working toward an alternative set of standards that may be receiving alternative Tier I instruction. This is likely to be less than 1% of our population.

Action 2: Identify and Teach Essential Academic and Social Behaviors

Schools, as a part of behavioral and social emotional learning, identify and teach academic and social behaviors to students and monitor success. In addition, academic expectations are named and deliberately taught.

Action 3: Provide Preventions to Proactively Support Student Success

The school has a plan to transition students that are new to the school, screen for academic and SEL needs, and ensure we use that information to set students up for success. This would include orientations, mentorships, buddies, etc...

**Tier 2: Teacher Team Essential Actions**

Action 1: Design and Lead Supplemental Interventions for Academic Essential Standards

Teachers have planned and delivered common assessments as a part of the teaching-assessing cycle. Upon completion of those assessments, the team analyzes their performance and the performance of students. The team plans appropriate Tier II interventions for students who did not meet the desired proficiency. This can be simple re-teaching to more extensive support delivered by the teacher team. The team may also design appropriate extension and enrichment for students who have demonstrated proficiency.

Action 2: Consider Screening in Immediate Prerequisite Skills

Teams can predict the most essential skills students need to be successful in upcoming new learning. Students missing those skills can be served in a Tier II intervention to prepare them for the new learning.

Action 3: Monitor the Progress of Students Receiving Supplemental Supports

Any intervention should be monitored. This would include Tier II interventions. However, this may be as simple as a short formative assessment, observation, or other fitting methods to determine if students have met the goal for the intervention.

Action 4: Extend Student Learning

Students who show proficiency on pre-assessments or during a unit may have their learning extended. This could include extensions in independent work time, WIN time, or other relevant instructional time. Many options exist to extend learning including:

- In Unit Curriculum Compacting
- Tiered Assignments
- Leveled Learning Stations
- Deeper Levels of Questioning
- Replacement Projects

**Tier 2: Schoolwide Essential Actions**

Action 1: Schedule Time for Supplemental Interventions

The Principal and Guiding Coalition should develop and continually revisit a schedule that allows for students to receive intervention and extension supports that do not interrupt new learning (Tier I instruction).

Action 2: Establish a Process for Schoolwide Student Intervention Identification

The Principal and Guiding Coalition should develop a process where students in need of social and academic behavior support can be identified and shared with the School Intervention Team. This team will then develop and support the needs. This process is in addition to the School Intervention Team regularly screening data to determine intervention needs for universal skills.

Action 3: Plan and Implement Supplemental Interventions for Essential Social and Academic Behaviors

The School Intervention Team should plan and implement interventions for students who need social and academic behavior support.

Action 4: Coordinate Interventions for Students Needing Skill and Will Supports

The School Intervention Team should plan for interventions where students are identified as a “will” need. Students with “skill” needs at the Tier II level are served by the teacher team. At the Tier III level, the School Intervention Team coordinates interventions.

**Tier 3: Schoolwide Essential Actions**

Action 1: Identify Students Needing Intensive Support

The school determines data that will be used to determine intervention needs (academic and SEL). The Intervention guide book provides further guidelines for assessment and tier III considerations. Interventions should start no later than the first week of school.

### Action 2: Create a Dynamic, Problem-Solving Site Intervention Team

Each school has a School/Site Intervention Team. This is the schoolwide intervention team that collaboratively supports students in need of additional support as identified in the Rtl Process. The team consists of educators identified by the Principal for Tier 3 decision making. This team may include interventionists, school psychologists, and the Principal/Assistant Principal.

- Teacher participation may and should be utilized, especially if the educator is delivering the Tier 3 intervention. However, the teacher team has the primary responsibility of Tier 1 & Tier 2 instruction and supports. Communication between all parties is essential.
- The team should meet no less than twice per month. Data needs to be monitored and decisions need to be made on a regular basis. This would include academic data as well as attendance, SEL, Behavioral, credit, grades, and other relevant data.

### Action 3: Prioritize Resources Based on Greatest Student Needs

The Principal and Guiding Coalition determine staffing resources available to support the Rtl process. The team works to ensure the system supports students who are in need.

### Action 4: Create A Systematic and Timely Process to Refer Students to the Site Intervention Team

The school utilizes data to determine needs. However, a referral process for staff to notify the School Intervention Team of a student need should exist and should not be cumbersome for the referring person.

### Action 5: Assess Intervention Effectiveness

The Principal and various district level teams monitor data, research, and other relevant information to ensure we are providing the best possible intervention options/resources to school teams.

The School Intervention Team should monitor effectiveness of delivered interventions in short cycles (not just when district benchmarks or state assessments provide data). This can be used to determine changes in interventions, changes in intervention intensity, or to exit someone from an intervention. This monitoring can also support determination of the need for further training or support for those delivering interventions.

## **Tier 3: Intervention Team Essential Actions**

### Action 1: Diagnose, Treat, Prioritize, and Monitor Tier 3 Interventions

The School Intervention Team determines the Tier III needs of students and prioritizes staff and resources (including time) available to best support students. While there may be many identified needs, the team determines how to make the most impact.

For example: A school may prioritize more time and staffing to ensure all Kindergarten students have mastered their letters and letter sounds in the first few weeks of school. Later in the school year, more time and attention may be paid to ensuring first grade students have their reading needs met to support them reading at grade level.

### Action 2: Ensure Proper Intervention Intensity

The School Intervention Team monitors success of interventions to ensure that students have enough time and attention to achieve positive results. Frequency, duration, and group size can all be manipulated to best serve students. We should also ensure that we are monitoring intervention selection in a manner that is addressing causes and not symptoms.

### Action 3: Determine if Special Education is Needed or Justifiable

The goal of the Rtl system is to support all students in performing at or above grade level. The process is not a Special Education referral system. If we go through the process and find that, despite our best efforts, a student is not able to make expected gains, the team may consider a referral for Special Education. More information can be found in the intervention guide.

## **A Summary Of Teams**

### Teacher Teams/Collaborative Teams

- *Collaborative teacher team* meeting frequency is determined at the building level. However, it is suggested that the team meets weekly.
  - The teams operate on the teaching-assessing cycle.
  - Teams have a common year-long goal (SLO) that is able to be monitored in short cycles of improvement.
- Some teams, particularly our MAPES teams at the elementary level, may not have common plan time and may not meet with the same frequency. These teams still participate in the teaching-assessing cycle, but this is drawn out over a longer period of time and is focused on common skills.

### Guiding Coalition/Building Leadership Team

- *Guiding Coalition/Building Leadership Teams* meet at least monthly to collaborate around the schools plan for continuous improvement, ensuring structures and plans are in place to enhance all three tiers of instruction.

### School Intervention Team

- *School Intervention Teams* should meet at least twice per month.
  - The team monitors data to plan, implement, and monitor Tier III interventions.
  - In addition to academic data, the team or a portion of the team, should be regularly monitoring social, emotional, behavioral, attendance, and other relevant student information in order to provide support and intervention.
  - Specific information is found in the Academic Intervention Guide.

## **Supporting and Monitoring Implementation**

6/2022

### Hiring of New Staff

Staff being hired to serve BDUSD should be committed to the PLC process and team collaboration. Interview questions should inspect for this commitment.

Collective commitments should be agreed to by any hiree.

### Coaching

Administrators and C&I Coaches exist, in part, to support the work of collaborative teams. Our meeting the needs of students depends on high functioning teams.

### Professional Learning

Opportunities for ongoing professional learning in the area of professional learning communities will be provided. All of our professional learning will be connected back to ensuring we can meet the goals of the district, schools, and teams.

### Annual Review of PLC Continuum

Annually, if not more regularly, educators will be surveyed on our implementation of professional learning communities and team effectiveness. This will inform our next steps in continuous improvement.

### Team Observations

The administrator supervising each teacher team/collaborative team should observe the team and provide feedback no less frequently than once per quarter. If the team would like support in their development, the team should reach out to an administrator or coach.

## **Additional Resources**

[Academic Intervention Guidebook \(RtI\)](#)

[Teaching-Assessing Cycle Team Protocol](#)