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Global Perspectives: Professional Learning Communities at Work™ in International Schools

By Timothy S. Stuart (Editor)

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Global Perspectives: Professional Learning Communities at Work™ in International Schools*, edited by Timothy S. Stuart. *Global Perspectives*, written by international school educators, expresses how to implement professional learning community (PLC) practices outside the United States to foster high-performing, student-centered international schools.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Study Guide

Chapter 1

Building a PLC Culture in International Schools:

A Superintendent's Perspective

By Chip Kimball

1. What unique challenges do international schools face? In what ways have these issues arisen at your school?
2. Why can international schools benefit from PLCs? What challenges may school educators and leaders face in implementing a PLC, and what issues may arise if a PLC is poorly implemented?
3. Describe each of the strategies Singapore American School (SAS) has found effective for implementing a PLC structure.
4. What institutional commitments does SAS adhere to, and why are these commitments in place? What is an institutional commitment you would establish for your school, and why is this the case?
5. Contemplate the thirty-four identifiable themes considered by the Clifton StrengthsFinder (www.strengthsfinder.com): achiever, activator, adaptability, analytical, arranger, belief,

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command, communication, competition, connectedness, consistency, context, deliberative, developer, discipline, empathy, focus, futuristic, harmony, ideation, includer, individualization, input, intellection, learner, maximizer, positivity, relator, responsibility, restorative, self-assurance, significance, strategic, and woo. Which of these do you believe are your top-five strengths, and how can these bring value to team dynamics at your school?

6. What is scope creep, and when does it occur? Have you experienced scope creep at your school? If so, what actions did you take in reaction to this development?

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Chapter 2

Understanding the International School Student

By Vicki Rameker-Rogers

1. Define *third-culture kid* (TCK) and *global nomad*. What are some other descriptors that have been used to refer to TCKs?
2. How does nationality impact a TCK, and how does this differ from the impact nationality has on a TCK's parents?
3. What struggles may TCKs face because of their multicultural identity? In what ways have you seen these struggles arise in the classroom?
4. What are some of the benefits of an international upbringing? Based on your experience as an international educator, what other benefits would you add to this list?
5. Of the 138 variables for student learning that he studied, which variable did John Hattie found had the most negative effect on student learning? Why is this both interesting and alarming for a TCK's development in school?

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Chapter 3

Understanding the International School Teacher

By Joshua D. Curnett

1. When Joshua Curnett starting working at an international school, what difference did he immediately notice between U.S. public schools and international schools?
2. In your experience, what are the distinctive characteristics of international teachers? How do these personality quirks impact how international teachers often react to new educational agendas?
3. When Curnett's school got a new principal, what insights did Curnett gain into why PLC transformation was vital for his school's flawed system?
4. What are the qualities of a *PLC lite* meeting? What do you think you could do to avoid PLC lite meetings?
5. What will happen if resisters to the PLC process are allowed to maintain their resistance and form their own group? How would you respond if some teachers resist PLC implementation?

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Chapter 4

Creating a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum in International Schools

By Treena Casey

1. What is a suitcase curriculum, and what does Singapore American School do to avoid suitcase curricula? How does your school avoid this approach to curriculum, or what do you think your school could do to better avoid this issue?
2. How effectively do your school's mission and vision capture your school's philosophy? If your school does not have a mission and vision, craft your own mission and vision for your school.
3. Define *desired student-learning outcomes* (DSLOs) and what they provide, and list SAS's DSLOs. Which of these outcomes do you think is most important for your students to gain, and why?
4. What questions must students answer to get to know themselves? How would you answer these questions to assess your own self-knowledge?
5. What questions should teacher teams ask after a unit is over in hopes of improving students' learning the next time?

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Chapter 5

Creating a Learning-Focused International School

By Jennifer L. Sparrow

1. What does it mean for a school to be a standards-reference school or a standards-based school?
2. In your own words, define *assessment literacy*. Why do teachers often lack assessment literacy?
3. What is the purpose of an assessment blueprint? How can teacher teams create an assessment blueprint?
4. How is correctness judged in answers to select-response assessments, extended written-response assessments, performance assessments, and personal communication assessments?
5. According to Richard Stiggins, what assessment methods are best suited to determining knowledge targets, skill targets, and product targets?

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6. When should assessment *for* learning, assessment *as* learning, and assessment *of* learning each occur, and what should they be used for? What should teachers and students do or provide in each case?

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Chapter 6

Creating an Inclusive International School

By Darin L. Fahrney

1. In your own words, describe what a typical inclusive international school looks like.
2. How did Fahrney, as principal, address the mindset of Singapore American School, and how did this help build an inclusive culture?
3. How is the student named Yoki described in this chapter an example of the power of collective responsibility in a PLC? How did his new teachers help him?
4. According to Fahrney, what are the qualities of an ideal school environment? How does your school exemplify these qualities? In which of these areas does your school fall short, and how do you think your school could go about improving in this area?
5. What is the *Matthew effect*? How does the situation involving Sue, a high school senior at SAS, illustrate why the Matthew effect is especially significant for international school educators?

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Chapter 7

Harnessing the Potential of Singleton Teachers in International Schools

By Tico Oms

1. Define a *singleton*. Do you have any singletons at your school?
2. For what two reasons should content take a back seat on interdisciplinary teams? What is a case in your school that you think would benefit from an interdisciplinary team, and why do you think this is the case?
3. In what disciplines do PLC vertical teams work best, and in what disciplines are they harder to manage?
4. Why is a virtual team advantageous for international school teachers, and why is this kind of team also difficult to manage? What qualities do the right team members for virtual teams have?
5. What does a team leader need to communicate to team members when forming a virtual team? Consider a case in which you may benefit from forming a virtual team of your own. What plan would you have to put in place to make this team effective?

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6. Explore the Articles & Research section of the AllThingsPLC website. What useful insight can you take away from reading the stories of singleton teachers who have organized themselves into meaningful teams?

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Chapter 8

Building a Progressive International School Through the PLC Process

By Timothy S. Stuart

1. Why can't traditional education models adequately prepare students for the future, and why is it that international schools are better prepared to adapt to the future?
2. At Singapore American School, what do teachers do to help students take ownership of their learning? What could teachers at your school do to empower students to own what they learn?
3. What are *individualized learning plans*?
4. What should opportunities for acceleration be about and not be about when they are given to students of all cognitive abilities?
5. According to John Hattie, what is the most powerful strategy for accelerating students' learning?

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Chapter 9

Learning From the Jakarta Intercultural School Story

By Paul Buckley, Anthea Clifton, Daniel L. Machacek, and Peter Round

1. When Pattimura Elementary adopted the PLC paradigm, what norms did it institute, and what grade-level schedule changes did it assume?
2. Briefly describe each component of the three-year cycle for improvement that Pattimura Elementary established.
3. What does the student support team at Pattimura Elementary focus on during its two scheduled blocks of meeting time?
4. In what ways does Jakarta Intercultural's middle school keep parents informed of their children's learning? Which of these practices does your school currently exercise, and which of these practices do you think your school would benefit from adopting?
5. At Jakarta Intercultural's high school, what do school leaders and teams revisit and determine at the beginning of a school year? What do teacher teams and administrators evaluate at the end of the year? How do these procedures compare with your school's year-beginning and year-ending customs?

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6. How do Jakarta Intercultural high school teams support students who are not meeting learning goals? Which of these strategies do you believe can have the most impact, and why?

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Chapter 10

Transforming the Singapore American School

By Darin L. Fahrney, Timothy S. Stuart, Devin R. Pratt, and David A. Hoss

1. For what three reasons do the authors of this chapter share the story of Singapore American School's PLC journey?
2. Briefly describe the challenges that the high school of SAS faced in scheduling collaboration time in a PLC structure. Why was it ultimately worth it to implement the PLC process in spite of these challenges?
3. Define *response to intervention* (RTI). What is the foundation of the SAS high school's RTI-based system? How does your school currently incorporate RTI principles, and how could it improve upon its responsiveness?
4. As the second year of PLC implementation started at the SAS middle school, what themes came up when faculty responded to a survey?
5. How did the SAS elementary program go about forming collaborative teams in spite of the program's large size?