



Professional Learning Teams FAQs

What are Professional Learning Teams?

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) are small teams of teachers who meet together regularly to collaboratively learn, investigate, and implement research-based teacher practices.

What do teams look like?

Teams may form around grade levels, disciplines, topics, interdisciplinary teams, or other criteria your faculty identifies. The optimum number varies, but teams should be small enough so that all team members can have substantial input during meetings. Three to five members usually work well together.

What do team members do?

Effective learning teams share five characteristics described by Garmston and Wellman in *The Adaptive School*, (1999).

- Teachers establish shared norms and values that spell out the expectations and interpersonal skills team members will practice.
- Team members focus collectively on student learning. The work of the learning team may include such activities as studying research-based practices in specific instructional areas, planning and implementing new strategies, examining student work, working together to modify strategies, and documenting the team's work.
- Team members regularly engage in reflective dialogue about instruction and how to accomplish needed results.
- Teachers collaborate on a regular, ongoing basis. During team meetings teachers share perspectives and expertise, and develop a feeling of mutual support and shared responsibility for effective instruction
- Teachers "teach out loud." That is, they deprivatize their practice and bring it into the open.
- Team members visit one other's classrooms, act as peer coaches and mentors, and problem-solve together. Teams share their work and findings with other teams and interested parties.

What does Professional Learning Team training involve?

SERVE Center staff will

- Introduce Professional Learning Teams. This work session includes a research-based rationale and description of the learning team process.
- Organize Professional Learning Teams. This engages staff in planning and organizing learning teams in a manner best suited for the school.
- Train teachers in establishing and conducting successful meetings. This training provides teachers with information, assistance, and tools for implementing and sustaining productive learning teams.
- Prepare facilitators to support learning teams. This provides facilitators with skills and assistance in sustaining learning team success and momentum

What kind of follow-up can the SERVE Center provide?

SERVE provides capacity-building assistance and support to facilitators and learning teams. As part of this assistance, SERVE staff will

- Conduct initial training and follow-up training as needed.
- Meet onsite with learning team members at intervals throughout the school year.
- Maintain regular online contact with learning teams and facilitators.



- Read team logs and provide regular feedback on team meetings and activities.
- Collect information from teams and use this to adjust the process as needed.

What are benefits of participating in Professional Learning Teams?

Learning teams provide a means of job-embedded teacher mentoring and induction. Faculty members become experts and resources for one another. Through Professional Learning Teams, teachers attending workshops have a strategic method for sharing and engaging other faculty in benefits of that training. The teams' work becomes "public" as they share their efforts and ideas through newsletters, websites, and other means. SERVE extends opportunities for some participants to present at regional and national conferences, and may present compelling case studies in SERVE publications.

Who can I contact about the SERVE Professional Learning Teams?

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