1.3 Participate in professional learning communities and networks

In my role as a leader of learning (instructional leader) this means I will:

- Seek out and actively participate in professional dialogue about my experiences of leadership for learning
  - Form a small learning group of my peers as a professional learning community
  - Engage in relevant learning opportunities, such as Regional Leaders’ days and cluster meetings with my professional learning community
- Participate in critically reflective inquiry to develop my leadership practice
  - Use systems-mandated accountability points (e.g. DIA site review and validation, performance reporting to my line manager) as opportunities for critical reflection on my leadership practice
- Create and sustain a professional learning community with my school leadership team
  - Embed a learning approach in the day-to-day work of my team
  - Establish specific sessions where our focus is purely professional learning

I will strategically design to:

- Create a climate where teachers can explore ideas and their practice in open dialogue
  - Establish expectations and norms for staff to learn together, share and critique practice
  - Make explicit the difference between professional disagreement and personal conflict
- Encourage and support teachers to participate in professional learning communities within and beyond the school
  - Model participation in professional learning communities
  - Establish effective systems and processes to support ‘deprivatised’ practice, such as teachers working in collaborative teams, teacher peer moderation of students’ work and observing each other’s practice
  - Help staff members develop professional language to be able to describe their work explicitly and accurately
- Deliberately allocate school resources to initiate and support professional learning communities
  - Structure the timetable to allow staff collaborative planning time
  - Allocate a budget to professional learning communities
  - Resource professional learning communities with expertise as needed

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If teachers engage in professional learning communities and networks, they will …

- be avid, ongoing learners about their professional work and actively participate in collegiate learning
- learn together by sharing their thinking, practice, programs and responses to students’ work
- reflect, through the learner’s lens, on the impact of what they do, say and imply
- seek to clarify their own assumptions and work towards congruence between beliefs and practice
- understand the role of intellectual conflict in learning, and will not confuse this with personal conflict
- develop their professional language to describe their work explicitly and accurately
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Notes:

- Practice check
  - Do we actively employ what we know about learning in our own leadership and staff meetings?
  - How and how often do I critically reflect on my own practice and set specific goals for my development? Do I have a professional support group?
  - How am I modelling being a learning community member with staff?
  - How do I do this with my leadership team?
  - How am I actively promoting respectful and trusting relationships?
  - Am I monitoring the ‘climate’ of our meetings? Do we have the right balance of challenge and support?
  - Am I actively supporting teachers’ involvement in professional learning communities? How?

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Alert

Many professional learning communities ‘fail’ because they cast their focus as a ‘problem’ to be solved and assume they will find an answer overnight.

Building a learning community where rich learning occurs takes time and focuses as much on exploration as it does on problem solution.

Effectiveness of Leaders’ Learning Circles depends on existing relationships, culture, rapport and an environment where participants can share their beliefs and bring unconscious assumptions to the surface.

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