

**GOAL 4 CREATE A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT IN A SELF-RENEWING ORGANIZATION****MILESTONE** All employees will be provided with high-quality professional development opportunities to promote individual and organizational effectiveness.**DATA ★ POINT****Staff Who Receive High-Quality Professional Development**

While the state of Maryland no longer requires a report on high-quality professional development, MCPS believes it is an important component of our strategic plan. Building the capacity of staff to meet student needs is critical in our efforts to achieve the goals of the MCPS strategic plan. Therefore, this data point has been redefined to include information on high-quality professional development that is building the capacity of individuals and school teams to ensure student success.

**Professional Learning Communities Institute**

The Professional Learning Communities Institute (PLCI) is an innovative professional development initiative designed to increase student achievement in selected schools by building the school improvement capacity of each school's leadership team. Through participation in the PLCI, leadership team members, including administrators, teachers, supporting services employees, and parents develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to create and sustain high-performing professional learning communities in their schools. PLCI participants read and debrief case studies, engage in reflective discussions, examine their own practices, and analyze data to inform decision making. Teams are provided with structured professional development, ongoing support from PLCI staff, and enhanced school improvement funding. The PLCI experience helps teams to examine their own values and belief systems and empowers them to establish and communicate high expectations for all students. The PLCI builds the capacity of all school leaders to make instructional decisions that lead to increased student achievement.

Every year, a new cohort of schools is selected to participate in the PLCI. Selected schools make a commitment to participate in the institute for two and one half years. Currently, a cohort includes four to seven elementary schools and two to six secondary schools. As of December 2010, 31 elementary schools and 11 middle schools will have completed the PLCI program. Another 19 schools will be participating in PLCI during 2010–2011.

**School Implementation of PLCI Budget Resources**

Each PLCI school has the opportunity to apply for up to \$3,500 in additional Baldrige-guided School Improvement Plan funds to support their school improvement efforts. PLCI staff collaborates with the Office of School Performance to develop modified procedures, forms, and resources to support this process. All PLCI schools develop a budget to support

academic intervention, teacher collaboration, parent outreach, and other strategies adopted through their PLCI discussions and school improvement plan.

**Impact on Student Learning**

The mission of the PLCI is to increase student achievement in all PLCI schools and eliminate disparities in student achievement. One way PLCI staff pursue this mission is to build the capacity of the school leadership team's members to implement beliefs, attitudes, strategies, and processes that will result in all students learning at a high level. These school leadership team members engage in self-assessment, reflection, and discussion, thereby developing a clearer understanding of themselves and their students.

Results from state assessments have consistently shown that schools that participate in PLCI demonstrate exceptional growth in student achievement as well as narrowing the gaps between groups of students. For example, scores on the 2010 Maryland School Assessment (MSA) show the progress made by the six middle schools participating in Cohort IV, which began in 2008. Student performance improved on all tests and in all racial/ethnic groups. PLCI staff and the participating school teams will continue to analyze student data in order to ensure continuous improvement in all areas (Tables OO-1, OO-2, and OO-3).

**Table OO-1**

Professional Learning Communities Institute Cohort IV Middle Schools Percentage of Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient on the MSA, 2008–2010				
	2008	2009	2010	Change 2008–2010
Grade 6 Reading	83.8	87.5	91.3	+7.5
Grade 7 Reading	83.2	88.4	88.4	+5.2
Grade 8 Reading	77.4	86.7	84.4	+7.0
Grade 6 Math	78.7	79.8	80.3	+1.6
Grade 7 Math	70.7	77.4	76.0	+5.3
Grade 8 Math	69.4	79.4	72.2	+2.8

**Table OO-2**

Professional Learning Communities Institute Cohort IV Middle Schools Percentage of Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient on the Reading MSA, 2008–2010 by Race/Ethnicity				
	2008	2009	2010	Change 2008–2010
Asian American	87.4	93.1	94.1	+6.7
African American	76.0	85.0	83.9	+7.9
White	94.8	97.8	97.7	+2.9
Hispanic	70.5	78.2	79.4	+8.9

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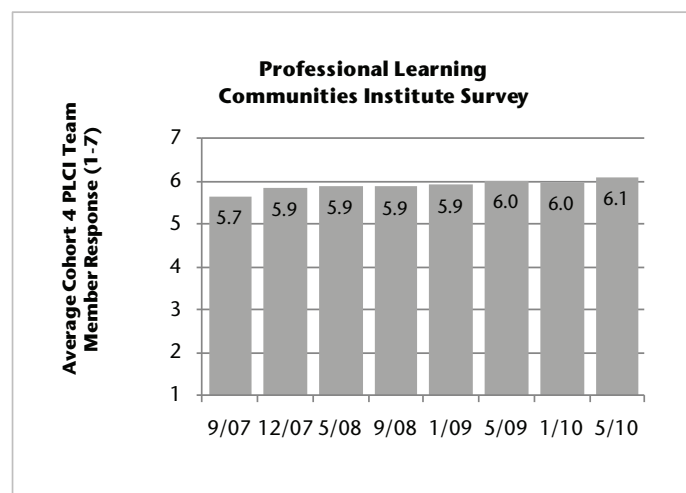
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Table OO-3

Professional Learning Communities Institute Cohort IV Middle Schools Percentage of Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient on the Mathematics MSA, 2008–2010 by Race/Ethnicity				
	2008	2009	2010	Change 2008–2010
Asian American	85.4	91.7	87.6	+2.2
African American	62.2	69.2	68.2	+6.0
White	94.8	97.8	97.7	+2.9
Hispanic	58.8	66.0	62.0	+3.2

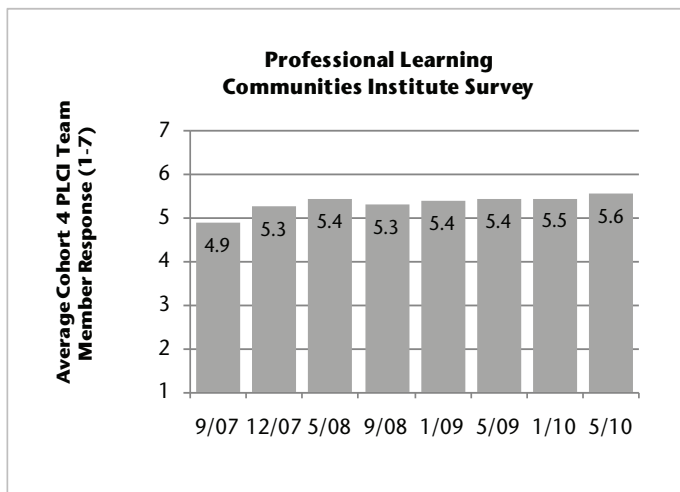
In addition to the student achievement data points, PLCI staff collects perceptual data through the use of the PLCI team survey. The survey is administered to the school leadership teams six times over two years. The survey explores the evidence of professional learning community characteristics present in the school. The survey uses a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (7) to Strongly Disagree (1). Higher scores on the survey indicate stronger agreement with the survey statements. The following survey items are of significant importance in support of eliminating disparities in student achievement: Q1: “Currently at our school, all staff members believe that the fundamental purpose of our school is to achieve high levels of learning for all students,” and Q2: “Currently at our school, all staff members demonstrate the belief that all students can learn.” Teachers do this through setting high expectations for all students. The leadership teams show growth in their belief that all students can learn at high levels and an increase in the actions and activities to promote that belief (Figures OO-1 and OO-2).

Figure OO-1



**Question Wording:** “Currently at our school, all staff members believe that the fundamental purpose of our school is to achieve high levels of learning for all students.”

Figure OO-2



**Question Wording:** “Currently at our school, all staff members demonstrate the belief that all students can learn. Teachers do this through setting high expectations for all students.”

**Staff Development Teacher Training**

Training for staff development teachers (SDTs) at all levels was differentiated and focused on the following areas during the 2009–2010 school year:

- For SDTs new to their positions: a nine-day course beginning in the summer and throughout the year occurred for the seventh year. Content included understanding the roles and responsibilities of their positions based on the job description and the standards for performance, coaching skills, professional development plans, professional learning communities, effective teams, developing comprehensive professional development plans, and the school improvement process.
- For SDTs in the second year in their positions: a three-day course throughout the year occurred for the sixth year. Content included action planning to support the school improvement planning process; the study of race and equity as it applies to the impact on teaching and learning; understanding the change process in order to support staff members as catalysts for change; using student, school, and system data to inform classroom instruction; and coaching skills.
- For elementary, middle, and high school SDTs: training included the study of race and equity as it impacts teaching and learning and the creation of professional development programs that are aligned with the school improvement plans (SIP) and can be monitored to determine impact on both teachers and students.
- For middle school SDTs: differentiated professional development included follow-up to middle school reform training, including content on the adolescent learner, collaborative planning, and rigorous instruction.

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- For all SDTs: an annual SDT conference was held in which SDTs applied to present and were chosen based on content and the quality of their application. SDTs are the only presenters on this day, sharing best practices with their peers on a multitude of topics.
- Voluntary “skill builders” were also offered to SDTs in order to differentiate training based on both individual school and individual SDT need. Those training sessions during the 2009–2010 school year included deep understanding of math content in the elementary grades, facilitation skills, trainer skills, and facilitative leadership.

In addition to the professional development that is provided to SDTs, each of the 210 SDTs in the system is assigned a staff development specialist from the Staff Development Teacher Project Team in the Office of Organizational Development (OOD). The staff development specialist serves as a personal

coach for the SDT, supporting his/her work in the school building to implement improvement plans and create results for staff and students. Priority is given to SDTs who are in their first few years in the position or who are struggling in one or more performance standards as well as to SDTs in schools that are underperforming.

**Evaluation of the SDT Project**

Each year SDTs are required to administer a feedback survey to the teachers in their buildings in order to reflect on their practice and inform improvement. In 2010, 6,978 teachers in 190 schools completed the surveys. Below are selected results from the compilation of survey responses. The data also are available disaggregated by elementary, middle, and high school responses.

**Table OO-4**

The SDT in my school ...	Percentage of Teachers Who Strongly Agreed/Agreed with the Item		Percentage of Teachers Who Strongly Disagreed/Disagreed with the Item	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Communicates high expectations for me as a teacher.	93%	93%	3%	3%
Models effective instructional strategies (e.g., during team or staff meetings, trainings, working with teachers in the classroom, workshops).	89%	90%	6%	4%
Provides support for me to work toward meeting our school improvement goals.	85%	86%	7%	9%
Provides information on MCPS expectations and initiatives (e.g., grading and reporting, teacher professional growth system, curriculum implementation, race and equity, etc.).	93%	91%	4%	4%
Supports the use of data to inform instruction to meet students’ needs.	94%	91%	4%	3%
Supports our school in the study of race and equity (training, study groups, discussion groups, etc.).	95%	88%	3%	3%

*Note:* There was another category of response—no basis to assess—which is not reported here; therefore, each total will not equal 100%.

**School Leadership Teams Institute**

The School Leadership Teams Institute (SLTI) offers school leadership teams the opportunity to participate in high-quality professional development on effective team collaboration and empowerment. Each workshop is designed to allow leadership teams enough time to apply the new strategies, skills, and processes to their specific, real-time needs and interests. The enduring understandings for SLTI are as follows:

- Effective school leadership teams drive high-quality teaching and learning.
- Collaborative decision making is the cornerstone of highly effective leadership.

A primary purpose of SLTI is to support school leadership teams in their school improvement process, from development

through implementation and monitoring. A key to an effective school leadership team is a belief in the concept of shared or distributive leadership coupled with a commitment to what research says is the true work of school leadership teams. SLTI workshops build the capacity of the leadership team, and thereby contribute to improved school performance and student achievement. Current workshops developed by SLTI include the following:

- Shared Leadership: A Team Examination of Collaboration and Empowerment
- Effective School Leadership Teams
- Facilitation of Effective Meetings
- Skillful Team Collaboration

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Feedback collected at SLTI sessions consistently shows that a high percentage of participants (96–99%) report that the workshop was relevant to the work of their leadership team. They also report their belief that as a result of this workshop their leadership team will be better able to conduct the important and relevant work of a collaborative school leadership team. Learning data also is collected in the workshops with high levels of learning data reported in all workshops. Staff development specialists are available to coach and support individual school leadership teams following their participation in these workshops in order to implement new learning.

### **Equity Initiatives Unit**

The Equity Initiatives Unit (EIU) in the Office of Human Resources and Development continues to focus on: 1) building leadership staff capacity to lead for equity; 2) developing products, resources, and tools to support school and office efforts to eliminate racial disparities in student achievement; and 3) providing direct training consultation, and other services to promote study and dialogue about the impact of race and ethnicity on teaching and learning. Schools receiving EIU support must commit to at least a year-long training and development program that is aligned to an equity goal in the SIP. Requests from schools for this long-term support have risen from 5 in 2005 to 50 in 2010. Between July 2009 and June 2010 the team provided more than 750 hours of professional development, benefiting over 1,000 staff members.

The EIU has developed several new tools to support the provision of equity in schools. The *Equitable Classroom Practices* document which describes 27 specific, observable, and measurable teacher behaviors and practices that communicate high expectations to all students was revised to incorporate research that supports the use of the strategies with African American and Hispanic students. Technology-based training modules for each of these 27 practices are nearing completion. A school assessment for cultural competence is also under development to assist schools to determine strengths and areas for improvement for equity.

The EIU also works with job-alike groups and other MCPS offices to build the capacity of staff to incorporate race and equity into their work with client groups. The superintendent's administrative and supervisory meeting with principals and central office staff continues to focus on race and equity. Specific clusters of school-based and individual staff development teachers are supported in their equity work with direct training, consultations, planning assistance, and the provision of resources. Human relations in-service course instructors receive session-by-session training plans and all required supplementary materials to support the implementation of high-quality course delivery. EIU supports system initiatives such as the Disproportionality Project Team, the Hiring for Excellence and Equity Project Team, the Hispanic and Asian Leadership Project Team, and the Algebra M-Stat. In 2010, the EIU planned and hosted the annual spring conference for the Maryland Multicultural Coalition/Maryland Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education for educators from across the state and is actively engaged in a partnership with McDaniel College to establish an equity certificate program for MCPS teachers.