Chapter 4

Bringing PLCs to K–20 Talented Youth:
Student Learning Communities as a Pivotal Practice

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes professional learning communities, an educator practice, brought to K-20 classrooms as a pivotal practice for talented youth as student learning communities (SLCs). Several research-based models are used as the theoretical framework, including professional learning communities, culturally relevant intentional literacy communities, and learner centered classrooms. The SLC model is composed of three levels; the first two parts lay the groundwork of the learning environment (community space and place) and curriculum (progress-based learning goals with relevant content) for the successful implementation of the SLCs in the third level. The chapter concludes with examples of operationalizing the pivotal practice.

INTRODUCTION

Tatanka Yotanka, Wichasa Wakan of the Teton Dakota People said "Let's put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children." More commonly known as Sitting Bull, Yotanka was a Chief and Holy Man, revered for his leadership in uniting the Sioux nation against the colonizers stealing their lands (History. com, 2019). Ideally, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) follow Yotanka's advice, engaging in collective thought and action to make informed decisions that will benefit students. Student Learning Communities (SLCs) are a pivotal practice through which educators engage talented youth in authentic, collaborative meaning- and decision-making.

Editors Nyberg and Manzone (2023) distinguish a pivotal practice from a strategy for talented youth in both its application and transferability. A pivotal practice is sustained over time and emphasizes pedagogical knowledge across both disciplines and instructional contexts. These practices promote innovation in the classroom, and individuality and agency in learners. Pivotal practices incorporate talented youths' funds of knowledge, metacognitive development, and social and emotional contributions with learning experiences that promote problem-solving, inquiry, critical thinking, and creative thinking.

A Research-Based Framework for Student Learning Communities: A Pivotal Practice

Student learning communities are authentic learning practices similar to professional learning communities but in K-20 education spaces. Several research-based practices make up the framework for SLCs as a pivotal practice for talented youth. PLCs are frequently used in schools, DuFour (2004) and DuFour et al. 's (2010) work on the practice is the research that supports SLCs. Dr. Kimberly Parker's Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities (CRILCs) is a second research frame that greatly informs SLC. Lastly, the importance of student-focused learning is essential in this pivotal practice; this research base is Tomlinson's (2021) Learner-Centered Classrooms. The following section introduces each of these research-based models and connects the research to the definition of pivotal practices.

DuFour's Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities require an ideological shift from teaching to learning, where teachers hold themselves accountable for results, rather than environmental circumstances, parents, students, and so on: if we don't see results,

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