

District 34 Classroom Learning Community (CLC) Model – Student Ownership, Empowerment and Responsibility

The Classroom Learning Community



The District 34 Classroom Learning Community (CLC) model encompasses 8 research-based practices designed to instill a positive and collaborative classroom climate which focuses on continuous improvement. The Classroom Learning Community instills the values of teamwork and collaboration by which the teacher shares leadership of the classroom with the students. In this model, students take responsibility and accountability for their own learning. The 8 components of the model embed true 21st Century learning with a strong focus on student ownership. In District 34, teachers and students are embracing the model and enjoying the benefits of a true collaborative classroom.

Ground Rules: Making Collective Commitments To Each Other

The creation of ground rules allows students and teachers an opportunity to voice what they, as individuals, need to ensure a safe, productive classroom environment.

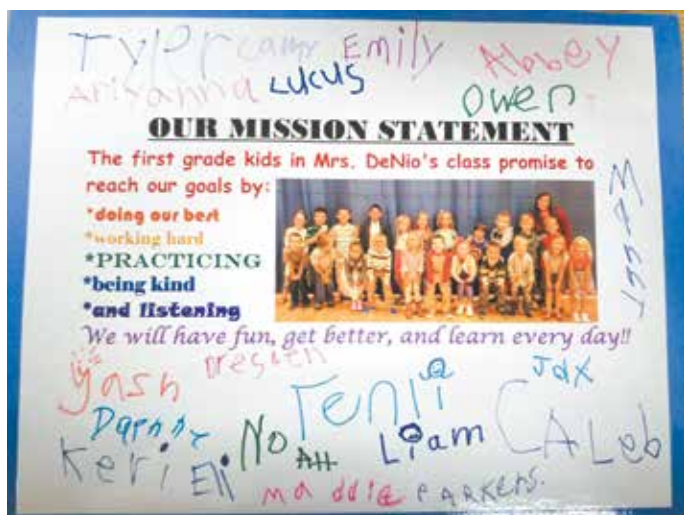
Ground rules (or collective commitments) are often created with a variety of quality tools. The process is simple, yet powerful, to give every student a voice. Students begin by brainstorming responses to the question — “what collective commitments should we make to each other to ensure a positive and collaborative classroom?” Students generate their thoughts and write one thought per post-it note. After a period of time, students review each other’s comments and begin to organize common thoughts together into key themes of like ideas. This process incorporates a tool called the Affinity Diagram.

Next, students decide which ground rules (or norms) are most important to help provide the foundation for a successful school year. To prioritize key ideas, students use a tool called Nominal Group Technique to rank order preferred themes and narrow the focus to the critical few (verses the trivial many). Once norms are prioritized and narrowed, they then serve as ground rules for the class. Students sign their name indicating that they had a voice in creating the norms and also agree to do their part in following them. Students use real-life problem solving tools like Brainstorming, Affinity Diagram and Nominal Group Technique to productively create their own ground rules, norms and collective commitments that they’ve made to each other. This is the first step in the District 34 CLC model.

Mission Statement: Ensuring Students Know What They are at School to Do Together!

Students collaboratively create a mission statement that focuses the learning for the year and gets everyone “on the same page” for learning. The process begins with a review of the school’s mission statement which defines the purpose of the school. In the CLC model, teachers review the school mission with their students and talk about how their class will contribute to the school mission. Using the same quality tools for the creation of classroom ground rules (Brainstorm, Affinity Diagram, Nominal Group Technique), students begin the creation of a classroom mission statement.

A classroom mission statement answers the question



(or content area)?” — Students use SMART goals to answer the same question. SMART is an acronym that means **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-Bound. SMART goals provide focus and define the measurable ‘desired’ state.

Within the District 34 CLC model, SMART goals are aligned throughout the school. Personal student SMART goals are aligned to classroom group goals which are aligned to school improvement goals. Students participate in goal setting that puts a “laser like focus” on instruction, customized and tailored to each student’s individual ability level.

Individual SMART goals, often found in the student’s data folder, are an opportunity for the students to create ownership of their learning. Through creating individual SMART goals, students evaluate what it is that is important to them and create a plan on how to achieve their goals. Self-monitoring and evaluating progress are vital characteristics of successful 21st Century learners.

“what are we here to do together this year?” Classroom mission provides clear focus for students, reminding them daily of what they are striving to accomplish and how they will go about accomplishing it together.

Just as the classroom mission statement is aligned to the school mission, some classrooms are also having students create personal mission statements. Personal mission statements provide students with clarity of purpose and and is customized to the students helping them answer the question “What am I here to do at school each day?”

Amy Guanci, Science teacher at Antioch Upper Grade School (AUGS) has her 6th grade Project Lead The Way (PLTW) students write personal mission and goals in the student’s engineering notebook. “This helps students keep track of their personal goal for the class and the trimester. They can review it and see their accomplishments. Students are aware of what they are learning and where they need to be. Creating this goal allows the student’s time to think about the course, why they signed up for it and their responsibility as a student,” says Guanci.

SMART Goals: Targeting Measureable Outcomes

Just like teachers in their Professional Learning Community answer the question, “What do we want students to know and be able to do in our grade level

Classroom Data Centers: Collectively Tracking Student Progress as a Group



Once goals have been created in student-friendly language, it is important that students participate in the collection and monitoring of progress toward the goals. The data center is the collection point to monitor

academic progress. The classroom data center helps students answer the question — “how do we know if we know and can do it?”

The data center is the focal point of the continuous improvement model and reinforces an environment that focuses on evidence of student learning. In essence, data centers drive continuous improvement. With the classroom data center, measurable goals/objectives with data charts and quality tools help to keep the class on track and are critical to attaining desired results.

Student Data Folders: Individually Tracking Student Progress



To connect every learner to the classroom goals, students maintain a data folder that tracks and measures their individual progress toward their goals. Data folders are a ‘tool’ utilized by the students in the CLC model.

Data folders allow students and teachers an avenue to track student progress. Students set individual goals that correspond to the classroom SMART goal. The data folder identifies what is important to the student.

When student data folders mirror the classroom data



center, students are able to analyze their progress with the rest of the class. Through individual goal setting and tracking progress, students take ownership and accountability for learning increases.

Kindergarten and first grade students at Hillcrest Elementary School use data folders to track their progress over time. Katie Koczorowski, a reading interventionist, states, “The students love using the data folders to see how they have improved. Setting personal goals and seeing their progress toward their goals motivates them to put forth their best effort.” The students are also creating online portfolios through Seesaw to document their growth in reading and writing. The Seesaw portfolios are shared with the families of the students. “My students are excited to show their families what they have accomplished. They can post photos and videos. They can also post voice recordings of themselves reflecting on their work. They are proud of what they have done and want to share it. They especially love it when their families leave positive comments about their reading and writing.”

Student Led Conferences: A New Paradigm Replacing Traditional Parent-Teacher Conferences



21st Century skills require students to look towards self-assessment as a method of evaluation and motivation leading to self-improvement. Having students facilitate their own conferences fosters a sense of ownership of their learning.

In a student-centered classroom, students are expected to be able to articulate their own progress of learning demonstrated through the review of their data folder. Students (instead of the teacher) facilitate the conference with parents.

This past November, students in Tamara Mount’s 4th grade classroom at Antioch Elementary School led their

own conferences. “The students feel empowered to be able to speak about their education. It shows parents their awareness of where they are at and where they are inspiring to be. Parents are always excited to see how their child is taking their goals and progressing towards making them. These students are taking ownership of their education and communicating that with their parents. To hear a child reflect on their areas of growth and their strengths is empowering!”

Using the individual data folder, students communicate their progress by evaluating their strongest and weakest samples of work, rating their study skills and character traits, and setting goals for improvement. Students not only gain a clearer sense of their academic progress, but also open the door for conversations with teachers and parents.

Class Meetings: Revising Mission, Goals and Using Data To Drive Improvements

Effective classrooms take time to revisit the classroom data center, mission and goals to make sure that continuous improvement is progressing. This forum provides students the opportunity to problem-solve and modify the classroom system to obtain maximum results.

Class meetings empower students. With the use of quality tools such as the plus/delta chart to discuss student feedback, class meetings help foster an environment where students and teachers are able to voice opinions and thoughts in a quiet, respectful atmosphere. As a result, mutual respect and understanding develops. The students realize that it is their classroom as much as the teacher’s



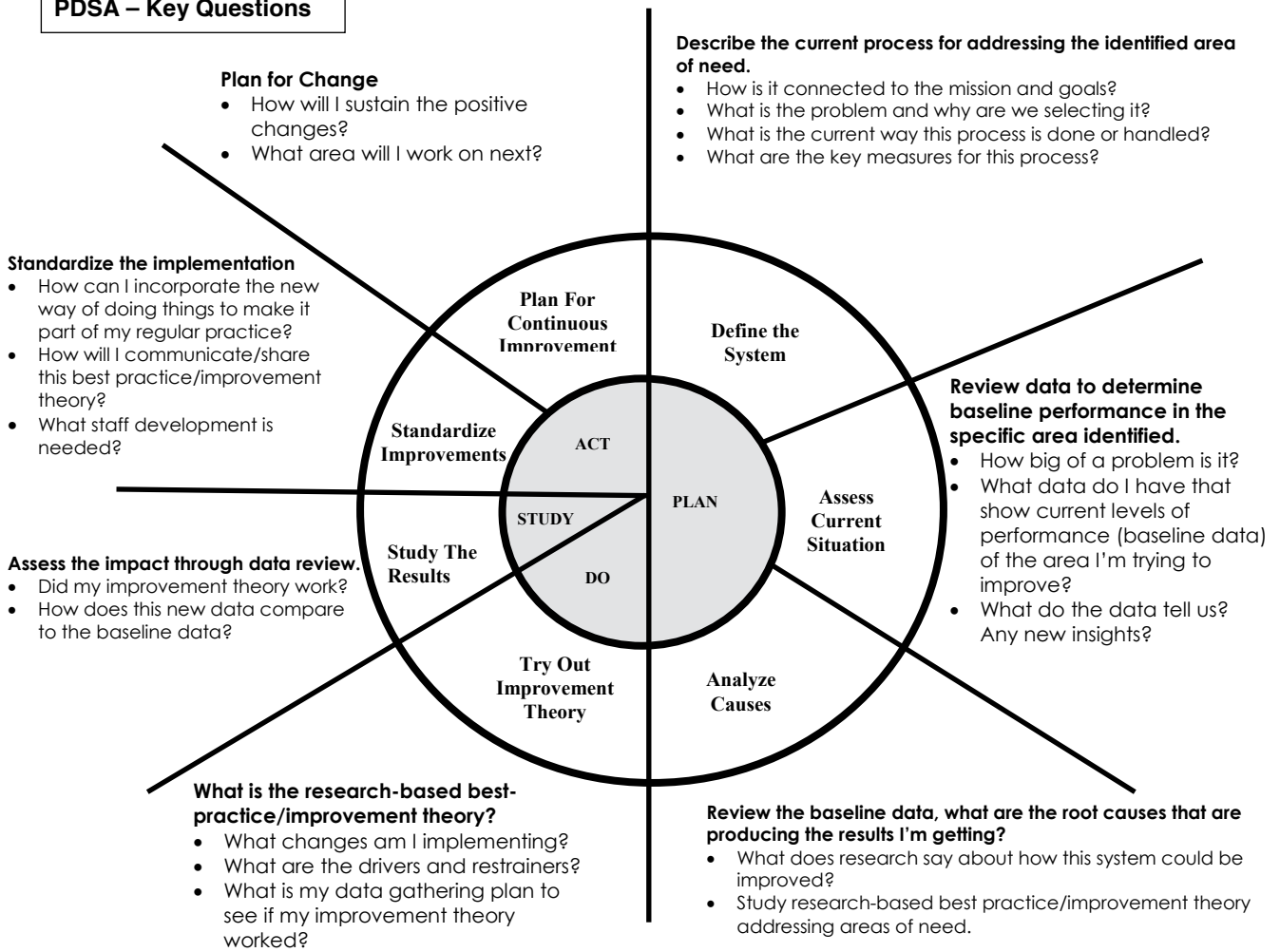
and they take ownership and pride in their role.

Throughout the year, students in Kim Reagle’s 5th grade classroom at Antioch Elementary School have acquired ownership of this role, and established their forum for student-led discussions. “It has allowed the class to decide on changes they would like to see made in our day-to-day operation, as well as allow every student the opportunity to provide feedback to me, their teacher, on how I can strengthen and improve our classroom community. The meetings are entirely facilitated by the students, as a weekly leader guides us through our agenda while I take notes of the decisions they make. This empowerment fosters our belief that every person has a voice, and their ideas truly matter.”

Class meetings play a crucial role in the development of students’ emotional, social, moral, and intellectual



PDSA – Key Questions



development. Class meetings promote personal growth, leadership, organizational and public-speaking skills, thinking skills and cognitive gains, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills — creating a community of learners.

Students in Mrs. Rivera’s fifth grade class find out a week before that they are leading the classroom meetings. Students take the task seriously and use an agenda to keep the meetings focused. They find it has created an even greater sense of community and a way to voice their opinions about the classroom.

Quality Tools & the Plan Do Study Act Cycle: Real World Problems Solving Tools and Strategies

21st century learners prepare for creative problem solving in the world ahead by learning and applying quality tools and the Plan Do Study Act cycle of continuous improvement. These tools and processes keep classroom productivity at its peak!

Students play a unique role in continuous improvement driven systems. They are not only served by the system,

but are active workers and participants in the system. The product they produce is learning, through a dynamic interchange between and among students and their teachers.

Quality tools are key mechanisms in the systematic problem solving approach within the CLC model. Quality tools provide a method for students to communicate and resolve issues that arise during the school day. In addition using the tools to solve problems, students also use quality tools to collect and analyze data, identify patterns in either behavior or academic areas. Quality tools allow students to take ownership and responsibility for learning.

Learn more about District 34’s continuous improvement model online at <http://www.antioch34.com>.