

## **Guidelines for Applying as a National Model of a Professional Learning Community at Work**

Thank you for your interest in serving as a national model of a school that is functioning as a professional learning community (PLC). This application is intended to clarify the guidelines that are used in the selection process and to provide you with a fairly open-ended format that allows you to explain the practices, structure, and culture of your school.

To receive this recognition, a school must:

1. Demonstrate a commitment to PLC concepts
2. Implement those concepts for at least 3 years
3. Present clear evidence of improved student learning
4. Explain the practices, structures, and culture of the school on the Evidence of Effectiveness form and submit it for consideration to the PLC Review Committee at [evidence@allthingsplc.info](mailto:evidence@allthingsplc.info).

The committee that reviews applications will utilize the criteria listed below in assessing each school. Keep these criteria in mind and address them as you complete your application. The criteria can also serve as a useful tool to help schools 1) assess their own progress as professional learning communities, and 2) identify meaningful steps to build the collective capacity of the staff to implement this powerful continuous improvement concept.

### **Criteria for Selection:**

1. Evidence of a Commitment to Learning for All Students
  - a. Teachers in our school work in collaborative teams to build shared knowledge regarding state standards, district curriculum guides, the content and format of high-stakes assessments, and the expectations of teachers at the next level to clarify the essential knowledge and skills all students must acquire to advance.
  - b. Collaborative teams of teachers have clarified the specific proficiency standards students must achieve on each skill and the criteria they will use in assessing each student's proficiency. They have practiced applying the criteria to ensure consistent, reliable assessment of student learning. They help students understand the criteria and students use the criteria to monitor their own learning.
  - c. Our school has a process for carefully monitoring each student's learning on an ongoing basis. This frequent monitoring of student learning includes common assessments created by the collaborative team of teachers responsible for the same group of students.
  - d. Our school has a process for responding when students experience difficulty in learning (rather than leaving it to the individual classroom teacher to resolve). This coordinated process ensures students receive additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive (rather than invitational), and systematic. Students do not miss new instruction to receive this additional support.
  - e. Our school has a process for enriching and extending the learning for students who are proficient.
2. Evidence of a Collaborative Culture
  - a. Teachers are organized into collaborative teams by course or subject area. Members of teams work interdependently to achieve common goals for which they are mutually accountable.
  - b. Teachers are provided with time to collaborate during their contractual day.
  - c. Teachers use their collaborative time to engage in collective inquiry regarding issues directly related to student learning.
3. Evidence of a Focus on Result
  - a. Each team has identified SMART goals that are aligned with one or more school goals. The SMART goals focus on student learning and require evidence of improved student learning in order to be accomplished.
  - b. Teams regard ongoing analysis of results as a critical element in the teaching and learning process. They gather evidence of student learning from a variety of sources to inform and improve their individual and collective practice as part of a process of continuous improvement.
  - c. Each teacher receives frequent feedback regarding the success of his or her students in achieving a standard using agreed-upon assessments in comparison to the other students attempting to achieve the same standard. Transparency regarding results helps teachers learn from one another.

**d. Student achievement in the school is clearly improving across the curriculum. High-performing schools are able to sustain their achievement over time.**

## **Professional Learning Community Evidence of Effectiveness**

*\* In order to be considered for the All Things PLC website ([allthingsplc.info](http://allthingsplc.info)), it is important to include information for all questions on this form.*

\*\* If you would like an example to guide you please reference the website. Districts (Blue Valley)  
Elementary (Boones Mill, Snow Creek) Middle (Pioneer, Overland) High (Adlai Stevenson, James Madison)

### **School Information**

**School Name: New Franklin Elementary School (K-5)**

**District Name: Portsmouth School District**

**School Address: 1 Franklin Drive, Portsmouth, NH 03801**

**School Phone: (603) 436-0910**

**School Fax: (603) 427-2335**

**Principal: Joanne Simons**

**Principal email: [jsimons@sau52.org](mailto:jsimons@sau52.org)**

**Web Address: <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/school/newfrank/index.htm>  
<http://newfranklin.wikispaces.com>**

### **Demographics**

**Number of Students: 265**

**Percent Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch: 30\2%**

**Percent of Limited English Proficient: 1%**

**Percent of Special Education: 15%**

**Racial/Ethnic Percentages:**

- **White 81%**
- **Black 1%**
- **Hispanic 10%**
- **Asian/Pacific Island 3%**
- **Other 5%**

Present Student Achievement Data at 3 points along a continuum to demonstrate trends. For example, provide data for grades 1, 3, and 5 or similar intervals. The data report should always include the most recent school year and should always offer a basis of comparison (for example, state scores, national scores, or scores from similar schools). If no data is available place n/a.

**EXAMPLE:**

*Percentage of students passing:School Scores/Comparison Scores*

<b>Grade: 5th</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Other (specify)</b>
<i>Year 03-04</i>	<i>82/80</i>	<i>90/80</i>	<i>75/80</i>	<i>80/88</i>	<i>86/84</i>	<i>87/90</i>
<i>Year 04-05</i>	<i>85/86</i>	<i>92/85</i>	<i>78/84</i>	<i>84/83</i>	<i>88/82</i>	<i>89/88</i>
<i>Year 05-06</i>	<i>84/80</i>	<i>94/80</i>	<i>85/80</i>	<i>84/88</i>	<i>89/84</i>	<i>92/90</i>

**ENTER DATA HERE:**

Percentage of students passing:School Scores/Comparison Scores

**Please list source of comparison data: School/State - Smarter-Balanced Assessment**

<b>Grade: 3</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Other ( )</b>
<b>Year 14-15</b>	79/53	87/55	N/A	N/A	N/A	
<b>Year 15-16</b>	93/57	89/57	N/A	N/A	N/A	
<b>Year 16-17</b>	90/55	98/54	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Percentage of students passing:School Scores/Comparison Scores

**School/State - Smarter-Balanced Assessment**

<b>Grade: 4</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Other ( )</b>
<b>Year 14-15</b>	91/49	91/56	N/A	89/49	N/A	
<b>Year 15-16</b>	94/52	97/58	N/A	94/66	N/A	
<b>Year 16-17</b>	93/52	82/56	N/A	83/49	N/A	

Percentage of students passing:School Scores/Comparison Scores

**School/State - Smarter-Balanced Assessment**

<b>Grade: 5</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Other ( )</b>
<b>Year 14-15</b>	77/44	89/63	N/A	N/A	N/A	
<b>Year 15-16</b>	86/47	91/63	N/A	N/A	N/A	
<b>Year 16-17</b>	86/61	86/45	N/A	N/A	N/A	

**Please comment on any aspect of the data that you believe is particularly significant.**

Comparison data with the state of New Hampshire for academic subject areas exists through the Smarter Balanced Consortium (SBAC) assessments. These assessments measure reading and math skills at grades 3-8,11. Students are assessed in science at grades 4,8, and 11. Writing is embedded in the reading assessment. As evidenced by the data above, New Franklin has consistently and significantly excelled about the state average on the statewide assessment system. While our PLC teams have no orientation towards standardized testing, we believe our high scores on the state test are a symptom of our daily PLC practices that focus on helping students learn whatever they need to learn next and adjusting time and supports to make it happen. The sustained high marks we've seen on the state assessment is also reflected on our local assessments. We attribute this steady progression to our steadfast emphasis on ensuring learning for all students.

What is not evident in the data above, but also impressive, is the fact that not only are more students scoring proficient, but also far greater numbers of students are scoring at the highest level, Proficient with Distinction. This serves as evidence that not only are our interventions helping students who struggle, but we are also increasing results for students who need additional academic challenge.

For the past several years New Franklin has placed a strong emphasis on Science and STEAM-related experiences for students. In the first six years of statewide Science NECAP assessment (2009-2014), New Franklin students' average proficiency was 64%. Since 2015, New Franklin students averaged 89% proficient, with an average of 7% of students scoring proficient with distinction (compared to <1% for the state). Again, while our PLC teams focus on daily, weekly and monthly learning objectives and not end of year summative assessments, the elevated scores are another affirmation for our staff, students and community that the work is working.

New Franklin's path of continuous improvement has also been a model in the Portsmouth School District. New Franklin has consistently seen the greatest gains and has been able to connect those results to deliberate implementation of all PLC principles. Noteworthy in that is the fact that New Franklin has the highest percentage of free and reduced lunch students in the district and carries the distinction of being the district's only Title I Schoolwide program. In recognition of improved student performance and a focus on success for all, New Franklin received recognition as a National Title I Distinguished School in 2016.

**Please present additional information that indicates your efforts to build a professional learning community have had a positive impact on students and/or teachers.**

New Franklin started down the road of shifting the school culture from teaching and learning as an individual responsibility to a collective responsibility nine years ago. At that time, the district was starting to establish core student learning expectations or *power standards* at each grade level that would be consistent across all schools. As these essential standards were being developed, a core group of New Franklin staff attended multiple PLC institutes and found that the work of establishing power standards was essentially answering the first fundamental question of PLCs. Further, the philosophy and structure of PLCs fit perfectly into the already

established goal of having all students learn at high levels and provided a clearer path on how to bring that goal to reality.

While all schools in Portsmouth were engaged in developing PLCs, New Franklin took the lead in building a successful model. Five years ago teachers started developing common formative assessments to measure student success on the power standards. They would collect and collaboratively analyze the data to share successful practices. An intervention block was introduced the following year as a structure to help build a more coordinated approach to delivering tier two interventions. PLC teams at each grade level engage now regularly in intervention cycles using common formative assessment data and structured interventions.

As a district, PLC implementation has been monitored through the district administrative team giving its own formative assessment to all staff. This assessment has been in the form of a PLC survey that measures staff beliefs, perceptions, and practices related to PLC work. Administrators collaboratively reflect on the results across schools. Teachers at New Franklin have consistently reported far greater levels of fidelity to PLC beliefs and practices and this data has been helpful across the administrative team to discuss successful PLC implementation.

During the 2017-18 school year, teams began looking at ways to engage parents in the PLC process to partner in their child's learning. Parents were invited to participate in a grade level "PLC meeting" to learn about an upcoming intervention cycle and how to support their children at home. Teachers and specialists presented parents with strategies to support their children in areas such as sight words and math fact fluency, and the research around the impact of a strong home-school connection in a child's academic success. Teachers shared individual student data with parents and parents received post assessment data at the end of each cycle. By engaging parents in the PLC process, teachers saw a positive impact in post assessment data as compared to previous years.

### **Please elaborate strategies you have found to be effective in the following areas:**

1. Monitoring student learning on a timely basis.

At the outset of our PLC work, grade level PLC teams asked for clear directions and support in effectively functioning as a PLC. To put it another way, there was no patience for any wasted time or energy in team meetings. Each team was supplied with a detailed PLC binder, which made all team products and timelines clear, while allowing the team to spend energy on important decisions, such as what to assess and when.

These teams work on creating common formative assessments by taking the existing standards and unpacking them on a unit-by-unit basis. This builds on already established agreements to core learning. Teams create six-week cycles of assessment to monitor student progress. Once the common formative assessment is administered, teams use the results to create SMART goals for each cycle. These goals focus on a particular need evidenced from the assessment for each unit. Teachers then plan intervention and enrichment in addition to differentiated classroom instruction. Teams take time to celebrate the progress for students in each cycle. The whole process from common formative assessment to SMART goals, to student data is recorded and captured in the team's PLC binder, which becomes a piece of school-wide sharing of PLC work across teams.

2. Creating systems of intervention to provide students with additional time and support for learning.

Six years ago we instituted an intervention block for all students in grades 1-5, which has become a critical scheduling structure to provide consistent “just right” support for all students in their learning. Our primary area of focus during this time has been math.

The intervention block runs five days per week for 30 minutes. It is scheduled at the beginning of the day at the same time across the whole school. This allows us to utilize more school resources and create small groups for focused intervention. Classroom teachers, specialists, special educators and paraprofessionals are all involved, with students grouped with a staff member who can best provide for their needs. These groups are flexible between intervention cycles to allow for changes in student needs.

As a way of communicating this work to students and parents, we have created a pyramid of interventions chart that communicates the purpose of the system and gives parents more awareness of how we are responding to student needs through PLC work.

3. Building teacher capacity to work as members of high performing collaborative teams that focus efforts on improved learning for all students.

Perhaps the greatest strategy in building team capacity is to establish early on a cycle of success for students. It has been tremendously motivating for staff to connect progress in student learning with team capacity. The PLC binder each team keeps serves as a record of their success. At the end of each intervention cycle, teams complete a Celebrating Student Achievement form, which serves as a What worked? What didn't? and What next time? reflection on the cycle.

The administratively developed PLC survey has also provided a point of reflection for team growth in PLC work. This work has become embedded in how we operate as a school and has helped us filter all of the things we have to do as a school to what is most essential for student learning.

The strength of our team collaboration has also allowed us to continue to find new ways to operate collaboratively and effectively. Teachers have expanded PLC work to a deeper level of collaborative planning working to take the lessons from PLC team meetings and intervention blocks to apply across the curriculum. During the 2017-2018 school year classroom teachers and building specialists began meeting for weekly “Squad Meetings”. These meetings bring the work to the student specific level. The team meets to discuss how to appropriately differentiate instruction to allow for optimal student growth and learning.

This work goes beyond the traditional school year and into the summer months. All students going into first grade and those reading below end of year grade level benchmarks participate in the You've Got Mail summer program. The building reading specialist individualizes a summer literacy learning trajectory for all participants. Students receive in the mail carefully selected texts based on interest and reading level over the course of 7 weeks. This non-traditional summer program has seen tremendous results when compared to previous data collected for the more traditional summer school program. Over 85% of students either maintain or show growth in reading levels as measured on fall reading assessments.

The foundation of PLC work has helped create a norm of collaboration in the district and makes programs like this successful. This program was a district-wide effort, and allowed for valuable sharing of practices among teachers from all of our elementary schools.

**List awards and recognitions your school has achieved:**

New Franklin has been recognized locally as a leader in PLC work for several years and in 2016 was named a National Title I Distinguished School. Some evidence to support that can be found by looking at the links below:

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/articles/20100513-NEWS-5130422?cid=sitesearch>

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/articles/20100321-NEWS-3210338?cid=sitesearch>

<http://www.titlei.org/ds/schools/new-franklin-school>