



**PROPOSAL:
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA FACILITATOR APPRENTICESHIP
ACADEMY**

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

School change is complicated and challenging, especially for the educators who work with students every day. Building and sustaining the work of school practitioners as members of learning communities can support educators who are pursuing significant change, in new and substantive ways. The work of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) promotes the values of reflective practice, collaboration, shared leadership, authentic pedagogy, democracy, and equity in opportunity and achievement. With quality training and on-going site-based, job-embedded support all of these values can serve as powerful leverage points to improve teacher quality and increase achievement for all students. It is critical for district personnel in key positions that support school-site administrators and teacher leaders to understand how to cultivate and sustain school site PLCs in order to affect job-embedded professional development (PD).

The purpose of this work is to train 25 selected MDCPS Instructional Specialist (IS) in a year-long apprenticeship program to become PLC facilitators. This training will equip these content experts with the tools they need to lead the planning and facilitation of meaningful professional development throughout the 2014-15 school year as the Florida Standards are rolled out throughout MDCPS. These 25 individuals will become part of their own PLC beginning with a three-day PLC Facilitator training at the end of the 2013-14 school year and followed by a co-facilitating experience in July 2014 during the *Synergy: Florida Standards Instructional Planning Academy* (FSIPA). As with any effective PD follow-up is crucial. Therefore, there will be four follow-up face to face sessions throughout the 2014-15 school year and communication between sessions on-line to provide continued support both from the UF facilitator and between this PLC of district individuals as they do this difficult work (refer Implementation: At A Glance, in this document, for specific time-line).

A Simple Idea: Changing the Way Adults Work in Schools

As a profession, teachers and administrators are not practiced, encouraged, nor rewarded for publicly examining their own or their students' work. Moreover, the culture of schools offers few opportunities for substantive professional collaboration designed to change teacher practice to increase student achievement. A Professional Learning Community consists of a group of teachers and administrators who agree to work regularly together to produce improved student achievement. As a group, the members establish and publicly state student learning goals, help each other think about better teaching practices, look closely at curriculum and student work, and identify school-wide issues that affect student achievement.

A Professional Learning Community is facilitated by a coach who is selected either from the school staff or from the ranks of trusted outsiders. The coach helps the group build a sense of



trust that must exist if they are to work together in a direct, honest, and productive way. The coach also helps the members learn and master techniques that sharpen self-insight, promote creativity and rigor, and encourage candid, usable peer feedback.

Professional Learning Communities derive from a simple idea, but that doesn't mean they are easy to create or manage. They require significant commitment—on the part of teachers, coaches, and administrators. Thoughtful critique of teacher practice may provoke important changes in classroom and school-wide practices, but it is difficult to ask hard questions, open classrooms to constructive scrutiny, and explore with colleagues, the nuances and assumptions of one's own practice. It takes time to learn these unfamiliar skills and requires a commitment from leadership to develop school cultures where students and educators are constantly learning and improving.

Powerful Traditions: Time, Privacy, and Professional Development

What happens during a school day and when it happens, send powerful messages about our educational priorities. So, too, do the provisions we make for educators' professional development. Traditional norms of time, privacy, and professional development embedded in the culture of schools are powerful obstacles to meaningful, student-focused change. The work of Professional Learning Communities is purposely designed to loosen the grip of these traditions by making teaching public and thus, changing the ways adults work in schools.

Critical Elements

Building and sustaining learning community in schools requires the close and purposeful alignment of several key elements:

Structure—Every group of adults functions as a permanent school/center improvement team—Grade Level Teams, Vertical Teams, Subject-Area Teams, Leadership Teams, et al. These groups develop the capacity to engage in substantive collaboration within and across groups to address both short and long-term goals.

Content— In an age of high stakes accountability, schools (and particularly low performing schools) are faced with a barrage of well-meaning, but often competing and contradicting mandates, curricula, and initiatives. In our model, we do not seek to add yet another mandate or curriculum to schools, but rather to help them sort out and think deeply about the systems in place in order to make best use of existing resources.

Process—Adults engage in on-going, site-based, facilitated collaboration employing a variety of processes or protocols designed to assist all adults—teachers, parents, administrators, other school staff members to:

- Develop the habit of reflective practice
- Make practice public
- Support each other's learning
- Adapt practice in ways that increase success for all children



Conditions—Adults actively and intentionally set about creating and sustaining conditions that enable all members of the school to take risks, pose questions, support each other's learning, serve as advocates for each other's success—in effect, to work as members of a learning organization. Principal leadership is vital to establishing the conditions and sustaining a culture where learning communities thrive.

Outcomes – Learning Communities provide a powerful and proven means to increase student achievement and improve educator practice and school performance.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SCOPE OF WORK

The University of Florida, will provide the services set forth in this scope of work starting on (Date) and will include:

3 Days of Professional Learning Community (PLC) training days

4 days of follow-up support/ technical assistance through (Date).

9 Days of facilitation at the Synergy: Florida Standards Instructional Planning Academy (FSIPA)

The Contractor and the University of Florida (UF) Project Manager will mutually agree upon the specific days that services will be provided. The Contractor shall work with and report to the UF Project Manager to provide the following services:

Title: Facilitator Apprenticeship Academy

Purpose: Enhance and deepen the work of Professional Learning Communities as the vehicle for Professional Development with a selected cadre of district personnel.

Scope of Work: Provide an apprenticeship experience to selected district personnel specifically focused on designing, facilitating and providing follow-up support for teachers/ instructional coaches.

Goals:

1. Enhance design and facilitation skills for selected cohort of district personnel.
2. Provide support for district personnel in establishing and sustaining PLCs as a job-embedded structure for on-going professional development for school site administrators and teachers.
3. Increase the number of trained district personnel PLC Facilitators within MDCPS.

Deliverables:

Contractor will:

1. Co-design and co-facilitate a design studio experience for selected district personnel.
2. Provide an apprenticeship experience and on-going coaching designed to build knowledge and skills to successfully design and facilitate PLCs.
3. Establish a PLC to deepen and sustain learning of participating district personnel.
4. Provide in person and virtual follow-up support throughout the year.
5. Employ a process for documenting learning and growth of district personnel.