PLC at Work™ in Arkansas Evaluation Blueprint

This blueprint lays out the first year of the three-year implementation and impact evaluation of *Professional Learning Communities at Work™ (PLC at Work)* in Arkansas. It builds on the evaluation's logic model and ensures the evaluation guides the work, continuously improves implementation, assesses the impact, captures lessons learned, and ultimately informs the field about PLC and school success.

Overview

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and Solution Tree Inc. have partnered to develop and expand the *PLC at Work* process. The 2017-18 pilot comprises schools selected from across Arkansas in a competitive application process. Each school is assigned a team of Solution Tree associates, who draw on *PLC at Work* resources and their professional expertise to provide up to 50 days of on-site support.
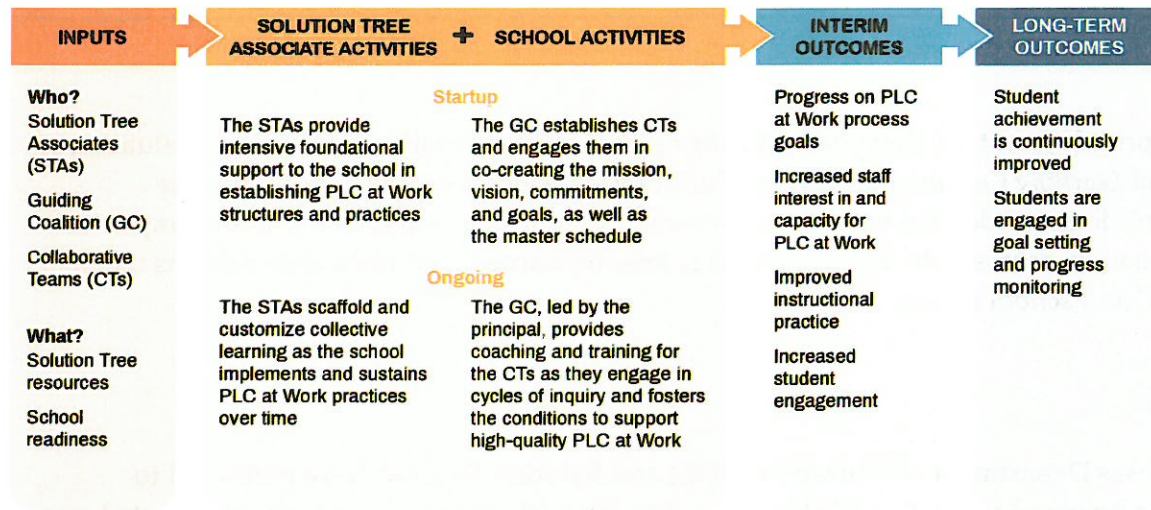
During the start-up phase, Solution Tree associates deliver training and coaching that provide intensive foundational support to the school in establishing *PLC at Work* structures and practices. This includes forming a guiding coalition, which then launches collaborative teams and engages them in co-creating the mission, vision, commitments, and goals, as well as the master schedule. Once the teams are up and running, the Solution Tree associates scaffold and customize collective learning as the school implements and sustains *PLC at Work* practices.

The guiding coalition, led by the principal, provides coaching and training to the collaborative teams as they engage in cycles of inquiry. The guiding coalition also fosters the conditions to support high-quality *PLC at Work*. Through this collaborative work, in the short term, schools are expected to make progress on their *PLC at Work* process goals, increase staff interest in—and capacity for—*PLC at Work*, improve instructional practice, and increase student engagement. In the long term, schools are expected to engage students in goal setting and progress monitoring while continuously improving overall student achievement.

Education Northwest designed a logic model that summarizes this process (figure 1) based on an in-person meeting with Solution Tree staff members, interviews with four additional individuals whom Solution Tree identified to provide essential knowledge about *PLC at Work,* and phone consultations with Solution Tree.

Figure 1. PLC at Work evaluation logic model

Logic Model for PLC at Work™ in Arkansas

INPUTS	SOLUTION TREE ASSOCIATE ACTIVITIES	✚ SCHOOL ACTIVITIES	INTERIM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Who? Solution Tree Associates (STAs) Guiding Coalition (GC) Collaborative Teams (CTs) **What?** Solution Tree resources School readiness	**Startup** The STAs provide intensive foundational support to the school in establishing PLC at Work structures and practices **Ongoing** The STAs scaffold and customize collective learning as the school implements and sustains PLC at Work practices over time	**Startup** The GC establishes CTs and engages them in co-creating the mission, vision, commitments, and goals, as well as the master schedule **Ongoing** The GC, led by the principal, provides coaching and training for the CTs as they engage in cycles of inquiry and fosters the conditions to support high-quality PLC at Work	Progress on PLC at Work process goals Increased staff interest in and capacity for PLC at Work Improved instructional practice Increased student engagement	Student achievement is continuously improved Students are engaged in goal setting and progress monitoring

PLC at Work teams are guided by four questions:

1. What is it we want our students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How will we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

Evaluation Questions

Based on the *PLC at Work* evaluation logic model, Education Northwest will address the following evaluation questions:

Implementation questions

1. To what degree are the pilot schools implementing the essential activities in the *PLC at Work* model?
2. What is the quality of *PLC at Work* implementation by the pilot schools?
3. What is the quality of Solution Tree support for the pilot schools?
4. To what degree are the pilot schools effective in shifting the interest, capacity, and behavior of school staff members?

Impact question

5. To what degree are the pilot schools effective in reaching their student achievement goals?

Staffing

Dr. Caitlin Scott will oversee this evaluation. Caitlin has extensive experience leading evaluations of professional development and school improvement initiatives that include the use of PLCs. Her career has focused on research that helps improve K–12 education for traditionally underserved students. She works at Education Northwest and manages a portfolio of statewide and national projects involving teams of Education Northwest researchers, such as the evaluation of the Wyoming Statewide System of Support (including the state's professional development efforts and PLCs for teachers and administrators), the evaluation of Instructional Leadership teams in 80 schools in Hawaii and professional development related to these teacher teams, and the evaluation of the federal Center on School Turnaround's technical assistance and professional development for supporting school turnaround. Caitlin's evaluation and research projects have used a variety of methods, from randomized controlled trials (such as an experimental study of a literacy program in Omaha, Nebraska) to qualitative case studies (such as a study of the Learning Assistance Program in Washington).

Dr. Julie Petrokubi will lead the qualitative team for this evaluation and will facilitate the logic modeling work in the design phase. Julie specializes in qualitative research and formative evaluation with a focus on organizational and systems change. She has facilitated logic models and theory of change processes for a range of organizations and several collective impact initiatives. She recently completed a multi-year formative evaluation of the Road Map Project, a cradle-to-career collective impact initiative in South King County, Washington. This evaluation investigated the interim outcomes of efforts to promote educational innovation and collaboration across seven school districts and their partners. Her other recent projects include evaluation of research-practice partnerships in education, case studies of developmental redesign efforts on community college campuses, and an implementation study of a complex network of college access programs.

Kathryn Torres will support the qualitative analysis for this evaluation and provide technical assistance during the logic modeling activity. She specializes in qualitative research and formative evaluation with a focus on data-driven decision making, instructional leadership, and organizational and systems change, particularly within schools that serve English learners. Her related projects include a formative evaluation of highly capable online learning modules, a case study of a cradle-to-career collective impact initiative in South King County Washington, and evaluations of National Professional Development programs intended to improve instruction for English learners. Prior to joining Education Northwest, Kathryn studied data and evidence use practices of instructional leadership teams in rural schools with large populations of Latino and English learner students.

Havala Hanson will lead the quantitative team for this evaluation. She manages a portfolio of large-scale quasi-experimental and mixed-methods evaluations, focused primarily on educator recruitment, development, and retention; postsecondary education; workforce development; STEM; and English learners. Her related projects include evaluations of the Alaska Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant, in which propensity score matching and time series analysis are used to estimate the impact of mining career training

programs on workforce outcomes, and the formative and summative evaluation of Oregon's Teacher Incentive Fund grant. As a research lead for Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, Havala has authored and managed numerous research studies published by the Institute of Education Sciences, many of which used advanced quantitative and mixed-methods approaches to address questions from educators and education system leaders. While employing advanced analytics, she also specializes in presenting relevant and actionable results to school practitioners and system-level leaders. She values a collaborative approach to evaluation that ensures project managers receive appropriate and timely feedback for continuous improvement and rigorous evidence of program impacts.