

## Professional Learning Community: Defining and Creating

### **One-credit graduate course**

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**PRDV 70725** 0.250 Credit hours

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*Instructor Profile, p. 7*

How can we meet the intense demands of schools? Today more than ever schools must become Professional Learning Communities with teachers working together



to solve problems. School professionals currently are facing major new changes in what and how they teach and work. We all are expected to be positive contributors to colleagues and school culture. State expectations are that school professionals will work together productively to solve problems, hone skills, seek and provide advice and support, and learn from one another.

Teacher evaluation has become more stringent.

School people can only attain the new extraordinarily high expectations by working together to support and learn from each other.

This course provides the definition, structure and protocols of Professional Learning Communities

### **PLC instructor Kay Scheidler**

needed for the teamwork and collaboration required to meet today's demands.

Learn how you can create an effective Professional Learning Community. Course work is based on the writings of the former principal Rick DuFour of a school that continues to embrace PLC's for high levels of excellence in their work with high student achievement, learned from now PLC national guru DuFour.

Course participants who are not classroom teachers have also found this course very helpful to guide their work in other areas in which they work with others.

## Course Description

*Defining and Creating Professional Learning Communities* provides information on the rationale and advantages for teachers creating action teams that will work together effectively to solve problems. This course also provides provocative online discussion on the issues. Harvard professor Seymour Sarason stated, “Schools haven’t changed because thinking hasn’t changed.” When teachers target goals and are action oriented and results oriented, and re-think solutions, success is seen. We can’t do this alone. School culture must change if we are to reach today’s new higher expectations. This course will present the theories and guidelines presented by Richard DuFour (2016) on how professional learning communities can work to create dramatic changes in teaching and learning, and in the school culture that supports a learning community. Participants will understand the specifics and effects of collaborative cultures and how school professionals can maximize benefits.

## Course Goals: To:

Fully inform teachers on the rationale and expectations of Professional Learning Communities (Dufour model)  
Provide the specific criteria of a Professional Learning Community  
Provide examples of successful PLC work  
Help accept feedback by using feedback  
Create a learning community in which participants learn from exchanging ideas



*Providing Smooth  
Sailing for Teachers*

## Course Objectives

To help participants understand

- Deep understanding of Professional Learning Communities
- The concept of Professional Capital as collective responsibility, use of scientific evidence, openness to one’s clients, and high expectations for all
- How to give and seek and receive constructive comments
- Collaboration in developing a Professional Learning Community
- Co-creating for a shared vision

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## **Required Text**

Required: DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R. (2016) *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

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## Course Requirements

This course is designed as a collaborative four-week online learning experience. Course material is arranged in modules and should be viewed in the order listed. All material is posted on the University eLearning platform Blackboard. One text is required (DuFour, 2016). Each of the four modules will be open and accessible for the full course, so course participants may view next steps, but are encouraged to work on one module at a time. Participants may expect to spend approximately three each week reviewing course material and participating on the discussion board to collaborate with the instructor. For course credit, participants will satisfactorily complete a plan for how they will develop a Professional Learning Community in their school. This final project should incorporate the ideas from the readings and ideas presented by the instructor, as well as other resources suited to the unit, indicating independent research.

## Grading Criteria

Participants will read all posted information in each module. Participants post on Discussion Board an answer to a question in response to each Discussion Board question (50%). The final Project of a Professional Learning Community plan acceptable to the provided criteria is 50% of the course grade. Please e-mail the instructor directly with any questions – This course is designed to help you!!

## Course Expectations

Participation in all assignments and course discussion is required. Readings and tasks stated at the syllabus end of session unit must be done for the next session. The final project must be submitted when due, so thinking for your final project at the start of the course will help you complete it when due. Please ask the instructor for any assistance you may need: [kscheidler@framingham.edu](mailto:kscheidler@framingham.edu) . If you are new to Blackboard or online courses, please review the Blackboard student tutorial or download the tutorial PDF file before you begin the course. By logging into Blackboard, you agree to the university Acceptable Use Policy which also covers academic honesty.

**Post your responses to Discussion Area questions no later than Sunday of each week**

## Course Schedule

*Online class meetings are weekly for 4 weeks, starting Monday of the first week.*

*Final unit project is due no later than Thursday, of the last week of the course.*

*Models of the final unit project are provided.*

### **Module 1 Monday**

#### **Presentation of the Criteria of Professional Learning Communities**

Objectives: Model preassessment and introduce the big picture rationale and advantages of Professional Learning Communities.

Activities Course overview

View Power point on rationale for Professional Learning Communities and the specific definition and characteristics of a Professional Learning Community.

Examples provided by instructor of unsuccessful PLC's and successful Professional Learning Community work in problem solving, meeting high standards

Read DuFour:

Chapters are on

Introduction "A Journey Worth Taking"

Chapter 1. A Guide to Action

Chapter 2. A Clear and Compelling Purpose

Chapter 3. Building the Collaborative Culture of a Professional Learning Community

for Question 2 "What are the main characteristics of a Professional Learning Community as defined by DuFour," and,

second, "What especially appeals to you about Professional Learning Communities for your own work?"

## Final Project: Stating the final expectations in advance

Participants will satisfactorily complete a plan for how they will develop a Professional Learning Community in their school. This final project should incorporate the ideas from the readings and ideas presented by the instructor and course participants, as well as other resources suited to the unit, indicating independent research. View attached rubric, to see also how rubrics guide learning

## Module 2 Monday

*Read this week*

### Unit Two, Week Two Discussion Question 1

Week Two: Please read this week Chapters 4 - 6 in Dufour's "Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work."

## Systematic Interventions: When some students don't learn

- Consideration of how will we respond when some students don't learn
- Building a collaborative Professional Learning Community
- Case Study: Collaboration or "Coblaboration"?
- Creating a results orientation
- Dangerous Detours and Seductive Shortcuts

## Questions for Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of Learning by Doing, DuFour

### Chapter 4 Creating a Results Orientation at the School, Team and Teacher Levels

What do you find are key points in this chapter to guide effective Professional Learning Communities?

### Chapter 5 Establishing a Focus on Learning

### Chapters 5 & 6, : Creating Team-Developed Common Formative Assessments

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## Module 3 Unit Three: Fine Points of Professional Learning Communities

Final course paper: Attached is the description of a final course paper. Please e-mail this to Kay no later than Wednesday of Week 4.

Once I've approved your final paper, please post it on the Week Four Discussions area, to share your thoughts.

Here are Discussion Questions for chapters 7, 9 and 10 of our text, "Learning by Doing: Professional Learning Communities at Work"

[Week Three Discussion Questions, Chapters 7, 9, 10.doc](#)

## **Consensus and Conflict in a Professional Learning Community**

- Using relevant information to improve results
- Consensus and conflict in a Professional Learning Community
- Confronting the brutal facts of substantive change

*1. Chapter 7: Responding when some students don't learn  
How is this applicable to your own situation?*

*2. Chapter 9 Consensus: Addressing Conflict and Celebrating in a Professional Learning Community*

In this important chapter on the key area of consensus building, do you believe that teacher leaders – teachers who are influential on others' thinking and practice, whether in an official role or not – can affect resistance?

What particular strategy or strategies in this chapter do you believe can be especially effective?

*3. Chapter 10 Implementing the Professional Learning Community  
Process Districtwide*

*DuFour mentions here that a school leader must set a tone of "Why" the need for change with a story with a teachable point of view – a succinct explanation of the school's purpose and how the initiative advances that purpose – and repeat this story.*

What is a story, or a phrase you may know, or have heard from others, that can be the story or brief phrase that we can promote to make change for something like an effective professional learning community infectious?

View attached rubric, to see also how rubrics guide learning

### **Module 4 Monday**

**Final posting and critiques of course participants' plans for creating a Professional Learning Community for one's school**

**Discussion Board: Based on our readings, Discussion Board discussions, and your own experience and independent research, create and describe a plan for developing a Professional Learning Community for your school. This may be small scale, with just a few people, or a school-wide plan. Rubric for your plan is provided.**

**Final posting of plan that includes the course ideas, as evidence of participant learning in this course.**

This Professional Learning Community course models for participants “teaching for the assessment” by providing the assessment at the start of our course and providing the steps to do the assessment of learning and the rubric to guide student work and assess the final project. This final plan for a Professional Learning Community is an example of a performance assessment that shows learning from the course, modeling what is intended for your students’ learning.

**Collegial review of participant unit plan teaching drafts:** Review others’ plan drafts to help improve the plan, giving and receiving constructive feedback in a positive way.

*What have we learned?*

*Presentation of final revised plans; participants demonstrate that they can provide constructive ideas course instructor for plan improvements, and accept and use constructive comments, demonstrating constructive, positive, supporting communication required in a Professional Learning Community.*

Objective: Participants show they have learned the course content by presenting to the instructor final unit plan project. Submit plan to Kay for viewing. Participants will receive comments on their final plans from the instructor. Grades will only be given when plan is satisfactorily completed.

**Instructor Profile**



**Dr. Katherine Scheidler** taught English for over twenty years in Providence, RI. Her doctoral degree is from the School of Education, Boston University. She holds graduate degrees from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and a Master’s in Teaching (MAT) from Brown University.

Dr. Scheidler taught in a cross-discipline teaching team in a program within her school. Teachers of four core content areas were provided common planning time. With no professional development on team work, moving from individual work alone in one’s own classroom to a team of teachers sharing the same students was stressful and created more anxiety than working with urban students. The students excelled; teachers had difficulty working together.

Dr. Scheidler served as clinical professor, Brown University Education Department, for eight years, teaching Methods of Teaching English to Brown seniors and MAT students, and supervised all Brown University English student teachers in fifteen different area schools, concurrently with her public school teaching.

She has also served as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in Canton and Hopkinton, MA, and K - 12 English Language Arts Curriculum Director in Marblehead and Curriculum Director in other Massachusetts districts of varied demographics.

Dr. Scheidler has taught courses in curriculum and instruction for The Education Collaborative, Dedham, in conjunction with the Boston University teacher licensure program, and with the National Faculty, Lesley University, Cambridge, teaching curriculum courses in the Master's in Literacy program. She has published articles in the National Council of Teachers of English *The English Journal*, The Boston University *Journal of Education*, and *The Teachers Journal*, Brown University. Scheidler is author, Standards Matter: The Why and What of Common Core Reading and Writing Standards, NewSouth Books, 2015, and publishes newspaper opinion pieces on education issues.



**Communication skills are a key factor** in an online class. It is important to write clear and concise statements when you communicate online. Remember the person reading your comments does not see your expression or hear your tone of voice. Take advantage of the environment and prepare your comments in Word before posting them online or sending an email to your classmates or instructor.

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Consequently, students who enroll at Framingham State College agree to maintain high standards of academic honesty and scholarly practice. They shall be responsible for familiarizing themselves with the published policies and procedures regarding academic honesty.

Academic honesty requires but is not limited to the following practices: appropriately citing all published and unpublished sources, whether quoted, paraphrased, or otherwise expressed, in all of the student's oral and written, technical and artistic work; and observing the policies regarding the use of technical facilities.

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