

np NEW PRAIRIE UNITED SCHOOL CORPORATION

a culture of excellence

Publication of the New Prairie United School Corporation

WINTER 2021-22



What's Inside:

- A New Approach to Student Learning
- Professional Learning Community
- Learn More – Meeting Schedule

All students and staff are looking forward to a very successful 2022! Please see inside for what has been going on in our schools!

MISSION

Our purpose is to Ensure High Levels of Learning for ALL Students



New Prairie United Schools Professional Learning Community

Frequently Asked Questions

Superintendent's Message

We have much to be thankful for as we begin 2022. NPUSC staff, families and communities have always come around our students to provide the best education possible for success in school and in life. We do a great job of working together in our students' best interest. With this in mind, I am excited to share in more detail our most recent initiative for student learning: the Professional Learning Community, or PLC process. This approach to student learning is based on years of research throughout the world to determine how students best learn. We have already seen an outstanding positive impact for our students due to the PLC process. Since implementing this process in 2018, NPUSC students have doubled their percent above state average earned on state exams.

This special issue newsletter will give you more background information about the PLC process and how it impacts student learning. We have included 12 "Frequently Asked Questions" about the PLC process for your consideration. You will also see that we have scheduled in person meetings at all NPUSC schools in spring 2022 so that we can explore the PLC approach together. We are very thankful for the positive impact this approach has had on our students and look forward to the opportunity to share the PLC process in more detail this spring.



Dr. Paul White, Superintendent of New Prairie United School Corporation



Every student is prepared for a bright future!

Question 1

We hear the term "PLC" all the time. What is a Professional Learning Community, or PLC?

A Professional Learning Community is an interdependent team that works together weekly and monthly to achieve common goals. In our case, that goal is improved student learning. A PLC team works together to collectively learn, research and identify the best approaches to help student learning. PLC teacher teams are organized around pursuing the following four "critical" questions:

- What do we want the students to learn?
- How will we know when the students have learned it?
- What are we going to do when we identify that students have not learned it?
- What are we going to do when we identify that students have learned it?

Question 2

Why has NPUSC invested so heavily in this approach to organize student learning?

Research is showing us two things: 1) The most effective schools that elevate student learning consistently meet in teams to collaborate to solve learning problems, and 2) The number one thing a school can do to improve student learning is work to build or improve "Collective Teacher Efficacy." This is an educational term for groups of teachers who work together to grow their capacity as teachers to identify the best approaches to learning and then implement those approaches. The research on this approach can be found at our answer to question 4.

Question 3

What does NPUSC do during Late Starts and why is it necessary?

Teachers have been given some time during their work day to meet with teams to work through the four critical questions for student learning. However, additional time is needed as this work can be very complex given the varying needs of all students. For example, working with Question 2 (How will we know if students have learned it?) involves a process of teachers' collecting student data weekly about the students' learning, sharing that data with their PLC teams and determining trends in student learning to inform next steps for the teachers in the classroom.

Question 4

Some of the NPUSC administrators have mentioned research by someone named John Hattie when talking about what NPUSC is doing. What is that research?

John Hattie is an international researcher who has spent his career studying the most effective schools around the world. His research can be found here: <https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/the-visible-learning-research> He has consistently found the following two areas to be among the highest positive influences on student learning: Collective Teacher Efficacy (previously explained) and Response to Intervention (RTI) is explained in questions 8 & 9).

Question 5

What does the term "Essential Standards" mean and how does it impact my student's learning? Is NPUSC no longer teaching "the entire book"?

You may recall when you were in school that you may have needed more time to understand an important math or English concept, only to have the teacher say, "We have to move on." The thought back then was to "cover the entire book", that exposure was more important than learning.

We have learned that it is more important to develop a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum for each course that identifies the most essential curriculum, the list of skills that students MUST know to be successful in that course and future courses. Teachers will spend more time on these

essential skills, including re-teaching and re-testing opportunities.

The focus has shifted from "covering the book" to "making sure the students truly learn the most important skills in the course, even if they need additional time and opportunities to show learning."

Question 6

What is a Common Formative Assessment, or CFA?

A CFA, or Common Formative Assessment, is a quiz or test given by a teacher, typically weekly or bi-weekly, with the purpose of figuring out where students are in the learning process on essential standards. These assessments are more about doing a check on current student learning than determining a final grade.

Also, the CFAs are collaboratively written by teachers teaching the same subject. The PLC team of the teacher works together to not only create the CFA but also to evaluate the results and data from the CFAs. This is one of the many tasks teachers engage in on Late Start Fridays, and teachers adjust their instruction and re-teach concepts when necessary based on data gathered from the CFA process.

Question 7

Why does my student get to re-take some quizzes/tests? Is this really helping my student?

This answer is connected to question 6. Much of the time, students will have opportunities to re-take quizzes and some tests that are part of the CFA approach. The goal at this point is student learning, not necessarily the final grade. CFAs give teachers critical information that students may need more help or a different approach to learning critical skills. Larger unit or summary tests will still happen, and the CFA process better prepares students for these larger summary tests which will often not have a re-testing feature. Below are two educational definitions of student assessment to help summarize the different types of tests:

- Formative Assessment: Frequent quizzes or checks of student learning to inform or guide teaching to ensure students understand the skill or concept.
- Summative Assessment: A final assessment or test event after a culmination of learning activities meant to measure final progress at a point in time. Some examples are state exams like I-Read, I-Learn or the SAT.

Question 8

Each NPUSC school seems to have a 30- to 40-minute time in the school day for additional help. Why is this happening?

Once teachers have identified the most essential curriculum and are checking for student learning of this essential curriculum more quickly than in the past, it is important to then create opportunities for students to engage in additional teaching and learning of essential curriculum, plus participate in additional re-testing. This will happen in the classroom some, and also each NPUSC school has additional time in the school day. Listed below is what each school calls this time and the days it is offered:

- NPHS – Success Period, Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday
- NPMS – Cougar Mentor Time, Monday through Thursday
- Olive – Math/ELA RTI Block Time, Daily
- Prairie View – ER Time, Daily
- Rolling Prairie – Math/ELA RTI Block Time, Daily

Question 9

We have heard the school mention an acronym called "RTI." What is RTI?

Please see the answer to question 8 above. RTI, or Response to Intervention, is the educational research term for what we are doing as summarized in question 8. This approach to student learning, according to the latest educational research, is among the most impactful positive approaches schools can implement to help students. A more detailed explanation of the RTI process and the role of the Interventionists will be shared at the coming public Q/A sessions.

Question 10

My student is behind his/her grade level peers and does not qualify for special education services? The teachers and my student keep talking about the extra help they are getting at school during the school day. What is NPUSC doing in these situations?

Students who need an additional layer of academic support will get this support from NPUSC teachers called Interventionists. These licensed teachers have specific expertise, licensing and/or training in either reading development or mathematics and will work with students to boost gaps in foundational learning skills. Students will get this support during the instructional day and will not miss instruction in their core classes or their favorite electives. Each student in need of this additional layer of academic service will have a schedule developed that is tailored to their situation. A more detailed explanation of the RTI process and the role of the Interventionists will be shared at the coming public Q/A sessions.

Question 11

What does NPUSC mean by its Mission Statement, "To achieve high levels of learning for ALL students?"

We are referring to and focusing on each student working to their maximum potential academically. We realize that is different for each student, and each student needs different levels of support to be successful. We realize each student is unique and will be interested in and achieve different career goals, whether it be college or workforce success after high school.

Question 12

Will NPUSC provide an opportunity for a Q/A session about the PLC process for public discussion?

Yes, each NPUSC school will host a PLC Information Night (listed below) which will include a brief presentation and time for a Question/Answer session

Please join us to learn more about the Professional Learning Community approach.

All meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m.

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| March 30 | Olive Elementary |
| April 13 | Prairie View Elementary |
| April 20 | Rolling Prairie Elementary |
| April 27 | New Prairie Middle School |
| May 4 | New Prairie High School |



Students and staff alike are happy to be back in the classroom.

You're Invited

You are invited to attend meetings of the School Board of NPUSC. These meetings are generally conducted at 6 p.m. CST on the fourth Monday of each month in the Superintendent's Office, 5327 N Cougar Rd., New Carlisle, IN, unless otherwise advertised.

School Board

- Phillip King..... President
- Al Williamson Vice President
- Dale Groves..... Secretary
- Jason DeMeyer..... Member
- Jill Smith..... Member

Contact Us

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- Olive Township Elementary (574) 654-7531
(219) 778-4740
- Prairie Elementary (574) 654-7258
(219) 778-9388
- Rolling Prairie (219) 778-2018

Our Website

www.npusc.k12.in.us



From the youngest students to graduates, New Prairie sets them up for success!



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Technology plays an important part of our school day.

All-School Calendar, 2021-22

- Feb. 25 No School
- March 11 Last day of Q3
- April 4-8..... Spring Break (no school)
- April 15 Good Friday (no school)
- May 24 Students' Last Day
- May 25 Last Teacher Day
- May 30 Memorial Day (no school)
- June 5 Graduation Day

