

MARCH 2019

# PLANNING FOR QUALITY

## A Guide for Continuous Improvement of Digital Learning Programs



## *About the Digital Learning Collaborative*

The Digital Learning Collaborative (DLC) works to illuminate key issues in digital learning, disseminate data and best practices, and guide practitioners, policymakers, the media, advocates, and interested observers.

As a membership-based organization, the DLC includes school districts, intermediate units, public agencies, non-profit organizations, and companies. Collaborative activities are supported financially by annual membership fees paid by providers, depending on the type and size of the member organization. School districts, most public agencies, and some non-profit organizations may join free of charge. We accept foundations as members but do not seek nor accept foundation funding at levels higher than members.

## *Acknowledgments*



The DLC thanks the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative (WDLC), a network of educators in Wisconsin, for their contributions to making this publication possible. As a statewide collaborative effort, WDLC shares knowledge and resources with K–12 schools, districts, and agencies who want to start or improve their online and blended learning practice.

WDLC offers quality planning strategies, connections to implementation solutions, and peer-led learning opportunities that empower schools and districts to meet a wide array of learner needs for choice, flexibility, and instructional support.

WDLC consists of three collaborating organizations, the Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS), the Wisconsin eSchool Network (WEN), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This partnership provides a single point for schools to access quality online and blended learning.

In early 2018, the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative (WDLC) began to explore a key question:

*How could its members take a new approach to assessing, addressing, and improving quality?*

The WDLC commissioned the Evergreen Education Group to investigate other sectors of education and work with WDLC members to discuss their ideas through a series of meetings and discussions.

The result of this intensive work is this Planning for Quality Guide, a practical guide to quality review that helps practitioners start asking reflective questions about how their efforts can be continuously improved.

The WDLC's collaborative partnership is critical to elevating the importance of quality in digital education, and the DLC thanks the WDLC for the permission to re-brand and share this meaningful resource with the field.

Suggested Citation: Digital Learning Collaborative. (2019). Planning for quality: A guide for continuous improvement of digital learning programs. *A Keeping Pace with Digital Learning Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.digitallearningcollab.com>

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# Background

In early 2018, Evergreen Education Group, the coordinating group of the DLC and DLAC, was working with a client that was focused on the following key question:

*How can an existing program assess, address, and improve quality?*

The result of this intensive work is this mini playbook, which is a practical guide to quality review that helps practitioners start asking reflective questions about how their efforts can be continuously improved for existing online, blended and/or digital programs. Serving as an extension of Evergreen's *Planning for Quality: Starting and Growing a Digital Learning Program*, the information in this playbook is not random; instead, the structure and content, including self review themes and questions, are based on an extensive literature review of standards and other quality-related documents that consist of vetted resources from schools, districts, organizations, and other trusted sources in the field of K–12 online and blended learning. These documents include but are not limited to the following (see Appendix A for detailed list and links to original sources):

- iNACOL quality standards for programs, courses, and teaching
- Implementation guides from The Learning Accelerator, Education Elements, and others
- *Keeping Pace* Planning for Quality guides
- Other resources that include work done by the Tennessee state virtual school, Florida Virtual School, and other leading schools, districts, and NGOs

This playbook is divided into two sections. **Section One: Individual Program Reflection** shares an approach to reflecting on quality for a single school, program, or district that wants to make changes and do so from an internal level. This section includes a list of initial self-review questions and then delves into a more extensive set of questions for a deeper dive into quality and continuous improvement. It is suggested to start with the initial self-review and then continue, as time permits, to shift into the extensive set.

**Section Two: Diving Deeper with Peer Learning Networks** introduces an innovative way of building on the process presented in Section One except this time, you incorporate a Peer Learning Network (PLN). Engaging with a PLN deepens what is already happening in the self review by adding in a robust peer-review process, providing a systematic approach to professional learning and quality improvement. Essentially, PLNs seek to provide a framework for the continuation and deepening of critical conversations around best practices and iterative cycles of improvement. More about this approach is presented in Section Two. Before jumping in, the DLC members want to provide some guidance and advice to encourage you to make this process work for you.

## Make This Work For You

Start out by slowing down, pausing, reflecting, and challenging your program to grow by doing the following:

- **Discuss** what the focus of your program's self review is and why
- **Reflect** upon what critical conversations you need to have in order to go deeper into the review
- **Focus** on just two to three areas of improvement because you can't do it all at once
- **Decide** where the program can improve
- **Create** next steps by identifying what needs to happen in order to start the continuous improvement process
- **Identify** who should be involved in the continuous improvement process

Before you jump in, the DLC members share some words of caution and support:

- It's not easy, but it's totally worth it.
- It doesn't have to be done all at once; this is just a starting point.
- You can take what is here and build on it. Leave what doesn't make sense, and take what does.
- There is an extended version of the Key Questions that can be spread out over a school or program's team rather than be tackled by one member.
- Timing is suggested but not required.
- Work on one piece at a time instead of getting overwhelmed by trying to implement the whole thing at once. You can't build an airplane overnight; instead, chip away at it bit by bit.
- The themes and questions posed here are ones that were established based on the literature review and the input of an extensive network of education professionals. That doesn't mean that everything has been covered. So if there is a theme that makes sense for your context and it's not here, incorporate it! If there's a question that works for your team, especially if it's something that your team needs to think critically about, put it in!

Make it your own; make it meaningful; make it make sense for your learning environment and stakeholders! Let's dive in.

## SECTION

# 1

# Individual Program Reflection

This section helps you leverage critical questions to identify where your school, district, and/or program is at, providing a jumping off point for quality improvement. You can decide if it makes more sense for your program to start with the initial questions (one page) or the extended set of questions (six pages) or somewhere in between. As you begin engaging in a process of organizational self-assessment and peer-assessment, the following questions will help you identify the strengths, needs, and priorities of your organization. The themes and questions on the following pages reflect components and aspects of high quality learning organizations as gleaned from a review of the literature on school quality for online, blended, and brick-and-mortar schools.

## Self Review

Self reviews are helpful for programs to reflect upon and understand the areas in which they need to improve. The questions asked during self review encourage programs to think critically and have vulnerable conversations about quality and decide where changes need to happen in order to better the experiences of the students' learning environments. While it helps to have another person who is not a program representative serve as a neutral facilitator for these critical conversations, especially in order to avoid bias, this self-review process can be done internally without a facilitator.

# A Snapshot of Themes and Key Questions

Full List Available on Page:

A full list of themes or building blocks and questions is provided in the next section.

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## SUCCESS CRITERIA

### Student Outcomes

- Which students or staff are getting the most benefit from what you're doing that "works"?
- Which students or staff are still struggling in spite of your best efforts?

### Organizational Outcomes

- How does your organization define organizational success?
- Is everyone inside of the organization on the same page about your success criteria?

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## ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

- Who are the human resources defined as educators in your organization (Counselors, Teacher, Guides, Coaches, etc)?
- What role does the educator play in instructional design and delivery?

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## ROLE OF THE STUDENT

- How does your organization ensure students are prepared to learn successfully in your model?
- Does each student have a learner profile? If so, how are those utilized, and by whom?
- What are your school's policies and practices related to attendance?

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## ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LEADER

- How do you ensure leaders are prepared to succeed in your model?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of leaders in your organization?

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## EQUITY

- Does your organization over- or under-serve certain populations of students, for example, students with disabilities, English-language learners, Title I students, students of certain ethnicities, etc.? Is this by design or by accident?
- What steps does your organization take to address persistent gaps in achievement by subgroup?

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## ACCESSIBILITY

- How does your program make courses, learning environments, and resources accessible?
- What is the program doing to support the faculty and staff responsible for making the program accessible?
- What is the program doing to support students with disabilities in their learning online?

## Grounding Questions

Use these questions to establish a foundation upon which the other questions can be built.

- What is the school/district/program that you are representing?
- To what extent does that school/district/program support full-time online learning, supplemental online courses, blended learning, other?
- How many students do you serve, in what grade levels and subject areas?
- What types of students do you serve, especially if your student demographics are not representative of your district/school/region?
- At a general level, what do you consider your organization's major successes and major current challenges? What's going well for your organization? How do you know?
- What are your goals for engaging in this process? If this process is successful for you, what will it look like for your organization?

# A Snapshot of Themes and Key Questions (cont.)

Full List Available on Page:

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## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- *Does your organization have a plan or strategy for engaging with stakeholders?*
- *Who does your organization consider to be a stakeholder?*

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## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- *How do you support staff to teach in your model?*
- *How do you ensure your staff are prepared to utilize your school's technology, systems, and digital and/or in-person curriculum tools?*

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## SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

(Some, perhaps most, of these questions may have been addressed at least in part in earlier discussions.)

Overall

- *Who does your organization serve? Why those students and not others?*
- *What are your organizational priorities? How do you know?*

Governance

- *What's your organization's governance model?*
- *What components of your governance model work well? How do you know?*

Policies and Procedures

- *What role do district, state, or other policies play in how you implement your program?*
- *How do you develop policies and procedures for your organization?*

Infrastructure (physical, technological)

- *What is your organization's technology plan?*
- *How does your organization maintain the functionality of learning materials, resources, and spaces?*

Finance

- *What priorities guide your budgeting and allocation decisions?*
- *How is your organization funded?*
- *What impact does your funding source have on what you offer students and staff?*

Human Resources

- *What priorities guide your hiring and staffing decisions?*
- *What do you do to attract and retain high-quality staff? How do you know what practices are most effective in helping you do this?*

## Make It Your Own

What theme or questions are missing from this list that you'd like to add?

Insert additional themes and questions here:



# A Full List of Themes and Key Questions

The questions aligned with all of the themes and sub themes are presented on the following pages. The first area of questions called Grounding Questions helps to establish a foundation upon which the other questions can be built.

## Grounding Questions

- What is the school/district/program that you are representing?
- To what extent does that school/district/program support full-time online learning, supplemental online courses, blended learning, other?
- How many students do you serve, in what grade levels and subject areas?
- What types of students do you serve, especially if your student demographics are not representative of your district/school/region?
- At a general level, what do you consider your organization's major successes and major current challenges? What's going well for your organization? How do you know?
- What are your goals for engaging in this process? If this process is successful for you, what will it look like for your organization?

## Critical Thinking

These questions will help challenge you and your team to dig deeper!

- What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?
- What data and tools are used to validate your results?
- Have you reviewed processes or practices that have been in place for long periods of time that may need review and/or further iterations?
- Are you digging deep enough? If so, how? If not, why not? Identify the barriers and/or what's holding you back from change.
- Are the conversations you are having as transparent as they need to be to affect meaningful change?
- How do ensure your practice isn't simply replicating the legacy classroom?

## Themes and Subthemes

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

Student Outcomes

Organizational Outcomes

### ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

### ROLE OF THE STUDENT

### ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LEADER

### EQUITY

### ACCESSIBILITY

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Overall

Governance

Policies and Procedures

Infrastructure (physical, technological)

Finance

Human Resources

## Success Criteria

### *Student Outcomes*

- Which students or staff are getting the most benefit from what you're doing that "works"?
- Which students or staff are still struggling in spite of your best efforts?
- How does your organization define student success?
- Is everyone in your organization on the same page about your success criteria?
- How do stakeholders know how close or far each student is from meeting your success criteria?
- What does your organization do if students aren't making progress against success criteria?
- What role do students play in setting goals and tracking their progress toward your organization's success criteria?

### *Organizational Outcomes*

- How does your organization define organizational success?
- Is everyone inside of the organization on the same page about your success criteria?
- How do stakeholders know how close or far your organization is to meeting your organizational success criteria?
- How much transparency does your organization provide to stakeholders regarding organizational successes and areas for growth? What are your reporting/oversight processes?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Role of Educator

- Who are the human resources defined as educators in your organization (Counselors, Teachers, Guides, Coaches, etc)?
- What role does the educator play in instructional design and delivery?
- How do you ensure educators are prepared to succeed in your model?
- What support or training does your organization provide educators, especially so they're able to serve learners with diverse needs (English-Language Learners, Special Education, Gifted and Talented, etc.)?
- What are your organization's expectations for how educators communicate with students? How often? Using what means?
- What expectations do you have in place for educators in terms of providing feedback to students?
- How do you evaluate educators in your organization? Do you have criteria you use to define what high quality instruction looks like?
- How do educators assess student learning?
- What parameters do you have in place for instructional design for your educators to follow?
- What latitude do educators have to modify curriculum? Under what circumstances?
- How do educators ensure they're meeting the individual needs of each student they teach?
- How do educators ensure their instructional materials and assessments are appropriately rigorous and aligned to standards?
- How do educators in your organization develop and maintain a culture and climate that's safe for students?
- What does behavior management look like in your organization?
- What expectations do you have for educators in terms of workload (prep time, number of students, course development, etc.)?
- Do educators in your organization understand their role as part of the larger vision for your organization?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Role of Student

- How does your organization ensure students are prepared to learn successfully in your model?
- Does each student have a learner profile? If so, how are those utilized, and by whom?
- What support do you have for students or families struggling with the use of technology?
- Does your organization provide access to hardware and software for students?
- What expectations do you have for students regarding the use of technology? How do students know what those expectations are?
- Who are all of the educators a student in your organization interacts with on a daily or weekly basis? How does your organization track or record those interactions?
- What are your organization's expectations for how students communicate with educators? How often? Using what means?
- What are your organization's expectations for student behavior?
- What's your organization's approach to discipline?
- What extracurricular learning opportunities do students have access to? How do they know about and access those?
- How do students receive feedback from educators?
- What expectations does your organization have for student engagement?
- What are your school's policies and practices related to attendance?
- What are your school's policies and practices related to work completion?
- What opportunities exist for students to advocate for their needs as a learner?
- How can students monitor their progress in their courses?
- Do students set and monitor progress toward goals?
- How do students interact and engage with their peers?
- What resources and opportunities does your organization provide to support student engagement?
- What resources does your organization provide to help meet the social and emotional needs of learners?
- What resources does your organization provide to help students plan for postsecondary opportunities?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Role of School Leader

- How do you ensure leaders are prepared to succeed in your model?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of leaders in your organization?
- How does your organization evaluate leaders?
- What responsibility does the leader have to set and communicate a vision for the school?
- What responsibility does the leader have for budgeting and fiscal planning?
- What autonomy and authority does the leader have to make decisions on behalf of the school?
- What responsibility does the leader have for enrollment?
- Does the leader provide professional learning for educators? If so, how do they determine what to offer?
- How does the leader ensure all students have the support, instruction, and resources they need to succeed?
- How does the leader ensure all staff have the support, professional learning, and resources they need to succeed?
- What are your organization's expectations for how leaders communicate with parents? How often? Using what means?
- How do leaders in your organization develop and maintain a culture and climate that's productive, safe, and engaging for students and staff?
- What does behavior management look like in your organization?
- What expectations do you have for leaders in terms of workload?
- Do leaders in your organization understand their role as part of the larger vision for your organization?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Equity

- Does your organization over- or under-serve certain populations or groups of students, for example, students with disabilities, English-language learners, Title I students, students of certain ethnicities, etc.? Is this by design or by accident?
- What steps does your organization take to address persistent gaps in achievement by subgroup?
- What role do students, families, and teachers from diverse backgrounds play in providing feedback and insight about how to best meet the needs of all students and families?
- How do you ensure that every student feels valued, empowered, and successful?
- How does your organization support all learners to use digital tools to ensure that they have access to rigorous, engaging learning opportunities?

## Accessibility

- How are we making our courses, learning environments, and resources accessible?
- What is the program doing to support the faculty and staff responsible for making the program accessible?
- What is the program doing to support students with disabilities in their learning online?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Does your organization have a plan or strategy for engaging with stakeholders?
- Who does your organization consider to be a stakeholder?
- How does your organization engage with stakeholders?
- What opportunities does your organization provide for stakeholder input or feedback?
- How does your organization seek input or feedback from diverse stakeholder groups?
- What form or shape does stakeholder input or feedback take?
- What level of transparency does your organization provide to stakeholders about areas of strength and growth?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?

## Professional Learning

- How do you support staff to teach in your model?
- How do you ensure your staff are prepared to utilize your school's technology, systems, and digital and/or in-person curriculum tools?
- What do evaluation and coaching look like for your organization?
- How much direction, choice, ownership do staff have in determining professional learning opportunities?
- How do you create time for professional learning throughout the day/week/month/year?
- What is the expectation for staff to share learning with colleagues?
- Who is expected to engage in professional learning?
- How does your organization determine what professional learning to offer?
- How do you expose teachers to a variety of technology/methods/strategies so they can think about how to apply them for their needs?
- What type of professional learning has proven most effective for your staff? (sit and get vs on-your-own, vs guided)?
- How does professional learning connect with evaluations and goal setting?

### Critical Questions

What are your next steps?

What evidence do you use to support your reasoning?

How are you going to dive deeper?

What key questions do you want to add?



## Systems and Structures

*(Some, perhaps most, of these questions may have been addressed at least in part in earlier discussions.)*

### *Overall*

- Who does your organization serve? Why those students and not others?
- What are your organizational priorities? How do you know?
- How does your organization make decisions? Why? Is that approach effective? How do you know?
- How do your systems and structures support your success criteria?
- How, if at all, do your systems and structures encourage innovation?
- How, if at all, do you create flexibility for educators and leaders to make research-based decisions and allow for innovative practices or pilots?
- What's your organization's approach to engaging in continuous improvement?

### *Governance*

- What's your organization's governance model?
- What components of your governance model work well? How do you know?
- What components of your governance model present challenges? What do you do to work through those challenges?

### *Policies and Procedures*

- What role do district, state, or other policies play in how you implement your program?
- How do you develop policies and procedures for your organization?
- How do you know whether policies and procedures are effective?
- How do you identify a need for new or revised policy and/or procedures?
- What's your process for developing new policies and/or procedures?
- How do you implement policies and/or procedures in your organization?
- How does the program align with current structures or expectations (eg.- SPED, Activities, GPA, Graduation, Student Supports, Scheduling)? How does your instructional model impact this?
- How do you maintain focus on your organizational priorities in light of new opportunities or requirements?

### *Infrastructure (physical, technological)*

- What is your organization's technology plan?
- How does your organization maintain the functionality of learning materials, resources, and spaces?
- How do your systems and structures support learners who are remote (proctored exams, support services)?
- How do your systems and structures support learners who attend brick-and-mortar schools for part of the time (transportation, scheduling, etc.)?
- How does your program bring curriculum and technology together?
- How do you make decisions about the software your students and staff utilize?
- How do you make decisions about the hardware students and staff utilize?
- What's your organization's approach to maintaining student and staff hardware and software?
- How do you manage student data?

### *Finance*

- What priorities guide your budgeting and allocation decisions?
- How is your organization funded?
- What impact does your funding source have on what you offer students and staff?

### *Human Resources*

- What priorities guide your hiring and staffing decisions?
- What do you do to attract and retain high-quality staff? How do you know what practices are most effective in helping you do this?
- How do you evaluate educators and staff?
- How do you deal with personnel issues?
- What are your hiring practices and procedures? Of those, what's been most helpful in determining whether someone is a good fit for your organization?
- How do you onboard educators in your organization?
- What do you expect educators to know about working in a model like yours (online, blended, etc.) before you hire them? What are you willing to teach or train for "on the job"?

## SECTION

# 2

## Diving Deeper with PLNs



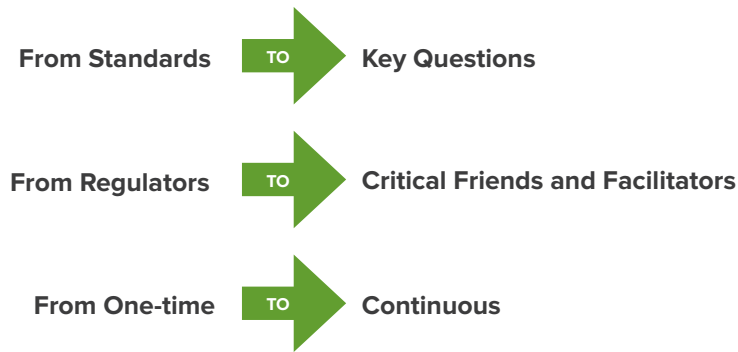
This section takes quality improvement to the next level – from self review to peer review – by incorporating a Peer Learning Network (PLN), which capitalizes on the idea of using a trusted group of critical friends for quality improvement.

### Key Elements of the PLN Approach

Quality assurance, accountability, and oversight in U.S. public education are accomplished by a series of activities and frameworks that have several common elements. These activities and frameworks tend to:

- Be focused on inputs such as content standards and teacher certification
- Use outcomes-based measures that are heavily based on one-size-fits-all test scores
- Base both inputs and outcomes on checklists and snapshots in time
- Use oversight by regulators, accreditors, and “experts” instead of peers

The PLN approach seeks to change these activities and frameworks to key elements as follows:



Elements that make up the structure of a PLN include the following:

- Micro PLNs and Macro PLNs
- Facilitators
- Self Review (similar to the one discussed in Section One except incorporating a Facilitator)
- Site Visits
- PLN Timeline
- School Perspective Timeline

Each of these elements are explained in the sections that follow.

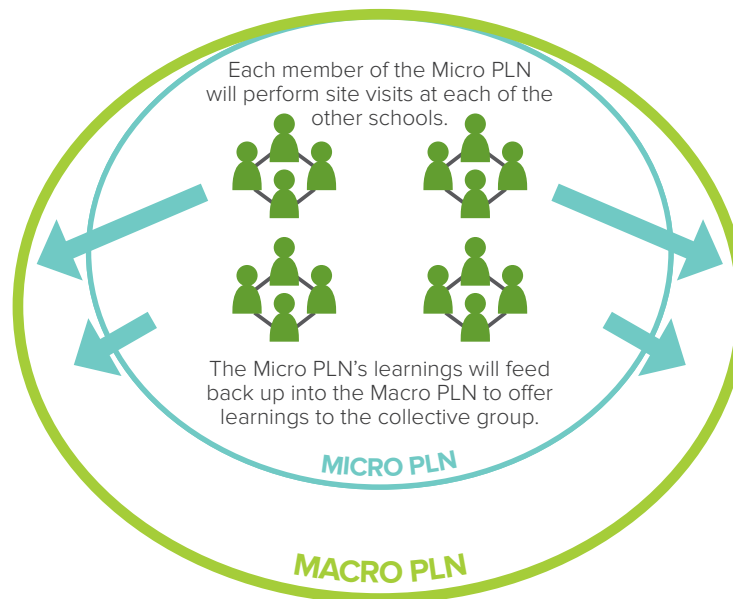
## Micro PLNs and Macro PLNs

The PLN, as envisioned by the DLC, operates on two levels: Micro PLN and Macro PLN.

At the **Micro PLN** level, school, program, and/or district members of the PLN are divided into groups of four that will work closely together. Each PLN member appoints a person who is the PLN Representative. More about the responsibilities of the PLN Representative are shared in the “Site Visits” section. Each Micro PLN is facilitated by an expert, known as the **Facilitator** (see “Facilitator” section for more information). The Facilitator does not belong to any of the Micro PLN’s programs and brings deep experience in online/ blended learning from K-12 public schools.

During the course of the school year, the members of each Micro PLN conduct a site visit (see “Site Visits” section for more information) at each other’s schools. These one-day site visits are a key element of the work of the PLN.

The Micro PLNs' work rolls up to the **Macro PLN**. The Macro PLN is made up of all of the schools that are involved in the PLN activities. In addition to the Micro PLN meetings and discussions, the Macro PLN provides a platform to share findings across and conversations with the entire PLN. An illustration of the Micro and Macro PLN is shared in the figure below.



## Facilitators

As previously mentioned, the facilitator is a neutral person who is well-versed in the field of K-12 online and blended learning. There is a facilitator assigned to each of the Micro PLNs. Before the PLN starts, the facilitators participate in a protocol training to establish consistency across all facilitators in the PLN. Even though most of the work for the facilitators will happen at the Micro PLN level, the facilitator will be involved in the Macro PLN level as well to share out learnings that occur during the Micro PLN activities. The facilitator will attend all Macro PLN meetings as well as the Micro PLN site visits. They will also spend time learning about each of their Micro PLN school members by interacting regularly with the PLN Representatives for each school and reviewing all pre-learning materials. During the pre-site visit meetings, the facilitator will ask the school's PLN Representative what themes and/or questions the program would like to focus on during the site visit. These questions will be areas that the program is struggling with so that the site visit is as meaningful and productive as possible.

During the site visits, facilitators will be outside people who can shed light on the discussions as well as allow for conversation and input from each of the Micro PLN members and stakeholders, which will in turn provide space for the host to concentrate on being the host.

In order to build trust with their Micro PLN, each facilitator should engage in gatherings outside the PLN work, perhaps having dinner with the PLN members ahead of each of the four site visits. To maximize the facilitator's time for each of their visits, especially if they are not located close by, they can attempt to schedule two site visits per facilitator visit. At the Macro PLN level, there are also monthly meetings that the facilitators need to attend virtually. After each site visit, it's helpful for the facilitator to have a debriefing with the group managing the PLN implementation. It's also suggested that there be two face-to-face Macro PLN meetings during the year, and facilitators should attend those as well.

## Self Review

The school self-review, similar to the one shared in Section One of this playbook, is a critical part of the PLN process because it determines the starting point for each school's site visit. Based on the self-review and one-on-one discussions between the school and facilitator, the facilitator creates two documents:

- A subset of the key questions that will be used by the school throughout the year, and especially for the site visit; and
- A site visit plan.

The self-review questions are provided in Section One. The PLN Representative for each school will:

- Conduct a self-review of their school to understand the areas of improvement that can be discussed at the Micro PLN site visit;
- Host the Micro PLN at their school site in order to engage in critical, vulnerable conversations surrounding quality and improvement within their school;
- Commit to attending site visits of the other three members of their Micro PLN;
- Report back to the Macro PLN with learnings that can help inform the rest of the schools as well as the field as a whole; and
- When appropriate, conduct webinars to share learnings.

### PLN Representative and Their Responsibilities



Host site visit at own school.

Attend site visits at the other three schools in the Micro PLN.

Conduct reflection of own school.

Report back to the Macro PLN and conduct webinars to inform the field at large.

At each of the site visits, the facilitator is present to help guide the conversation and make sure everyone is heard and contributes. As mentioned in the “Facilitator” section, the facilitator is committed to being a neutral party in the Micro PLN’s process.

# Site Visits

As mentioned before, each member of the Micro PLN will host a site visit at their school. The site visit will last between six and eight hours and will vary structurally based on the needs that arise for the school out of the self-review process. The PLN Representative for the school that is hosting the site visit will set up meetings with various stakeholders, including but not limited to students, teachers, curriculum specialists, instructional designers, principals, assistant principals, mentors, counselors, psychologists, special education teachers, superintendents, parents – with whom the rest of the Micro PLN members and facilitator will meet. To be clear, the PLN Representative, in order to avoid bias, should not be involved in meetings with stakeholders. The Micro PLN members and facilitator will note any reflections that they have during the meetings with stakeholders and will bring those reflections up during a culminating meeting with the PLN Representative at the end of the day.

The design of the PLN work itself has many considerations, including but not limited to what is shared in the table below.

Timing	Facilitators	Micro PLN Grouping	Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of site visits</li> <li>• Length of PLN implementation</li> <li>• Cyclical vs. linear implementation</li> <li>• Include summer?</li> <li>• Value of physical meetings</li> <li>• Time investment</li> <li>• Building trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside person to shed light and allow conversation</li> <li>• Neutrality</li> <li>• Take pressure off host</li> <li>• Unqualified facilitator worse than no facilitator at all</li> <li>• Pre-learning of programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trust in network</li> <li>• Micro PLNs as closed or open to others</li> <li>• Similar program type groupings vs. varied</li> <li>• Schools identify needs for change ahead of visits</li> <li>• Allow organizing group to help with matching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have clear goal</li> <li>• Provide school demographics and other info ahead of site visits</li> <li>• Explore how to build trust proactively</li> <li>• Strike a balance between data-intensive vs. relational</li> <li>• Encourage vulnerability, opening up to others, and committing to work together</li> </ul>

## PLN Timeline

A suggested timeline for the PLN activities is a school year, using a combination of online discussions, onsite Macro PLN meetings, and Micro PLN meetings. These are only suggested elements and milestones and can be modified based on the needs of those who are implementing them.

The planned PLN calendar, illustrated in the figure below, is as follows:

- Starting in September and in most months through June, the PLNs hold web meetings to discuss key issues. This will be a combination of Micro and Macro PLN meetings.
- The Macro PLN hold two onsite meetings, one in the middle of the fall semester and one in the middle of the spring semester.
- Throughout the course of the year, each PLN member hosts **one** site visit at their own school and attend site visits at the **three** other schools in their Micro PLN. These site visits may be combined such that two visits are held on back-to-back days.

Activity	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Micro PLN Site Visits*		X		X		X		X		
Macro PLN Web Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Macro PLN F2F Meetings			X				X			

\*Micro PLN site visits will vary depending on schedules and will potentially align with regional meetings for ease of travel.

## School Perspective Timeline

The previous section outlines the timeline for the PLN project as a whole. But what does the timing look like from a school perspective? The following is a suggested school perspective timeline:

- Spring: School<sup>1</sup> agrees to join the PLN and designates the appointed PLN Representative.
- Summer: School is assigned to a Micro PLN and connects with its fellow Micro PLN members.
- September: School attends the online discussion explaining processes and goals, meets all PLN Facilitators including its Micro PLN Facilitator.
- Fall: School conducts self-review (explained in the “Self-Review” section).
- Fall: School works with its Micro PLN Facilitator to determine which of the key questions it will focus on, based on its areas of focus reflected in its self-review.
- Fall: School attends the first F2F Macro PLN meeting to discuss overall themes, issues, and process.
- Fall or spring: School hosts one site visit (explained in the “Site Visits” section).
- Fall and spring: School goes on three site visits to the other schools in their Micro PLN.
- Spring: School attends second F2F Macro PLN meeting to discuss reflections, process, findings, and plan for extending the PLNs.

<sup>1</sup> We use the term “school” here for simplicity while recognizing that some are districts or other entities.



# Appendix A

## *General Resources:*

Oakland School Quality Review – [http://qualitycommunityschools.weebly.com/uploads/4/1/6/1/41611/focus\\_sq\\_standards-2013-14\\_version.pdf](http://qualitycommunityschools.weebly.com/uploads/4/1/6/1/41611/focus_sq_standards-2013-14_version.pdf)

Colorado Rural Alliance SQR – <http://nebula.wsimg.com/92b91a85a7b169dcc74a7bd6da3833c9?AccessKeyId=28B9BF9B4DD52F91489F&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

SchoolWorks Quality Review – <https://www.schoolworks.org/service-type/schoolworks-school-quality-reviews/>

NYC Department of Education SQR – <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/review/default.htm>

LEAP Innovations in Chicago – <http://leaplearningframework.org/>

Schools of Opportunity – <http://schoolsofopportunity.org/selection-criteria>

Quality Matters – <https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards>

Education Reimagined Vision for Learner Centered Education – <https://education-reimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/A-Transformational-Vision-for-Education-in-the-US-2015-09.pdf>

## *Online/Blended Resources:*

iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Programs – <https://www.inacol.org/resource/inacol-national-standards-for-quality-online-programs/>  
<https://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/national-standards-for-quality-online-courses-v2.pdf>

The Learning Accelerator Resources for Blended Learning Implementation – <https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/do/conditions-for-success-scale/culture?subtopic=&grade=&audience=&stage=>

Ed Elements Personalized Learning Framework – <https://www.edelements.com/personalized-learning-district-framework>

*Keeping Pace* Planning for Quality – [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59381b9a17bffc68bf625df4/t/59399a42b8a79b1d172d6da7/1496947277898/EEG\\_P4QBooklet.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59381b9a17bffc68bf625df4/t/59399a42b8a79b1d172d6da7/1496947277898/EEG_P4QBooklet.pdf)

SREB trends in state run virtual schools – [https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/13t01\\_trends\\_state-run.pdf](https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/13t01_trends_state-run.pdf)

Charter School Center – <https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Virtual%20Schools%20Accountability%20Report.pdf>

National Education Policy Center Report on Virtual Schools – <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/virtual-schools-annual-2017>

Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance and Quality Matters. (2019). National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, Programs, and Courses. Retrieved from <https://www.nsqol.org/>



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