

WHO DARES TO TEACH MUST NEVER CEASE TO LEARN

Professional Learning Communities

- How do you define a professional learning community?

A group of professionals who share the common interest and endeavour to make our students better every day by first becoming better ourselves, is how I would define a professional learning community. As teachers, we are first learners and we constantly tap into each other's expertise so that we can give the best to our students. That is what makes us all a part of a professional learning community who are constantly learning from each other, our students, and the world outside so that we can be the best version of ourselves and role models for our students.

- How does the IB support a professional learning community?

IB advocates and efficiently creates an environment that is conducive for the growth and development of its professional learning community.

Firstly, IB rules and regulations are followed closely to ensure that there is adequate support for the teachers. The pedagogical leadership team in IB schools have a well-trained program co-ordinator for each of their programs and this person goes through the required professional development so that he/she can guide their teams towards the efficient and effective implementation of the program.

Secondly, adequate and structured time, within the school week, is provided to IB teachers to facilitate collaboration, planning, and learning. There is a steady supply of all required resources in terms of time and material to effectively support teacher growth. Thirdly, assessment, evaluation and feedback form an integral part of the IB learning community. All stakeholders: leaders, teachers, students, and parents engage in an ongoing assessment of learning goals, reflect on their success or obstacles and collaborate to make things better.

Finally, IB school teachers collaboratively plan , design and implement programs so that the learner profiles are addressed and learning goals are achieved.

- How do you know that your school/context is genuinely supporting professional learning communities?

The school that I worked in, QSI, demonstrated it's commitment towards developing and supporting professional learning communities by:

- a. Allowing adequate time for collaboration and planning. The school finish time on Wednesdays was moved from 3:30 to 2:30, so that teachers could meet and discuss important issues pertaining to the school environment, learning and the larger community. This time was well structured into celebrations, where teachers celebrated one thing that happened during the week, because it is important to stop and remind ourselves that a lot of great things are happening in our classrooms. This was followed by important committee meetings where teachers would brainstorm and plan events or activities to achieve certain goals. The committees were 21st Century Skills, Literacy, and Communication –three things we wanted to be better at. Some meetings were for review, reflection, and course change.
- b. Organizing two professional development sessions during the year where all our time was dedicated towards development. Prior to these events, questionnaires were sent out asking us things we want to learn, be better at, needed help with and whatever was possible was organized with experts during the PD sessions.
- c. Organizing leaders and peer teacher visits to other classrooms for observation, learning and feedback.