

“It didn’t feel like something extra we had to do; it was something we all looked forward to” - How school-based professional learning communities can reimagine teacher professional learning for inclusive practice.

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“It didn’t feel like something extra we had to do; it was something we all looked forward to” - How school-based professional learning communities can reimagine teacher professional learning for inclusive practice.

The development of inclusive education has become a policy priority across the world, yet the reality of enactment is inconsistent. While many barriers contribute to creating inclusive classrooms, effective teacher professional learning (PL) presents a significant challenge. Professional learning communities (PLCs) have been identified as potentially transformative models of PL but despite the growing research base on PLCs, there is limited research on their role in the context of inclusive education. We address this knowledge gap and build upon previous research that demonstrated the positive impact of a PLC on sustained PL for inclusive practice. Situated in the Republic of Ireland, PLCs for inclusive practice were developed in four schools, supported by a school-university partnership, comprising one academic and four teacher leaders. Focus group interviews with the PLC participants (n=33) and observation of practice in two schools indicated teacher change. Of note, PLCs that transform PL for inclusive practice can be internally led when teachers are empowered through a school-university partnership. This paper strengthens the research on the potential of PLCs as transformative models of PL for inclusive practice and offers a framework that includes design principles for school-university partnerships to support the PLCs for inclusion across diverse school contexts.

Introduction

The development of inclusive education has become a policy priority across the world, reflected in the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development target of achieving equitable and quality education for all (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2015). Yet, the reality of enacting inclusive education remains inconsistent worldwide due to myriad barriers. Among these barriers is the reported lack of teacher confidence and competence in meeting the needs of all learners in diverse classrooms. Teachers are tasked with the responsibility of enacting policy and ensuring equity and inclusion, however, they commonly report feeling underprepared for this task (Florian & Camedda, 2020; Rose et al., 2015). Despite the glocal policy focus on teacher education for inclusion, there is a lack of effective professional learning (PL) opportunities for inclusive education across the teacher education continuum (Brennan & Gorman, 2023). Notwithstanding the complexities associated with teacher change, teacher education must support learning that challenges hegemonic assumptions regarding ability, and support teachers to develop a sense of responsibility for including all learners (Ainscow, 2020; Florian, 2014). Additionally, teachers need to develop a shared understanding of inclusive education to support its enactment, which is challenging due to tensions in the field and contradictory understandings (Ainscow, 2020). In order to bring about changes in knowledge, beliefs, and practice that impacts student outcomes, teachers need access to PL that exposes them to cognitive conflict or “turbulence in relation to existing ways of thinking and working” (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020, p. 671; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Models

of collaborative professional learning, such as professional learning communities (PLCs), have shown potential to bring about and sustain teacher change (Brennan & King, 2022; Dogen, & Yurtseven, 2018). However, despite the increasing research base on PLCs, there is limited research on how they can enhance teacher PL for inclusion. Given the call for sustainable and effective models of PL for inclusion (EASNIE, 2022) and inclusive and quality education for all (United Nations, 2015), we demonstrate how a school-university partnership supported teachers to lead PLCs in their school contexts in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) which resulted in transformative teacher learning for inclusive practice. This research offers key design principles to support the development of PLCs for inclusion across diverse school contexts and a framework for school-university school partnerships that can empower teachers to lead PL in their schools.

Teacher professional learning for inclusion: Policy Context

Like the United Kingdom and other European counterparts, the RoI provides a legislative framework and policy for inclusive education that includes all learners, notably the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998), Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) and the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) in 2018. While legislative and policy frameworks espouse inclusive education in the RoI and many countries across the world, there is a large body of research which highlights the lack of teacher confidence and competence for inclusion (King & Holland, 2022; EASNIE, 2015). Despite the general acceptance of inclusive education as an imperative, a knowledge-practice gap persists among teachers both in the RoI and internationally (Brennan & King, 2022; Gorman & Hall, 2023; Walton et al., 2022). Teachers work in a system where learner differences are often seen as deficits that need remediation,

which can contribute to this knowledge–practice gap (Florian, 2014). Inclusive pedagogy offers a way forward in supporting teachers to narrow the persistent knowledge–practice gap for inclusion and can elucidate the opacity associated with inclusive practice (Görel, Franzen, & Hellmich, 2023). It emphasises a shift away from planning teaching and learning for ‘most’ and ‘some’ learners based on perceptions of what they can or cannot do, to creating lessons that will meet the needs of all learners (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). Teachers who enact inclusive pedagogy reject deterministic beliefs about ability and view diverse learning needs as teaching dilemmas to solve, rather than within learner problems (Florian, 2014), thus providing a roadmap to support the development of a shared understanding about creating inclusive classrooms for all learners. However, the enactment of inclusive pedagogy depends on developing and sustaining models of PL that positively impact teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and practice. The challenge to enacting inclusive pedagogy lies in the complex process of teacher change, signalling the importance of PL models that can transform teacher learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Transforming Teacher Learning through Professional Learning Communities

Since the 1990s, there has been a shift regarding teacher PL that acknowledges the range of approaches that can vary in impact. Transmissive models of PL are less likely to impact practice (e.g. once-off workshops or seminars) in contrast to models that are more likely to be transformative (e.g. sustained, meaningful and collaborative models of inquiry) (Kennedy, 2014). Despite the research consensus on the features of impactful PL, ineffective models continue to persist (Poekert et al., 2020). This has prompted a sharpened focus on the complexity of teacher learning and how teacher change can be supported and evidenced (King & Poekert, 2023). If the objective of PL is to improve student outcomes, then it must support

changes to teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practice (Opfer & Peddar, 2011). However, the capacity for teacher change is dependent upon contextual variables at the macro, meso and micro levels that may help or hinder the change process. (King, Poekert & Pierre, 2023). For example, PL that is linked to a narrow accountability agenda rather than connecting with the interests and needs of teachers is likely to constrain teacher learning (Bubb & Early, 2008). In contrast, models of collaborative inquiry such as PLCs, can provide opportunities for supporting teacher autonomy and agency in developing learning in a shared area of professional interest (Brodie, 2021) and have been shown to support teacher change which leads to improvements in practice and student learning (Brennan & King, 2022, Doğan & Adams, 2018; Huijboom et al., 2021; Tam, 2015). While the definition of PLCs lacks universal consensus, there is general agreement that an effective PLC involves regular reflective collaboration among a group of educators with a focus on improving teaching and learning (Huijboom et al., 2021). PLCs draw upon situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and encompass active engagement in ongoing, job-embedded learning which is identified as key to improving teachers' professional growth and student learning (Poekert et al., 2020; Vescio et al., 2008). Core characteristics of effective PLCs are well-established, including shared values and norms, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, making practice public and collaboration (Stoll et al. 2006; Vescio et al., 2008). Furthermore, PLCs have been successful in transforming teacher learning when they encompass critical dialogue and the public sharing of work (Brennan & Gorman, 2023; Parker et al., 2016). Such pedagogies support teachers to move beyond surface-level conversations about teaching and learning to a focus on critical reflection and sharing evidence of student learning.

While PLCs can develop collaborative relationships, there is a danger that a collegial community may reinforce existing practice if it fails to challenge thinking (Parker et al., 2016).

Evidence points to the importance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), from outside the school context, in creating the conditions for teachers to engage in critical reflection on practice (Brennan & Gorman, 2023; Balfe & Ní Bhroin, 2022; Cirkony et al., 2024; Darwish et al., 2023). Although the research is limited, school-university partnerships have proven to be successful in supporting school-based PL to include signature pedagogies that disrupt hegemonic discourse and bring about teacher learning (Brennan & Gorman, 2023; Darwish et al., 2023). Thus, when carefully designed and supported, school-based PLCs hold the potential to result in transformative teacher learning for inclusive education.

PLCs for inclusive education

Despite the growing body of research in collaborative PL and PLCs in that context, it has been argued that continued, more comprehensive research is required to clarify and better understand how PLCs can support the learning of teachers and students (Vescio et al., 2008; King & Holland, 2022). There are some signposts in the literature about how collaboration can support inclusive schools, for example when it involves social learning processes underpinned by organisational support, such as effective leadership (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010). However, the research on PLCs for inclusive education is limited. Previous research on an externally facilitated PLC for inclusive practice in a primary school in the RoI demonstrated how it led to effective teacher learning and increased teacher efficacy for inclusive practice (Brennan et al., 2021). A follow-up study two years after the PLC has ended, evidenced that it had resulted in sustained teacher learning for inclusion in the longer term (Brennan & King, 2022). Extending this research, a cross-case analysis of two learning communities identified design principles to support their development for inclusion (Table 1). These design principles include previously

identified and additional characteristics of collaborative PL, such as effective pedagogies for teacher learning and supporting factors such as leadership for inclusion within the school.

[Insert table 1 here]

Further research is warranted to investigate how design principles can support PLCs for inclusion across diverse school contexts and how changes from these PLCs occur (Watson, 2014). We address this call by documenting how a school-university partnership supported the development of PLCs for inclusive practice across four different schools in the RoI. This paper offers a framework for school-university partnerships to support sustainable and effective PL that empowers teachers to lead effective PLCs for inclusion in their own contexts.

Method

The research approach adopted is a qualitative, multiple case study design which broadens the scope of the study and proves its relevance beyond that of a single case study while allowing for comparison across cases (Yin, 2006). School staff in two primary schools and two post-primary schools participated in the study (Table 2). The 33 participants comprised 31 teachers (mainstream class teachers and special education teachers [SETs]), and two special needs assistants (SNAs). In the RoI, the role of the SET is to provide additional support for learners with special educational needs, while the role of the SNA involves providing additional support to students who have personal care needs, complex medical needs, or physical needs. Each PLC was led by a teacher leader who had a postgraduate qualification in inclusive and/or special education. Ethical approval was granted by Dublin City University and permission to conduct the study was sought from the principal of each school. Participation in the PLCs was voluntary and open to every member of the school community. Informed consent was obtained before the commencement of the study.

[Insert table 2 here]

PLC meetings were led by the teacher leaders approximately every four to six weeks in each school over 6-7 months and lasted for 60-90 minutes. The design principles for learning communities for inclusive practice were used to underpin the development of the PLCs (Table 1) and each school agreed on a shared focus within inclusive practice, based on inclusive pedagogy (Florian, 2014) in their school during the research period. Data collection methods administered by the university academic included focus group interviews in each school and observations of practice. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to understand the experience of PLC participants and the impact of the PLC on teaching and learning. For the observation of practice, three teachers opted to participate across two schools (Hazel Green and Willow North).

The transcripts of the focus groups were analysed using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to coding data, supported using NVivo software. Data was coded using both a deductive and inductive approach (Dawadi, 2020): A deductive approach to qualitative coding involved assigning a descriptive label to pertinent features of the data. In this approach, initial codes are informed by the findings in the literature review and the research questions guiding this study. Following this, an inductive approach to analysis was utilised to capture themes emerging from the data. The formation of themes was next and involved organising similar codes into categories. Categories were reviewed and themes were formed, namely: changes to individual practice, student learning, increased confidence and changes in beliefs and attitudes.

Findings

Changes to individual practice

Engagement in the PLC supported teachers to implement new methodologies and strategies which enhanced their inclusive practice, as reflected in Olivia's (FG1) experience of a specific approach gleaned from the PLC which she found effective in supporting inclusive practice:

Choice boards have been brilliant in the classroom... it really gave a scope for everyone to engage in their independent station.

Choice boards include a range of teacher-designed student tasks to support student learning on a particular topic. Students choose tasks that suit their interests and level of learning. Olivia had not used this approach previously and found that it enabled students to work independently at their own pace and level. This was evident in the observation of practice of a reading lesson in Olivia's classroom where all learners were meaningfully included without any learner being marked as different, despite the varying levels of reading ability in the classroom. Changes to practise arising from participation in the PLC were also reported by the special needs assistant (SNA) participants. While they do not have a teaching role, they too used new strategies discussed during PLC meetings and in doing so reinforced the new approaches being adopted and trialled by teachers, thus enhancing collaboration between teachers and SNAs. Vicky's (FG1) reflected on her use of a choice board when supported a learner in the classroom:

The choice boards were a huge success both in the classroom and on a movement break. And I think when the other SNAs had seen me using them, they started to realise as well that you know it can lower a child's anxiety levels and stops that avoidance.

Vicky's comment demonstrates the diffusion of practices from the PLC to other colleagues in the school. When Vicky's colleagues observed new approaches that supported inclusion, they were interested in learning about these practices. The impact of the PLC on participant change appears to have been multifold; the concrete ideas and methodologies behind changes to practise arose from the collaborative dialogue during PLC meetings and the catalyst and impetus behind such dialogue was the PLC focus on inclusive practice, as observed by Olivia (FG1):

The bouncing back of ideas that makes you realise what's working and what's not, to talk it out. It makes you extend where you are with your own learning on [inclusive practice], I think which was brilliant.

The PLC acted as a safe and supportive collaborative space that provided sustained support for participants which was highly valued by participants, despite giving up their free time to engage in it:

It was always like a pleasure. It didn't feel like something extra we had to do. It was something we all looked forward to, we were all happy to go in the end and spend our lunch hour (Anna, FG2).

Thus, the PLC strengthened teachers' confidence and commitment to take risks in their classrooms and try new practices which was further reinforced when their efforts resulted in successful inclusion.

Increased confidence for inclusive practice

The increased confidence for inclusive practice arising from engagement in the PLC was evident among participants in the focus group interviews and observation of practice, as reflected in Paul's (FG3) comment:

If I heard that it had gone well for someone else, then it does give you the confidence to try and do it yourself... that's big because sometimes trying something new in a class... is a bit daunting and scary especially if you haven't done it before.

In a lesson observed in Paul's classroom, he collaborated with a colleague who was not in the PLC to enact an inclusive approach to reading instruction. He had heard his PLC colleague discuss how the approach worked in her classroom and it gave him the confidence to try it in his classroom. The increase in confidence was particularly important given that many participants felt they lacked confidence and competence in enacting inclusive practice before the PLC, as captured by Siobhan (FG2):

25 per cent of our students are diagnosed with some kind of... learning challenge...
...it's overwhelming to walk into a classroom and be expected to just know when you haven't been trained ...how to accommodate [diverse needs] in a classroom...something like [the PLC] ...was really worthwhile.

As captured by Cathy (FG3), the PLC gave participants the confidence to put new strategies into practice in the knowledge that the PLC would support them if any difficulties were encountered.

The benefit from my point of view was not only getting the ideas but having the confidence to put them into practice because your colleagues are advising you and giving you suggestions that you know worked for them in the same context that you're working in. And if it doesn't work or falls a bit flat you can go back to the same group of people, seek advice, see what they did, tweak it and keep going.

It was evident that seeing the positive impact of the new methodologies on student learning increased participants' confidence for enacting inclusive practice and taking risks in trying new approaches that led to changes in their beliefs and attitudes about inclusive practice.

Changes in beliefs and attitudes

The PLC provided the opportunity for critical dialogue that enabled participants to gain greater insight and clarity on how to enact inclusive pedagogy. For example, Cathy (FG3) discusses how the PLC guided her to better understand the importance of the “process” or “experience” for students and not just the “outcome”. She noted how she places further consideration on how activities can bring students together and enable the meaningful participation of certain students. Similarly, the PLC supported Paul (FG3) to consider the process whereby all students can participate in the same activity:

One thing that I would take away from it is... instead of having an activity that I tried to make, or that I may try to lower the level of or raise the level of if there's a very exceptionally able student... I'm thinking more now about how to get everyone into the same activity.

Paul's comment reflects deep learning relating to enacting inclusive pedagogy by extending what is ordinarily available to all learners in the classroom (Florian, 2014). This deep learning was also illustrated by Deborah (FG2):

That word differentiate was always kind of driving me a bit silly.... I kind of get it now, like they [students] are learning the stuff but it's just different methods of learning it... it's not dumbing down your teaching, it's just using different methodologies.

This comment is reflective of a change in beliefs among participants relating to inclusive practice as they moved from a view of differentiation being about teaching simplified content to an understanding of it enacting different methodologies to include all learners.

Student learning

Participants reported improved student participation, engagement, and motivation as a result of implementing new approaches from the PLC. They also reported improvements in student performance in terms of both individual and collaborative student learning. For example, Mia (FG3) discusses how the changes in her practice arising from participation in the PLC improved the performance and learning outcomes of one student with SEN:

We had a lovely positive result... because we were doing this stuff [new approaches] he suddenly started answering questions that we didn't realise that he was able to answer... we moved to level 2 and then he started answering higher order questions and we're kind of going, 'right, we're going to do level 3'.

The new approaches Mia implemented in her teaching resulted in this student demonstrating a level of learning that surprised her which resulted in her supporting student engagement more effectively. The positive impact on student learning prompted participants to move away from deterministic views of ability. By taking risks in implementing new practice that offered students choice and autonomy, the teachers removed limitations on their expectations which resulted in enhanced learning.

Discussion and Implications

The interview and observation data demonstrates key indicators that enabled the PLC to support transformative learning for inclusive practice among the participants. Firstly, the positive impact of the PLC was made possible due to supporting factors, including inclusive and voluntary participation, cultivation of a safe and supportive space, fostering teacher agency, and leadership for inclusion. This study extends previous research on PLCs for

inclusive practice (Brennan & King, 2022) by including paraprofessionals in the PLCs. Like their teacher colleagues, the special needs assistants (SNAs) reported positive results in terms of learning, and teachers felt that their involvement and input were “invaluable” (Cathy, FG3), thus demonstrating the value of PLCs being inclusive of the school community. Furthermore, the inclusion of SNAs in the PLCs enhanced collaboration between teachers and SNAs, which is key to successful inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010)

All participants lauded the PLC as a safe space where they felt comfortable sharing work and could support and challenge each other critically. Participants engaged in the PLCs during lunch hours or before or after their teaching day, illustrating how the PLC not only met their professional needs and interests (Bubb & Early, 2008; Opfer & Pedder, 2011) but also met their desire to collaborate with colleagues in a supportive environment. The lack of time for teacher collaboration is a perennial challenge to developing inclusive schools (Huijboom, et al., 2021), yet participants were willing to give up their time to collaborate in the PLCs due to the safe and supportive environment. The PLCs emboldened teachers to take risks in their teaching by implementing new practice, which in turn fostered teacher agency. Teachers took initiative in making changes to their practice arising from their engagement in the PLCs. For example, in a lesson observed by the university academic, a teacher used her agency to take the idea of a choice board from the PLC and innovate it for the purpose of her geography lesson. Teacher agency was further supported by the school principals who tacitly supported the autonomy of PLC teacher leaders to develop the PLCs for inclusive practice as they saw fit in their contexts. This created the conditions for the PLCs to grow and develop according to the participants' professional needs and interests, thus demonstrating the importance of leadership for inclusion (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010).

Secondly, the signature PL pedagogies of critical dialogue and sharing practice in a community of learners (Parker et al., 2016) were paramount to participants developing their knowledge, beliefs and skills for inclusive practice. They enabled participants to move beyond surface-level discussion to engage in critically reflective dialogue where they experienced cognitive conflict (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). When colleagues shared new practices that worked well to support inclusion, it gave participants the confidence to try new approaches in their classrooms. The increased confidence was particularly valued by participants given their lack of PL for inclusive practice and feelings of being overwhelmed by the range of diverse learning needs. When new practices yielded positive results in their classrooms regarding student participation, engagement and motivation, participants were motivated to sustain the approaches and take further risks. As a result, the quality of the critical dialogue and sharing of ideas became richer within the PLC, and evidence of changes to beliefs and attitudes was observed as seen in their move away from deterministic thinking about ability towards a view of learning that is open-ended (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). For example, the concept of differentiation among participants evolved from providing easier content and tasks for learners who experienced difficulty in accessing lessons, to a belief that differentiation should provide opportunities for all learners to engage in lessons. Thus, changes in beliefs and knowledge were prompted by changes in practice, which were influenced by changes in student learning, evidencing the cyclical nature of teacher change (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Thirdly, while the key indicators of signature pedagogies and supporting factors supported teacher change, the school-university partnership was also paramount to supporting the teacher leaders to develop PLCs in their own schools successfully. The school-university partnership academic or MKO mentored the PLC teacher leaders throughout the process to support them in enacting pedagogies of critical dialogue and public sharing of work within their own PLCs.

In developing PLCs in their schools, the teacher leaders ensured a balance between creating an informal space while also engaging colleagues in effective pedagogies in the PLC. They were mindful of cultivating an atmosphere in which PLC meetings were facilitated in an informal manner where teachers felt comfortable. The MKO modelled good practice for the teacher leaders by facilitating collaborative discussion among the group rather than imposing knowledge (Darwish et al., 2023), which enhanced the teacher leaders' capacity to lead PL in their schools. Each teacher leader worked in a different context and therefore brought unique experiences to the school-university partnership. It supported collaborative problem-solving among the teacher leaders, as highlighted by Zoey "It reminded me that it wasn't part of my role to solve everybody's challenges, but it was the group that were committed to solving the challenges and to helping each other". This reflects the teacher leaders' experience of external support in terms of empowering them to lead PL in their own contexts. They felt reassured that they did not need to "have all the answers", but rather their role was to facilitate critical discussions with their colleagues.

This study builds on the design principles for learning communities (Table 3) specifically for school-based PLCs for inclusive practice and offers a framework of how these design principles can be applied in the context of school-university partnerships. Furthering the design principles for inclusion, this study highlights the value of PLCs having external support in addition to internal support from teacher leaders. External support is necessary to support school-based PL to move from isolated cultures to collaborative problem-solving where evidence of teaching and learning is shared and discussed ((Messiou & Ainscow, 2020).

[Insert table 3 here]

Limitations and future research

While this study enabled an in-depth exploration of PLCs in four schools, future research could support the generalisation of findings more broadly. This study was conducted over one academic school year. Given that PLCs can evolve through different stages over time (Huijboom et al., 2021), future research could follow the PLCs over a longer duration of time. However, even though the PLCs did not run for a long period of time, they had a significant impact on teacher learning and practice. Follow-up research, like that conducted by Brennan and King (2022), could therefore be carried out to identify the extent to which teacher learning is sustained over time. Other limitations related to factors, notably the perennial issue relating to lack of time and Covid-19. For example, due to issues relating to Covid-19 and commitments to other projects and completing draws on time, the development of the PLC in Oak Field School was limited. However, the teachers did report positively about the two meetings that were held.

Conclusion

This paper responds to calls for further research to better understand the impact of PLCs on both teachers and students (Vescio et al, 2008) while also addressing the lack of research on PLCs focusing on inclusive practice and how PLCs can lead to improvements in inclusive teaching and learning (Brennan & King, 2022). This is particularly warranted given the increasing diversity of classrooms around the world, the dearth of PL for inclusive practice across the continuum of teacher education and the lack of teacher confidence and competence for inclusive practice. The research findings have important implications for schools, teacher education providers and stakeholders to show the transformative potential of the PLC model

for supporting teachers to enact inclusive practice and empowering them to meet the needs of all learners. Furthermore, it validates the design principles proposed by Brennan and Gorman (2023) for learning communities for inclusive practice across education contexts and extends them for school-based PLCs focusing specifically on inclusive practice. Of note is that effective PLCs for inclusive practice can be internally led when teachers are empowered through a school-university partnership. While the teacher leaders had a central role in leading the PLCs in their schools and sustaining the PLCs over time, the support of the university academic or the MKO was critical. We provide a framework for how schools can be supported to develop effective PLCs for inclusive practice based on identified design principles, through a school-university partnership. This framework reimagines teacher professional learning for inclusive practice to offer a way forward for policy and practice in developing sustainable and quality inclusive education for all.

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Table 1. Design principles: learning communities for inclusive practice (Brennan & Gorman, 2023, p. 11)

Shared focus for teacher learning

Group, as well as individual, learning is promoted

Inclusive and voluntary membership

Effective pedagogies: critical dialogue, public sharing of work

Supporting factors: *Leadership for Inclusion, External Support, Cultivating a Safe and Supportive Space, Teacher Agency*

Table 2. Participant and School Information

School Pseudonym	School Level	Participants (including teacher leader)	Focus Group
Hazel Green	Primary (5-12 yrs)	7 teachers and 1 SNA	FG1
Willow North	Post-Primary (12 - 18 yrs)	14 teachers	FG2
Ashley West	Post-Primary	5 teachers and 1 SNA	FG3

	(12 - 18 yrs)		
Oak Field	Primary (5-12 yrs)	5 teachers	FG4

Table 3. Design principles: PLCs for inclusive practice (amended from Brennan & Gorman, 2023, p. 11)

Shared focus for teacher learning

Group, as well as individual, learning is promoted

Inclusive and voluntary membership

Effective pedagogies: critical dialogue, public sharing of work

Supporting factors: *Leadership for Inclusion, External **and Internal** Support, Cultivating a Safe and Supportive Space, Teacher Agency*
