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TEACHING, LEADERSHIP, AND
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AN EXAMINATION OF HOW MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS USE COMMON
PLANNING TIME TO FOSTER THEIR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (201 pp.)

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The purpose of this case study was to examine ways that middle school teachers use their common planning time (CPT) to develop professionally, specifically through the implementation of a professional learning community (PLC). A team of five eighth grade teachers on an interdisciplinary team and their use of CPT was the center of the study, but they were also followed to their respective content PLC meetings.

The teachers were observed, interviewed, and administered questionnaires to determine how they used their time during their CPT and PLC meeting times and what perceived professional growth they had gained. Additional data were collected through interviews with the principal and curriculum director, as well as observation of an inservice day.

Results showed that the anticipated professional learning during CPT was not as strong as the professional growth that was observed in the content PLCs. The role of collaboration played a major part in the effectiveness of this form of professional development and had a direct effect on the outcomes within the PLC. A distinct pattern of discussion topics in CPT and PLCs emerged. These topics were used as evidence of teacher learning and growth. Since the PLCs were job-embedded professional

development rather than a one-shot workshop, it helped foster long-term learning among the teachers and allowed them to develop sustained professional relationships within their PLCs. Also, this model was a teacher-led initiative and allowed certain teachers, especially experienced teachers, to make decisions that affected their professional growth. It also gave them the ownership to take their PLCs in the direction that best suited the needs of not only their own personal growth, but also the growth of their students. Overall, the results showed that the PLC professional development model led to teacher professional growth; however, with the continuation of addressing critical elements, its future will have an even more positive impact on the teachers and students