

## 2019-20 | Year 1 in Review

### Background

The first year in a new school can be deeply challenging and isolating for teachers. Fortunately, research shows that when educators receive ongoing support and training, they are more likely to experience success in the classroom, stay in their schools, and mentor their colleagues. With this in mind, the Philadelphia Learning Collaborative piloted a series of educator-led workshops during the 2019-2020 school year, specifically for teachers new to its member schools.

### Goals

The Institute was designed to bridge the gap between traditional teacher education and the training educators need to be successful in schools with student-centered practices, including inquiry-based and project-based models, real-world learning experiences, and restorative justice practices. A key aim was to ease the transition for teachers new to these models by providing an opportunity for them to learn from one another and identify a network of supportive peers.

### The Model

The Institute was open to teachers in their first year at a PLC school, at any stage in their teaching career. They were given the opportunity to celebrate early successes, connect with supportive colleagues, and share strategies for adapting their own teacher practices to deeper learning environments. The guided learning experiences were based on proven teaching and learning strategies from deeper learning and other leading progressive education frameworks. Participants were given tools and encouraged to connect between meetings to share resources and ideas.

Participants were expected to attend the whole series (at least five of the six sessions) and received incentives in the form of \$100 stipends per session to cover travel and time, as well as continuing education credits.

Sessions were scheduled for 5-7 pm, with dinner provided. Each was held in a different PLC school to familiarize participants with each other's schools and build a sense of community across the Collaborative. Most sessions were led by at least two facilitators—including one master PLC teacher and one university representative.

Workshop Topic	Date	Location	Facilitators
Building Relationships with Students	10/15/19	The Philadelphia School	Ameen Akbar, Senior Associate, Grovider Yves Kabore, Division Director, The Philadelphia School Dr. Zachary Herrmann, Director of the Project-Based Learning Certificate Program, UPenn Graduate School of Education
Effective Tools for Collaboration	12/3/19	Building 21 Philadelphia	Dr. Amy Scallon, Associate Director of Clinical Practice, Internship/Field Supervisor, Temple University Max Arnosky, 8th Grade Math Teacher, AMY Northwest
Facilitated Student-Centered Classrooms	1/7/20	String Theory Schools	Dr. Marc Brasof, Associate Prof. of Education, Arcadia University Aaron Gerwer, Head of School, String Theory Schools Danielle Shylit, Director of Innovation, String Theory Schools
Teacher Self-Care	2/11/20	SLA Middle School	Nancy Ironside, 5th & 6th Grade Math Teacher, SLAMS
Reflective Practices	3/10/20	SLA Center City	Anna Walker-Roberts, CTE Digital Video Teacher, SLA Center City Amal Giknis, English Teacher, SLA Center City Dr. Valerie Klein, Assistant Clinical Professor, Program Director for Teacher Education Programs, Drexel University
Collaboration and Distance Learning in Response to the COVID-19 Shutdown	5/12/20	Online via Zoom*	Diana Laufenberg, Executive Director, Inquiry Schools Caitlin Thompson, Director of Operations, Inquiry Schools Crystal Cabbage, Director, PLC Monica Lynn, Project Manager, PLC

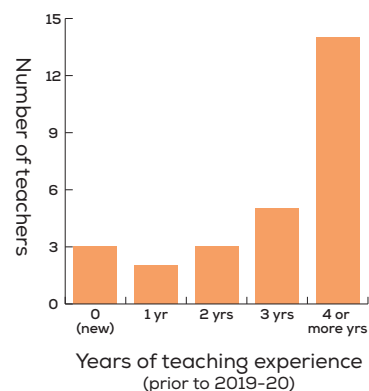
\*The workshop was originally planned to be held at Vaux BPHS, but was switched due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## Participants

There were 31 participants from ten schools. All were new to teaching in progressive schools. They were nearly evenly split between relatively new teachers (0-3 years of experience) and more seasoned professionals (4 or more years in the classroom). Three were first year teachers, ten had one to three years of teaching experience and a little more than half had taught for four or more years.

School	# participants
Building 21	2
The Crefeld School	2
El Centro	3
The Philadelphia School	2
SLA@Beeber	2
SLA Center City	1
SLA Middle School	8
String Theory	4
Vaux	5
Workshop School	1
Youthbuild	1

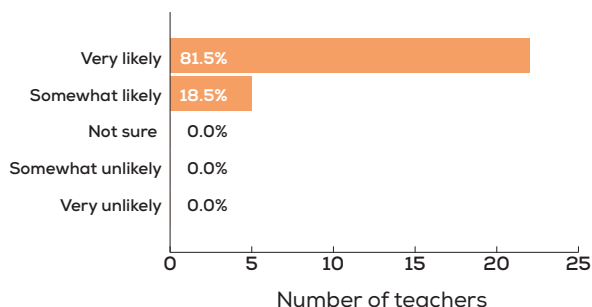
SLA = Science Leadership Academy



## Feedback & Results

**Overall** · Exit interviews and online surveys were completed by 27 participants. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 100% saying they were likely to recommend the Institute to a teacher who was new to a PLC school. Based on this positive response, PLC plans to make the institute an annual event and use this feedback to inform its design and delivery.

**Q:** How likely are you to recommend the Teacher Institute to another teacher who is new to a PLC school?



# 100%

were very or somewhat likely to recommend the Teacher Institute to another teacher who is new to a PLC school

**The importance of relationships** · Attendees reported that an important take-away from the Institute was learning effective practices to build and/or strengthen relationships with their students and colleagues, including strategies they could introduce immediately. Examples included simple things like attending student sports events to show support, as well as more in-depth efforts to cultivate connection and allow students' voices to emerge and be recognized.

**Connections to like-minded peers** · Participants stressed the value of meeting and working with other teachers who were engaged in personalized, student-centered approaches. Particularly for newer teachers, the Institute helped participants understand that they were not alone, and that there were many seasoned educators to whom they could reach out and from whom they could learn.

**A focus on practical strategies** · Many participants voiced their appreciation for the Institute's focus on straight-forward, practical approaches which they could understand and quickly adapt to their own circumstances. Examples mentioned include learning about technology applications (e.g. utilizing Zoom to its fullest potential); modifying the frequency and types of feedback provided on student work; practicing development of personalized lesson plans, creating "accountability partners" within participants' schools, enhancing student engagement, learning how to be part of a collaborative team, and other types of "plug and play" strategies.

*"I've learned lots of tidbits and strategies from my peers about improving student voice and building community."*

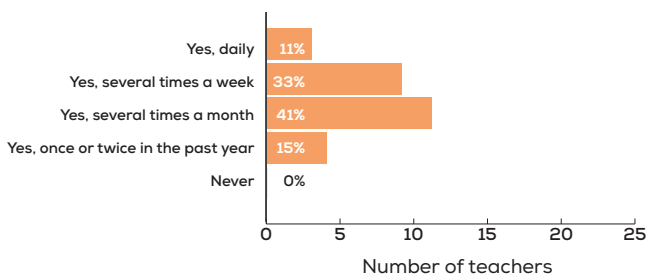
*"I liked knowing that I wasn't the only teacher adjusting to a new way of learning and teaching at a progressive school."*

**Transition and retention** · In general, participants reported that the Institute helped ease their transition to a student-centered school and made them more likely to want to continue teaching there, which is critical since a stable faculty is particularly important in schools practicing personalized learning. Specifically, two-thirds agreed that they were more likely to "stick with teaching at my current school due to the program."

**Collaboration** · Many teachers stressed the need for tools to guide co-curricular and interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as strategies for communication. Participants were given collaborative frameworks to assist them in enhancing team dynamics within schools and bring energy to their classrooms.

*"Visiting different schools throughout the city allowed me to take a peek at different practices going on outside of my building."*

**Q:** Over the past year, in your teaching practice—including class time and general interactions with students and adults—did you implement any tips, activities, and/or behaviors as a result of the Institute?

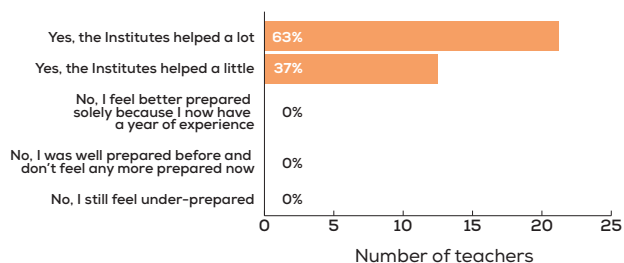


**100%** implemented tips, activities, or behaviors as a result of participating in the Institute

*"I have built confidence in what I am doing through the sessions. I learned a ton of small tips and tricks that have helped me tackle specific problems in my classroom like how to better approach interdisciplinary teaching."*

**Self-care & reflection** · Many participants found significant value in sessions surrounding self-care and reflection. Teachers with varying levels of experience stressed the importance of taking care of themselves through reflective practices outside of school. They were given tools to manage self-care and reflective practices, such as grading tips, ideas around co-planning, and finding ways to intentionally bring joy to their classrooms.

**Q:** Did the Teacher Institute improve how prepared you feel to teach at a progressive/deeper learning school?



**100%** said that the Institute improved how prepared they feel to teach at a deeper learning school

*"I usually leave with at least one new idea or way to consider something in my classroom."*

**Building Philly's progressive ed community** · The Institute created an environment in which participants began to see themselves as part of a group of progressive educators who could share ideas, find support, and take strength from one another.

## 2020-21 | Year 2 in Review

### Summary

The Collaborative was privileged to host Teacher Institute 2.0 during the historic 2020-2021 academic year—an almost fully remote school year. Educators needed a place to share practices and resources, workshop ideas, and be in community. They trusted PLC to create that space for them and participated in it enthusiastically. As organizers, we were concerned that teachers would be too overwhelmed to even think about spending one more hour at work in front of a screen. Yet, month after month, they deeply engaged in the workshops and consistently described the content as relevant and useful. They valued the sessions being educator-led and were grateful for a well-planned hour that respected their time.

**Impact on practice** · Nearly all participants (97%) reported that they'd implemented something they learned from the institute in their practice. That's only slightly lower than last year's 100% which is worth noting since this year was entirely virtual. It was also noteworthy that the frequency increased significantly from last year, with 72% reporting that they'd used what they'd learned several times a week or more, compared with 44% in year one.

**Impact on perceptions** · When asked how the Institute impacted their feelings about the value of the deeper learning/progressive school approach, nine out of ten respondents (90%) said they felt somewhat or much more positive about the value of the deeper learning/progressive school approach as a result of the Institute. This was also a significant increase over last year, which was 81.5%

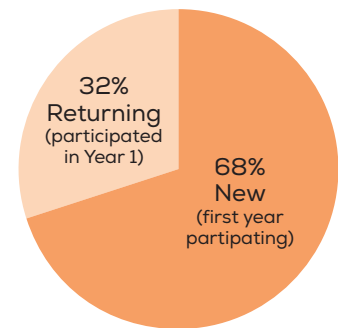
### Participants

Forty-five teachers from 11 schools registered for the Institute. Three-quarters participated in at least four sessions, with nearly half attending all six sessions. As in Year 1, the participants were split evenly between those new to teaching in progressive schools and those who had one or more years of teaching experience in such schools.

School	# teachers registered
Building 21	5
The Crefeld School	4
El Centro	2
The Philadelphia School	1
Revolution School	1
SLA@Beeber	4
SLA Center City	1
SLA Middle School	3
String Theory	11
Vaux	12
Youthbuild	1

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### Prior participation in the PLC Teacher Institute



Workshop Topic	Date	Facilitators
Adapting and Designing Curriculum for Virtual Learning   Synchronous Asynchronous	Dec 8, 2020	Amal Giknis and Anna Walker Roberts, SLA Center City
Student Engagement	Jan 12, 2021	Dr. Amy Scallon, Temple University and Peter Gasiorowski, Juniata Park Academy
Anti Bias Anti-Racist Practices in Education	Feb 9, 2021	Davis Sparrow, Building 21
Self-Reliance   Executive Functioning	Mar 9, 2021	Dan Cunitz, The Crefeld School and Diana Laufenberg, Inquiry Schools
Self-Reliance   Catalyzing Connections	Apr 13, 2021	Danielle Shylit, String Theory Schools
Connecting with and Caring for Students + Caring for Ourselves	May 11, 2021	Nancy Ironside, SLA Middle School

## Year 2 - Teacher feedback excerpts *(emphasis added)*

"As a new teacher, PDs [professional developments] are sometimes intimidating and I feel like I don't have skills or tools that I can take away and apply the next day. The Teacher Institute has not been like that. **Speaking with other teachers so openly about session topics, applying knowledge, and transferring skills is invaluable.** I'm specifically thinking about a breakout room I was in where we broke down giving students reflective questions at a midpoint and end of a project to help us better serve them and improve our practice. This is something that was feasible and I added to the next day's assignment."

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"[What I liked about the format was] the wealth of time to connect with fellow educators that are in the same boat. **This is not your normal PD with a lecture on things we already know.** The peer to peer learning structure makes it the most valuable time and experience."

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"**The hour sessions were packed with information** and collaboration and reflection without the inclusion of wasted time."

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"**I actually looked forward to these sessions,** which I cannot say of most PDs. I just really enjoyed the collaboration and community that was fostered during the sessions."

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"I'm a huge fan of what and how PLC rocks out. This is my 2nd year and my only disappointment is I've phased out of the program at this point as far as I know. **This has always been such a refreshing step back to be introspective** and find great ideas and thinkers to continue to push and develop."