

# PLCs in Action



## Decatur Middle School is Making it Happen!



**WE ARE** an urban middle school located in MSD of Decatur Township on the southwest side of Indianapolis. We serve 970 students in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

**OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES** The Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township is located inside the city limits of Indianapolis in the southwest corner of Marion County. The school district also serves students residing within the neighborhood bounded by Fall Creek Parkway (east and south), Central Avenue, and 34<sup>th</sup> Street.

The current ethnic make-up of the student population is 8.7% African American, 77.2% Caucasian, 8.5% Hispanic, 4.5% Multiracial, and 1% American Indiana/Asian. Many families in the township live either near or below the poverty level. Relative to Marion County, Decatur has one of the highest percentages of students receiving free meals. In 2014-2015, 70% of the middle school students were eligible for the free meal plan. For the 2014-2015 school year the percentage of students on free meals and textbooks is 64.3%.

**OUR TEACHERS** receive professional development on an ongoing and regular basis. Our PD is always related to our core mission of delivering lessons daily that not only are engaging but also increase student achievement. Teachers give up their prep time once a week to participate in targeted PD. A great deal of this training has been related to writing curriculum, increasing pedagogical strategies, and creating rigorous assessments. Through this process, it became apparent that the PLC framework would further enhance our ability to better fulfill our core mission. We have ten PLCs within the building.

### OUR PROMISING PRACTICE

At the conclusion of 2014-15, Decatur MS began the journey of using the Professional Learning Communities framework. Our teachers formally meet twice a week to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment data. Our teachers have focused conversations on the four questions that all PLCs should be able to answer:

1. What do we want our students to learn?
2. How do we know if they have learned it?
3. What will we do if they do not learn it?
4. What will we do if they do learn it?

Through the work of our four Small Learning Communities, where our teachers are working collaboratively, we are collectively more productive and more effective. Teachers share instructional strategies, interventions, and enrichments in order to improve student learning. Our teachers analyze common assessment data to determine instructional next steps regularly throughout the school year. Across all subjects and both grade levels, students are thinking more critically and solving problems more regularly, and this is a direct result of the work of our PLCs.

### IN OUR OWN WORDS

"I think our PLC time is extremely valuable as well as productive and wish that more time could be devoted to PLCs during the week." – DMS Staff

"PLC time has allowed us to have great conversations to improve the quality of instruction and to make sure we are presenting content the best way possible for students. This time has also allowed us to create quality common assessments that truly reflect the content we need students to learn." - DMS Staff

For more information about our school or corporation, email: [kbarrentine@msddecatur.k12.in.us](mailto:kbarrentine@msddecatur.k12.in.us) or visit our website: [www.decaturproud.org](http://www.decaturproud.org)