**San Diego State University**
**Program in Educational Leadership**
**Dissertation Defense Announcement**

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**Title of Dissertation:** Evaluation of the Mountain Top Elementary School Professional Learning Community Program

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## Abstract

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a common structure for teacher collaboration. The literature links strong PLCs to collective teacher efficacy and data-informed instruction. It also links them to improved student outcomes. However, their effectiveness depends on fidelity, leadership support, and site context. This program evaluation examined the PLC program at Mountain Top Elementary School during the 2025–2026 school year. Mountain Top is a Title I school serving transitional kindergarten through sixth grade. The evaluation addressed three questions. (1) To what extent has the PLC process been implemented? (2) How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the PLC process on professional growth in collaboration, instructional planning, and data use? (3) To what extent do teachers and administrators perceive that PLC participation has influenced student achievement? The evaluation used a convergent mixed methods design guided by Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Model. Twenty of 22 invited teachers completed a survey. The assistant principal took part in a semi-structured interview. Other sources included PLC artifacts and professional development feedback forms. Student data from i-Ready and common formative assessments provided context. Survey ratings were analyzed descriptively. Open-ended responses and the interview were coded thematically in NVivo. Teachers reported strong implementation. Ninety-five percent reported consistent meetings and adherence to norms. Eighty-five percent reported regular collaborative planning. Use of student data was the least consistent element, at 65%. Artifacts from grades 1 through 5 documented structured inquiry cycles. Ninety-five percent of teachers reported improved collaboration

skills. The same percentage perceived that PLCs had influenced student achievement. The assistant principal rated five of six comparable items lower than teachers did. She cited an already collaborative staff and limited observation of PLC meetings. She also pointed to other initiatives, such as the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). On i-Ready, the share of students at or above grade level rose by year's end in reading and mathematics where complete data existed. This growth was suggestive, not causal. Overall, PLCs provided meaningful value to teachers. Leaders should attend PLC meetings more consistently and calibrate documentation expectations. They should also connect PLC data cycles with MTSS decisions.