

I Am Sold on PLCs: Practical Tools and Directions to Be Successful

Luis F. Cruz



Solution Tree

I Am Sold on PLCs **Practical Tools and Directions** **to Be Successful**

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Desired Outcomes

Participants will:

- Learn the importance of reculturing as part of the PLC process.
- Understand the difference between rational and irrational resistance to the PLC process.
- Learn how to use resources for strengthening your PLC process.
- Learn the role of a guiding coalition when reculturing.

Remember: Building a PLC is as much **about culture as structure!**

“School culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school.”

—Peterson, “Positive or Negative,”
Journal of Staff Development, 23(3)

“Healthy” School Culture

“Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt or covert ways. Educators create policies, practices, and procedures that support their belief in the ability of every student.”

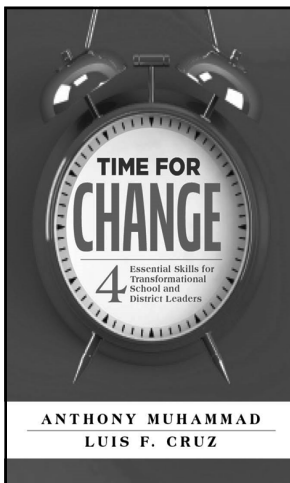
—Cromwell, “Is Your School Culture Toxic or Positive?”
Education World, 6(2), p. 3

“Toxic” School Culture

Educators believe student success is based on a student’s level of concern, attentiveness, prior knowledge, and willingness to comply with the demands of the school, and they articulate that belief in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies, practices, and procedures that support their belief in the **impossibility** of universal achievement.

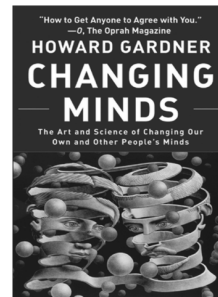
(Cromwell, “Is Your School Culture Toxic or Positive?”
Education World, 6[2])





Why should we expect resistance?

Why
Who
How
Do



CliffsNotes Version

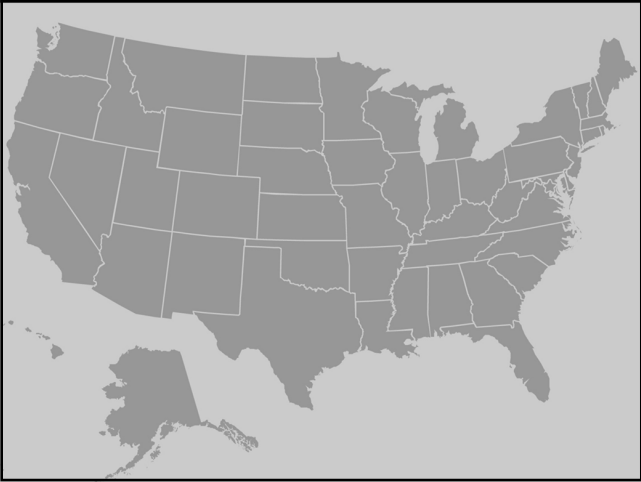
1. Irrefutable evidence there is a better way of doing something
2. Positive peer pressure

Learn how to use *Learning by Doing*.

A Must-See Resource:

AllThingsPLC.info

See the Evidence
PLC Locator





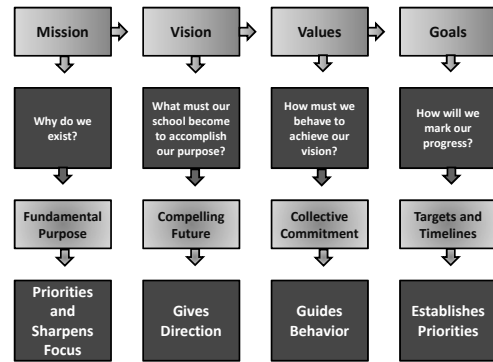
A Must-Use Resource:

AllThingsPLC.info

Tools and Resources

Articles and Research

The Foundation of PLC



John P. Kotter

“No one person, no matter how competent, is capable of single-handedly developing the right vision, communicating it to vast number of people, eliminating all of the key obstacles, generating short-term wins, leading and managing dozens of change projects, and anchoring new approaches deep in an organization’s culture. Putting together the right coalition of people to lead a change initiative is critical to its success.”

—Kotter, *Buy-In: Saving Your Good Idea from Getting Shot Down* (2010), p. 52

Important Characteristics of a Guiding Coalition (Handout)

1. To guide, unite, and support the faculty and staff at our school through the change process
2. To embrace research based best practices, hence the eventual implementation of the "science" of our profession
3. To keep the staff working collectively to ensure learning for all students

**The purpose of the
Guiding Coalition at
Santa Maria
High School
is to unify staff with
the development of
best practices in a
mutually accountable
school environment
which undeniably
increases learning for
ALL!**



The purpose of Blackford's
Guiding Coalition is to guide,
unite and empower ALL staff to
collaboratively take risks based on
evidence of learning, mutual accountability,
and best practices to ensure ALL
students learn at high levels.

LEADERSHIP TEAM PURPOSE

TO CREATE A CONTINUOUS
COLLABORATIVE CULTURE
THAT STRENGTHENS, SUP-
PORTS, AND VALUES ALL
STAFF TO UNDENIABLY EN-
SURE THAT EACH AND EVERY
STUDENT LEARNS.

Seven Correlates of Effective Schools (Lawrence Lezotte)	90/90/90 (Douglas Reeves)
<h1>Science</h1>	
PLC at Work (Richard DuFour)	Beat the Odds (Morrison Institute & Center for the Future of Arizona)

Prequel

- A story or movie containing events that precede those of an existing work
- An experience our faculty and staff may need to have before or while initiating the PLC process

Four Schools Activity

Purpose

The purpose of the four schools activity is to create a personal nonjudgmental experience that will allow our faculty and staff to realize the link between our collective attitude and actions taken as educators.

Resources and Materials Needed

- A focused staff
- Single sheets of the same colored paper
- A writing utensil

Four Schools Activity

Here is what you might say. (Note the statement is not true and must be revealed as such at the activities' end.)

A recent publication surveyed schools across the nation and revealed that a majority of public school educators continue to be hardworking professionals who genuinely choose the teaching profession because of their concern for students.

The report also revealed that the collective attitude and values of the adults in the building differed. The following description of the four types of schools in the research is provided. Note that the real names of the schools are not revealed and instead names that describe the collective focus of a particular staff are used.

Type A School

Charles Darwin Academy

**Learning is based on
the student's ability.**

Type B School

Pontius Pilate Academy

**Learning takes place only if
the student takes advantage
of the opportunities to learn
within the school.**

Type C School

Warm and Fuzzy Academy

**All students can learn
something, and we will create
a warm, pleasant environment
for them to learn.**

Type D School

By Any Means Necessary Academy

**All students can learn and
we will do whatever it takes
to help students learn and
achieve the agreed upon
essential standards.**

On a blank sheet of paper, answer the following questions based on the information just shared about the four types of schools:

1. Which school did you attend?
2. In which school do you currently work?
3. In which school do you want to work?
4. Which school do you want your kids to attend?

Reflection

1. What were the big takeaways from this activity?
2. What challenges to moving forward as a D school become apparent?
3. How might having your staff take part in this activity spark the necessary PLC movement at your school?
4. Let's review how best to describe each school.

Final Questions

Muchas Gracias!

To schedule professional development at your site, contact **Solution Tree** at **800.733.6786**.



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Four Schools Activity

1. Make sure you give yourself enough time, typically an hour, to conduct the activity.
2. Do not vilify any school in your description. Instead, describe each school as facility with “hard-working staff members who love kids and work hard, but here is what they believe”
3. Review descriptions of schools.

Type A: Charles Darwin Academy—Educators at the Charles Darwin Academy believe some kids “have it” and some kids don’t through no fault of their own. Charles Darwin introduced the theory of natural selection, emphasizing that some species (including humans) have what is necessary to thrive, and others do not. In comparing a child with no learning disability to one who has learning challenges, it is unrealistic to expect the child with a learning disability to achieve at similarly high levels. Educators cannot expect a child who is learning English as a second language to achieve at high levels. They cannot expect poor children to learn at high levels since there is little support at home. The Darwin Academy of belief is captured in a bell-shaped curve.

These educators love all kids and will do their best to teach them at their level, which is not always at high levels (grade level or higher). Time is spent offering high-level classes (honors and AP) to students who are the elite, since doing so is an investment in the leaders of tomorrow.

Type B: Pontius Pilate Academy—Educators at the Pontius Pilate Academy believe students can learn at high levels if they and their parents take advantage of opportunities provided to them. In these schools, it is the job of the teacher to teach and the job of the student to learn (teachers “wash their hands of” the responsibility to produce learning). They offer students support, but it is up to the student to show up before or after school for assistance.

Type C: Pobrecito, “The Poor Kids’ School”—At Pobrecito School (Spanish for “kids who deserve sympathy”), educators believe students learn at their own pace and to heights determined by their self-esteem. The job of educators is to make students feel special and “love them unconditionally.” One day, when they are ready; they will learn. While schools offer support, most programs focus on character building and making students feel “special.”

Type D: By-Any-Means-Necessary Academy—Educators at the By-Any-Means-Necessary Academy emphasize how all students—those who eventually will be independent adults—can and will learn at high levels (grade level or higher). These educators love their students and see their role as working as a team to ensure high levels of learning for all. They enact “tough love” strategies when needed; hence, when students do not take advantage academic supports, the school mandates students use them. If needed, teachers will physically escort them where they need to be. Educators continuously look at data and set goals for student achievement. They also celebrate as a faculty and staff whenever evidence of learning occurs. In short, this school is constantly looking in the mirror for answers and never out a window.

4. **Next steps:** Once everybody has learned about these schools, answered the four questions, and revealed the collective responses of the staff via the “snowball fight” activity, please allow plenty of time for discussion and reflection. If the majority of staff agrees they would like to be a **By-Any-Means-Necessary School**, record the date and time for future reference. You now have the case to begin learning what schools must do to achieve high levels of learning for all. Now, the PLC process begins!

Effective Schools

From Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia

"Effective Schools" is both an educational movement and body of research which examines school-based factors which positively influence learning outcomes in K-12 schools. Effective schools research has been widely adopted by school districts worldwide.

History

Early research into the essential qualities of successful schools emerged in North America as a response to the controversial 1966 Coleman Report, which concluded that family background and socio-economics were the major determinants of student achievement. Research published by Christopher Jencks in 1972 contributed to Coleman's findings, suggesting that "school quality has little effect on achievement."

The Coleman Report prompted U.S. policymakers to focus on "compensatory programs" which focused on changing the behavior of less advantaged students. The report also stimulated vigorous reaction from educational researchers who believed, to the contrary, that schools *could* make a significant difference on student achievement. Their research formed the foundation of the 'Effective Schools Movement', and enabled them to assert that "all children can learn and that the school controls the factors necessary to assure student mastery of the core curriculum."

Early effective schools researchers attempted to locate schools that were successful in educating students of all backgrounds, regardless of socio-economic status or family background. Such schools were found in varying locations and communities, and researchers tried to isolate which philosophies, policies, and practices those schools had in common.

Larry Lezotte and Wilbur B. Brookover conducted studies at eight Michigan elementary schools in the mid-1970s, identifying characteristics of schools that were improving or declining. A notable finding was that "staff in the declining schools had low opinions of their students' abilities, while the staff in the improving schools had high opinions of student abilities".^[4]

George Weber, and later Ronald Edmonds, conducted research in inner-city U.S. schools where students of low socioeconomic background were able to equal or surpass the national average. Edmonds' 1979 article "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor" is noted for drawing professional attention to the effective schools movement. Edmonds outlined six characteristics essential to effective schools, including:

1. Strong administrative leadership.
2. High expectations.
3. An orderly atmosphere.
4. Basic skills acquisition as the school's primary purpose.
5. Capacity to divert school energy and resources from other activities to advance the school's basic purpose.
6. Frequent monitoring of pupil progress.

Educational researchers soon dropped "capacity to divert energy and resources" from the list, and Edmonds' "five-factor model" was widely proclaimed as a framework for reforming low-performing schools.

In 1979, *Fifteen Thousand Hours* documented effective schools research in high schools in the United Kingdom, and found that school characteristics could positively alter student achievement.

Edmonds published "Programs of School Improvement: An Overview" in 1982, describing the "correlates of effective schools", a now widely used phrase commonly associated with the later work of Lezotte. Edmonds' correlates described effective schools as the following:

1. The leadership of the principal notable for substantial attention to the quality of instruction.
2. A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus.
3. An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning.
4. Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery.
5. The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.^[3]

In 1991, Lezotte published *Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation*, describing the "Seven Correlates of Effective Schools":

1. Instructional leadership.
2. Clear and focused mission.
3. Safe and orderly environment.
4. Climate of high expectations.
5. Frequent monitoring of student progress.
6. Positive home-school relations.
7. Opportunity to learn and student time on task.

The correlates of effective schools have remained a cornerstone for many school districts.

