

# Solution Tree | Press

**Professional Learning Communities at Work® and**

**High Reliability Schools™:**

**Cultures of Continuous Learning**

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## **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Professional Learning Communities at Work and High Reliability Schools: Cultures of Continuous Learning*, edited by Robert Eaker and Robert J. Marzano. This book successfully proves that the PLC at Work framework and HRS model are not only interrelated but also support each other.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for

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consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to merge the HRS model and PLC at Work framework to improve learning for all students.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to employ the HRS model and PLC at Work framework in your school or district.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Culture Building in a High Reliability School**

*Mario Acosta*

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1. Why are creating and fostering a positive school culture so important for school leaders?
2. What are some of the traits and skills of effective school leaders? How can school leadership responsibilities be integrated in the HRS model?
3. Why are defining and clarifying a core ideology for a school's culture so important, and what are some ways it can be developed effectively with staff members?
4. Why is it critical for school leaders to develop and coach their PLC teacher teams and groups?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Frames of Mind and Tools for Success: Organizational Culture in a PLC**

*Anthony Muhammad*

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1. What is school culture, and why is it critical to ensuring student equity and excellence?
2. What are some challenges and predeterminations in nurturing a positive, engaging school culture that guarantees learning for all students?
3. How is the collaborative team the platform for HRS work in the PLC model, and how does the team become high-performing and effective?
4. What is the *liberation mindset*, and what beliefs does it consist of?
5. Student learning can be vastly improved when collaborative teams focus on what four areas? How does the PLC process organize this work?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Six Steps for Effective Teaching in Every Classroom**

***Toby Boss***

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1. Describe the three distinct themes of a system of effective instruction that this chapter outlines.
2. What is the *model of instruction* (MOI), and what are some examples of its practice in schools?
3. What are some methods school leaders and collaborative teams can use to engage in reflective practice, track progress, and plan next steps for student achievement?
4. What are some aspects of a quality system of monitoring and evaluating instructional practices in a school?
5. In what ways can job-embedded professional development and instructional rounds effectively aid teachers' professional goals and reflection?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Effective Teaching in a Professional Learning Community**

***William M. Ferriter***

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1. What is *collective teacher efficacy* (Hattie, 2017), and how can it be realized in schools, according to Ferriter?
2. How do common assessment data provide teachers with evidence of instructional effectiveness?
3. How can teachers research and develop a list of promising practices for instruction using a cycle of inquiry?
4. Describe the difference between meaningful collaboration *about* versus comprehensive evaluation *of* effective teaching.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Six Action Steps for a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum**

***Jan K. Hoegh***

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1. What are the six action steps for a guaranteed and viable curriculum presented in this chapter?
2. What are action steps that school and district leaders can take to ensure curriculum alignment occurs?
3. How can leaders ensure adequate time is available for teachers to identify critical standards and content, and the knowledge and skills required for mastery?
4. How does the author define assessment? What are some examples of quality formal and informal assessment processes?
5. How can the response to intervention (RTI) process support student achievement?

## **Chapter 6**

### **PLC, HRS, and a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum**

*Heather Frizellie and Julie A. Schmidt*

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1. What can happen if collaborative teams skip the process of unpacking and creating shared understanding of, rather than individual interpretation of, learning standards?
2. Describe the four descriptors (Reeves, 2002) teams can use to carefully identify priority standards in schools and districts.
3. How do the authors define *priority standards* and *supporting standards*?
4. Describe the districtwide multi-layered goal-setting process the authors outline. What types of goals can a district, school, grade-level team, individuals, and students develop for school improvement, achievement, and professional growth?
5. What are some ways intervention and enrichment time can be embedded into school days for targeting instruction or extending learning?



## **Chapter 7**

### **A Multiyear Plan for Standards-Referenced Reporting**

***Tammy Heflebower***

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1. What will school leaders need to consider during a transformation from traditional grading to standards-referenced reporting?
2. How do strong teams respond to moving on from a traditional grading system?
3. Describe the multiyear plan for leading the shift to standards-referenced reporting presented in the chapter. What are some of the essential actions for each year?
4. How can leaders thoughtfully reflect on and evaluate a school's progress in implementing standards-referenced reporting?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Grading and Reporting for Learning in a PLC**

*Eric Twadell*

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1. How are traditional grading practices in most schools incompatible with student learning?
2. What do teachers and leaders identify as the two most important indicators in a grade?
3. What are some of the most common grading mistakes when using traditional grading and reporting practices?
4. What are the benefits of standards-based grading and reporting?
5. How can teachers make learning targets effective during instruction and assessment?
6. What are elements of effective assessment, feedback, and grading for students in a standards-based grading and reporting system?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Personalized, Competency-Based Education**

*Mike Ruyle*

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1. What does personalized, competency-based education involve?
2. What is the *evolutionary triad*?
3. Why are student agency and personal mastery in learning so powerful?
4. What is *academic optimism*, and how can the PCBE model contribute to it?
5. Describe the approach of *transformational instructional leadership*.
6. How can the concept of *student voice and choice* empower students who have already demonstrated competence in the system to advance in learning?

## **Chapter 10**

### **Preparation for Tomorrow: A Competency-Based Focus and PLCs**

***Mike Mattos***

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1. What are the important higher-level thinking skills for college and career readiness, and the academic behaviors critical to developing a successful learner, presented in the chapter?
2. What are the defining characteristics of the 21st century workplace, and what are the suggested academic skills, content knowledge, and social behaviors students must master for college and career readiness?
3. What elements must be in place in schools to ensure students master the skills needed to be college and career ready?
4. How is tracking or ability grouping detrimental to students, and how can a school develop an equitable system of interventions and extensions?
5. How do students benefit from a curriculum that allows them to personalize their learning and exercise agency?

## **Chapter 11**

### **High Reliability Leadership**

***Philip B. Warrick***

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1. What is the *art of possibility*, and how can schools practice it?
2. How can school leaders operate as *legacy builders*?
3. What is *high reliability leadership* as defined by the author, and how can school leaders successfully exercise it?
4. Describe the three systems-based tools that high reliability leaders use, and how they can be used in the HRS model.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Leadership in a PLC: Coherence and Culture**

***Timothy D. Kanold***

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1. Why does a PLC culture of continuous improvement need constant attention and nurturing from leaders, as Richard DuFour recommended?
2. What are the five coherence-building leadership actions that Kanold describes?
3. What positive impacts does loose-tight leadership have on school processes?
4. How can a superintendent assess principals' commitment to districtwide PLC implementation?

## **Chapter 13**

### **Leadership in High Reliability School Districts**

***Cameron L. Rains***

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1. What is the most important role for district leaders, according to the author?
2. What is the importance of *defined autonomy* in schools?
3. What are some different ways districts and schools can adopt or create a high-quality model of instruction?
4. What are the recommended non-negotiables for ensuring a guaranteed and viable curriculum in a district?
5. How are developing proficiency scales aligned to standards, and reporting student status and growth, examples of *second-order change*?

## **Chapter 14**

### **Leadership in a High-Performing PLC**

***Marc Johnson***

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1. Why is it critical for district leaders, especially superintendents, to address changing culture in a district during the PLC implementation process? What are some challenges they must address in shifting to a collaborative culture?
2. What do DuFour and Marzano (2011) describe as the five points of concentration for district leaders?
3. Why does the author recommend that district leaders establish two guiding coalitions, at both the district and site levels, during the PLC transformation process? What are the critical roles of these guiding coalitions?
4. Why are developing a common vocabulary, and also defining the specific actions associated with that vocabulary, so vital during the PLC journey?
5. How can district leadership support principals' growth in the PLC process?



6. How can district leaders in a PLC effectively monitor site, team, and system progress?
7. How does the author describe *building* versus *cultivating* a collaborative culture?
8. What is the *Golden Gate* approach for continuous learning?
9. How can meaningful celebration help leaders cultivate a collaborative culture?