



## **Harbors of Hope: The Planning for School and Student Success Process**

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Harbors of Hope: The Planning for School and Student Success Process* by Wayne Hulley and Linda Dier. *Harbors of Hope* offers a proven way for schools to deal effectively with the “white waters” of change and to create a culture of hope in which students receive the support they need to achieve success. The book combines the authors’ extensive experience with effective schools research and the power of the professional learning community to create a unique approach that results in hopeful schools.

This study guide is designed to help you benefit from and apply the ideas presented in *Harbors of Hope*. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school, and suggest steps that might be taken in a school or district. The guide is arranged by chapter, enabling

*Harbors of Hope:  
The Planning for School and Student Success Process—Study Guide*

readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves to be a useful tool. The authors have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in many schools and school districts across North America. They have told the story of only three. The authors intend to continue their writing and celebration of schools where “learning for all” is a reality. You may be a teacher, a principal, or a central office administrator who believes you have created a “Harbor of Hope.” If you would like to share your story, please contact the authors at:

Wayne Hulley  
Canadian Effective Schools  
231 Cheltenham Road  
Burlington, Ontario, Canada  
L7L 4H6  
[canadianeffectiveschools@sympatico.ca](mailto:canadianeffectiveschools@sympatico.ca)

Linda Dier  
Canadian Effective Schools  
3217 Point Place  
Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada  
V9T 5V2  
[canadianeffectiveschools@shaw.ca](mailto:canadianeffectiveschools@shaw.ca)

## **Introduction**

### **Creating Harbors of Hope**

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1. In the introduction, the authors claim that school improvement, to be successful, must go beyond the cognitive, rational, and theoretical to include the emotional. They assert that it is “as much an act of the heart as it is an act of the head.” Why is it important to go beyond the “head” to include the “heart” in planning for school and student success?
2. Hope is a concept that is often misunderstood in the context of school improvement. How do the authors define and describe the concept of hope? What would one expect to see, hear, and feel in a school that is a Harbor of Hope?

## **Chapter 1**

### **Harbors of Hope: Three Schools That Lead the Way**

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1. Michael Fullan tells us that reculturing leads to restructuring more effectively than the reverse. When school improvement efforts take the form of technical change (the implementation of new programs or structures) without first engaging in adaptive change (the complex work of reculturing), there may be some benefits in the short term; however, the long term impact will be limited. How did the three schools featured in chapter 1 facilitate adaptive change before introducing the technical changes that influenced student achievement?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Harbors of Hope: What We Have Learned**

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1. Effective schools demonstrate character, competence, and strong moral purpose. How are these three qualities demonstrated in effective schools or districts? How are they demonstrated in your school or district?
2. How did focusing on two correlates only (“safe and orderly environment” and “climate of high expectations for success”) at Sacred Heart and Lawrence Heights in the end impact the remaining five correlates? How is the presence of the correlates of effective schools seen in the work done at Monticello High School?
3. In this chapter, the authors provided examples from districts that are aligned in support of overall school improvement in the district. Review the examples and discuss the alignment that exists in each of them.
4. Why is classroom-school-district alignment critical to school improvement efforts?
5. Current thinking suggests that classroom, school, and district alignment needs to be extended to include the state (provincial, state, or federal) level. How might alignment look in this context? How might it be facilitated?

6. Discuss the issue of alignment in your district. What is presently working well? What else could be done?
7. How can working within the professional learning community concept enhance the communication and planning necessary to ensure classroom, school, and district alignment in support of school improvement?

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Harbors of Hope: A Proven Approach**

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The authors assert that the Planning for School and Student Success process is a “cyclical, self-perpetuating model for continuous improvement.”

Examine the diagram on page 60 and consider these questions:

1. What are the features of this model that make it “cyclical and self-perpetuating”?
2. What steps would you have to take to implement this model in your school?
3. What things are already in place that would facilitate the implementation of this model?
4. What challenges might you face in the process?

5. How could this model contribute to the continuity and sustainability of school improvement efforts in a school?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Plan to Improve: Who Is in Charge?**

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1. Who do the authors believe should be in charge of planning to improve? Why?
2. The Planning for School and Student Success Process is a model that is designed to bring about change. Not everyone will embrace the process. Resistance to change is inevitable and to be expected.
  - How can the school improvement agenda be advanced in spite of the inevitable resistance to change that will result?
  - Why is it important to respect and hear the opinions and objections of those who are resistant?
  - What is the role of the school administration in this process?
3. What are some objections that could be raised to the expectation for change in your school or district? How would you respond to these objections?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Set the Course (Values, Vision, Purpose)**

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1. The “Set the Course” phase of the Planning for School and Student Success Process is critical to the establishment of the foundation for the reculturing required for successful school improvement. The planning process will be seriously compromised if the articulation of values, vision, and purpose is skipped or glossed over. Why is it so important to do thoughtful work in the identification of values, vision, and purpose?
2. The articulation of values, vision, and purpose is only the beginning. Without effort to “breathe life into them,” they will remain just words. What steps can be taken to bring them to life? What steps can be taken to keep them alive?
3. Reflect on your school or district. Have you done the work required to identify your values, vision, and purpose? Are they “living” statements or just words? What are the next steps for you and your staff in this area?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Study**

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1. “Measuring what matters” is the key to planning to improve. How does a school determine what matters? What are the potential sources of critical

evidence that will be useful? What are the criteria for the collection of critical evidence?

2. What has been done in your school to collect and study critical evidence for planning to improve? What else could be done?
3. The authors recognize that mandated testing programs are often criticized; however, they contend that results from such tests may provide valuable critical evidence that can be used in planning to improve. In fact, in their view, scores from mandated tests could be considered both formative (assessment *for* learning) and summative (assessment *of* learning). How can results from provincial and state testing programs be a source of critical evidence about both assessment *of* and assessment *for* learning?
4. When you consider mandated testing in your district, what actions could be taken to recognize and maximize their benefits? If you are not already doing these things, how might you get started?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Reflect**

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1. Once critical evidence has been assembled and disaggregated for reflection, it is important that the entire staff be involved in the process. Why is this so? How could clearly stated and understood values, vision, and purpose statements be helpful in this process?

2. The professional learning community is the context within which the collaboration required for reculturing occurs. On page 108, 11 cultural shifts are identified as being potential outcomes of positive, authentic teacher collaboration in PLCs:
- From Teaching to Learning: This is a subtle but powerful shift in thinking. What does it mean?
  - From Teacher Isolation to Collaboration: Schmoker says that “true collaboration is a discipline—a fragile, high-maintenance set of practices and attitudes that need constant care and attention.” How can true collaboration be supported? What are some of the potential pitfalls in the collaborative process? How can those pitfalls be avoided?
  - From a Pass/Fail Mindset to the Elimination of Failure: Why is it no longer acceptable to think in terms of students passing and failing? What are the implications of committing to the elimination of failure?
  - From Compliance to Commitment: What differences in behaviors and attitudes would you see among people who are compliant and those who are committed? How is commitment built?
  - From Curriculum Overload to Guaranteed Curriculum: How is a guaranteed curriculum developed? How can a curriculum be guaranteed?
  - From General Goals to Specific Goals: Why is it critical that teachers be involved in the goal-setting when a school plans to improve? How can teacher involvement in goal-setting be ensured?

- From Static Assessment to Dynamic Assessment: What is dynamic assessment? What are the benefits of dynamic assessment?
  - From Over-the-Wall Grade Promotions to Flexible Structures: Why is it no longer acceptable to engage in over-the-wall grade promotions? Several flexible structures for accommodating students are highlighted beginning on page 114. What are the implications of these structures being put into effect in a school or district? Are there other flexible structures that would accomplish the same goals?
  - From Planning to Plan to Planning to Improve: What are the characteristics of schools that plan to improve? What would one see and hear in an improving school?
  - From a Fixed Time and Staff to Fixed Learning: What is the impact of viewing learning rather than staff and time as the fixed variable in a school? What structures and practices could change when learning is viewed as the fixed variable?
  - From Learning for Most to Learning for All: When this shift occurs in a school, instruction and structures must change to support the students. What changes in instruction would occur when “learning for all” is the goal? What changes in structure would occur to facilitate the goal of “learning for all”?
3. Reflect on your school or district in light of the 11 cultural shifts discussed in this chapter. Identify the areas in which progress is being made. What evidence do you have that progress is being made in these

areas? Which areas require greater focus? What action could be taken to begin the improvement process in these areas?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Plan**

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1. What are the factors that make the work of reculturing so complex?
2. Discuss the potential challenges faced by professional learning communities. What can be done to address them?
3. Discuss the character and competence correlates. How do they differ? How does the instructional leadership correlate fit with the character and competence correlates? How do all of the correlates apply to your school or district?
4. The SMART goal format is recommended for stating goals related to competence development. It can also be used to state character goals. Using the SMART goal format, state a character goal related to bullying. Identify other character goals and write SMART goals to articulate them.

## **Chapter 9**

### **High-Yield Strategies: Keys to Goal Attainment**

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High-yield strategies are those activities, practices, and structures that are known to enhance student achievement and result in improved student/teacher relationships. Use the following guidelines to discuss the four focus areas for strategies that are presented in chapter 9:

#### **Area One: School Structures and Practices**

1. School Environment: The responsibility for the environment of a school rests in the hands of the adults. What can be done to ensure a safe and orderly environment?
2. Deployment of Staff: How is it possible to maximize staff involvement?
3. Student Grouping: Discuss the pros and cons of ability tracking and flexible grouping. How can flexible grouping be facilitated?
4. Struggling Students: Discuss the questions on pages 144 and 145. What is the philosophy about inclusion in your school or district? If there are issues in this area that require attention, what are they? How might you go about dealing with them?
5. Timetable: What are the curriculum priorities and learning conditions that should drive the construction of a timetable? What are some of the

challenges inherent in timetable construction? How might they be addressed?

6. Reporting Practices: What is the purpose of reporting? In an ideal world, what would be the best way to manage reporting? What can be done to begin to move toward the ideal?
7. Student Recognition Practices: Discuss student recognition procedures that are respectful and encouraging for all students.
8. Discipline Policy: The authors assert that a code of conduct is useful for dealing with behavior management. What is the advantage of this approach? What is the ultimate goal of discipline? How does your school's policy or practice compare?
9. Homework Policy: Discuss the homework guidelines the authors present. How does your school's policy or practice compare?
10. Attendance policy: How can attendance policies be established to make student retention in school a priority? Why is this important?

### **Area Two: Curriculum Alignment**

1. What is the relationship between the intended curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the assessed curriculum?
2. Why is it important that the three curricula be aligned?

3. What process can be used to align them?

### **Area Three: Instructional Practices**

1. Curriculum Knowledge: What is the relationship between basic skills and concept skills? Why is it important to address each in a deliberate way?
2. Differentiated Instruction: What is differentiated instruction? How can it be done?
3. Staff Development: Staff development can take two forms. What are they? Why is each one important?
4. Learning: Why are assessment and instruction “inextricably connected”? What is the difference between assessment *of* and assessment *for* learning? How can assessment *of* learning also be assessment *for* learning? Identify as many types of assessment as possible. When would each be used and for what purpose?

### **Area Four: Parent Involvement**

1. Why would positive home-school relationships be identified as one of the seven correlates of effective schools?
2. Discuss the various methods presented in this book for involving parents in meaningful ways. In what ways do you involve parents in meaningful ways in your school? What else could you be doing?

### **All Four Focus Areas**

1. Reflect on the work being done in your school or district in each of the four focus areas for high-yield strategies. Which areas are strong? Which areas would benefit from attention? How might you strengthen structures, policies, and teacher competencies in those areas? What are the implications for your staff development program?

## **Chapter 10**

### **Implement**

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1. The authors describe work in the area of school improvement as a process of “getting the amoeba across the road.” Why do they see the process as amoeba-like? How is the Planning for School and Student Success Process model helpful?
2. The authors state that the school plan should give readers a “sense that the school has a clear grasp of the future it is trying to create.” What elements would be included in a school plan that successfully communicates its vision for the future?
3. Describe the school plan monitoring process and the role of the School Success Management Team in this process.
4. Consider your school improvement plan. In what ways does it communicate your vision of the future you are building? What else could you include to create a more complete picture? How is the

implementation of your school plan being monitored? What else could you do to support the work of reculturing in your school?

## **Chapter 11**

### **Creating the Culture for Change**

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1. Leadership must be responsive to issues that are inherent in the reculturing process. What are the issues inherent in the process? What are the implications of these issues for those in leadership positions?
2. The principal has a particularly important role to play in supporting planning for school and student success. Why is this role so important? What are the qualities and behaviors seen in effective principals?
3. The authors quote Schmoker as saying “Without data, vision cannot exist.” What does he mean when he says this?
4. The authors view accountability as a “collective issue.” Why is it seen as a collective, or shared, issue? What measures can be taken to develop an attitude of shared accountability?
5. The issue of sustainability in education must be addressed if school improvement efforts are to remain intact and be built upon over the years ahead. What measures can be taken to address the sustainability issue? How does the Planning for School and Student Success Process ensure and support sustainability?

6. Reflect on your school in the following areas:
- Identify the existing conditions that will support a reculturing process in your school.
  - What challenges to reculturing can you anticipate?
  - What capacities will need to be developed in both the school administration and the teaching staff in order for reculturing to occur?
  - What activities might be undertaken to advance the reculturing process in your school?
  - Where will you begin?
  - Who might you call upon for consultation and support as you move forward in this area?

## **Chapter 12**

### **Building on Success: Continuous Improvement**

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1. The authors assert that “starting the change process is simple compared to what it takes to sustain it.” Reflect upon what you have read and discussed. Why would the authors make this statement?
  
2. With the development of school improvement plans now required in most states and provinces, there exists a danger that schools will make the development of the written plan the priority. The authors caution us that the *process* of improvement is much more important to school and student success than the *product*, or written plan. How does the model

presented in this book support both the improvement process and the development of the product—the written school plan?

3. The authors have used the harbor metaphor in this book to illustrate their belief that schools that offer hope are safe places where students can prepare to take on the challenges of life. In a “Harbor of Hope,” students can be assured they will receive the support they need to be successful as they take risks to learn. Safe in the “harbor,” they can develop the skills and confidence they need to “set sail on the open sea.” What other metaphors can you identify that would illustrate the same concepts? Which metaphor could be applied to your school? Why is it an appropriate metaphor for your school?