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A New Way: Introducing Higher Education to Professional Learning Communities at Work™

By Robert Eaker and Debra Sells

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *A New Way: Introducing Higher Education to Professional Learning Communities at Work™* by Robert Eaker and Debra Sells. *A New Way* details how colleges and universities can implement professional learning community (PLC) practices and why the PLC model can reshape how leaders think and how well students succeed.

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 consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Study Guide

Chapter 1

**Enhancing Student Success With the Promise of Professional Learning
Communities**

1. What have higher-education institutions focused on imparting to students in order to meet the perceived needs of employers? What do employers, in contrast, indicate they are really seeking in potential employees?
2. At its most basic level, what is a PLC?
3. What three fundamental ideas form the framework of a PLC's practices?
4. How can PLCs establish a collaborative culture in an institution's daily operations? What is the power source of a PLC?
5. What question do faculty and staff at a traditional college or university culture often ask when school leadership pursues implementing a new idea?

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Chapter 2

The Journey From Student Access to Student Success

1. Besides societal shifts like desegregation and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, what three influences helped cause a great increase in college attendance in the United States in the 20th century?
2. How did the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education report *A Nation at Risk*, an assessment of K–12 public education, impact higher education?
3. What questions do observers ask when they are cautious of making college process changes based on trends in college success rates?
4. To increase student success, what must universities aim to do?
5. What does creating a “new normal” require?

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Chapter 3

Leading Cultural Change

1. In what areas is the culture of a successful PLC loose, and in what areas should it be tight?
2. What do Timothy Waters and Robert J. Marzano mean by *defined autonomy*?
3. Why has a distrust of top-down leadership taken shape in higher education institutions?
4. In your own words, define *reciprocal accountability*. What does reciprocal accountability require to be clearly explained and described?
5. Why do organizational values lose their meaning if recognition and celebration aren't present?

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Chapter 4

Enhancing Student Success Through a Commitments-Driven University

1. What four questions should university leaders raise to their organization in order to prompt an examination of institutional commitment?
2. What are some manipulative tactics that are commonly used in many organizations? Why is manipulation by itself insufficient to produce deep cultural change?
3. To communicate a target so it achieves the intended impact, what two elements are essential?
4. According to Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker, what are important benefits of establishing a clear vision for an organization?
5. What is the best tactic for giving a college or university's vision real-world meaning?
6. What do Robert Eaker and Janel Keating mean by the "expectations-acceptance gap"? To close this gap, what new role must university leaders accept and take on?

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Chapter 5

Capturing the Power of Collaborative Teaming

1. In your own words, define what collaboration-lite involves. What traits of a workplace culture may get it mislabeled as a collaborative culture?
2. How do Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker define real *collaboration*?
3. On what two principal core values does the Mayo Clinic build its purpose?
4. To be effective, what prerequisites must collaborative teaming meet?
5. What three questions should teams address together to improve student learning, according to Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker?
6. What qualities of student academic support help make a support plan appropriate at the college level?

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Chapter 6

Enhancing Student Success in a Culture of Continuous Improvement

1. List the steps in the continuous improvement process.
2. What elements are central for participating in effective goal setting?
3. How do setting short-term goals and celebrating reaching them allow individuals to build confidence? In relation to setting long- and short-term goals, what does *granularity* mean?
4. Why should school leaders limit the number of goals they set for their universities?
5. What are the common elements of all effective planning formats?
6. For what reasons is a collaborative analysis important?

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Chapter 7

**Bridging the Rhetoric-Reality Gap: Helping More Students Succeed—As If
We Really Mean It**

1. According to Vincent Tinto, what four conditions promote student retention?
2. In your own words, define what *disjointed incrementalism* entails.
3. Why are protocols and checklists essential in routine administrative functions?
4. Briefly describe the seven strategies Howard Gardner presents that can help leaders change people's minds.
5. If leaders want people within their institutions to adopt attitudinal change, what must the leaders do? What mistake do leaders commonly make when they seek to encourage people to change their attitudes?
6. What is a situational question you would ask during candidate interviews to determine if the candidates have values complementary to your school's values?

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Chapter 8

Improving Student Retention and Graduation Rates: The Undergraduate Experience

1. For what reasons should faculty teams develop common formative assessments together for all sections of a course?
2. What characteristics should procedures for providing students with supplementary time and support include?
3. How is an ability-based mindset different from a growth mindset?
4. What is the key for educators to keep in mind when they use social media to interact with parents?
5. What three factors have key impacts on the quality of advising? Why do colleges and universities need to have a broad interpretation of the term *advising*?

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Chapter 9

Overcoming Barriers: Roadblocks, Detours, and Occasional Breakdowns

1. What is the meaning of “disruptive change” and of “second-order change”?
2. Why can pursuing real cultural change be challenging?
3. According to John Kotter, what eight errors do leaders commonly make when they take on organizational change?
4. What do Ken Blanchard and researchers classify as being barriers to organizational change?
5. What four substantial barriers to cultural change pose difficulties in implementing strategies that can improve student success in universities?
6. At a campus level, what should people discuss in order to pinpoint routine practices that do and do not inspire student success?