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The School Wellness Wheel: A Framework Addressing Trauma, Culture, and Mastery to Raise Student Achievement

By Mike Ruyle, Libby Child, and Nancy Dome

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *The School Wellness Wheel: A Framework Addressing Trauma, Culture, and Mastery to Raise Student Achievement* by Mike Ruyle, Libby Child, and Nancy Dome. *The School Wellness Wheel* provides a framework for schools to address student trauma and promote wellness and healing.

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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Chapter 1

The School Wellness Wheel

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1. On page 21, the authors write that "schools have the moral responsibility to facilitate healing and build resilience while also ensuring all students master critical academic content." What is the relationship between healing and resilience, and how does that relationship affect learning?

2. Why is it important to prioritize mastery-based systems over traditional school systems?

3. List the four critical components for trauma-informed schools to include in treatment protocol (as stated by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).

4. What are Zaretta Hammond's (2015) three functional dimensions of culturally responsive teaching? Define them in your own words.

Chapter 2

Culture of Adult Ownership, Expertise, and Professionalism

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1. Consider your school or district. Has there been a time when your administration has attempted a new initiative and it did not take root? What are some reasons this initiative did not succeed? Refer to the list on page 33 and discuss.

2.   What is the difference between *instruction* and *learning*? How does mastery-based teaching provide a shift in the power paradigm between the two?

3. What are the three levels of stress, as differentiated by Robert Macy (2018)? Define them in your own words.

4. List Brave Heart and colleagues' (2012) four-step process that can help people move beyond generational grief. Why is it important to understand the biological and emotional impacts of stress and generational trauma in culturally responsive teaching?

Chapter 3

Culture of Mastery

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1. What are some steps you have taken to develop learning partnerships in your classroom? Describe a time when you actively impacted student success.

2. Consider your school or district. What are some of the prioritized standards within your curriculum, and what learning goals do you use to ensure students and parents comprehend what mastery of the material entails?

3. What are the three general categories of knowledge used by effective mastery-based-learning schools? Define each and provide examples.

4. What are the seven major mindsets, behaviors, or personal commitments that exemplify an instructional leader, according to John Hattie (2015b)?

Chapter 4

Culture of Learning

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1. Do you practice mindfulness as a part of your everyday routine? If so, how do you feel it has improved your well-being as an educator? If not, what are some of the exercises you could put into effect?

2. What are four actions teachers can take to enhance student motivation?

3. The authors discuss the importance of validity, reliability, and fairness in student mastery assessments (pages 90–95). List two ways you can improve each of these three concepts in assessments in your classroom.

4. Consider your school's or district's efforts toward improving and practicing mindfulness using the "Culture of Learning Proficiency Scale" (page 97). Where have you succeeded? Where do you need improvement?

Chapter 5

Culture of Connection

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1. What is relational poverty? List four ways you can cultivate empathy and connection to combat it.

2. Describe Joanna Nesbit and Emily Graham's (2020) four pillars for supporting community building. What are ways you can put these into practice within your school or district?

3. Barry Kouzes and James Posner (2007) describe five leadership traits that are crucial to guiding school transformation. Define each in your own words.

4. The authors write that "all of the research on resilience suggests that one of the primary issues in student resilience is a relationship with at least one significant adult" (page 107). Reflect on your role and how you can positively impact the resilience of your students.

Chapter 6

Culture of Empowerment

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1. Why is it important for schools to prevent reenactment as a response to students, especially those who have been victims of trauma? What are some strategies for encouraging "voice and choice" regarding cultural and academic issues?

2. The authors write that "teachers' expectations impact student success more than a student's own motivation" (page 113). Reflect on a time when your expectations for students have positively impacted your classroom environment.

3. Strengthening student agency significantly impacts students' ability to succeed in the classroom. What are actions that should be put into practice in a mastery-based classroom? Provide examples for each.

4. Reflect on your role in your school or district. How can you empower your students and colleagues by practicing ethical leadership?

Chapter 7

Culture of Humanity

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1. The authors "assert that best educational practice for discipline entails the recognition that consequences for challenging behavior must be tailored to the needs of the individual student" (page 126). How does your school or district approach misbehavior and punishment? What are areas of strength, and what areas need improvement?

2. Consider table 7.1 (page 127). What are ways you personally can apply trauma-responsive consequences for misbehavior instead of traditional punishment?

3. If you were to develop a list of behaviors for teachers and staff to embody in order to bring the School Wellness Wheel to life in your school or district, what would be your first step?

4. What are some practical ways resilient leaders can accomplish change within their schools regardless of pushback?