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Making Teamwork Meaningful: Leading Progress-Driven Collaboration in a PLC at Work™

By William M. Ferriter, Parry Graham, and Matt Wight

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Making Teamwork Meaningful: Leading Progress-Driven Collaboration in a PLC at Work™* by William M. Ferriter, Parry Graham, and Matt Wight. *Making Teamwork Meaningful* shows school leaders how to successfully focus on the real work of professional learning communities—ensuring that *every* student experiences academic success—by empowering collaborative teams to overcome the difficulties that accompany collaboration.

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

Chapter 1

Getting the Right People in the Right Places

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1. When hiring a new staff member in a collaborative culture, what questions must progress-driven principals of professional learning communities ask themselves? How do these questions ensure new staff members will be able to successfully become members of the collaborative environment?

2. What unique set of challenges and opportunities do openings in leadership roles present?

3. How should leaders choose members of their hiring teams? What recommendations do the authors make for determining a hiring process?

4. According to the authors, "Even good people can fail when placed in the wrong environment or paired with the wrong people" (p. 14). How can leaders ensure they know their staff members and determine the best collaborative combinations?

5. What are common personnel pitfalls leaders make that stall progress, and what can you do to avoid them?

Chapter 2

Incorporating Singletons and Teachers in Small Schools

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1. What special challenges do principals of small schools face when creating high-functioning learning teams? How can leaders ensure that progress around practice will occur?

2. How can leaders set up successful interdisciplinary groups?

3. How can principals help interdisciplinary teams identify the truly essential skills worth collaborating around?

4. What are electronic learning teams? What steps must teachers take to ensure that electronic teaming is meaningful, productive, and focused on the real work of PLCs?

5. How can leaders hold electronic teams accountable? How can leaders support electronic teams?

Chapter 3

Aligning a Master Schedule With PLC Priorities

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1. The authors suggest that the master schedule is the most important structure in any school? What role does the school schedule play in your building's collaborative efforts? How about in your efforts to provide extra time for struggling learners? Is your schedule helpful or harmful? Why?

2. According to the authors, "In every situation where star analysts moved from a larger company to a smaller company or between companies of similar sizes, they experienced a measurable drop in performance that lasted anywhere from two to five years" (p. 44). Why do accomplished individuals who already have an established track record of success struggle in new environments?

3. What questions must leaders ask in order to create a master schedule that facilitates progress?

4. How does the process of creating the master schedule change for elementary, middle, and high school PLCs? What are the different models for scheduling available for high school? Which is best for your team?

Chapter 4

Building an Intervention System

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1. What lesson can the progress-driven leaders of learning communities learn from Virginia Apgar's work in obstetrics?

2. What is the purpose of screening tools? How can leaders identify the best screening tools to use in their buildings?

3. How do the authors recommend leaders use standardized testing data? What should they be cautious of?

4. What recommendations should leaders consider when choosing diagnostic assessments?

5. How can leaders make sure teacher-created common assessments are an integral part of school improvement?

6. What steps need to be taken to determine which students will receive interventions? How can leaders decide who will provide interventions and ensure the success of interventions as part of the PLC?

Chapter 5

Improving Collaborative Capacity

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1. What is the greatest barrier that educators face while working in a PLC? How can school leaders prevent this challenge from leading to teacher frustration?

2. What is *collaborative capacity*? What steps can leaders take to build collaborative capacity?

3. How can leaders successfully differentiate the supports offered to each collaborative group?

4. According to the authors, "Staff surveys should not simply be framed in terms of 'Tell me about something neat you would like to learn'" (p. 88). What should be the goal of staff surveys?

5. What are common developmental needs of mature learning teams? How can progress-driven leaders support them?

6. How can leaders narrow professional development topics to make PD successful?

7. What role should peer observation play in professional development? How can leaders make teachers comfortable observing and being observed by peers?