

# Solution Tree | Press

## **Leading by Design: An Action Framework for PLC at Work™ Leaders**

*By Cassandra Erkens and Eric Twadell*

---

### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Leading by Design: An Action Framework for PLC at Work™ Leaders* by Cassandra Erkens and Eric Twadell. *Leading by Design* examines the successes and struggles of professional learning community restructuring in order to bring you replicable techniques from leaders who have achieved proven, sustainable results. It moves beyond theory into practice, demonstrating the importance of strong leadership in creating a PLC.

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 ultimately increase leadership within a PLC.

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

Copyright © 2012 by Solution Tree Press

## **Chapter 1**

### **Leading to Learn and Learning to Lead**

---

1. What is the most significant place to impact student achievement? Why?
2. What can variances in the quality of leadership in schools be attributed to?
3. What two reasons make relying on training as the sole mode of professional development for leadership inadequate?
4. What are the characteristics of effective leaders?
5. How is a leadership practice different than a strategy?
6. What are the common characteristics of effective leadership practices?
7. Describe the seven leadership practices of highly effective PLC leaders.
8. What is the benefit of collaborative teams? How can you sustain them in your school?
9. How does building coherence and clarity underpin each leadership practice?
10. How can effective leaders monitor their professional learning community for collaboration?
11. What kind of change does transforming schools into PLCs call for?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Creating and Sustaining Collaborative Relationships**

---

1. Why is health as important as productivity to PLCs?
2. How can teams learn to navigate emotion and handle conflict safely?
3. Why are beliefs and culture just as important to collaboration as skill and practice?
4. What issues must norm setting address and accomplish?
5. Why does engineering for success always involve beginning with the end in mind?
6. Identify the four corollary PLC questions, and explain why effective leaders back map through them.
7. How do effective leaders identify immediate and long-range action steps?
8. How can leaders monitor their PLCs for success?
9. What does empowerment mean in a culture of shared responsibility and leadership?
10. What is the leadership challenge for unhealthy but productive teams?
11. What is the leadership challenge for healthy, productive teams?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Aligning Systems**

---

1. What problems occur when the internal system is not aligned with the vision, mission, values, and goals or the work of the PLC?
2. What is an aligned system? What happens when the components of the PLC are aligned?
3. Name the indicators that tell whether a system is in alignment.
4. How can effective leaders develop a shared understanding of how change occurs?
5. Explain how changing culture is essential to successfully aligning systems.
6. Why is working to address culture before changing practice a mistake?
7. Compare and contrast culture and context. How are they both necessary to system alignment?
8. What indicators of success could PLCs monitor to know whether collaborative teams are becoming more effective in their work?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Facilitating Shared Responsibility**

---

1. What is the facilitation of shared responsibility?
2. What is the difference between accountability versus shared responsibility?
3. Explain why the “Get ‘er done” approach is efficient but not effective.
4. What is allocentric language? Why should effective leaders use it?
5. How does trust impact a leader’s ability to create a culture of shared responsibility?
6. What four criteria does relational trust reflect between leaders and followers?
7. What three things can effective leaders do to build relational trust?
8. How do effective PLC leaders succeed in using clear and effective communication?
9. How do effective leaders manage emotions? Which of the strategies would be most appropriate for your school?
10. How do effective leaders manage relationships? What strategies has your school used to manage relationships?
11. How do leaders know that a group arrived at consensus?
12. What are the five sources of authority that shape leaders’ understanding of their roles and relationships with those they lead?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Building Coherence and Clarity**

---

1. When leaders engage in the core leadership practices without building coherence and clarity, how does that affect a PLC's sustainability?
2. How can changes in beliefs and attitudes impact practices?
3. What is initiative fatigue? How can effective leaders prevent or overcome it?
4. When do most educators notice that change is coming?
5. How can data be used to support the mission of PLCs?
6. Explain why building coherence and clarity is not a one-time event. How can you ensure that it's an ongoing event in your PLC?
7. What is the benefit of developing common vocabulary and common definitions?
8. What are the common reasons meetings become dysfunctional, and how can they be overcome?
9. What are collaborative conversations opportunities for?
10. What skills does the effectiveness of dialogue require from facilitators?
11. How should collaborative conversations be made a part of decision making?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Modeling Practices and Expectations**

---

1. What kind of act is leadership?
2. What are some positive characteristics and behaviors of teaching skills?
3. What can educational leaders who want others to follow their lead do to relay their desired message effectively?
4. When should self-talk and think-aloud strategies be used?
5. Why is “messy” leadership superior to “neat” leadership?
6. What are superhubs? What role do they play in PLCs?
7. What are the six characteristics of craft knowledge?
8. What personal qualities do effective leaders have?
9. How can teachers model the importance of lesson planning?
10. How can principals model the importance of shared responsibility?
11. What does the phrase “leader as teacher” mean?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Reflecting on Leadership Effectiveness of Self and Others**

---

1. How does reflection maximize the success of PLCs?
2. What are the characteristics of reflective practitioners?
3. Briefly describe some of the main focal points implemented during reflection.
4. What three questions do engaged leaders naturally ask themselves?
5. Is charisma a beneficial or detrimental quality for leaders? Explain.
6. How do strong leaders share tacit knowledge?
7. What critical questions must be addressed when reflecting on the team's effectiveness?
8. What kinds of questions should PLC leaders ask during reflection?
9. How does celebration serve as a reflective activity?
10. What factors should be taken into account when using celebrations as a sign of growth and encouragement?



## **Chapter 8**

### **Developing Leadership Capacity in Self and Others**

---

1. What practice marks the difference between becoming a strong PLC and sustaining a strong PLC?
2. Explain how leaders can use monitoring, modeling, and reflecting to develop leadership capacity in others.
3. How can PLC members develop leadership capacity in themselves?
4. What role does feedback play in a leader's success?
5. How can individual leaders choose to grow their capacity?
6. How do leaders handle politics to operate their organizations effectively?
7. What two assumptions are characteristic in the idea that good teachers already know how to lead? How can this idea be overcome?
8. What two factors challenge the ability to develop leadership opportunities and pathways?
9. What are the fundamental truths that support abundant thinking?
10. What does the career lattice identify? Why is it important?
11. How do leaders develop leadership capacity from every level?