So Who’s Leading This Thing?
I Guess We All Are!

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A Learning-Centered Culture

“A learning-focused culture understands that
the school was not built so that teachers have a
place to teach—it was built so that the children
of the community have a place to learn.”

—DuFour, In Praise of American Educators
... and How They Can Become Even Better (2015), p. 104

Leadership Defined

• Leadership is working with others to establish a
shared sense of purpose, goals, and direction,
and then persuading people to move in that
direction.

• Leadership is both that simple and that complex.

Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson,
Learning From Leadership: Investigating
the Links to Student Achievement, 2010)
Leadership: An Amended Definition

- Leadership is working with others to establish a shared sense of purpose, goals, and direction.
- Persuading people to move in that direction.
- Clarifying the specific steps to be taken to begin moving in the right direction.
- Providing the resources and support that enable people to succeed at what they are being asked to do.

(Richard DuFour, Leaders Wanted: Keys to Effective Leadership in Professional Learning Communities at Work, PLC Keynote, 2014)

The Challenge of Cultural Change

“Unlike structural change that can be mandated, cultural change requires altering long-held assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that represent the norm for people in the organization. These deeply held but typically unexamined assumptions help people make sense of their world. More simply put, culture is just ‘the way we do things around here.’ Systematic implementation of the PLC process requires changing the way things have been typically done at all levels.”

—DuFour & Fullan, Cultures Built to Last: Systemic PLCs at Work (2013), p. 2

So, What Is A Team?
Defining Culture Through “Below the Green Line”
No culture or identity, no shared vision or mission, no interdependence or mutual accountability

From This (GROUP) To This (TEAM)

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
The “team” process begins to unravel when groups demonstrate the five dysfunctions of a team—the inability to:
1. Establish trust.
2. Engage in honest dialogue regarding disagreements.
3. Make commitments to one another.
4. Hold each other accountable.
5. Focus on results.
(Lencioni, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable, 2002)

Norms Must Be in Place
Norms must be in place to ensure a team meets a common, minimum level of behavior, process, and respect.

Teams without norms function fine ... until the members have a problem with one another.
Revisiting norms is often overlooked.
### Guiding Questions for Team Norms

- Are we clear on the commitments we have made to each other regarding how we will work together as a team?
- Have we stated our commitments as explicit behaviors?
- Have we discussed how to address the issue if we feel someone is not honoring our norms?

### Criteria for Team Norms

- The norms have clarified our expectations of one another.
- All members of the team participated in creating the norms. All voices were heard.
- The norms are stated as commitments to act in certain ways.
- All members have committed to honoring the norms.

### Tips for Team Norms

- Each team establishes its own norms.
- Norms are stated as commitments to act or behave in certain ways.
- Norms are reviewed at the beginning and end of each meeting until they are internalized.
- One norm requires a team to assess its effectiveness every six months. This assessment should include a review of adherence to norms and the need to identify new norms.
- Less is more. A few key norms are better than a laundry list.
- Establish a process for addressing violations of norms.
Our Teams Collective Commitments

In order to make our team meetings positive and productive experiences for all members, we make the following collective commitments to each other:

- Begin and end our meetings on time and stay fully engaged during each meeting;
- Maintain a positive attitude at team meetings—no complaining unless we offer a better alternative;
- Listen respectfully to each other;
- Contribute equally to the work load;
- Make decisions based on consensus;
- Hold ourselves accountable to our shared commitments and candidly discuss our concerns when we feel a member is not living up to those commitments;
- Fully support each other’s efforts to improve student learning and our individual and group professional skills and practice;
- Results must guide our work, without student outcome data, all we have is an opinion.

Keys to Responding to Resisters

- Assume good intentions.
- Seek to understand.
- Use strategies of persuasion.
- Identify specific behaviors essential to the success of the initiative.
- Focus on behavior, not attitude.
- Monitor behavior.
- Acknowledge and celebrate small victories.
- Confront incongruent behaviors and communicate logical consequences.

Defining the Roles of Site Leadership

“Principals arguably are the most important players affecting the character and consequences of teachers’ school-site professional communities. Principals are culture-makers, intentionally or not.”

—McLaughlin & Talbert, Building School-Based Teacher Learning Communities: Professional Strategies to Improve Student Achievement (2006), p. 80
Defining the Roles of Site Leadership

• Build a collaborative culture based on shared missions, visions, values, and goals and a shared commitment to achieve them.

• Keep teams focused on student learning and engaged in ongoing action research regarding best practices to improve student outcomes driven by results.

The Foundation of a PLC

Defining the Roles of Site Leadership

• Ensure teams develop and work toward achieving clear SMART goals that can be achieved only through the interdependent work of collaborative teams.

• Be accessible to teams, differentiate support to teams, monitor the achievement of goals, and celebrate success.
Site Collaborative Team Leaders

“Effective principals will not attempt to do it alone. They will foster shared leadership by identifying and developing educators to lead their collaborative teams because without effective leadership at the team level, the collaborative process is likely to drift away from issues most critical to student learning.” — Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, & Goldenberg, “Moving the Learning of Teaching Closer to Practice: Teacher Education Implications of School-Based Inquiry Teams,” Elementary School Journal (2009), 109(5)

Site Collaborative Team Leaders

Selection of teacher leaders should be based on four key factors:

1. Their influence with colleagues: Is this an individual whose credibility with others is so strong that his or her support for an initiative or idea will influence others in that direction?

2. Their willingness to be a champion of the PLC process: Is this someone who demonstrates an understanding and support of the process by modeling commitment to learning, collaboration, and a focus on results? (Marzano & DuFour, Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement, 2011)

Site Collaborative Team Leaders

3. Their sense of self-efficacy and willingness to persist: Is this someone who understands that the solutions do not lie anywhere else but with us, who can demonstrate his or her belief that it is the collective actions of the team that will have a positive impact on results, and who will develop solutions when faced with challenges?

4. The ability to think systematically: Is this someone who can bring coherence to the team process by helping the team see the connection that teamwork has with improving the school and the district? (Marzano & DuFour, Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement, 2011)
Defining the Roles of Team Leadership

- Hold team members accountable to norms.
- Facilitate focus and growth.
  1. Establish trust.
  2. Engage in honest dialogue regarding disagreements.
  3. Make commitments to one another.
  4. Hold each other accountable.
  5. Focus on results.

A Commitment to Continuous Improvement

A Professional Learning Community will always seek to improve and so will develop systems and processes that engage each member in a cycle of:
- Gathering evidence of current levels of student learning
- Developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weakness in that learning
- Implementing those strategies and ideas
- Analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not
- Applying new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement

PLC Leaders Promote Clarity About the Work to Be Done by Creating a Culture That Is Simultaneously Loose and Tight

- Effective leaders of PLCs establish clearly articulated nondiscretionary parameters and priorities that individuals and teams must honor and observe. These aspects of the organization are tight.
- Within those tight boundaries, individuals and teams are empowered and encouraged to work in creative and autonomous ways. These aspects of the organization are loose.
What Must We Be Tight About If All Means All

1. Work in collaborative teams and take collective responsibility for student learning rather than working in isolation
2. Implement a guaranteed viable curriculum unit by unit
3. Monitor student learning through an ongoing assessment process that includes frequent team developed common formative assessments
4. Use the results of common assessments to
   - Improve individual practice
   - Build teams capacity to achieve its goals
   - Intervene or extend on behalf of students
5. Provide systematic intervention and enrichment/extension

The Ultimate Truth About Leadership

• The first and most important truth about leadership is that you make a difference. You have to believe in yourself, believe you can make a difference, believe you can have a positive impact on others.

• It is not a question of “Will I make a difference?” Rather, it is “What difference will I make?”

Want to Learn More?

[Image of book cover: How to Coach Leadership in a PLC by Marc Johnson]