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Professional Learning Communities at Work™ and Virtual Collaboration:

On the Tipping Point of Transformation

By Richard DuFour and Casey Reason

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Professional Learning Communities at Work™ and Virtual Collaboration: On the Tipping Point of Transformation* by Richard DuFour and Casey Reason. *Professional Learning Communities at Work™ and Virtual Collaboration* states that the time for education transformation is now, and it provides ways for virtual collaborative teams to fortify PLC implementation.

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 and support effective virtual collaborative teams in a PLC.

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 and collaborative culture in your school or district.

Chapter 1

Examining the Past to Understand the Present

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1. What is a professional learning community (PLC)? How do collaborative teacher teams relate to the PLC structure and PLC process?

2. What does culture in a school mean, and what does it define? What are some cultural traditions present in schooling that have delayed improvements in teaching and learning?

3. How is Taylorism-influenced education different from education influenced by W. Edwards Deming's ideas?

4. Why hasn't widespread access to computers transformed schools?

5. What are some examples of effective collective commitments? Write a few collective commitments tailored to your goals.

6. How might virtual team organizers address the effects of the lack of social interaction often present in virtual teams?

Chapter 2

Focusing on the Right Work

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1. What qualities are typically lacking in a collaborative space when "coblabberation" takes place? What question should virtual teams focus on to avoid the wasted time caused by coblabberation?

2. In your own words, what does a two-way dialogue established through virtual collaboration help team members to clarify?

3. Name the three big ideas that drive a face-to-face or virtual dialogue that can produce a strong PLC foundation.

4. What questions must virtual collaborative team members address for each of their units in order to help all students learn what they need to learn?

5. To ensure that all students learn at high levels, what must members of a virtual collaborative team collaborate to do?

Chapter 3

Organizing Virtual Connections

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1. Name the three strategic levels for implementing virtual teaming in a PLC, and briefly describe what strategies in each of these levels are meant to do.

2. What does the power of "the crowd" refer to?

3. How do synchronous learning and asynchronous learning differ? What do they each allow team members to do?

4. What are the ten dimensions of decisions that influence virtual collaborative teams?

5. What are the two choices for membership in regard to participation in a virtual learning space? What does each of these membership choices represent?

6. How is a task force different from a guiding coalition?

Chapter 4

Strategizing for e-Collaboration

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1. What four big-picture issues regarding e-collaboration should educators keep in mind?

2. Name the seven strategies for creating asynchronous collaborative environments that can promote team discoveries and innovations.

3. What are some of the ideas that virtual team members can use to ensure that their fellow team members correctly interpret the moods and messages they wish to express? What additional approach might you add to this list?

4. What steps can people take to get an active virtual discussion going, or "get the party started," as the authors describe it?

5. What is a powerful step to ensure that participants in a conversation actively engage in responding to conversation threads?

Chapter 5

Enhancing Learning With e-Acceleration

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1. What is the goal of the e-acceleration level of virtual collaboration?

2. In regard to virtual teaming in a PLC, what does openness indicate? What is the hallmark of openness in schooling?

3. Define *personal learning networks* (PLNs). What is the advantage of PLNs?

4. How is direct access to high-performing teams an advantage of the era of openness in schooling? What do today's educators have direct access to in communicating with high performers?

5. What is the purpose of open sourcing?

6. What is needed for educators to get the most out of efforts in open sourcing?

Chapter 6

Improving School-Based Teams With Virtual Teams

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1. In your own words, define *singletons*. How can singletons benefit from the PLC process?

2. Which team structure should teachers first implement in creating a virtual team? Why is this the case?

3. How are a group and a team different?

4. What guidelines should collaborative team members follow in establishing and following SMART goals aimed at improving student achievement?

5. Describe the difference between conversations about how team members prefer to teach a concept and conversations that determine which teaching strategies are most effective.

6. In your own words, what is the main takeaway from this chapter?

Chapter 7

Virtual Teaming: A Case Scenario

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1. Why is the National Education Association Professional Practice Communities platform a powerful virtual collaborative meeting space for Springfield High School?

2. Consider the example blog post provided on page 132, which reiterates the six characteristics of a PLC. Using this blog post as an example, how would you reiterate the six PLC characteristics to your school's staff through your own blog post or a different method?

3. What unexpected benefits did Springfield staff gain as a result of supporting their teams with technology?

4. What benefits do asynchronous, threaded discussions offer that well-designed, face-to-face meetings do not?

5. How can a faculty agenda in an asynchronous learning space serve as an alternative to face-to-face meetings? What options do staff have in contributing agenda items and attachments to a virtual agenda?

Chapter 8

Leading School-Based and Virtual Teams

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1. How do people in the United States tend to view leaders and the qualities of leadership? Name a few famous people who are considered leaders. How does the authors' idea of leadership differ from the broad concept of leadership held in the United States?

2. How do the authors define *servant leadership*? What are the six keys to successful servant leadership?

3. What does the micromanaging strategy fail to do, and what does laissez-faire leadership make it impossible to do?

4. On what elements did a study of Sanger Unified School District attribute the district's improvements?

5. What are the keys to giving effective recognition and celebrating small wins?

Chapter 9

Reaching the Tipping Point

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1. What aspects of Richard DuFour's visits to multiple doctors can educators learn from as they aim to be effective professionals?

2. What are the two core values that drive work taking place at the Mayo Clinic? What disadvantage in launching a collaborative culture must educators overcome that Mayo Clinic staff members do not have to face?

3. Which ideas is the culture of schooling changing to support?

4. In your own words, define a *tipping point*.

5. For what reason was the Partnership for 21st Century Schools established? What did it agree that schooling should help students to do, and what did it determine that professional development should encourage?

6. What two kinds of training does a professional require?