



Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap Whatever It Takes

Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Gayle Karhnek

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Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap is a sequel to *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). In *Whatever It Takes*, the authors addressed the question of what happens when students don't learn. In this sequel, the authors reiterate, reinforce, and expand upon the ideas in *Whatever It Takes* by exploring the following questions: 1. Is the PLC improvement process sustainable? The authors return to two of the schools featured in the *Whatever it Takes* case study to examine once again the intervention and enrichment processes they put in place and to consider how those processes have impacted student achievement in the years since *Whatever It Takes*. 2. Is this improvement process transferable? To answer this question, the authors explore the practices of schools at different grade levels, from different parts of the country, serving very different student populations to consider how they have transferred the research base on best practice and the experiences of other schools to become some of the best schools in America. 3. What is the role of the central office in promoting the professional learning communities concept throughout a district? The authors devote three chapters to case studies that examine how three different school districts have created the expectation that all of the schools in their districts would operate as professional learning communities. 4. How should we enrich and extend the learning of students who are proficient? In *Whatever It Takes*, the authors focused intensively on students who experienced academic difficulty. In this book, the authors address enrichment for proficient students by illustrating how the effective implementation of the PLC concept not only closes the gap for students who have historically struggled in schools but also raises the achievement bar for all students. 5. What prerequisite framework must be put in place in order for schools to create effective systems of intervention and enrichment? Creating an effective system of interventions and enrichment must be part of a larger cultural transformation of a school; however, educators often fail to fully appreciate the comprehensive change that must occur. In this book, the authors are explicit about the prerequisite work a school must address and the structures that must be in place as part of the process of creating powerful intervention and enrichment. 6. How have the changes in national educational policy impacted the premise that schools should have a systematic plan for responding to the learning needs of students? The authors address the future of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) legislation of 2004 as it relates to the professional learning community concept. They also explore the connection between Response to Intervention (RTI) and the PLC concept.

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