

About the Author



Alan M. Blankstein is Founder and President of the HOPE (Harnessing Optimism and Potential through Education) Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, the Honorary Chair of which is Nobel Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The HOPE Foundation is dedicated to supporting educational leaders over time in creating school cultures where failure is not an option for *any* student. Founded in 1989, the HOPE Foundation has focused for the past decade on helping districts build leadership capacity to close gaps and sustain student success.

The HOPE Foundation launched the professional learning communities movement in educational circles first by bringing W. Edwards Deming and later Peter Senge to light in a series of Shaping America's Future forums and PBS video conferences from 1989 to 1992. The HOPE Foundation now provides some 20 conferences annually, highlighting their long-term successes in sustaining student achievement in districts and regions in 17 states and parts of Canada and South Africa.

A former "high risk" youth, Alan began his career in education as a music teacher and has worked in youth-serving organizations since 1983, including the March of Dimes, Phi Delta Kappa, and the National Educational Service (now Solution Tree), which he founded in 1987 and directed for 12 years.

In addition to authorship of this award-winning book, Alan is publisher of three *Failure Is Not an Option* video series and, with Paul Houston, is senior editor of the 13-volume *The Soul of Educational Leadership* series. Alan also coauthored the *Reaching Today's Youth* curriculum and has published articles in *Educational Leadership*, *The School Administrator*, *Executive Educator*, *High School Magazine*, *Reaching Today's Youth*, and *Inside the Workshop*. Alan has also provided keynote presentations and workshops for virtually every major educational organization.

Alan served on the Harvard International Principals Centers advisory board, as board member for Federation of Families for

How to Use This Chapter-by-Chapter Guide

Failure Is Not an Option addresses all the elements that are absolutely necessary for effective and enduring educational reform. It is a deeply passionate call to arms, combined with the wherewithal to take systematic, continuous, and effective action. A must-read for all those interested in reform because it is simultaneously inspiring and practical.

—Michael Fullan, University of Toronto

This Facilitator's Guide is a companion to *Failure Is Not an Option: 6 Principles for Making Student Success the ONLY Option*, Second Edition, a book that tells the vivid story of what it takes to turn schools around, continually improve schools that are already good, and succeed with ALL students. Drawing on more than 15 years of practical research, and an in-depth look at 20 high-performing schools and districts, the book identifies six principles that guide sustainable professional learning communities. Most important, readers will find a detailed set of field-tested processes for re-creating these successes in their own schools.

Many schools are choosing this accessible publication for collaborative book study groups. Most groups will read one or two chapters before each group meeting. This simple guide is structured to help the leader facilitate those meetings.

For each meeting, a set of *chapter content review* questions will help readers prepare for the group meeting by highlighting the main points of each chapter. Readers may want to write down answers to the questions beforehand and take them to the group meeting.

Suggested group *activities* are designed for small or large groups but can be undertaken by individuals working alone. In advance of each meeting, decide which activities you will be

pursuing together and which activities members will be encouraged to do on their own.

The open-ended *discussion* questions are designed to encourage members both to apply what they have read to their own experiences or current professional concerns and to share these with their colleagues. In some cases, you may want to look at the discussion questions first and then undertake the activities, or you may want to alternate between activities and discussion. In every case, the activities and discussion questions are meant to be suggestions only. Each group leader may decide to skip some, add others, or amend all to fit local issues.

There are suggestions *for further reading* for practitioners who wish to pursue a topic in greater depth individually or for group members to assign in round-robin fashion so that each member reads and summarizes a selection during the series of meetings.

Finally, at the back of this guide are all of the *resources* that accompany this guide and the main text. Each of these resources is included in the activities and discussion question of their corresponding chapters. As facilitator, you may want to have copies of these available in each meeting, as they are not found in the main text. However, they are also available to all participants through the HOPE Foundation Web site at www.hopefoundation.org.

Note: Chapter 5 is longer and more complex than the others. You may want to schedule extra time for the meeting at which it is discussed, or discuss it over two successive meetings.

Chapter 9. Principle 5: Gaining Active Engagement From Family and Community

Alan M. Blankstein and Pedro A. Noguera

Chapter Content Review

1. Name the three key principles of positive school-family relationships. Name at least three things schools can do to address these key principles.
2. Name the benefits to the school and community gained by good school-family relationships.
3. List the National PTA's six standards for family involvement
4. Name several challenges or obstacles to establishing good ties between school and community and possible solutions for each.

Activities

Note: Due to the length of this chapter's activities, consider breaking into smaller groups with each group focusing on one or two of the following activities, or use two group meetings to address the activities and questions below.

1. Consider the questions in the "Think It Through . . ." section on page 197. In small groups, come up with a plan that answers these questions that could be implemented at your school.
2. In small groups, read and discuss the scenarios in the section "What Good Looks Like" on pages 202 to 203. Rate each on the quality of the interaction and give reasons why each deserves such a rating. Come back as a large group and discuss your ratings.
3. In small groups, draw three columns on a piece of paper.

Column 1: List typical issues involving family responsibilities for their children's schooling (tardiness, absenteeism, incomplete homework, failure to sign homework or other forms, etc.).

Column 2: Next to each, note the school's current policy in regard to the issue.

Column 3: Note possible reasons for the problem.

Discuss whether the established policies address the source of the problem effectively and what a more empathetic approach might involve.

<i>14. I average or summarize all evidence gathered over time when reporting a final grade. (The opposite of this would be to allow new evidence to replace, not simply be added to, old evidence when determining a final grade. For example, if a student retakes a test, the new score would completely take the place of any old scores related to that skill.)</i>		
Never	8	32%
Sometimes	6	24%
Almost always	6	24%
Always	5	20%
Total	25	100%
<i>15. I involve students in all stages of the assessment process and they understand from the onset how grades will be determined.</i>		
Never	1	4%
Sometimes	6	24%
Almost always	10	40%
Always	8	32%
Total	25	100%
<i>16. I would like to use a standards-based report card in reporting grades.</i>		
Yes, I am ready to rock and roll! Let's get moving.	8	32%
Yes, but I need a little bit more information on some concerns I have.	10	40%
Maybe, but I need more information and more time to digest.	7	28%
No, I disagree with this train of thought.	0	0%
Other, please specify.	0	0%
<i>17. If you expressed an interest in a standards-based report card, what would you need to make this happen? If you did not express an interest, please explain your reasoning and/or hesitation.</i>		
[25 responses]		
<i>18. I believe the primary purpose of grades is to</i>		
Provide teachers with information for instructional planning.	1	4%
Provide information that students can use for self-evaluation.	3	12%
Communicate student achievement.	21	84%
Provide incentives to learn.	0	0%
Select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs.	0	0%
Total	25	100%

(Continued)