

A HANDBOOK FOR

High Reliability Schools

••• The Next Step in School Reform

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Italicised entries indicate reproducibles.



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Chapter 1

Safe and Collaborative Culture



Level 1 addresses the factors considered fundamental to the well-being of a school. Namely, do staff, students, parents and the school community feel that the school is safe and maximises collaboration for the enhancement of student learning? Level 1 has eight leading indicators:

- 1.1 The staff perceive the school environment as safe and orderly.
- 1.2 Students, parents and the school community perceive the school environment as safe and orderly.
- 1.3 Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.
- 1.4 Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction and the achievement of all students.
- 1.5 Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.
- 1.6 Students, parents and the school community have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.
- 1.7 The success of the whole school, as well as individuals within the school, is appropriately acknowledged.
- 1.8 The fiscal, operational and technological resources of the school are managed in a way that directly supports teachers.

As explained in the introduction, the leading indicators are designed to help school leaders determine what is already working well in their school and identify areas in need of focused attention. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to administer a leading indicator survey to teachers and staff, school leaders, students and parents.

Level 1 Short-Form Leading Indicator Survey

Figure 1.1 (p. 16) presents a short-form leading indicator survey for level 1. This survey can be administered to staff and school leaders within a school. Sign in to go.hbe.com.au for reproducible versions of the short-form survey items for all five levels.

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither disagree nor agree
 4: Agree 5: Strongly agree N: N/A or don't know

1.1 The staff perceive the school environment as safe and orderly.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.2 Students, parents and the school community perceive the school environment as safe and orderly.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.3 Teachers have formal roles in the decision-making process regarding school initiatives.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.4 Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction and the achievement of all students.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.5 Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.6 Students, parents and the school community have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.7 The success of the whole school, as well as individuals within the school, is appropriately acknowledged.	1	2	3	4	5	N
1.8 The fiscal, operational and technological resources of the school are managed in a way that directly supports teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Figure 1.1: Level 1 short-form leading indicator survey

This survey provides very general information about a school's level 1 status. For more specific information, long-form surveys should be used.

Level 1 Long-Form Leading Indicator Surveys

Here, we present long-form surveys for four different audiences: (1) teachers and staff, (2) school leaders, (3) students and (4) parents. These surveys provide detailed information for each leading indicator. School leaders ask teachers, staff members, students and parents to complete the appropriate survey from reproducibles 1.1–1.4 (pp. 17–26). Leaders then examine the results to identify areas of perceived strength or weakness within the school.

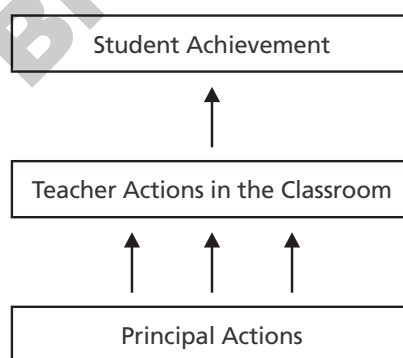
After administering the survey and compiling the results, school leaders might notice that staff responses to leading indicator 1.4, which is “Teacher teams and collaborative groups regularly interact to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction and the achievement of all students,” are lower than responses to other leading indicators. This could prompt school leaders to implement activities and initiatives specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative groups addressing common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction and the achievement of students. As described in the introduction, we consider implementing professional learning communities as critical to high reliability status at level 1. Hence we refer to the implementation of the PLC process as a critical commitment.

Level 1 Critical Commitment

While the PLC process is sometimes thought of as a singular intervention to engage teachers in meaningful collaboration, when used to its full potential it can be the structure that makes possible the successful implementation of a variety of the leading indicators for level 1. Indeed, Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano (2011) maintained that the PLC process can change the basic dynamic of leadership within a school, allowing school leaders to have a more efficient and direct impact on what occurs in classrooms. DuFour and Marzano noted that

the principal of a K–5 building can now work closely with six teams rather than thirty individuals. The principal of a large high school can influence twenty team leaders directly rather than 150 teachers indirectly. In short, the PLC process provides a vehicle for focused interactions between principals and teachers. (p. 51)

DuFour and Marzano explained that in the absence of the PLC process, the principal must influence each individual teacher, who in turn influences student achievement in their classroom (see figure 1.2). This has long been recognised in the research literature: the principal has an indirect influence on student achievement (see Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2006).



Source: DuFour & Marzano (2011, p. 49)

Figure 1.2: Typical relationship between principal behaviour and student achievement

DuFour and Marzano (2011) further noted that one of the more enlightening and disturbing aspects of the figure is that

multiple lines of influence are depicted between the principal and teachers’ actions. This is because traditionally there has been no way for principals to interact directly and concretely with teachers in a manner that influences their actions in the classroom. (p. 49)