

From:

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We began the journey in our district and at Tomé to be a Professional Learning Community about 11 years ago, 2007. When I arrived at Tomé 5 years ago, in 2013, it was evident that it was PLC light. We began by focusing on the 3 big ideas of a PLC. A collective responsibility and collaborative culture, a focus on student learning and a results orientation. We began by focusing on the culture of the school with a specific focus on a culture that is simultaneously loose and tight. We worked with Solution Tree and Dr. Luis Cruz at this stage of the journey. We also made a conscious decision to build capacity in by making our guiding coalition representative of the stake holders on our campus.

In 2015 we began the High Reliability Schools journey as a district. Our guiding coalition worked with Marzano Research and Dr. Phil Warrick. As we began working on Level 1, safe and collaborative culture, it became evident how closely aligned the work is. The HRS model took a deeper look at school safety and allowed us to review some of our practices including providing students, parents and community members formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.

As we began this journey we had no intention of being recognized as a Model PLC School or becoming certified in the HRS framework. Our goal was to improve student achievement and make the shift from teaching to student learning. As we continued to make changes for our students and learn more about both the HRS and PLC process we realized how intertwined these two processes are. Each level we look at in the HRS framework allows us to refine our practices that exist as a PLC. Both are focusing on student outcomes. Both advocate a cultural shift from traditional schooling. Traditional schools were never meant to guarantee learning for all students. These models have allowed us to evaluate our policies, practices and procedures to be able to be where we are today. We have made the guarantee to parents the regardless of the classroom their student is in their student will receive all the extra, time, help and support they require to be successful. We define success as grade level or better. Our RTI process is responsive to students skill by skill, student by student. All staff members participate in an "all hands on deck" approach including myself.

This district made the decision to use the HRS framework to assist schools in promoting effective practices with clear and incremental steps. There is a clear long term goal coupled with short term goals that provide quick wins and validation. We had started the Model PLC journey and continued with both because I could clearly see the correlation. Since we started the HRS journey I have said, "It certifies the PLC process".

I believe that being recognized in both practices has made it very difficult for people to discount the work being done. It has legitimized our vision of being The World's Best Elementary. It validates the student learning focus and journey we are on for our students and community to guarantee student success, both now and throughout their life. We have noticed growth in the areas of academic achievement, teacher practice and student behavior. Tomé currently has a school grade from the New Mexico Department of Education of a B. Historically we have had 1 C, 3 Bs and 1 A. Teachers are tracking student achievement on formative and common formative assessments and see students consistently meeting or exceeding grade level goals of 80% proficiency on essential standards. We see our

proficiency rates on interim and benchmark assessments continue to climb. We are currently at 45% ELA and 60% math and anticipate more growth with our end of the year assessments. Teacher practice continues to grow as they participate in job embedded professional learning including instructional rounds with peers and use of video. As a result of our Responsible Teachers Intervening (RTI) process that is systemic, directive and timely the number of students receiving assistance in Tier II and the Student Assistance Team (SAT) has decreased from 100 students to 26 students. The number of student discipline referrals has continued to decrease as there has been a focus on positive behavior and celebration. The most remarkable difference is we have not had any long term suspensions in 3 years.

Our biggest challenge is the fact that good is the enemy of great. We also had to take a look at each of our practices and ask ourselves if we were making decisions because it was good for students or convenient for adults. We determined we would guarantee student learning and ineffective practices would be abandoned no matter how thick the tradition of man was.

We found that people do what they do because it is either all they know or their practice works for them. We used evidence to evaluate each of our practices and make necessary changes. I would recommend anyone who puts student learning first to use either or both the PLC or HRS frameworks. To spend the time learning the basic tenants of the chosen framework, attending an event and seeking support from someone who has taken the journey. Their experience and learning will be invaluable most definitely transferable in your journey.

Education is the best and arguably the only tool we have in helping students find success in life. My father told me he there wasn't much in life he could give me other than an education and a work ethic. These frameworks allow schools to do the same for every student.

It is our moral imperative to provide each student an education skill by skill, student by student.