Tiers Without Tears: Successful Implementation of RTI by Building on PLC Practices
(slides)

Austin G. Buffum
Tiers Without Tears
Successful Implementation of RTI by Building on PLC Practices
Austin G. Buffum, EdD

Key Recommendations
• Introduce and discuss RTI in terms of how it will help students—not just meet federal mandates or raise test scores: “the why behind RTI.”
• Focus on the three big ideas of a PLC to build a foundation to support RTI.
• Create a systematic approach to RTI that does not leave it up to each teacher to respond.

Capistrano Unified School District

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Reproducible.
Never in our nation’s history have the demands on our educational system been greater or the consequences of failure as severe. Beyond the high-stakes school accountability requirements mandated by state and federal laws, the difference between success and failure in school is, quite literally, life and death for our students.

Building the Foundation
RTI and PLCs

Three Big Ideas of a PLC
1. Focus on learning
2. Collaborative culture
3. Focus on results
Big Idea 1

Focus on learning
(instead of on teaching)

We accept high levels of learning for all students as the fundamental purpose of our school and therefore are willing to examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.

Fundamental Assumption

To have a mission of learning for all:
• You must believe all students can learn at high levels.
• You must take responsibility to ensure that all students learn.
Restructure vs. Reculture

“If you intend to introduce a change that is incompatible with the organization’s culture, you have only three choices: **Modify the change** to be more in line with the existing culture, **alter the culture** to be in line with the proposed change, or **prepare to fail**.”


A Candid Mission Statement

It is our mission to help kids learn *if* they are conscientious, responsible, attentive, developmentally ready, fluent in English, and come from homes with concerned parents who take an interest in their education.
A Candid Mission Statement

Our mission is to create a school with an unrelenting focus on learning; failure is not an option.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the student and his or her parents to take advantage of the opportunities for learning.

A Candid Mission Statement

Our mission is to take credit for the accomplishments of our highest achieving students and to assign blame for low performance to others.

A Candid Mission Statement

It is our mission to ensure the comfort and convenience of the adults in our organization.

To promote this mission, we place a higher value on individual autonomy than we do on ensuring that all students learn.

We avoid any change or conversation that might create anxiety or discomfort or infringe on individual autonomy.
Activity
Creating a PLC Foundation
Current Reality and Steps
to Success

Discuss your current reality.

Building the Foundation: Five Essential Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Question</th>
<th>Current Reality</th>
<th>Desired Reality</th>
<th>Steps for Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 1: A Focus on Learning</td>
<td>To what extent do teachers believe all students can learn at high levels?</td>
<td>To what extent do teachers accept responsibility to make this a reality?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 2: Collaborative Culture</td>
<td>To what extent do teachers believe it is possible to hold ourselves accountable for students learning?</td>
<td>To what extent do teachers accept responsibility to support each other’s professional growth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check What We Know About Learning</td>
<td>How do we know if our students are learning?</td>
<td>How do we know if our students are learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Value Measures</td>
<td>How do we identify high contributors to student learning?</td>
<td>How do we identify high contributors to student learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematically Respond When Students Don’t Learn</td>
<td>How do we intervene when students do not learn?</td>
<td>How do we intervene when students do not learn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essential Questions

- To what extent does your staff believe all students can learn at high levels?
- To what extent does your staff accept responsibility to ensure that all students learn?
PLC Connection to RTI

What would happen if a school attempts to implement RTI, but has a focus on teaching rather than on learning?

Three Big Ideas of a PLC

1. Focus on learning
2. Collaborative culture
3. Focus on results

Why collaborate?
“We can achieve our fundamental purpose of high levels of learning for all students only if we work together. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high-performing teams!”


“Creating a collaborative culture is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives and the first order of business for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their schools.”


Collaborative teams are the engines that drive a school’s collaboration efforts.
By team, we do not mean groups who assemble for traditional grade-level and department meetings. The act of meeting together does not define a group of people as a team.

Members of a true team “work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable.”

—DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, Learning by Doing (2010), p. 28

The common goals uniting team members are shared learning outcomes for their students, and all team members take collective responsibility to ensure that all students succeed.
We would start by:

- Creating frequent, collaborative time during the professional workday
- Creating teams that support each person’s day job
- Creating and following team norms

Team Time

Creating a PLC Foundation
Current Reality and Steps to Success

Discuss your current reality.

Building the Foundation: Five Essential Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Our Current Reality</th>
<th>Desired Reality</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 1: A Focus on Learning</td>
<td>- Is everyone doing self-assessments at the same time?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Idea 2: Collaborative Culture</td>
<td>- How do we leverage our group’s thinking to make our decision-making stronger?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 3: Every Student Succeeds</td>
<td>- Who do we have a day on learning?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 4: Ongoing Monitoring of Our Efforts</td>
<td>- How do we know our students are making progress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea 5: Systemically Support Our Students</td>
<td>- Are our interventions working?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Essential Questions**

- Do we have frequent (weekly) collaborative time embedded during our professional day?
- Does our teamwork support each member’s daily responsibilities?
- Have we identified team norms?
- Do we hold each other accountable to follow our norms?

“Collaborative cultures, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things, they may end up being powerfully wrong.”


**In a PLC, collaborative teams focus on four key questions:**

1. What do we expect students to learn?
2. How do we know they are learning it?
3. How do we respond when they do not learn?
4. How do we respond when they have already learned?
In a PLC, collaborative teams focus on four key questions:
1. What do we expect students to learn?
2. How do we know they are learning it?
3. How do we respond when they do not learn?
4. How do we respond when they have already learned?

But don’t we already have state standards?

The Need to Prioritize

Robert Marzano: “To cover all of this content, you would have to change schooling from K–12 to K–22…. [T]he sheer number of standards is the biggest impediment to implementing standards.”

Criteria for Selecting Essential Standards

1. **Endurance**: Will this standard provide students with knowledge and skills that are valuable beyond a single test date?

2. **Leverage**: Will it provide knowledge and skills that are valuable in multiple disciplines?

3. **Prepare for the next level**: Will it provide students with knowledge and skills essential for success in the next grade or level of instruction?


Establishing Curricular Priorities


Most teachers provide a “self-selected jumble” of standards.


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But We Have Already Adopted Common Core Standards

“Although the national standards for language arts are better than the state standards they would replace, there are still too many of them, and many are poorly and confusingly written.”

—Schmoker, Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Learning (2011), p. 41

Common Core Standards vs. a Viable Curriculum

“The common core standards have not solved the problem for the classroom teacher of developing standards that truly represent a viable curriculum— one that can be adequately addressed in the current time available to classroom teachers.”


Fourth-Grade English Language Arts
(Excerpted from Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 28)

A student will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking by:

• Using relative pronouns and relative adverbs
• Forming and using progressive verb forms
• Using modal auxiliaries to convey various conditions
• Ordering adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns
• Forming and using prepositional phrases
• Producing complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons
• Correctly using frequently confused words (to, too, two)
What is the essential standard to be learned? Describe in student-friendly vocabulary.

I can compare whole numbers to 1,000 by using the symbols <, =, >.

Which symbol goes in the box to make this problem correct? <, >, =, +

62 □ 21 + 31
Prior Skills Needed

What prior knowledge, skills, and/or vocabulary are needed for a student to master this standard?

I know place value of digits from 1 to 1,000. I understand key phrases like greater than, less than, fewer, least, and most.

Common Assessment

What common assessments will be used to measure student mastery?

CFAs designed by the second-grade team will be administered halfway through and at the end of the unit.

When Taught?

When will this standard be taught?

This standard will be taught in September.
Enrichment

What will we do when students have learned the essential standards?
I can compare money written in decimal form.

Grade 7 English Language Arts
Standard 2.6 Expository Critique

Standard—Description
What is the essential standard to be learned? Describe in student-friendly vocabulary.
R2.6. Students will be able to assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author’s evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of biases and stereotyping.

Example—Rigor
What does proficient student work look like? Provide an example and/or description.
Students can identify a thesis, argument, or main idea and how well it is supported. They also can evaluate its effectiveness. Students can note instances of bias and stereotyping in an author’s argument.
The author supports the argument that Houdini was a hard worker by describing:

A. how he prepared.
B. his famous tricks.
C. his childhood.
D. how he became popular.

Which claim from the article is least supported by factual evidence?

A. Your eyes are like two small cameras.
B. This allows you to view the world in three dimensions or 3D.
C. On the one hand, animals that are hunted have eyes on the sides of the head.
D. If you think it would be great to have another type of vision, think again!

The student explains that a big window may require some extra painting. The student supports this idea by:

A. suggesting painting techniques.
B. describing types of supplies to buy.
C. offering suggestions of pictures to paint.
D. explaining the steps of window painting.

Which phrase from Document A is contradicted by information in Document C?

A. America's favorite and safest scooter!
B. Adjustable steering arm that ranges from 23” to 38”
C. Self-adjusting shoulder strap for comfortable carrying
D. Imagine being able to get a WINNING STREAK scooter for ONLY $39.95.

Suppose that your school has raised over $5,000 for school improvement. How would you use this money to improve your school?

Write an essay that proposes an idea and persuades the school that it is the best way to spend the money.

- Your essay should have multiple paragraphs.
- The first paragraph should include the statement of your proposal.
- The body paragraphs should provide evidence that supports your proposal.
- Be sure to address the concerns of readers whose position may be different from yours.

In this writing test, you will write a persuasive essay. Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- State your position on the topic.
- Describe the points in support of your position, including examples and other evidence.
- Anticipate and address readers’ concerns and arguments against your position.
Prior Skills Needed

What prior knowledge, skills, and/or vocabulary are needed for a student to master this standard?

Vocabulary: bias, opinion, fact, thesis, stereotype, argument, evidence, main idea

Skills: reading comprehension, critical thinking

When Taught?

When will this standard be taught?

This standard will be taught for three to four weeks in late January and early February.

Team Time

Creating a PLC Foundation
Current Reality and Steps to Success

Discuss your current reality.
**Essential Questions**

- Have we clearly defined essential learning outcomes that our students must master for success in the next course or grade level?
  - Clarity, rigor, prerequisite skills, enrichment

- Do all students have access to grade-level essential standards?

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**PLC Connection to RTI**

What would happen if a school attempts to implement RTI without a culture of collaboration, and without clearly defining what is essential for every student to learn?
Three Big Ideas of a PLC

1. Focus on learning
2. Collaborative culture
3. Focus on results

Big Idea 3: Focus on Results

“We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams, schools, and districts seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.”

—DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work (2008)

To guide our intervention program, common assessment information must tell us …

1. Which students did or did not master specific essential standards
2. Which instructional practices worked or did not work
School Performance Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Far Below</th>
<th>Below Basic</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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Classroom Performance Summary Report

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<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Num. Correct</th>
<th>Perc. Correct</th>
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<td>Student 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<td>Student 6</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>Student 7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<td>Student 8</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
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<td>Student 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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</table>

Classroom Standards Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Num. Correct</th>
<th>Perc. Correct</th>
<th>LS 2.d</th>
<th>LS 2.c</th>
<th>LS 2.a</th>
<th>LS 2.b</th>
<th>LS 2.e</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
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<td>43%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
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<td>Student 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
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<td>67%</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 10</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Classroom Teacher Report

| LS 2.d | Teacher A | 82% | Teacher B | 89% | Teacher C | 90% | Teacher D | 90% | Teacher E | 79% | Class Averages |
| LS 2.c | 100% | 75% | 80% | 82% | 71% | 82% |
| LS 2.a | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 73% | 95% |
| LS 2.b | 97% | 93% | 96% | 100% | 82% | 94% |
| LS 2.e | 100% | 83% | 86% | 91% | 80% | 88% |

Class Averages: 96% 91% 90% 88% 77% 89%

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3. Find x.

![Diagram of a triangle with sides 4 cm and 3 m, and an angle with an unknown measure x.]

Here it is

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Solution Tree

---

Peter

\[ 1.21 \]

(b) Expand

\[ (a+b)^n \]

\[ = (a+b)^n \]

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Select and unwrap essential student learning outcomes and develop a unit assessment plan.

Analyze summative assessment results, identify students in need of supplemental interventions.

Introduce learning targets to students. Begin core instruction.

Analyze formative assessment results, provide mid-unit interventions, continue and/or complete core instruction.

Give formative assessment.

Give end-of-unit assessment.

Repeat for additional learning targets as needed.

Where are we going?

Where to next?

How are we going?
Tier 2 Help

1. What do we expect our students to learn?

2. How do we know that they have learned it?

3. How will we respond when they don’t?

Conduct end-of-unit test.

Teach

What must all students be able to know or do?

Plan a common, formative assessment.

Reteach and enrich.

Additional Outcomes

What do we expect our students to learn?

Conduct end-of-unit test.

Team Time

Creating a PLC Foundation Current Reality and Steps to Success

Discuss your current reality.
### Building the Foundation: Five Essential Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Questions</th>
<th>What Can We Do? What are the Strong Points of the Team?</th>
<th>When Are We Ready?</th>
<th>Which Do We Need Work On?</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
<th>How Do We Get There?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Big Idea 1:</strong> A Focus on Learning</td>
<td>• How can we do self-assess on our strengths and weaknesses?</td>
<td>• Professional development and personal responsibility is made the norm.</td>
<td>• Practices are aligned with the professional development needs of the team.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Big Idea 2:</strong> Collaborative Culture</td>
<td>• How can we foster a culture of collaboration and accountability?</td>
<td>• Our team is committed to high standards and continuous improvement.</td>
<td>• How can we implement effective collaboration strategies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential Questions</strong></td>
<td>• Have we created common assessments that measure student mastery of each essential standard? Each target?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do we compare results to identify the most effective teaching strategies?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do we use this information to guide our interventions?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Essential Questions**

• Have we created common assessments that measure student mastery of each essential standard? Each target?

• Do we compare results to identify the most effective teaching strategies?

• Do we use this information to guide our interventions?

---

**Final Thoughts**

Don’t confuse simple with easy
Response to Intervention

RESOURCES

Books and DVDs

Online Course:
Pyramid Response to Intervention

Presenters: Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos, Chris Weber

solution-tree.com 888-763-9045

Thank You!

Pyramid Response to Intervention

For professional development at your site, contact Solution Tree at 800.733.6786.