

Rick DuFour on Teacher Collaboration for Student Achievement

In this piece in *The Learning Principal*, Rick DuFour declares, “Collaboration by invitation never works.” Effective principals have to ensure that every staff member is a contributing member of a collaborative team. “Principals must do more than organize teacher teams and hope for the best,” he says. “They must provide the focus, parameters, and support to help teams function effectively.” These include:

- Providing time for collaboration in the school day and year.
- Identifying critical questions to guide the work of collaborative teams.
- Asking teams to create products as a result of their collaboration.
- Insisting that teams identify and pursue specific student achievement goals.
- Providing teams with relevant data and information.

DuFour compares a well-led school with a first-rate symphony orchestra. The conductor wants each violinist to improve, but developing those skills will not result in a great orchestra. The conductor also has to get each section of the orchestra working together as a section – and help each musician and each section to hear the music in the same way and have a shared sense of what they are trying to accomplish with each piece of music they play.

“Principals who are staff development leaders function in much the same way,” says DuFour. “They want each 3rd-grade teacher to become a better teacher, but they realize that a focus on individual development will not create a great school. They must also help the 3rd-grade team function in ways that strengthen the entire 3rd grade. Most importantly, they must keep everyone in the school committed to a shared vision of improved learning for all.”