

# Book Study

Prepared by the  
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

## ***All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform***

Michael Fullan  
(Corwin Press, 2010)

**Book Description:** In short, Fullan has shown that real change is possible but only by taking a truly systemic approach. No single quick fixes. No good guy-bad guy politicizing to mobilize public anger. No fear mongering about America's declining competitiveness in the world. Just clear strategy, broad engagement (especially including educators themselves), and a consistent message that this can only be done by all of us working together across all levels of the educational system.

### **Target Audience(s):**

- Teams during Structuring
- Teams during Implementation
- District Leadership Teams
- Building Leadership Teams
- General Staff
- Leadership
- Empowering Culture
- Professional Development
- Elementary Team
- Secondary Team
- District Team

## Chapter 1

### -The Idea and Importance of Whole-System Reform-

**Brief Overview:** The basic idea of whole-system reform is addressed, including what it looks like and why it is critical to the success of any single country and the world.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Identify the big ideas for Whole-System Reform.
  
- 2) Discuss Hattie's critical change agents and how each one is imperative for successful reform.
  
- 3) What would happen if your school/district had NO silos of standards, such as curriculum, instruction, personnel, finance, etc.?
  
- 4) Discuss your reaction, individually and as a group, to Fullan's statement: "I did not feature the United States in the whole-system reform examples in this chapter because there are no examples of whole states achieving this level of coherence and focus."? Is your school/district on the right track?

## Chapter 2

### -Deceptive Inadequacies-

**Brief Overview:** Fullan shows why most current reform strategies are bound to fail. They look good from a distance; but upon closer inspection, they are a gross waste of political, human, and fiscal resources. They seriously fail the collective-capacity test.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the statement: “The emphasis needs to be on higher order skills for everyone in the system”.
2. Analyze and discuss your school’s/district’s current ability to develop students in the eight 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.
3. List the nine Elements of Successful Reform.
4. Discuss the nine Elements of Successful Reform in relation to reality, motivation, unions, division of labor (silos), etc.
5. Define simple, compound, and complex resources and give examples of each within your school/district.
6. Read page 31 individually and then discuss its contents related to your school’s/district’s current set of beliefs.
7. How would your school/district be different if you shifted from enforcing procedures to building capacity and from managing compliance to managing improvement?

## Chapter 3 -Collective Capacity at the School and District Level-

**Brief Overview for Chapters 3, 4 & 5:** These three chapters tie closely together as Fullan takes up the details of whole-system reform at the school, district, and state levels – what it really looks like and ideas for getting there. It is in these three chapters that Fullan makes the critical distinction between collective capacity (which is exponentially powerful) and individual capacity (which is necessary but not sufficient).

**Discussion Questions:**

1. List and define the eight Characteristics of an Effective School District.
  
2. Discuss how many of the eight Characteristics of an Effective School District are evident in your school/district.
  
3. If resources were not an issue, what would you change and why in order to ensure implementation of the eight Characteristics of an Effective School District?
  
4. Express an argument for or against the following statement: “It is not alignment that makes all systems go but rather engagement and the power of allegiances put to a higher purpose.”
  
5. Discuss the four big reasons for Tower Hamlets turnaround and how the four big reasons look within your school/district:
  - a. Resolute Leadership
  - b. Allegiance
  - c. Professional Power
  - d. Sustainability
  
6. Describe collaborative competition ~~is~~ and how it would or would not benefit your school/district.
  
7. Define sustainability.

8. Discuss whether or not your school/district is currently organized to achieve sustainability.
9. Apply your discussion of sustainability to the idea of “just-in-time” professional development and to an analysis of your school’s/district’s current professional development system.
10. List and discuss the 13 Parameters From Realization related to where the 13 Parameters would fit within your MTSS.
11. Define collective efficacy.
12. Make an argument for or against the following statement: “Communication during implementation is far more important than communication prior to implementation.”
13. Will your school/district get to the needed 90% or more participation in deep implementation of MTSS so there will be a payoff in student achievement?
14. Discuss Reeves’s finding of “low implementation is worse than no implementation”.
15. Discuss the following findings:
  - a. The solution is not a program; it is a small set of common principles and practices relentlessly pursued.
  - b. Neither off-the-shelf programs nor research per se provides the answer.
  - c. Effective practitioners are critical consumers of research and not implementers of research findings.

## Chapter 4

### -The State We Are In-

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you agree that actually accomplishing something is the best incentive around for doing more of it?
- 2) Discuss and apply the seven lessons on page 64 to your school/district related to resolute leadership.
- 3) Define and discuss intelligent accountability.
- 4) All Systems Go basically says that ALL schools are implicated, not just the so-called failing ones, and if you try to change just the bottom performing schools, you won't change the context in which they are working. Discuss this premise and your stance as a school/district.
- 5) What does "carrots over sticks, capacity over cajoling" look like in practice?
- 6) Does your school/district believe the following statement? Give evidence to support your answer.
  - a. "Moral purpose plus capacity building, plus transparency of practice and results, plus an emphasis on collaboration all serve to generate natural and healthy competition."

## Chapter 5

### -Individual Capacity Building-

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) If instructional practices are specific to individual teachers rather than school wide, then will students lurch between ineffective and effective practices and experience inconsistent teachers? Why or why not?
- 2) Discuss the seven practicalities for leadership development on page 88 in relation to the principal's priorities.
- 3) Discuss the Incentives That Work for Teachers on page 89 and whether you agree or disagree with each. Would these incentives leverage all teachers, and make it increasingly uncomfortable for those who do not improve?

## Chapter 6

### -Politicians and Professionals Unite-

**Brief Overview for Chapter 6:** This chapter focuses on the most difficult and decidedly essential part of the solution – how politicians and professionals must unite, while maintaining their respective roles and responsibilities, for their own good and for the good of society as a whole.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Read and discuss the chapter in its entirety. Focus on how your school/district can begin applying principles from *All Systems Go* in order to begin whole-system reform that will result in sustained reality.