BUILDING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

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Dabo Swinney-Dec. 30, 2018
after beating Notre Dame 30-3

“Players come and go-coaches come and go, but our culture stays the same”
OPENING ACTIVITY

WALLET/PURSE INTRODUCTIONS

- 3 to 5 participants will pull an object out of their wallet or purse, which represents them and explain why.
TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

- What is School Culture?
- Positive vs Toxic School Culture?
- Role of the Leadership in Creating a Positive School Culture
- Strategies for Sustaining a Positive School Culture
- Inspiration for 2019-2020
What Is School Culture?
DEFINING CULTURE

Culture is defined as the school’s personality (Hofsted, 1997)
In short, Terrence Deal, author and professor at Vanderbilt University, explains, “It is the way we do business here and clarifies what is important and what is not.”
Why Is School Culture Important?

What research tells us:

“Positive learning can only take place in a positive culture. A healthy school culture will affect more student and teacher success than any other reform or school improvement effort currently being employed.”

-Gary Phillips
Characteristics of Positive School Culture
POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE
- Appreciate what you have—are thankful
- Focus on the TEAM
- Accept blame
Characteristics of Culture

- Welcome and support new teachers
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Build positive relationships
- Focus on priorities
MORE CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

- James 3:18 - Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness
- Display GRACE and TRUST
- Place equal value of all students, parents, co-workers
- If you want to be big enough to lead, you have to be small enough to serve
SHAPING POSITIVE CULTURE

- Work with the informal network
- Recount stories and history
- Communicate core values in your actions
- Use ceremonies and celebrations to recognize accomplishments
- Changing culture takes TIME!
How long does it take to change culture?

With a carefully planned transformation leveraging all of these dimensions, your organization can feel very different within 12 months. Consistency and persistence however are needed so that you don’t declare victory too soon – remember your people are watching and waiting to see whether this is for the long haul.

https://blog.walkingthetalk.com/busting-the-myth-how-long-does-it-really-take-to-change-your-culture
How long does it take to change culture?

- Number of Employees  
  10  100  1,000  10,000  100,000  
  Year to complete change  
  1  2  3  4  5  

- The speed of culture change depends on size, commitment, and resources.
  - **The size of the organization**—with fewer people to involve, small companies change faster than big companies.
  - **The commitment of the top leaders** to walk the talk. If leaders show by their actions that they are committed to the change, employees and managers will quickly join them. If leaders delegate the task, little will change.
  - **The resources available**. Developing a work culture takes a little extra time. If the operational needs are too demanding, if there simply is no time to meet and discuss the culture, it may be best to wait.

Characteristics of Toxic School Culture
TOXIC SCHOOL CULTURE
TOXIC SCHOOL CULTURE

- Wish you were somewhere else
- Focus on yourself
- Blame others
TOXIC SCHOOL CULTURE

- Judge each other
- Low expectations
- Complain
- Gossip
TOXIC SCHOOL CULTURE

- Negative Values and beliefs
- No Shared sense of purpose
- Negative Relationships.
- Destructive individuals or groups.
- No sense of trust or caring.
- Few positive rituals or ceremonies to build a sense of community and hopefulness.

Deal and Peterson (2009)
Role Of The Leadership In Creating A Positive School Culture
The leader is the key person in developing trust, both by demonstrating it him/herself and in fostering a culture of trusted relationships.”

~M. Fullan
“At a deeper level, all organizations, especially schools, **improve performance** by fostering a shared system of norms, folkways, values, and traditions. These infuse the enterprise with passion, purpose, and a sense of spirit.”

(Peterson and Deal, 2002)
COMMITMENT

- Levels of commitment
  - Commitment
  - Compliance
  - Resistance
  - Disengaged

- Building commitment
  - Model it for others
  - Be honest about costs and rewards
  - Let others voluntarily participate
LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

- Timely identification of mistakes
  - Requires psychological safety
  - Blameless reporting systems
  - Statistical process controls and feedback

- Effective analysis
  - Regular debriefings and evaluations
  - Example: Airline crashes

- Deliberate experimentation
  - Create a culture of innovation, risk taking, and expected failure
“The biggest dilemma facing all leaders with moral purpose is what to do if you don’t trust the competence and motivation of the people you are expected to lead.”

~M. Fullan
TRUST OF CAPABILITY

- Respect people’s knowledge, skills and abilities
- Respect people’s judgment
- Surround yourself with excellence
- Develop others
- Support people in learning new skills
- Involve others and seek their input
BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS

- Embed collaboration in routine practices of the school with focus on learning
- Time for collaboration built in school day
- Teams focus on key questions
- Produce team norms and guidelines
- Products of collaboration are made explicit
What Google says about TEAMWORK
ADVANTAGES OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS

- Gains in student achievement
- High quality solutions to problems
- Increased confidence of all staff
- Teachers able to support one another’s strengths and accommodate weaknesses
- Ability to test new ideas
- More support for new teachers
Suggested Reading

The Power of a Positive Team

Proven Principles and Practices That Make Great Teams Great

Jon Gordon
Bestselling Author of The Energy Bus and The Power of Positive Leadership
Promote school spirit
KEY WAYS CULTURE IS MANIFESTED

- What hallways and classrooms look like.
- Relationships among staff.
- How newcomers are treated.
- Relationships between staff and administration.
- How students who are struggling are treated.
- Relationships with parents and the community.
- How staff collaborate to improve the school.
- How successes and accomplishments are celebrated.
Strategies For Building A Positive School Culture
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SCHOOL CULTURE

- Individual Meetings With Students and Teachers
- Individual Graduation Plans
- Push Academic Numerical Data
- Establish Academic and Behavioral Competitions
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SCHOOL CULTURE

- Implement PBIS system classroom and schoolwide
- Use social media for branding purposes
- Great teachers and students with spirited hello or high five daily
- Clear up misconceptions about college vs careers
Inspiration For The 2019-2020 School Year
LEAD
BY
EXAMPLE
RETAINING QUALITY EMPLOYEES

- Refer to Article:
Remind Me

- Participants will complete a School Culture Survey form about his or her school and place it in a self addressed envelope to be sent by presenters within 2 to 3 months after the start of the 2019-2020 school year.
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