



**School Improvement
Specialist Training Materials:
Performance Standards,
Improving Schools, and
Literature Review**

**Module 2—
Learning Culture**

December 2005

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)
at

EDVANTIA™
Partners in education. Focused on results.

Edvantia was founded in 1966 as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL); on September 1, 2005, AEL became Edvantia, Inc. The Regional Educational Laboratory for the Appalachian region is known as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia.

Edvantia is a nonprofit education research and development corporation, founded in 1966, that partners with practitioners, education agencies, publishers, and service providers to improve learning and advance student success. Edvantia provides clients with a range of services, including research, evaluation, professional development, and consulting.

For information about Edvantia research, products, or services, contact



P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325 • 304.347.0400 • 800.624.9120 • fax 304.347.0487
One Vantage Way, Suite D-210, Nashville, TN 37228 • 615.565.0101 • fax 615.565.0112
info@edvantia.org • www.edvantia.org

© 2005 by Edvantia

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Edvantia maintains policies and procedures that govern the Institutional Review Board in ensuring the welfare and protecting the rights of human subjects who choose to participate in research and evaluation activities.

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, under contract number ED-01-CO-0016. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of IES, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. government.

Edvantia is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

The School Improvement Specialist Project prepared seven modules. School improvement specialists, as defined by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia, are change agents who work with schools to help them improve in the following areas so as to increase student achievement. These modules are intended to provide training materials for educators seeking professional development to prepare them for a new level of work.

Module 1—Shared Leadership

Module 2—Learning Culture

Module 3—School-Family-Community Connections

Module 4—Effective Teaching

Module 5—Shared Goals for Learning

Module 6—Aligned and Balanced Curriculum

Module 7—Purposeful Student Assessment

Each module has three sections:

1. Standards: Each set of content standards and performance indicators helps school improvement specialists assess their skills and knowledge related to each topic. The rubric format provides both a measurement for self-assessment and goals for self-improvement.
2. Improving Schools: These briefs provide research- and practice-based information to help school improvement specialists consider how they might address strengths and weaknesses in the schools where they work. The information contained in the briefs is often appropriate for sharing with teachers and principals; each includes information about strategies and practices that can be implemented in schools, resources to be consulted for more information, tools for facilitating thinking about and working on school issues, and real-life stories from school improvement specialists who offer their advice and experiences.
3. Literature Review: The reviews of research literature summarize the best available information about the topic of each module. They can be used by school improvement specialists to expand their knowledge base and shared with school staffs as part of professional development activities.

Learning Culture

Content Standards and Performance Indicators for School Improvement Specialists

Self-Assessment Tool

1. **Learning Culture:** This matrix measures the extent to which a school improvement specialist has the knowledge and skills to assist a school in developing its capacity for the nurturing of a learning culture that reflects the following characteristics: (1) models effective relationship-building skills; (2) diagnoses a school’s culture; (3) aligns personal beliefs with behaviors; (4) facilitates reflection on impact of beliefs on student achievement; (5) collaborates to create supportive organizational structures; (6) develops skills and attitudes to support distributed accountability; and (7) facilitates school leaders’ efforts to mobilize staff around a vision and mission that support high levels of achievement.

Knowledge or Skill	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Novice
1. Modeling effective relationship-building skills	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. makes sure that others are aware of the positive relationships and trust building, as well as the research literature that associates the building of positive relationships to school improvement b. intentionally models relationship-building skills in ongoing work with school administrators, faculty, staff, and students and provides opportunities for school leaders to practice and receive feedback on their use of these skills c. facilitates systematic reviews with school leaders on organizational structures that may facilitate or hinder the development of positive relationships 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. coaches school leaders in the development and maintenance of positive relationships with all stakeholders b. ensures that leaders understand the connections between trustful relationships and a positive culture, and the connection between organizational structures and positive relationships c. models relationship-building skills in interactions with others 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. understands and values the importance of the connections between trustful relationships and a positive culture, and models appropriate behaviors to develop trustful relationships b. reviews organizational structures that facilitate or hinder the development of trustful positive relationships among constituents of the school community c. practices relationship building skills and reflects on continued need for growth 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has read about the effects of relationships on culture and has an understanding of these connections from personal experience b. is familiar with literature on organizational structures that support positive culture

Knowledge or Skill	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Novice
2. Diagnosing school culture	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. keeps abreast of the current research-based and theoretical literature on school culture b. knows and can use strategies to counter negativity in school culture and shares these strategies with school leaders c. facilitates systematic reviews of school culture, including strengths and weaknesses, and the development of strategies for culture change d. coaches school leaders in the development of knowledge and skills associated with the creation and sustenance of a positive culture 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. keeps abreast of the current research-based and theoretical literature on school culture b. knows how to counter negativity in school culture c. assists school leaders in the diagnosis of school culture strengths 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. keeps abreast of current research and literature related to learning culture, b. assists school leaders in the diagnosis of the school's strengths in culture c. can clearly identify negativity 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Has done reading on the research base to support the tenets of school culture
3. Aligning personal beliefs with behaviors	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. articulates his or her personal beliefs about ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control b. reflects on these beliefs in light of what the research says about their relationship to student and adult performance in schools c. aligns his or her behaviors with these beliefs d. models reflection and action based on these beliefs to school staff e. keeps up with the latest research and professional dialogue on the topic and encourages the faculty to do likewise 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. articulates his or her personal beliefs about ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control b. aligns his or her behaviors with these beliefs c. models reflection and action based on these beliefs to school staff 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. articulates his or her personal beliefs about ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control b. aligns his or her behaviors with these beliefs 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. articulates his or her personal beliefs about ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control

Knowledge or Skill	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Novice
4. Facilitating reflection on impact of beliefs on student achievement	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has a thorough understanding of student achievement research as it relates to administrator, teacher, student, and parent beliefs in the areas of ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control b. facilitates reflection and dialogue on beliefs about student achievement research c. keeps up with the latest research and professional dialogue on the topic and encourages the faculty to do likewise 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has a thorough understanding of student achievement research as it relates to administrator, teacher, student, and parent beliefs in the areas of ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control b. facilitates faculty reflection on these areas 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has a basic understanding of student achievement research as it relates to administrator, teacher, student, and parent beliefs in the areas of ability and achievement, effort and efficacy, and power and control 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has little knowledge of the research base on correlates of student achievement b. is very knowledgeable from personal experience on what influences student achievement
5. Collaborating to create supportive social and organizational structures	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. understands the relationship between social and organizational structures and beliefs about student performance b. works with staff to develop and institutionalize structures that support the belief that “all students can learn, and it’s my job to see that they do so” c. keeps up with the latest research and professional dialogue on the topic and encourages the leadership team to do likewise 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. understands the relationship between social and organizational structures and beliefs about student performance b. provides research-based, job-embedded learning experiences to assist the leadership team and other involved stakeholders in understanding and developing such structures 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has a basic awareness of the relationship between social and organizational structures and beliefs about student performance b. talks with school leaders and staff about this issue 	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. has limited knowledge of the relationship between social and organizational structures and beliefs about student performance

Knowledge or Skill	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Novice
6. Developing skills and attitudes that support distributed accountability	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. has a thorough understanding of distributed accountability and its relationship to increased student performanceb. provides school staff with a research-based rationale for embracing this approachc. provides ongoing learning opportunities to develop supportive skills and attitudesd. assists the leadership in establishing structures to create and monitor distributed accountability throughout the school, and models appropriate skills and attitudese. keeps up with the latest research and professional dialogue on the topic and encourages the leadership team to do likewise	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. understands distributed accountabilityb. provides school staff with a research-based rationale for embracing this approach and provides ongoing learning opportunities to develop necessary skills and attitudes supporting distributed accountability	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. has a basic understanding of the research base underlying distributed accountability, the underlying rationale, and skills and attitudes that support itb. talks with school leaders and staff about the value of this approach	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. understands the concept of distributed accountabilityb. is only slightly familiar with the research base or how to implement distributed accountability models in schools

Knowledge or Skill	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Novice
7. Facilitating school leaders' efforts to mobilize staff around a vision and mission that support high levels of achievement	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. has a thorough understanding of features of an effective school vision and mission, their role in supporting student achievement, and the processes for developing themb. provides research-based information and facilitates the faculty's collaborative development of vision and missionc. mentors school leadership in mobilizing members of the school community around that vision and missiond. keeps up with the latest research and professional dialogue on the topic and encourages the leadership team to do likewise	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. understands the processes for developing appropriate school vision and missionb. provides research-based information and engages faculty in the collaborative development of vision and mission statements that support student achievement	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. has a basic understanding of school vision and mission and how school leaders can engage staff in developing vision and mission statements that support student achievement	<p>The school improvement specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. has knowledge about school vision and mission and the processes for developing them, but has not had much experience in doing so

The Way We Do Things Around Here

Here are a few definitions of organizational culture, selected from the many that appear in the literature. The simplest is “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Kotter (1996) describes culture as “the norms of behaviors and shared values among a group of people” (p. 148). Schein (1992) defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 12). This definition points out the constructed nature of a culture. “As in all cultures, all facts, truths, realities, beliefs and values are what the members agree they are—they are perceptions” (Ott, 1989, p. vii).

Early studies did not make a distinction between organizational culture and climate (Purkey & Smith, 1983). In a study on child welfare and juvenile justice case management teams, Glisson and James (2002) investigated the differences between these two constructs. Using factor analysis on responses to two well-known instruments for measuring organizational culture, they demonstrated that culture and climate were distinct concepts. They describe climate as the way people perceive their work environment, and culture as the way things are done in the organization. In schools, climate is the feeling one has in the classrooms and hallways. The climate can be positive and supportive or it can be negative. School culture, however, is the set of unarticulated “rules” about the way things are carried out—how conflicts are dealt with or how people are honored, for example.

Schein (1992) analyzed culture at three levels—artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Artifacts are “surface-level” expressions of culture, such as the way space is organized, the language used, the myths and stories that are told, ceremonies and rites, and published materials. Espoused values help give meaning to the artifacts. These values are stated and are usually consciously held expressions of what an organization cares about and “what ought to be.” Espoused values may or may not be reflected in organizational practices. At the deepest level, culture consists of a set of underlying assumptions. These assumptions are largely unarticulated, unexpressed, and taken for granted, yet they powerfully shape what happens in the organization.

Three of the important assumptions that shape school culture are “what students are like and how to deal with them, what academics are like and how important they are, and how teachers should relate to each other” (Firestone & Louis, 1999, p. 304). Underlying assumptions are particularly relevant to school change. Unless those basic assumptions are brought to the surface and the process of “cognitive transformation” (Schein, 1992, p. 19) takes place, it will be difficult to make long-term changes in the way things are done in a school.

References

- Deal, T., & Kennedy, A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Firestone, W.A., & Louis, K.S. (1999). *Schools as cultures*. In J. Murphy & K.S. Louis, (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (2nd e. pp. 297-322). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Glisson, C., and James, L. R. (2002). The cross-level effects of culture and climate in human service teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 767-794.
- Kotter, J.P. 1996). *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ott, J. S. (1989). *The organizational culture perspective*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1985). Educational policy and school effectiveness. In G. R. Austin & H. Garber (Eds.) *Research on exemplary schools* (pp. 181-200). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Professional Learning Community

As recent research has argued, the possibilities for individual teacher learning increase greatly as professional communities move from individualistic or “balkanized” cultures to “collaborative” cultures, and toward what can be described as learning communities.

—Linda Darling-Hammond and Milbrey McLaughlin,
Teaching as the Learning Profession

In most schools, teachers work with students but rarely with other adults. Individual teachers typically wrestle with questions and issues related to lesson designs, instructional decisions, assessment quandaries, and classroom management issues in isolation from a broader collegial group. The “egg carton” metaphor is an apt one for school organization, each teacher being separated from colleagues by classroom walls, school schedules, and time-honored norms that reinforce patterns of practice.

Two emerging themes in professional development are challenging the “Lone Ranger” approach to teacher practice: deprivatization of practice and job-embedded learning. Both advance the notion of professional learning community, which is characterized by new teacher roles, relationships, and responsibilities. Deprivatization refers to practices that bring teachers out of their individual classrooms into exchanges with colleagues. For example, in professional learning communities teachers reflect together, dialogue around issues central to teaching and learning, share challenges as well as successes, and focus on student work. Whether talking together about effective strategies for engaging the unmotivated student or observing and being observed for the purpose of giving and receiving feedback, teachers are beginning to look to colleagues for assistance, support, and solutions.

Job-embedded learning integrates professional development with the daily issues of teaching and learning—centering professional learning on students and their performance. Job-embedded learning is to teachers what authentic learning is to students. In both cases, learning is problem centered and focused on real—not “made-up”—work. Job-embedded learning also brings students into the loop as teachers engage them in assessment and design activities that help students think about how they best learn. The vision becomes one of individual classrooms as communities of learning and practice, each of which is a component of the larger learning organization (i.e., school).

Learning in community is a radical departure from traditional models of staff development, and this change doesn’t “just happen” spontaneously. Rather, school leaders commit to a new philosophy and approach to professional growth and development and provide both the vision and the resources—including time, training in new strategies, and materials—to support this transformation in practice. Not only do teachers and their students benefit directly from this type of collaborative work, the nature and quality of the school community change.

Excerpted from Walsh, J. A., & Sattes, B. D. (2001). Learning in Community—Broadening the Definition of Professional Development and Collegiality. In *Inside School Improvement: Creating High-Performing Learning Communities* (pp. 35-36). Charleston, WV: AEL.

Reference

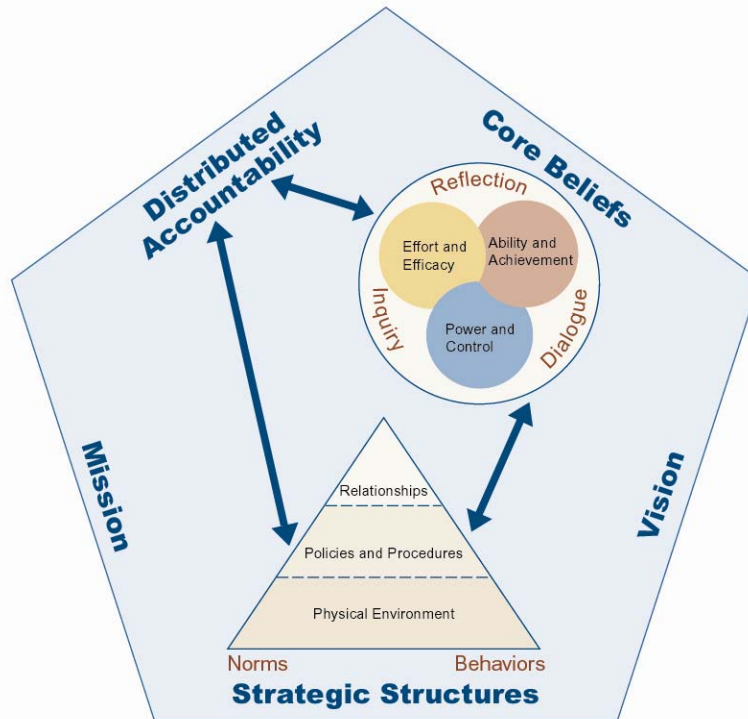
Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. (1999). Investing in teaching as a learning profession: Policy problems and prospects. In L. Darling-Hammond & L. Sykes (Eds.) (pp. 376-411) *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Learning Culture

A high-performance learning culture is one in which every member is expected to perform to high standards. In such a culture, colleagues and peers support one another’s efforts, and resources and structures are aligned with expected behaviors. School leaders must take an action-oriented approach to grow a culture that is conducive to high achievement for students and extraordinary performances by adults.

Many approaches to school culture are descriptive. They are strongly influenced by the work of Deal and Kennedy (1982), who identified five phenomena associated with organizational culture: vision, norms, rituals or ceremonies, heroes and heroines, and stories and legends. While descriptive approaches advance understanding of the nature and shape of culture, they often fail to make research-based connections to student and teacher performance. And, in practice, they involve educators in assessing these facets of their school but do not always engage them in the kind of deep learning that leads to cultural change.

The Edvantia framework focuses attention on three spheres for action and change: the intangible areas of (1) vision/mission, (2) core beliefs, and (3) the concrete arena of strategic structures. The underpinning theory posits that, while individuals' behaviors are guided initially by intrinsic personal beliefs, their behaviors can be modified by strategic structures designed to reinforce organizational core beliefs as stated in the vision and mission. Over time, changes in behaviors can lead to changes in beliefs.



Design of this conceptual framework began with the end in mind: *increased achievement for all students*. It used this essential question as a starting point: If achievement is to increase for each student within a school, how will individuals within the school community relate to one another regarding issues of student learning? Or, how will they conduct the business of school?

Distributed accountability, an approach that has every member of a school faculty assume responsibility for the academic progress of every student, is the defining feature of a high-performance learning culture. Given a vision grounded in distributed accountability, one emerging question was this: What are the beliefs shared by individuals who accept collective responsibility for the learning of all students in their school? A review of the literature revealed that beliefs in three critical areas relate to distributed accountability: ability and achievement, efficacy and effort, and power and control. A second emerging question asked: What kinds of concrete organizational structures promote and support distributed accountability? Research and literature pointed to structures in three critical arenas: physical environment, policies and procedures, and relationships.

This approach to creating a culture that supports high levels of student achievement is neither simple nor linear. The components of the framework are dynamic and interactive; the framework organizes the elements to facilitate school leaders' understanding of the interconnectedness of the components. The framework also serves as “scaffolding” to guide and support strategic interventions intended to strengthen school culture. This is not a neutral or value-free framework; rather, it is an action-oriented blueprint for use by leaders who are committed to nurturing a culture that supports learning.

Reference

Deal, T., & Kennedy, A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Edvantia Culture Training

To help school leaders and school improvement specialists explore the theory and master techniques that can help a school achieve a top-notch learning culture, Edvantia has used its framework to develop these courses.

- **Creating a High-Performance Learning Culture**
This face-to-face learning experience for school leadership teams introduces participants to ways of thinking about and acting on their school cultures. The training requires three days, which can be scheduled all at once or spread across a semester. Teams may come from schools in one district or geographical area.
- **Reculturing for Student Success: Supporting and Sustaining Improvement**
School improvement specialists and school leaders can fit this course into busy schedules and apply what they learn as they go. This course is delivered through ePD@Edvantia, an online learning environment that supports individual and group activities.

For more information, contact Carolyn Reynolds (carolyn.reynolds@edvantia.org, 800.624.9120 ext. 5447, 304.347.0447) or visit www.edvantia.org.

Working Collaboratively to Achieve Results

The school improvement specialist stories that appear in Improving Schools come from real life. The names have been changed or removed to preserve confidentiality.

As a School Improvement Specialist, I spend a large portion of my time promoting and building professional, collaborative working relationships at my schools. While receiving training on Mike Schmoker's *Results*, I realized we needed to give

serious thought to implementing focused collaboration meetings because the process has several benefits:

- it is research based
- it is needed by the staff
- it helps build capacity
- it keeps us focused
- it makes common sense to the staff
- it helps us to experience success toward meeting our school improvement goals
- it is inexpensive to implement and operate
- it promotes a professional learning culture

There has been buy-in from the principal and instructional staff in each of the schools where I have employed this process. This buy-in is assisted by use of a modified version of Schmoker's time-efficient meeting form. This form, which also serves as an agenda and minutes of the meeting, complements the aligned curriculum map on assessments and strategies that have been proven to work. The team will review the data and identify a specific need that is aligned with the curriculum. Then, after brainstorming strategies that could be used to teach the identified need, they develop an action plan that includes some of the strategies discussed as well as pre-and post-assessments.

Teachers experience and celebrate incremental successes. Working on one or two standards at a time in order to reach their goal for the year keeps us focused. Whenever these teachers are asked what has caused the increase in test scores, focused collaboration meetings is always one of the top three responses.

Reflection

- Speculate as to why and how the structure of the focused collaboration meeting promotes a professional learning culture.
- In what way do you think each tool associated with the focused collaboration meeting (e.g., the time-efficient meeting form, curriculum map) contributes to the success of this collaborative strategy?
- In what ways and to what purposes might you be able to use or adapt this structure?

Reference

Schmoker, M. (1996). *Results: The key to continuous school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Toward an Understanding of School Culture—Metaphorically Speaking

Culture is difficult to capture with a simple definition. Because it is an abstract concept, it is elusive and expansive—more to be understood than defined. This may be why the preeminent students of school culture use metaphors to convey their thinking. Metaphors invite others to enter into the definition process—to make their own meaning of a given concept. Let's look at the metaphors suggested by four different authors. Each provides a powerful way to think about the concept.

Since the publication of *Corporate Cultures* in 1980, Terry Deal has been one of the most ardent students and prolific authors regarding corporate and school cultures. In *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*, Deal and his co-author, Kent Peterson, think of **school cultures as “complex webs** of traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents and administrators work together to deal with crises and accomplishments” (p. 4). Within these webs, they identify multiple elements beginning with the mission and purpose, which they view as “the focus of what people do” in schools, “the school’s reason for existence,” and statements that embody the vision and values of the school’s culture.

Roland Barth, founding director of Harvard University’s Principal’s Center, views **culture as a pattern**. Barth (2002) writes, “The school culture is the complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization” (p. 8).

Thomas Sergiovanni, an education researcher who has focused much attention on school cultures and communities, conceives of **culture as glue**—the normative glue that holds a particular school together. One can view norms as the “unstated group expectations or ‘behavioral blueprints’ that people are supposed to follow” (Deal & Peterson, 1998, p. 27). Normative glue seems to connote the “shared meaning” that Barth and Fullan (2001) believe to be so important.

Rick DuFour, former principal of the internationally acclaimed Adlai Stevenson High School near Chicago, offers the final metaphor for culture. DuFour describes **culture as a garden**—understanding it to be a growing, dynamic, ever-changing phenomenon. DuFour and his co-author Burnett (2002) write, “A garden is influenced both by internal and external factors. Its most vital elements occur underground and are not readily visible. More importantly, a garden is fragile and very high maintenance. Even the most flourishing garden will eventually become overgrown if it is not nurtured. Flowers left unattended eventually yield to weeds” (pp. 27-28). He believes that “the same can be said of school cultures. Unless educators carefully tend to their schools’ cultures by shaping the assumptions, expectations, habits, and beliefs that constitute the norms within them, toxic weeds will eventually dominate” (DuFour & Burnett, 2002, pp. 27-28).

Reflection

- Which of the four metaphors—web, pattern, glue, or garden—do you find most helpful? What evidence from your personal experience can you offer to support your choice?
- Generate another metaphor for culture.
- Why do you think cultural considerations are so critical to successful improvement?

References

- Barth, R. (2000). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership*, 5(8), 6-11.
- Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (1998). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DuFour, R., & Burnett, B. (2002). Pull out negativity by its roots. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23(3), 27-28.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1999). *The lifeworld of leadership: Creating culture, community, and personal meaning in our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mission and Vision

Deal and Peterson (2002) are among the scholars of culture who view mission and vision as critical elements of a school's culture. They define mission as "the focus of what people do" in schools, "the school's reason for existence." Mission can also be seen as the work, or job, of members of the school community.

Vision can be defined as a group's shared view of what its members are creating together. Vision typically grows out of and is congruent with core values. School leaders should engage the broader school community in the process of creating a shared vision and mission. The exemplars below contain key ideas associated with high-performing cultures.

Mission

It's our job to set high expectations for all students and to provide the environment, instruction, and support to ensure that all students are learning and achieving as measured by rigorous standards.

Vision

Our shared view of what we are creating together

- All students are engaged in learning, and all are achieving at high levels.
- Faculty/staff accept collective responsibility for the achievement of all students in the school.
- All adults work together to ensure that each student receives appropriate instruction and support in a learning-enriched environment.
- Both students and adults behave as if they believe their individual and collective efforts will improve performance.

Reference

Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (1998). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Book Review

Leading in a Culture of Change: Personal Action Guide and Workbook by Michael Fullan. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

In this reader-friendly publication, Michael Fullan highlights and restates the major themes presented in his 2001 book of the same title. He includes questions to prompt reader self-assessment and discussion with others as well as suggested activities (“things to try out”).

The *Workbook* is organized around Fullan’s five components of change leadership: Moral Purpose, Understanding Change, Building Relationships, Creating and Sharing Knowledge, and Making Coherence. Each component of leadership gets a chapter of its own, and a final chapter discusses issues related to what the reader has learned.

The case examples, exercises, and resources in the *Personal Action Guide and Workbook* make it a good candidate for a school leaders’ study group, as it is for individual study and reflection.

“Reculturing is creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It activates and deepens moral purpose through collaborative work cultures that respect differences and continually create and test knowledge against measurable results. It creates the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices both inside and outside the organization. It involves developing relationships, creating knowledge, and striving for coherence.” (Fullan, p. 76)

The Ladder of Inferences: A Tool for Testing Our Beliefs

Our beliefs—especially those we hold most strongly—are self-perpetuating. We tend to choose information and ideas that support our beliefs; we interpret data in ways that affirm our beliefs. These beliefs become so self-evident that we rarely see a need to question or test them. These beliefs—influenced by the culture in which we live, the family in which we grew up, the friends we have—typically become stronger and stronger, unless we stop to examine them and the assumptions on which they are based.

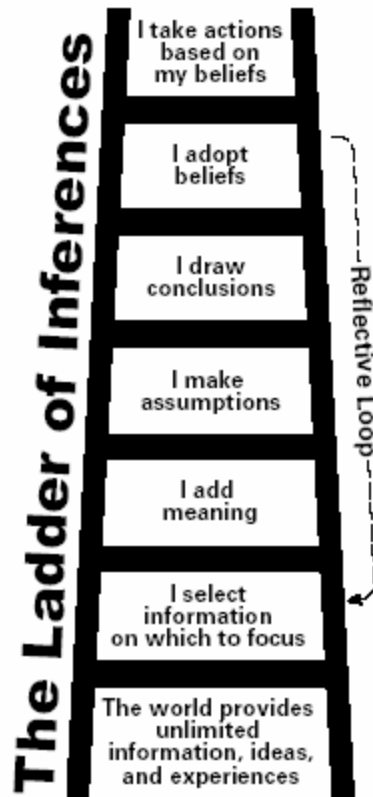
Here is a story of how jumping to conclusions—without testing beliefs—can lead a person to take unwarranted action. Many years ago, in an after-school workshop during which most of the faculty was engaged, the facilitator noticed that one teacher was extremely off-task; her side conversations were beginning to distract others. No matter what strategies the facilitator tried (moving closer to her group, addressing her directly and by name, giving her positive feedback), the teacher would not be engaged.

The facilitator concluded (*leaping* up the ladder of inferences) that the teacher was “waiting for retirement,” not interested in improving her skills, exhibiting passive-aggressive behavior by disrupting others, and basically intent on derailing a session that others could find helpful. The facilitator resolved, at the break, quietly and respectfully to invite the teacher to leave the session, because it seemed clear that she didn’t want to be present. Fortunately, when the facilitator approached the teacher, she caught herself before speaking. Instead of asking her to leave, the facilitator asked, “How’s it going for you this afternoon?”

The teacher told the facilitator about her circumstances: Over the past several months, she had used her sick leave to care for a dying husband; now, although she herself was ill, she had to be at school because she needed the income and had no more leave. The facilitator listened with interest and empathy; silently shuddering at how limited data had led to the wrong conclusions. After the break, the teacher engaged actively in the remaining activities.

How often do we make snap judgments about the students in our classes? About the teachers with whom we work? About the principals we are coaching? About our students’ parents and families?

Chris Argyris (1993) writes about the “ladder of inferences”—the mental process of using data to reach a conclusion that supports a long-held belief. Peter Senge (1994), in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, depicts this ladder in a way that is useful as a tool .



Think of the first rung being the data we select to consider—out of all the data to which we’re exposed. We take another step by adding meaning to those data (based on our personal experiences), and from there we make assumptions and draw conclusions, which are central to the beliefs that we adopt about the world. But the “reflexive loop” is the most critical piece of the ladder. It allows us to focus on data that support our beliefs by directly influencing the data we select; thus, the self-perpetuating belief becomes more solidly entrenched. All these steps happen in a split second, and they all occur internally. Only the data that are observable to all (below the first rung) and our subsequent actions (above the top rung) are visible to others. We don’t “see” the steps others move through—on their way to taking action—and often we aren’t aware of the steps we move through.

We see the result of this ladder in all parts of our lives. The Ladder of Inferences can be critically important in a school—in at least three ways. First, the ladder can be a **tool for self-reflection** when we draw conclusions about students. Let’s say that some students in our school come from professional families—their parents were successful in school and in their careers; they believe education is important. We may believe that these students are high achievers and that, coming from this supportive environment, they will do better in our school. We will select data—from all the possible information around us—that confirm this belief. “What a good answer he gave.” “She wrote such a thoughtful paper.” “That science project shows real initiative.” Based on these beliefs, we may treat these students differently than students from less-advantaged families, where we conclude, “He doesn’t even try.” “She’s like her sister—only interested in boys.”

“There’s nothing more I can do if the parents won’t do their part.” What data are we using to reach these conclusions?

Second, the ladder can be an important **tool to use with students** as we teach them to be more intentional about being thoughtful, reflective, and metacognitive. The ladder helps us make our thinking visible to ourselves and to others; it is a tool for dialogue as well as for writing. What an opportunity for students to learn that beliefs are not “facts” and that their beliefs, like the beliefs of all others, are influenced by data, interpretation, and assumptions—all of which are individual.

Finally, the ladder can be a **tool to assist a leadership team** or a faculty when we consider alternatives to help students. Consider the reaction of some teachers and parents to the suggestions of “de-tracking” or “cooperative learning.” How often we have heard the statement “That will hurt our high-achieving students.” Providing information from research is one way to help people understand new ways of doing things; helping people understand where beliefs come from can facilitate making a change.

Peter Senge (1994) writes that when a team learns the language of “the ladder,” team members have a vocabulary for asking one another about assumptions. “Can you help me understand how you reached that conclusion?” “How did you interpret what I just said?” “What was your reaction to that suggestion?”

References

- Argyris, C. (1993). *A guide to overcoming barriers to organizational change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., & Smith, B. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

It’s Not Easy

The school improvement specialist stories that appear in Improving Schools come from real life. The names have been changed or removed to preserve confidentiality.

As a School Improvement Specialist, I know the value of a positive school culture: improved collaboration; genuine concern for others; improved attendance before, during, and after school; and an enthusiasm for teaching and learning with the reward of improved student performance.

But one school, according to its faculty’s assessment, had a toxic culture. During a full day of grade-level meetings, the teachers and staff used the listing of top-notch vs. toxic indicators to rate themselves. Sadly enough, teachers agreed, “We’re way over on the toxic side.” In discussion and further assessment, almost without fail, teachers and administrators agreed that not many positive initiatives were practiced in the school.

The leadership team selected “Improvement of School Culture” as a goal for the year. With money from a local foundation, they hired a professor from a local college to meet with them in March. She talked at length about what makes a positive culture and then asked the question, “What will *you* do to improve the culture of your school?” Dead silence greeted her. She remained calm and silent also. Finally, after many minutes, one teacher spoke up, “The problem is ours. We’re going to have to do something ourselves.” The ball was rolling!

The consultant showed a powerful video, called— “FISH!”— that communicates the value of a positive culture, albeit in a fish market. Faculty members couldn’t see how it related to their school. “We really can’t have fun here; we’re too busy teaching the standards.”

The year ended. Several teachers requested transfers. Some remained at the school because they could not find work elsewhere, bitter about the transfer policies in their district. Two administrators accepted positions at other schools. And the highly touted summer retreat designed for ultimate “team building” touched only one third of the faculty who chose to attend.

Now another year begins. Yes, it will take more than a video, more than a consultant, and more than a goal in a school improvement plan to change the culture of this school. Despite ample funding and heartfelt discussions among school leaders, cultural change will need a major “jump-start” to move from toxic to tolerable. Achieving a top-notch culture—at least in the near future—is only a dream.

There is, however, one glimmer of hope: for the first time in five years the school has made adequate yearly progress. Perhaps the celebration of this small but powerful indicator will provide the much-needed catalyst for change. I certainly hope so.

Reflection

- What reasons can you give for the leadership team’s failure to “kick-off” a cultural renewal in this school even with the support of a consultant, a motivational video, and a plan for bringing more people “on board”?
- What suggestions would you offer to help the leadership team in its efforts to improve the culture at the start of this new year?

Top-notch vs. Toxic Culture: What's the Difference?

Cultures are not neutral, nor are they passive. Our vision is for a high-performance learning culture—or a real top-notch place to be.

What is the difference between the extremes of top-notch and toxic? Review this list of some of the major differences. Compare these with your own experiences.

Top-Notch	Toxic
Caring and supportive of others	Apathetic and self-protective
Cohesive	Fragmented
Collaborative	Independent or competitive
Diverse	Homogeneous; conforming
Efficacious; "can-do"	Helpless; dependent
Energetic	Lethargic
Democratic; egalitarian	Elitist
Focus on student and adult learning	Focus on schooling
Focus on excellence; high expectations	Focus on "getting by"
Hopeful; optimistic	Hopeless; despairing
Innovative	Satisfied with status quo
Interdependent	Isolated
Respectful	Disrespectful
Trusting	Cautious; suspicious

Eight Potential Roles for Leaders of Change

In their 1998 book, *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*, Terry Deal and Kent Peterson outline eight school leadership roles that relate to culture. Deal and Peterson use metaphors to embody these eight roles and suggest that leaders who consciously shape their schools' cultures employ all eight of these powerful roles to energize their communities.

- 1. Historian.** The authors write, "In order to understand the present culture and plan for the future it is important to understand the past . . . to understand where the school has been. Past crises, challenges, and successes reverberate in the present. It is important for a leader to learn from the past [and to] take and keep the good and avoid repeating the mistakes" (1998, p. 88). Questions posed by historians are
 - What are the "roots" of our school's current culture?
 - How did key beliefs and norms evolve?
 - Who was instrumental in shaping the culture that we've inherited?
 - How has the school changed over time?
- 2. Anthropological sleuth.** Deal and Peterson see this role as that of detectives who investigate the customs, social relationships, structures, and myths of a group of people. Only by having a thorough understanding of the school's daily rituals and activities can the leader fully understand the state of the school culture. In the role of anthropological sleuth, school leaders ask such questions as
 - What is the daily rhythm of our school?
 - What beliefs and rituals underpin the routine activities of staff, students, and parents?

3. **Visionary.** In their research on leadership, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner (2002) identify the visionary function of the leader as critical to success. They call this function “inspiring a shared vision” and suggest two parts in the process: (1) envisioning the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities and (2) enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations (p. 22). Deal and Peterson put it this way: “Visionary leaders continually identify and communicate the hopes and dreams of the school, thus refocusing and refining the school’s purpose and mission” (1998, p. 89).
4. **Symbol.** Actions of the leader symbolize the core beliefs embedded in their school’s vision. Deal and Peterson write:
 - Everyone watches leaders in a school.
 - Everything they do gets people’s attention.
 - Educational philosophy, teaching reputation, demeanor, communication style, and other characteristics are important signals that will be read by members of the culture in a variety of ways. (p. 90)

Key questions that leaders might pose regarding the symbolic role are these:

- In what ways do our actions and behaviors serve as symbols for other members of our school community?
 - How can we make visible our commitment to the mission, shared vision, and core beliefs of our school?
5. **Potter.** Deal and Peterson write: “School leaders shape the elements of school culture (its values, ceremonies, and symbols), much the way a potter shapes clay—patiently, with skill, and with an emerging idea of what the pot will eventually look like” (1998, p. 92). Key questions that leaders can ask in consideration of their role as potters are
 - How do we use rituals and celebrations to mold and reinforce beliefs and norms that are aligned with the vision of our school?
 - What strategic structures can we design to help shape beliefs and norms?
 6. **Poet.** Have you ever been under the spell of a “master communicator”—a leader who understands the potential of language to motivate and mobilize people to action? The leader as poet recognizes the power of language and carefully crafts both written and spoken pieces. In the role of poet, a leader would ask these questions:
 - How do we use language to communicate our school’s vision, mission, and beliefs to all stakeholder groups?
 - What words and images do we use? Think of the power of the following phrases: *All means all. No child left behind. A nation of readers. It takes a village to raise a child.*

- Do we optimize the use of slogans and creeds—for both students and adults in our schools?
7. **Actor.** Let's face it. Some of us are more theatrical than others. Few of us could challenge the real-life heroes celebrated in recent movies. However, most school leaders have the opportunity to take the stage multiple times during a school year. In the role of actor, a leader can use devices other than language: stage props (e.g., a well-chosen hat), music, timing (pauses can be powerful). Think about how you capitalize on the potential of leader as actor.
- How do you orchestrate events to strengthen our school's culture?
 - In what ways do you create "stages" or use existing forums to call attention to shared vision and beliefs?
 - What new "stages," or strategic structures, can you create to showcase core beliefs?
8. **Healers.** Leaders as healers are in tune with the emotional health of the school community. When individuals are in the midst of change, when their comfort zone is temporarily violated, leaders are sensitive to feelings and are ready to listen, empathize, and assure. Because the health of a school's culture is so tied to the emotional well-being of those who inhabit the school, this leadership role is of critical importance. To assume this role, leaders need to constantly monitor the mood or the spirit of the school. Both formal and informal structures are essential to effective monitoring.

How Leaders Model Culture

1. Deal and Peterson (1998) offer five specific ways leaders can signal to the schoolwide community what is important:
2. Symbolize core [beliefs] in the way offices and classrooms are arranged.
3. Model values through the leader's demeanor and actions.
4. Use time, a key scarce resource, to communicate what is important, what should be attended to.
5. Realize that what is appreciated, recognized, and honored signals the key values of what is admirable and achievable.
6. Recognize that official correspondence is a visible measure of values and reinforces the importance of what is being disseminated. (pp. 90-92)

References

- Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (1998). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This tool can be the first of a two-part strategy for helping people create a vision that all can share. Initially, it is important for individuals to reflect on and gain clarity about what is important to them in an “ideal” school. Teachers, parents, students, and community members can all be involved in this quick way to discover what is most important to them.

The second part of the strategy should employ an activity that promotes sharing among group members as they identify collective values with which to establish common themes for a vision or statement of beliefs.

The 20/20 Vision activity takes 60 to 90 minutes and can be completed with a group of between 20 and 50 people. If more people participate, the ensuing conversation will be richer but it will require more time. Prepare a handout with about six to ten prompts and, under each prompt, allow ample space to write.

Individual Reflection

Be sure the setting is quiet and participants respect the time to think and write without interruption. Allow at least 15 minutes so you get thoughtful responses. Tell people they’ll be sharing their ideas orally in small groups after writing time ends.

Identifying Common Themes

Have people number off or somehow form small groups, one for each prompt. In the groups, they will share responses and look for common themes, which they should write on easel paper. After a few minutes, have the groups move in a clockwise direction to the paper that represents the next prompt. Here, they will study the previous group’s themes and add any from their own responses that are not already on the list. The groups should continue moving until they have seen all the responses.

Finding the Common Core

Next, ask participants to think about what they have seen and to answer the following kinds of questions: What ideas are recurring? What elements are absolutely essential to the collective “picture” this group holds of the school? Each person should write down five or six key ideas.

Now, the group is ready to move on to the second activity, which might happen in this or another session. After that session, a small group can be selected to put the resulting ideas for a vision into a written statement.

Sample Prompts for 20/20 Vision

These examples can help you write your own prompts or, if you prefer, get the complete list from Inside School Improvement by Jackie A. Walsh and Beth D. Sattes, published in 2000 by AEL (now Edvantia).

Directions: Imagine you are a part of “20/20 School” and are joining other members of the school community to celebrate the school’s continuing journey toward excellence. Respond to the following scenarios in a way that aligns with your philosophy and ideals regarding school improvement and excellence.

- You attend a session that focuses on “All Students Reaching Their Potential.” Many current and former students are talking about the goals 20/20 School has for all students. You take note of the most frequently mentioned ones:
- You leave the room with a group of parents who clearly take great pride in their children’s accomplishments. They mention the following specific ways parents help make 20/20 School a place where everyone is responsible for the total development of all students:
- You visit a classroom and observe teacher and students in a regular day’s work. You notice that most students are enthusiastically engaged in learning and you begin to look for factors that seem to contribute to student engagement. Among the things you note are:
- When you leave the classroom, you meet two teachers who have been on the faculty “forever.” They begin talking about what you saw in the classroom you just visited. You mention that, not so long ago, they wouldn’t have known about anything outside their own classrooms. They agree and discuss the excitement for learning that permeates the school and the norms that support these new behaviors, including:

Reference

Walsh, J. A., and Sattes, B. D. (2000). *Inside school improvement: Creating high-performing learning communities*. Charleston, WV: AEL.

Book Review

Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement, by R. J. Marzano, D. J. Pickering, & J. E. Pollock. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001.

As its title indicates, this book has a much wider scope than culture alone; however, Robert Marzano and his colleagues include a provocative discussion of a belief that influences success—a belief that also can be influenced by school culture.

The authors cite psychologist Bernard Weiner as the person responsible for popularizing the idea that believing in effort can pay off in achievement, a notion that has been confirmed by research. The book describes the four causes to which people generally attribute success: ability, effort, other people, and luck.

Research shows that, of these four causes, belief in one—effort—is the most useful. As the authors explain, “If you believe that effort is the most important factor in achievement, you have a motivational tool that can apply to any situation.”

The authors draw two generalizations about what research on effort reveals:

1. **Not all students realize the importance of believing in effort.** Although it might seem obvious to adults—particularly successful ones—that effort pays off in terms of enhanced achievement, not all students are aware of this. . . . The implication here is that teachers should explain and exemplify the “effort belief” to students.
2. **Students can learn to change their beliefs to an emphasis on effort.** Probably, one of the most promising aspects of the research on effort is that students can learn to operate from a belief that effort pays off even if they do not initially have the belief. An interesting set of studies has shown that simply demonstrating that added effort will pay off in terms of enhanced achievement actually increases student achievement. (pp. 50-51)

The Little School That Could: Raising Community Expectations

Nestled in the hills of West Virginia is Atenville Elementary School, where students, parents, teachers, and staff exude a “can-do” attitude as they engage in exciting new ventures in teaching and learning. Faculty and staff are continually learning and incorporating research-based practice into their daily instruction. From a focus on brain-based learning to more effective questioning strategies, teachers seek ways to more actively engage students in learning; students move about with a sense of confidence and purposefulness—especially as they engage in learning through participation in Atenville’s Microsociety. A virtual army of parent volunteers assumes myriad roles in support of teaching and learning.

Things were not always thus at Atenville. Darlene Dalton, principal, recalls the days when the little school reflected the low self-esteem and low expectations of the surrounding community, which is beset with high levels of unemployment and poverty. In Dalton’s words, “Our school was a ‘gray school,’ infected with complacency and defeatism.” This spunky lady—driven by love and passion for these children—determined that these young people would and could “get to the other side of the mountain.” They would develop a vision for their future; they would believe in themselves; they would develop a work ethic; they would be nurtured by adults who held high expectations for their performance and who also provided high levels of support; they would experience success in school so that they could build on this in their futures. Darlene’s vision for the children and the school is palpable—a striking example of “vision as a field of energy” that engages individuals within an organization to work together to achieve shared goals.

Excerpted from Walsh, J. A., & Sattes, B. D. (2000). *Inside School Improvement: Creating High-Performance Learning Communities*. Charleston, WV: AEL, p. 111.

It's the Little Things

As a curriculum generalist, I visited 20 schools in my district each year. School culture was something I felt within minutes of my arrival. In the air. in the rooms, halls, and offices. Over the years, I could almost sense “good vibes” on my first visit and know whether a school was a place where students wanted to learn and teachers wanted to teach.

Schools with top-notch cultures had one overriding trait in common: open, respectful communication. Administrators and teachers talked with their hearts, not just with their years of experience and knowledge. They cared for students. They wanted students to succeed. They wanted their school to be a “good school.” Whenever there was a problem, they asked, “What can we do to fix things so we can move forward?”

In schools with top-notch cultures, there was also a lot of listening. People felt valued not just for the jobs they did but for who they were and what they had going on in their personal lives. Students, too, felt comfortable sharing what they liked about school—and even what they didn’t like. They knew that someone (in fact, a lot of “someones”) cared and would listen.

Positive schools had a happy hum of activity. Little or no shouting in the halls and classrooms. Laughter . . . sometimes. Praise given with specificity. Professionals sharing tried-and-true strategies. Staff coming early or staying late—just because they want to. Shared goodies in the lounge. Hugs. Lots of hugs.

When I was asked to become a principal, I wanted a top-notch culture for my staff and students. Over the years, I’d been listening, observing, and making mental notes of what I could do if the opportunity ever arose. And so I resolved to engage others in making our school a place where students wanted to learn and teachers wanted to teach.

First, I listened sincerely. And people wanted to talk. I knew I could be uplifting and positive, but I also knew I had to give honest feedback. The words “We can do this” and “I believe in you” became part of every reflective session I had with teachers.

Second, I involved all members of our learning community. I once knew a principal who wrote and produced a skit to honor each retiring teacher. Everyone, including the custodian and secretary, wore costumes and acted their parts. I wanted that same level of involvement, not just at retirement but always. Everyone, I resolved, would be a part of the important work we did and of our celebrations.

Third, I put notes in mailboxes and offered candy from a clay bowl in my office. Sometimes I just went down the hall and asked, “Could you use a little chocolate today?” By so doing, I opened my door for a teacher to chat with me. Frequently, he or she stayed, and lines of communication opened up over a simple Milky Way.

And fourth, I wanted students to know how to talk with adults. Every day I opened doors in the morning “car circle” and greeted children by name. When I realized that some children didn’t know how to respond, I asked teachers to teach them. From then on, I would say, “Good morning,” and students called me by name and complimented my earrings or dress or shoes. They were learning. And they felt confident because they had been trained to respond politely and make eye contact.

All these little things built rapport—caring, honest, don’t-hold-back rapport—among faculty, students, parents, and visitors. And that rapport impacted teaching and learning because “our family” wanted to shine.

I am retired now, but I frequently reflect on the culture I tried to establish in my school. Sometimes I reread a favorite note from one of my students: “You just make me want to do my best.” It may not be much to some, but to me it’s a measure of success. When kids feel positive and comfortable, they feel free to learn.

Reflection

- Do you or agree or disagree that “the little things” have a major impact on a school’s culture?
- What indicators of success did you find in this principal’s attempts to create a top-notch culture in her school?
- Where would you begin when trying to help a school develop a top-notch culture?

Contributors to this issue of *Improving Schools* include school improvement specialists Susan Hudson and Rusha Sams and Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia staff members Jackie A. Walsh, Beth D. Sattes, and Nancy Balow.

The Cultural Approach to Studying Schools

Albert J. Boerema

December 2005

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) at Edvantia

Introduction

Various aspects of a school's learning culture are related to the quality of the school's instructional program and the school's ability to implement reforms effectively (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Smith & O'Day, 1991). Among educators, researchers, and policymakers, enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 heightened interest in how the learning culture of a school affects the performance of all students (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003; Desimone, 2002).

For this paper, theoretical literature on organizational change and school learning cultures was reviewed, and key concepts are presented here. The literature review examines the cultural approach to studying organizations and presents a definition of organizational culture that comprises 11 dimensions: (1) control, coordination, and responsibility; (2) orientation and focus; (3) the nature of time and time horizon; (4) stability and change; (5) orientation to work, task, and coworkers; (6) isolation versus collaboration/cooperation; (7) the basis of truth and rationality in the organization; (8) motivation; (9) resources; (10) the nature of students; and (11) the nature of academics. Dimensions 1 through 9 were identified by organizational management researchers Detert, Schroeder, and Mauriel (2000) while conducting a comprehensive review of the literature on organizational culture. Education researchers Firestone and Louis (1999) added dimensions 10 and 11, which are specific to educational organizations. This review concludes with eight actions school leaders can take to help school communities develop or enhance learning cultures that are receptive to change.

Learning Culture and Its Role in School Reform

The U.S. education system has undergone a period of almost continual reform (Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999). Since the 1980s, there have been several waves of school reform—the effective schools movement, school restructuring, systemic reform, and most recently, comprehensive school reform. Interesting and creative curricular, pedagogical, governance, and structural innovations have arisen from this series of reforms; yet frequently the reform effort breaks down and things return to the way they were. The most recent policy development in the reform agenda is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which seeks to make education systems more accountable by holding schools, principals, and teachers responsible to raise levels of student achievement. Schein's (1992) insight—that to change the way an organization functions, change must occur in the underlying belief structure of the organization members—is useful in understanding why reform efforts are so difficult to sustain.

As researchers investigate the success of the reform agenda, one aspect that interests them is the role of school culture in successful reform implementations. Organizational culture is one of the four lenses through which one can examine school reform, according to Bolman and Deal (2003). The other lenses involve structure (the rules, roles, and policies that guide and control organizational behavior), human resources (alignment of human and organizational needs), and politics (the power and conflictual aspect of organizations). All

four of these lenses offer insight into important aspects of school reform, but reform efforts will not have long-term effects if they are not embedded in the culture of the school (Kotter, 1996). The body of research that developed around the effective schools movement (Purkey & Smith, 1983) and the later restructuring movement (Murphy & Hallinger, 1993) used both quantitative and mixed methodologies to investigate some of the cultural aspects of schools that were effective in meeting their missions. When statistical methods suggested certain findings, they were expanded through case studies and other qualitative methodology (see, for example, Louis & Marks, 1998).

Organizational Culture

Thinking about organizations in terms of their culture became common in the field of organizational research in the 1950s. Two early works that focused on organizational culture were Elliot Jaques's *The Changing Culture of the Factory* (1951) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956). In the 1980s, several works brought the concept to the center of management thinking—*In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982), *Corporate Cultures* (Deal & Kennedy, 1982), and *Theory Z* (Ouchi, 1981). Culture entered the world of education research through the 1979 study on effective schools, *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*, by Michael Rutter and his associates. This body of work has made it clear that organizational change must be accompanied by a change in organizational culture to be effective and sustained (Kotter, 1996; Schein, 1992).

The culture approach to analyzing and managing organizations employs a set of assumptions that differ from the other dominant approaches to organizational theory, which look at structure (Jaques, 1990) and systems (Scott, 1961). In both the structural and systems approaches, the assumptions are that the actions and behavior of organization members are directed and constrained by rules, by managerial authority, and by the norms of rational behavior (Ott, 1989). The organizational culture perspective, however, is rooted in the assumption that “many organizational behaviors and decisions are in effect predetermined by the patterns of basic assumptions that are held by members of the organization” (Shafritz & Ott, 2001, pp. 361-362). In other words, the organizational culture influences the behavior of members as much as or more than the formal rules and structures.

In addition to its different set of assumptions, the organizational culture approach to studying organizations relies on the qualitative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

A Definition of Organizational Culture

Many definitions of organizational culture exist. The simplest is Deal and Kennedy's theory that it's just the way things are done (1982). Kotter (1996) describes culture as “the norms of behaviors and shared values among a group of people” (p. 148). Schein (1992) defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to

perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 12). This definition points out the constructed nature of a culture. According to Ott (1989), “As in all cultures, all facts, truths, realities, beliefs and values are what the members agree they are—they are perceptions” (p. vii).

Early studies did not make a distinction between organizational culture and climate (Purkey & Smith, 1983). In a 2002 study on child welfare and juvenile justice case management teams, Glisson and James investigated the differences between the culture and climate constructs. Using factor analysis on responses to two well-known instruments for measuring organizational culture, they demonstrated that culture and climate were distinct concepts. They described climate as the way people perceive their work environment, and culture as the way things are done in the organization. In a school context, climate is the feeling one has in the classrooms and hallways. The climate can be positive and supportive, or it can be negative, even toxic. School culture, however, is the set of unarticulated “rules” about the way things are carried out—how conflicts are dealt with or how people are honored, for example.

Schein (1992) analyzed culture at three levels—artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Artifacts are “surface-level” expressions of culture, such as space organization, language use, myths and stories, ceremonies and rites, and published materials. Espoused values help give meaning to the artifacts. These values are stated and are usually consciously held expressions of what an organization cares about and “what ought to be.” Espoused values may or may not be reflected in organizational practices. At the deepest level, culture consists of a set of underlying assumptions. These assumptions are largely unarticulated, unexpressed, and taken for granted, yet they powerfully shape what happens in the organization.

In a school, three important assumptions that shape culture are “what students are like and how to deal with them, what academics are like and how important they are, and how teachers should relate to each other” (Firestone & Louis, 1999, p. 304). Underlying assumptions are particularly relevant to school change. Unless those basic assumptions are brought to the surface and the process of “cognitive transformation” (Schein, 1992, p. 19) takes place, it will be difficult to make long-term changes in the way things are done.

Dimensions of Culture

The eleven dimensions of culture examined in this review address the often unstated core beliefs that ultimately drive the actions of organization members (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001). Nine of these dimensions were identified by Detert, Schroeder, and Mauriel (2000) in their comprehensive review of the literature on organizational culture. Two additional dimensions specific to education organizations were identified by education researchers Firestone and Louis (1999). Discussion of these dimensions of culture and their implications for reforming school practices are presented here.

Dimension 1: Control, Coordination, and Responsibility

Both the organizational and educational literatures report that organizations that are high performing or attempting to improve quality hold corporate beliefs that it is necessary to have a shared vision and a set of shared goals. Studies (Kruse & Louis, 1995; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) suggest that schools with a greater degree of consensus on school goals were also those that were demonstrating higher levels of student academic performance. The opposite value, expressed in many schools, is that individuals need to have the freedom to establish their own goals and vision in their classrooms. Timperley and Robinson (1998) described an attempt at collegial problem solving in which teachers were unable to reach a consensus on how to solve their school's homework problem. Individual teachers who reserved the right to address the problem as they saw fit, rather than accepting the group's decision, created this difficulty. Vision-setting exercises are valuable techniques for groups to express their collective visions, but if they hold an underlying assumption that individuals can follow their own goals and visions, school improvement will be undermined.

Dimension 2: Orientation and Focus

In the early part of the 20th century, there was a move to professionalize public education. Local control gave way to centralized control as the number of school districts in the United States was substantially reduced (Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGaughy, 2001). The belief underlying this move was that education experts should be making education decisions. Reform efforts that attempted to develop school-based management have tried to counter this belief, yet it continues to be widely held.

The quality management literature of the 1990s, however, holds a different belief about the orientation and focus of schools: education needs should be decided primarily by those served by schools—students, parents, community groups, and other stakeholders. This value holds that decisions about curricular matters do not belong solely to teachers and administrators; rather, teacher professional knowledge needs to be combined with the contributions of all education stakeholders.

Research on this belief has compared student academic results of public and private schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Private schools, especially the Catholic schools that Coleman and Hoffer examined, had governance structures that were more responsive to community and parents' educational goals and aims for their children. A review of the vigorous debate over this issue indicates that stakeholder participation in education decisions was associated with improved student academic performance (Boerema, 2005).

Dimension 3: The Nature of Time and Time Horizon

This component of organizational culture considers how the organization views its time horizon. The important question here is whether to plan and act for short-term or long-term objectives and gain. Schools are experiencing two contradictory sets of pressures relating to their time horizon. The first comes from the establishment of statewide testing. This has created incentives for administrators and teachers to teach to the test for short-term

gains, as opposed to implementing proven pedagogical approaches and focusing on long-term student gains. Focusing on the long-term student gains may carry the risk of insufficient gains over the short term. Yet Newmann, Bryk, and Nagoaka (2001) reported that higher gains were achieved in classes in which more intellectually stimulating pedagogical activities were used.

The second pressure is the move to site-based management in many jurisdictions, which encourages schools to make strategic long-term plans. “Strategic planning is the process of matching school activities to the current and emerging environment” (Davies & Ellison, 1998, p. 135). Schools that wish to establish a culture that focuses on continual student improvement must take the long-term approach (Detert et al., 2000).

Dimension 4: Stability Versus Change

Based on their dispositions and experiences, organizations and their members hold assumptions about the relative merits of stability and change. Schools that have a norm of continuous critical inquiry understand that all schools have areas of strength and weakness, and they need to be open to addressing the areas of weakness (Saphier & King, 1985). One behavior that shapes this norm is the way criticism is handled in the organization. Druian and Butler (1987) reported that schools where the atmosphere allows the expression of criticism are schools that recognize and respond to weaknesses in more productive ways.

One major impediment to change and the creation of a culture receptive to change is the perceived “cost” of implementing change. Eby, Adams, Russell, and Gaby (2000), reporting on an organizational attempt to move to a team-based sales approach, found that those who would need to make the greatest changes were those who were most resistant to the initiative. There are factors that may contribute to this resistance to change. For one, if organization members who try new things without success are “punished,” others will be less likely to attempt improvements if risk is involved. Also, leaders must provide the right support to enable the organization to undergo change.

Dimension 5: Orientation to Work, Task, and Coworkers

A feature of the professionalization of education described earlier is the differentiation of tasks. What emerged during the professionalism movement was a belief that schools should be managed and led primarily by administrators who were trained for this role and who had time to carry out the tasks.

The quality management literature, however, indicates that the opposite view is held by organizations that are improving and functioning at a high level. Workers at all levels should be active in improving overall performance. In schools, this belief is expressed in practices that seek teacher input on curricular and education matters. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of data collected from a sample of 24 restructuring schools indicated that improved student learning was strongly related to the empowerment of teachers to make decisions about quality educational practices (Louis & Marks, 1998).

Organizational learning can help advance overall school and district performance. Relying on qualitative data from 111 teachers in 14 schools, Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt (1998) investigated the conditions that promote organizational learning. They found a strong correlation between teachers learning to improve their teaching and the school district's culture—its mission, policies, and resources. This is an interesting finding, given that much of the literature has pointed to the primary importance of factors within the school.

Dimension 6: Isolation Versus Collaboration/Cooperation

The literature on quality management holds that collaboration is essential for achieving maximum effectiveness (e.g., *The Deming Management Method*, Walton, 1986). Yet, that value runs counter to the fundamental American value of individualism. It also runs counter to a fundamental structural characteristic of U.S. schools. Typically, teachers and students do their work individually, and student work is evaluated independently. Schools are organized in ways that promote independent work. Teachers are assigned to classes individually; they spend the bulk of the school day working with students without collegial support. In addition, the departmental nature of high schools encourages teachers to focus on their subject areas, rather than their students' whole program.

Research conducted by Lee, Smith, and Croninger (1997) showed that teacher collective responsibility for student learning was positively associated with both effectiveness and equity in student learning. In addition, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) found that one factor related to the high productivity in the Catholic schools they examined was the collegial approach in those schools. Belief in the importance of collaborative work was part of virtually every framework for quality improvement reviewed by Detert and colleagues (2000).

Dimension 7: The Basis of Truth and Rationality in the Organization

A seldom-discussed component of school culture is the way in which members of the organization determine what is real (true) and what is not. While physical aspects of a school are evident just by looking, other aspects are more ephemeral, and this component deals with those aspects of a culture. For example, if there has been a rash of petty theft in the school, some teachers may feel there has been a general decline in discipline and demand that the principal do something about it. The principal may pronounce that the disciplinary climate of the school has not really changed. The vice principal may report that a student caught in the act of stealing has admitted to the previous instances of theft. This represents three ways of deciding what is real—"gut feeling" or intuition, pronouncement, or examination of the data. The way the organization decides what is real or not real is an important aspect of organizational culture. For schools that want to improve student performance, decisions must be based on data rather than on intuition or pronouncement by authority (Detert et al., 2000).

Dimension 8: Motivation

Members of an organization who do their best work because the task is worth giving their best are motivated by internal forces, while those who do what they need to do to avoid

punishment or to get a reward are externally motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1981). In education settings, the issue of motivation is related to both teacher and student performance. Do students work because learning is intrinsically worthwhile or because they want high marks or are trying to avoid punishment for not doing the assigned work? The oft-heard question “Does this count?” may indicate that much of the work students do is driven by grades rather than by the intrinsic value of the learning (Dweck, 1986).

The total quality management literature (Detert et al., 2000), however, assumes that workers want to do their best but are often prevented from doing so by the system in which they work. One way to think about improving student and teacher performance might be to think about the structural elements of schools and how these encourage or prevent top performance. An evaluation system, for example, that has a grade as the final product might not be providing the best incentives to do quality work.

Dimension 9: Resources

The importance of resources in raising educational quality has been frequently stated in the popular press. Detert et al. (2001) assert that business managers know there is a cost to quality, and there are also areas where quality can be improved without consuming additional resources. In a school, teachers and principals who hold the view that quality can come about only through the infusion of additional resources are impeding improvement. “Improving internal processes, focusing on customers’ needs, and preventing quality problems from occurring in the first place can achieve improvements. . . . If one believes that quality can always be improved within any set of resource constraints . . . , then one is always searching for ways to improve the system” (pp. 201-202).

Dimension 10: The Nature of Students

Firestone and Louis (1999) add this dimension to the list, arguing that teacher and principal beliefs about their students make up a central dimension of school culture and have profound effects on the ways schools and classrooms are managed. Further, teachers’ beliefs range from viewing students as serious academic learners to seeing students as problems to be managed.

Assumptions about students can be related to assumptions about intelligence. During the early 20th century, intelligence was considered to be a fixed trait (Murphy et al., 2001). This view supports tracking practices that are still used in many schools. Alternative views of intelligence see it as developmental—that one’s ability to learn can expand through school and life experiences—or as multifaceted, with each student having a unique array of intellectual gifts. The beliefs about intelligence that teachers bring to their classrooms will influence their pedagogical choices. If teachers believe each student has a fixed amount of intelligence, they will not provide challenging activities for those they see as having less intelligence.

Dimension 11: The Nature of Academics

Firestone and Louis (1999) also add this dimension. Teaching and learning are the core technology of schools, yet they do not play a role in shaping or guiding all school activities. Beliefs about the importance of academics are important aspects of school culture that will determine school effectiveness. Beliefs about the centrality of academic work will determine the degree of academic pressure found in a school and the approach that teachers take to teaching. One approach, the incorporative (Firestone & Louis, 1999), emphasizes teaching a prescribed curriculum to students who are vessels to be filled. Another approach, alternatively called *developmental* (Firestone & Louis, 1999), *authentic* (Newmann & Associates, 1996), or *constructivist* (Brooks & Brooks, 1993), views students as active learners who construct knowledge through the learning activities they engage in. A growing body of literature suggests that the latter approach has greater and longer-term outcomes.

Actions Leaders Can Take That May Build Cultures Receptive to Change

Organizational culture is a communal creation, yet much of the literature on leadership frames the establishment and management of organizational culture as a leadership task (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Vaill, 1984). However, there are aspects of school culture over which leaders have no control—school history, national culture, the larger culture of the teaching profession, gender and class cultures, and the economy (Angus, 1996). In addition, Angus contends that the organization's culture is continually being contested by the interplay among the teachers, students, and parents who make up the school community.

Whatever past or present forces may be at work, leaders have significant tools they can use to influence the cultures in the organizations they lead. Principals have the power to reward and celebrate, or to censure and condemn. They frequently set the agendas for discussions and have the means to provide opportunities for discussion to take place. These tools, with careful intention, can be used to help shape a school culture that is receptive to change and focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. An examination of the literature on organizational and school culture suggests these actions that principals can take:

- Recognize that changing culture takes time. Senge (1990) noted that in making deep changes, slower is faster.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful conversations among organization members so they can surface their underlying beliefs about schools, change, and quality—and jointly identify contradictions, inconsistencies, and the need for change (Kotter, 1996).
- Include the wider community of stakeholders—parents, students, and representatives of community groups—in conversations about schools, change, and quality. This wider conversation helps the school to be responsive to the desires and needs of those who have the greatest stake in its performance (Leonard, 1999).

- Create opportunities for collaborative work. Carve out quality time for staff members to meet together and create work assignments that give opportunity for collaborative work (Borko, Wolf, Simone, & Uchiyama, 2003).
- Give away power. Giving others in the organization power to make decisions at their level of expertise and relevance frees leaders to focus on solving problems at their level, which gives the organization as a whole more degrees of freedom in responding to its environment (Follett, 1924).
- Keep continuous improvement at the top of the agenda. Unless the leader is always vigilant, the immediate issues will take precedence over important long-term improvement issues (Borko et al., 2003).
- Base decisions on data that have been interpreted communally (Mason, 2001).
- When addressing performance issues, begin the search for solutions by looking for problems in the organizational system rather than in its people (Hammer & Champy, 1993).

References

- Angus, L. (1996). Cultural dynamics and organizational analysis: Leadership, administration and the management of meaning in schools. In K. Leithwood, J. Chapman, D. Corson, P. Hallinger, & A. Hart (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 967-96). Boston: Kluwer Academic.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Berends, M., Bodilly, S. J., & Kirby, S. N. (2002). *Facing the challenges of whole-school reform: New American Schools after a decade*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Boerema, A. J. (2005). *Examining differences among private schools in British Columbia*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, TN.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Borko, H., Wolf, S. A., Simone, G., & Uchiyama, K. (2003). Schools in transition: Reform efforts and school capacity in Washington state. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(2), 171-201.
- Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(2), 125-230.
- Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (1993). *In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Bryk, A., Lee, V., & Holland, P. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Davies, B., & Ellison, L. (1998). Futures and strategic perspectives in school planning. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 12(3), 133-140.
- Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1981). *Curiosity and self-directed learning: The role of motivation in education*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Desimone, L. (2002). How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 433-479.
- Detert, J. R., Louis, K. S., & Schroeder, R. G. (2001). A cultural framework for education: Defining quality values and their impact in U.S. high schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 12(2), 183-212.
- Detert, J. R., Schroeder, R. G., & Mauriel, J. J. (2000). A framework for linking culture and improvement initiatives in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 850-863.
- Druian, G., & Butler, J. A. (1987). *Effective schooling practices and at-risk youth: What the research shows*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist*, 41(10), 1040-1048.
- Eby, L. T., Adams, D. M., Russell, J. E. A., & Gaby, S. H. (2000). Perceptions of organizational readiness for change: Factors related to employees' reactions to the implementation of team-based selling. *Human Relations*, 53(3), 419-442.
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Firestone, W., & Louis, K. (1999). Schools as cultures. In J. Murphy & K. Louis (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (2nd ed., pp. 297-322). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Follett, M. P. (1924). *Creative experience*. New York: Longman, Green & Co.

- Glisson, C., & James, L. R. (2002). The cross-level effects of culture and climate in human service teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(6), 767-794.
- Hammer, M., & Champy, J. (1993). *Reengineering the corporation: A manifesto for business revolution*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Jaques, E. (1951). *The changing culture of the factory*. New York: Dryden Press.
- Jaques, E. (1990). In praise of hierarchy. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(1), 127-134.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kruse, S., & Louis, K. S. (1995). *Teacher teaming—Opportunities and dilemmas*. (Brief to Principals, No. 11). Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.
- Lee, V. E., Smith, J. B., & Croninger, R. G. (1997). How high school organization influences the equitable distribution of learning in mathematics and science. *Sociology of Education*, 70(2), 128-150.
- Leithwood, K., Leonard, L., & Sharratt, L. (1998). Conditions fostering organizational learning in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34(2), 243-276.
- Leonard, P. (1999). Understanding the dimensions of school culture: Value orientations and value conflicts. *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations*, 13(2), 27-53.
- Louis, K. S., & Marks, H. M. (1998). Does professional community affect the classroom? Teachers' work and student experiences in restructuring schools. *American Journal of Education*, 106(4), 532-575.
- Louis, K. S., Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. D. (1996). Teacher's professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757-798.
- Louis, K. S., Toole, J., & Hargreaves, A. (1999). Rethinking school improvement. In J. Murphy & K. Louis (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (2nd ed., pp. 251-276). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mason, S. A. (2001). Turning data into knowledge: Lessons from six Milwaukee public schools. In *Using data for educational decision-making*, 6(1), 3-6, Newsletter of the Comprehensive Center—Region VI. Retrieved October 22, 2005, from http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/ccvi/pub/newsletter/v6n1_Spr01.pdf
- Murphy, J., & Hallinger, P. (1988). Characteristics of instructionally effective school districts. *Journal of Educational Research*, 81(3), 175-181.

- Murphy, J., & Hallinger, P. (1993). *Restructuring schooling: Learning from ongoing efforts*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Murphy, J., Beck, L. G., Crawford, M., Hodges, A., & McGaughy, C. L. (2001). *The productive high school: Creating personalized academic communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Newmann, F. M., & Associates. (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Newmann, F. M., & Wehlage, G. G. (1995). *Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators*. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED387925)
- Newmann, F. M., Bryk, A. S., & Nagaoka, J. K. (2001). *Authentic intellectual work and standardized tests: Conflict or coexistence?* Chicago: University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110. (2002).
- Ott, J. S. (1989). *The organizational culture perspective*. Chicago: Dorsey Press.
- Ouchi, W. G. (1981). *Theory Z*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Peters, T. J., & Waterman R. H., Jr. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Warner Books.
- Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *Elementary School Journal*, 83(4), 427-452.
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., & Ouston, J. (1979). *Fifteen thousand hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Saphier, J., & King, M. (1985). Good seeds grow in strong cultures. *Educational Leadership*, 42(6), 67-74.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Scott, W. G. (1961). Organization theory: An overview and an appraisal. *Academy of Management Journal*, 4(1), 7-26.
- Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

- Shafritz, J. M., & Ott, J. S. (2001). Organizational culture and sense making. In J. Shafritz & J. Ott (Eds.), *Classics of organization theory* (5th ed., pp. 361-368). San Antonio, TX: Harcourt.
- Smith, M. S., & O'Day, J. (1991). Systemic school reform. In S. H. Fuhrman & B. Malen (Eds.), *The politics of curriculum and testing: The 1990 yearbook of the politics of education association* (pp. 233-267). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.
- Timperley, H. S., & Robinson, V. M. J. (1998). Collegiality in schools: Its nature and implications for problem solving. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34 (Supplemental), 608-629.
- Vaill, P. B. (1984). The purposing of high-performing systems. In T. J. Sergiovanni & J. E. Corbally (Eds.), *Leadership and organizational culture: New perspectives on administrative theory and practice* (pp. 85-104). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Walton, M. (1986). *The Deming management method*. New York: Perigree Books.
- Whyte, W. H., Jr. (1956). *The organization man*. New York: Simon and Schuster.