

A Culture of Collaboration

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“Collaboration is a purposeful relationship in which all parts strategically choose to cooperate in order to accomplish a shared outcome.”

Hank Rubin in *Collaborative Leadership*

What is culture?

- A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, rites, and rituals that members of group or society use (explicitly and implicitly) to govern their survival and with one another.
- Through teaching and learning, these practices are passed on from one generation to the next.
- “It’s the unwritten rules and traditions, the norms and the expectations that determine how we act, how we dress, and how we work together.”
- “It’s the way we do things here.”
- “It shapes the hundreds of decisions and transactions we make everyday.”
- “Culture affects everything from our daily instruction to the way we talk in the faculty lounge.”

Different Organizational Cultures

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| ■ Positive | ■ Negative |
| ■ Healthy | ■ Toxic |
| ■ Professional | ■ Dysfunctional |
| ■ Constructive | ■ Destructive |
| ■ Energetic | ■ Depressing |

Culture and Productivity

- In the business world, there’s a strong link between financial performance and the organization’s culture. (Deal & Peterson)
- In the education world, there’s a strong link between student performance and the school’s culture. (Fullan, Lezotte)

Autocratic vs. Collaborative Leaders

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Withhold information | ■ Share information |
| ■ Limit shared decision making | ■ Promote shared decision making |
| ■ Affirm layers of control | ■ Reduce layers of control |
| ■ Reward conformity | ■ Accommodate diversity |
| ■ Obscure individual differences | ■ Promote individual differences |
| ■ See school as a hierarchy | ■ See school as a community |
| ■ Promote top-down relationships | ■ Promote collegial relationships |
| ■ Act unilaterally | ■ Act multilaterally |
| ■ Focus on control | ■ Focus on cooperation |

Dimensions of Collaborative Leadership

- Strategic planning skills
- Professional and personal credibility
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Consensus building skills
- Diplomacy skills
- Vision-centered approach
- Regard for people and relationships
- Knowledge of “self”

“Community is a collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together binded to a set of shared ideas and ideals.”

Thomas Sergiovanni in *Building Community in Schools*

A Need for Community

- We are social beings
- We need and want to belong
- We need and want to connect to others
- We need and want to wear a “team hat”

Sharing Values and Ideals of Collaboration and Community

- Moving from “Me” to “We”
- Moving from “Those kids” to “My kids”
- Moving from “Groups” to “Teams”
- Moving from the “Individual needs” to “Collective needs”

“The problems of schooling (low achievement, high dropout and suspension rates, teacher turnover, absenteeism, and lack of parent involvement) are actually consequences of a deeper, more fundamental problem: issues in lack of community.”

The Institute for Education and Transformation

“The collaborative leader helps each partner and stakeholder understand and sustain a personal connection to the goals of a partnership by attaching the work to each partner’s individual and organizational self-interest.”

Hank Rubin in *Collaborative Leadership*

Who are the stakeholders of a collaborative school community?

- Students
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Local businesses
- Taxpayers and budget voters
- Faith-based organizations
- Higher education institutions
- Healthcare and social service organizations
- Cultural and informal institutions

Successful schools have effective leaders and teacher/leaders capable of gaining collaboration and commitment among teachers, parents, and community-based organizations to fulfill the school’s vision and goals.