

Understanding School Culture

Strand: Culture and Climate



Workshop Overview

Following is a general overview of this workshop, including desired participant outcomes, an explanation of the workshop's alignment with Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, and resources that are included in print and electronic form.

Category: Teacher Essentials

Duration: Full workshop – 3 hours

Desired Outcomes:

Participants will...

- Recognize key elements of school culture.
- Investigate how history, symbols, and traditions bind people together.
- Recognize harmful patterns that keep a culture from growing.
- Assess their current work culture.

Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning:

- **Learning Communities:** Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- **Resources:** Requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
- **Implementation:** Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.
- **Outcomes:** Aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Resources in This Binder:

- Attendee Handouts:
 - Workshop Agenda
 - Pre-reading Assignment: "School Culture: The Hidden Curriculum" by Craig Jerald
 - Handout 1: Scavenger Hunt
 - Handout 2: School Culture Survey
 - Attendee Notes
 - 3-2-1 Evaluation Form
 - Certificate of Completion
- School Culture Survey Tally Sheet
- "Think About It" Exercise
- Ready, Set, Go Planning Activity

References

- Bower, M. (1966). The will to manage. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill.
- Deal, T. & Kennedy, A. (1982). *Corporate cultures*. Indianapolis, IN: Addison-Wesley.
- Jerald, C. (2006, December). Issue brief. School culture: The hidden curriculum. Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform. Retrieved from www.centerforcsri.org
- Marion, R. (2002). *Leadership in education*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Peterson, K. & Deal, T. (1999). *Shaping school culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



Topic Outline



Understanding the general flow of topics to be covered is an important part of giving a strong presentation. This allows the presenter(s) to lead effective group discussions and speak extemporaneously.

Following are the primary and secondary topics covered in this PowerPoint presentation. As you prepare to give the workshop, you may want to refer to this page often.

Main Topics:

- 1. High Notes of School Culture
- 2. What Makes Culture Thrive?
- 3. The Carbon Footprint of a Workplace
- 4. Moving Our Culture Forward

Subtopics:

1. High Notes of School Culture

- a. Defining school culture
- b. Why culture matters
- c. Movers and shakers

2. What Makes Culture Thrive?

- a. Five signs of a thriving culture
- b. History
- c. Symbols
- d. Rituals

3. The Carbon Footprint of a Workplace

- a. Warning signs
- b. Carbon calculator
- c. Go green

4. Moving Our Culture Forward

- a. Three points of leverage
- b. Read it (Scavenger Hunt activity)
- c. Measure it (School Culture Survey activity)
- d. Celebrate it (Closing Act activity)

Presentation Outline



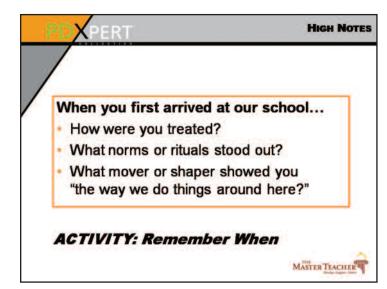
This outline is designed for you to see the PowerPoint presentation at a glance. Note that slide numbers and the approximate amount of time needed per slide are shown in the right two columns. **The times in bold print show the approximate total time needed for that topic, while non-bold print times show the approximate amount of time an activity will take within that topic.** You might consider keeping this page within reach during the presentation.

Section of Presentation	Slide #	Timing (mins)
Getting Started Introduce self, co-teacher, participants Essential questions and objectives	1-5	20
Activity – Checking In	4-5	(10)
Topic 1 – High Notes of School Culture	6-11	25
Activity – Remember When	11	(10)
Topic 2 – What Makes Culture Thrive?	12-21	35
Activity – Singing Bee	21	(20)
Break (10 minutes)		
Topic 3 – The Carbon Footprint of a Workplace	22-26	30
Activity – Walk About	26	(15)
Topic 4 – Moving Our Culture Forward	27-32	65
Activity – Scavenger Hunt	29-30	(45)
Activity – School Culture Survey	31	(10)
Activity – Closing Act	32	(10)
Total of 3 hours (including break)		

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Helpful Tip! This workshop can be broken up into two $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour segments to allow you to adapt the presentation according to your time constraints. Just use the break as a guide for dividing the workshop into two parts; the second half will be a bit longer than the first half.

Slide 11



Activity: Remember When

Allow 10 minutes for this activity.

Start by sharing out:

Think back to when you first started at our school. Were you a founding member of the staff? Or are you a recent immigrant?

Directions to participants:

Spend 6 minutes at your table groups talking about how you were "assimilated" when you first arrived here, using the questions as a guide.

Ask a reporter from each group to summarize the experiences or memories from their table.



Slide 13



Five common values serve as indicators of a thriving culture:

- **1. Norms of collegiality:** *There is a clear expectation that teachers will work together to exchange ideas, solve problems, and decide what's best for the school.*
- **2. Students take precedence:** *Student needs are at the core of every conversation and decision, as opposed to teacher needs or comfort. Decisions are based on evidence, not seniority, personal preferences, or taking turns.*
- **3. Wide cultural network:** *There's a wide network of communicators in the school beyond the principal. Communicators are conduits for stories, information, and making connections.*
- **4. Lots to celebrate:** *Even when the chips are down, there is always something to cheer about. Humor is used to lift people's spirits. Laughter is heard throughout the building. Teachers care about each other and are excited to celebrate the successes of peers.*
- **5. History, symbols, rituals:** *The schools emanates a rich history (who we are), symbols of commitment (displays that show the school stands for the right things), and positive rituals (communal events that tie people together and mark the passage of time).*







Have staff complete this exercise to begin implementing what they learned during the workshop. Distribute this document to staff by attaching the file to the Next Day Follow-Up Email, or make copies for the staff.

1. What cultural elements make our learning environment strong?

2. What "harmful emissions" might need a bit of cleaning up?

3. What other ways can we celebrate our successes?

