

## Elements of a School Culture of Achievement for All ©



Dr. Lourdes Ferrer

[www.drlourdes.net](http://www.drlourdes.net)

Minority Academic Achievement Specialist

## What is culture?

Culture is a **shared frame of reference** for **interacting** with one another and for **interpreting** the world in which we live. This common frame of reference includes communication, values, beliefs, and interpretations of experiences. It is reflected in customs, artifacts, rituals and ceremonies, legends, myths and stories.

2

## Why is leaning about school culture so important?

The school culture has the power to either **invigorate** or **debilitate** the vital elements of the school improvement process. It is deep, complex, powerful, highly experiential, and pervasive.



## What are the 10 elements of a school culture where all students can achieve academic success?

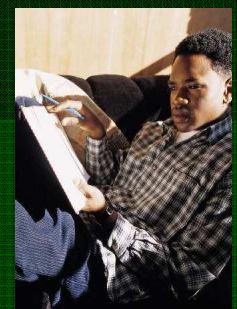
## 1) Possesses a strong vision

This vision must:

- Be widely shared
- Foster genuine commitment rather than compliance
- Generate motivation
- Provide direction
- Create the agenda for action, and
- Provide clarity and focus on what needs to be done

## 2) Believes in Effort-Based Education

An effort-based school replaces the assumption that - aptitude determines what and how students learn with the assumption that - sustained and directed **effort** can yield high achievement for all students.



## 3) Operates based on selective core values

### Core values:

- Grow out of the vision and direct the daily efforts toward that long-term target
- Are the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that a faculty must exhibit if the vision of the school is to be pursued.

## Did you know that...

The **mission** answers the question – WHY do we exist?

The **vision** answers the question - WHAT is it that we want to become (ideal)

**Values** answers the question – HOW do we advance toward that ideal?

## 4) Exercises effective leadership

### Effective leaders:

- Derive their power from trust
- Create followers and mold them as a team
- Motivate people to excel their performance
- Bring about necessary change in a way that is responsive to the vision and values of the organization.



*"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

## 5) Celebrates the teaching profession

The community must recognize that teachers are at the heart of the educational enterprise.

Teachers should receive the respect, prestige, and status that is commanded by other professions.



## Did you know that...

*In a completely rational society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have.*

*Lee Iacocca*

12

## Did you know that...

*According to Goodlad (1984), merely holding teachers accountable for improving student learning without addressing internal and external negative circumstances is not likely to improve the quality of their professional lives and the schools in which they teach.*

13

## 6) Empowers teachers to be leaders

Teachers who perform as leaders:

- Have a clear sense of what they want students to accomplish
- Are masters of clear and effective communication
- Accept the responsibility of motivating
- Are persistent - believe in students even when they stop believing in themselves

## 7) Nourishes a spirit of teamwork

Working in teams allows teachers to:



- Validate each other
- Increase their creativity
- Become a self-learning organism
- Resource each others' ideas and perspectives



*"The days for 'heroes' are over. What we need now are **DREAM TEAMS**. Individual teachers alone can't take an entire school to **PROFICIENCY**. This kind of endeavor requires an entire faculty."*

16

## 8) Humanizes education

We must see our school system as a **people** system rather than a system of programs. We don't teach lessons, we teach kids.

Schools should be places where students can develop self-esteem and confidence and experience a sense of security and community.



*"Schools should be about providing a sense of hope for all not achievement for the few."*

Anon

*According to Bill Gates' 3R's, education can only be successful when is rigorous, relevant, and most of all, based on relationships.*

## 9) Generates motivation to learn

Motivation is the desire and drive required for any kind of successful performance.



In education, it is the interest students have in the content being presented and/or the desire they have to do well in their studies.

A teacher with 35+ years of experience said the following about student motivation:

*“The question is how do we get their minds? How do we reach their minds to help them become the people that they don’t even know they want to become? As a teacher I need, not just their bodies present, but also their minds as well.”*

20

## 10) Commits to never-ending renewal

Schools that are committed to a never-ending renewal process:

- Practice flexibility
- Understand and attend the interplay between stability and change
- Seek different perspectives
- Mine, analyze, communicate, and use data for school improvement purposes



- Goes beyond research to decision-making
- Turn grand causes into small actions



No child left behind means  
no teacher left alone...  
no parent left apart...  
no principal left aside and  
no district left unfunded.  
- Dr. Lourdes Ferrer

**Dr. Lourdes Ferrer, ELL, Hispanic and African American Academic Achievement Specialist and NCLB Consultant**  
[www.drlourdes.net](http://www.drlourdes.net)  
561-236-4154