Culture: The foundation of everything else in our schools

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A little bit about me...

Professional background...

Doctoral program AND a new gig...

My mom...

Noble purpose...
My noble purpose is to...

- Inspire others through my own sources of inspiration
- Create nurturing environments where young people can thrive
- Tirelessly advocate for those who need it most
- Serve as a leadership role model for young women
- Give back to my community and encourage others to do the same
- Make those around me feel valued and appreciated
- Have fun and create fun for others
- Remind myself daily of the beauty and wonder around me
- Appreciate and utilize the gifts I have been given
- Make my mom proud
What makes a school culture GREAT?
A Qualitative Study of the Positive Transformation of Public High School Cultures as Perceived by Administrators, Teachers, and Classified Staff Members

Amy L. Besler

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What do schools with great culture have in common?

- **Student achievement**: the foundation for the development of positive culture.

- **Shared values**: the underpinning for cultural change efforts which are fundamental to everything that happens within the school environment.

- **Trust**: at the heart of everything that occurs in schools with positive culture. A trustworthy leader inspires staff members to become more open, vulnerable, and trusting themselves.

- **Parent relations**: are deliberately cultivated through means that work for each unique school community in order to achieve a meaningful partnership.

- **Communication**: a means of delivering an inspiring vision and shared values. A school must have many voices communicating the “why” behind what is being done and communication must be used to celebrate and convey important underlying messages whenever possible.

- **Socialization**: student socialization is fundamental to school culture and must be purposefully taught to younger students by older peer mentors through specific programs, such as Link Crew.
My school and our needs...

Beautiful place

Strong history... but declining...

Feeling of being “beaten down”

Lacking continuity/shared purpose

Who are we?
Our vision...

Bear River High School is the school no one ever wants to leave... a place where every student, staff member, and family and community partner is meaningfully engaged, connected, supported, challenged, and inspired.
It’s all about our

CORE VALUES

Grit
Empathy
Integrity
Intellectual & Creative Curiosity
Community
Core Values: Criesco shows his apt for Empathy

OCTOBER 13, 2017  JOSH HOWSER  FEATURES
Raising the bar of expectation

RELAX...
YOU ARE
NOW
ENJOYING A
CELL PHONE
FREE ZONE!

"That was an awesome worksheet," said no student ever.
We’re focused on RELATIONSHIPS...

GOAL:
Every student has a meaningful relationship with AT LEAST one adult on campus.
The lightbulb moment... it comes down to the STAFF
**#1: LEADING FROM THE HEART**

**Vulnerability:** Bringing your entire self to every moment.

**Communication:** Sharing your thoughts, feelings, and fears as frequently as possible.

**Trust:** Eventually, trust is built through openness, honesty, and ALWAYS doing what you say you are going to do.
Something for your library...
#2: RELATIONSHIPS

- Build in regular structures for staff connection
- Put LOTS of love, time, and energy into your new people
- Meet people where they are... both literally and figuratively
Lawn Chair Fridays

LAWN CHAIR FRIDAY

THE REASON WE COME TO WORK
Buddy system
Making memories together...
#3: HUMBLE SERVICE

Do anything and everything you can possibly think of to serve your staff.

Don’t ever ask anyone else to do something you aren’t willing to do, even (and especially) if it’s not your job.

Take the time to get into the “world” of each staff member. Listen. Serve. Roll up your sleeves and help.

Make every staff member feel like their work is absolutely critical to the school (which it certainly is). Celebrate them. Thank them. Do this over and over and over and over.
Thankful Thursdays
Our snazzy new Staff Lounge
Owners, not renters...
Moving right along... and then tragedy strikes...
What I’ve learned...

Our culture is strong.

Our students feel loved and empowered.

Our families trust us.

Our work is never done, but we’ve come a long way.

In the end, all that matters is the relationships we build and the love we share.

Loving with your whole heart is worth it, even when it breaks.
A couple more items for your library...

**School Culture Rewired**
How to Define, Assess, and Transform It

**Transforming School Culture**
How to Overcome Staff Division

**Trust Matters**
Leadership for Successful Schools

By Megan Tschannen-Moran

By Steve Gruenert & Todd Whitaker

By Steve Gruenert & Todd Whitaker
Time to reflect... and look ahead...
Strategies you might use to support, engage, and celebrate STAFF...
Strategies you might use to engage students (creating owners, not renters) and raise the bar of expectation...
Strategies you might use to build meaningful connections with families and community...
Strategies you might use to improve your communication in order to build positive culture and inspire others...
Who are the key players within your organization that you need on board with cultural change efforts?
What efforts are YOU making in your school environments to help build positive culture?

What other ideas can you share?

How can we support one another in these efforts and help positive culture grow all around us?
THANK YOU!!!

Your relentless efforts to make our schools better places for kids and adults are herculean. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to support your noble work!

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