

Culturize-J. Casas

Reflection

It's up to you. You are in control of how you act, think, and ultimately the persona you portray to the outside world. You can choose to be a negative burden on those around you or you can choose to be a positive light that motivates and inspires others. You can choose to believe kids can or you can choose to believe they cannot; if you subscribe to the latter do not complain when those same kids **won't**. Students are our WHY; they are why we exist as educators. They are not a burden to be dealt with, manipulated, or disregarded.

Choose to believe. Choose to celebrate. Choose to be a **culturizer**.

Notes

-building positive school climate and classroom climate is about building effective relationships

Just Talk to Me

-many conversations had in school are done by adults, with an adult-centered focus

-**Culturize**: To cultivate a community of learners by behaving in a kind, caring, honest, and compassionate manner in order to challenge and inspire each member of the school community to become more than they ever thought possible.

-we must be willing to reflect on our own leadership to effect change

- it is difficult to point the finger back at ourselves

- we must point to our inefficiencies as leaders when thinking about lackluster culture

-school leadership isn't solely administration, everybody is a leader and is responsible for culture and their own morale

-people have to decide to put words into actions but great leaders provide the words and inspiration needed to spur this action

- We should expect our leaders to be able to grow and inspire us

-**the difference between today and tomorrow is us**

-we need to identify average within our building and CHANGE it

-four core principles of positive school culture: champion for all students, expect excellence, carry the banner of your school in a positive light, everybody strive to be a merchant of hope

Core Principle 1-Champion for students

-is school a place for students to unleash their abilities or only for those who can play the game and be compliant?

-we must keep their long term results in mind as they struggle or fail in the short term and as they reject our efforts

-begin early on to implement in our schools systemic, organized structures to ensure that every child feels safe, connected, and valued by staff and that our programs accommodate a diverse group of learners.

-establish connections through the three Rs: relationship, relationships, relationships

-students should know our core principles

-**we must allow our Ss to get to know each other on deeper levels if we are to establish the culture we want**

-many Ss don't recognize their own potential and feel disconnected

-**CONNECTION**: every S deserves to feel connected and cared for by somebody at school through their whole experience

-**CAPABILITY**; we have to believe ALL Ss can perform at a successful level AND we must be willing to provide the support(s) needed to make it happen

-**CONFIDENCE**: Ss have to believe they can do it; combination of Growth Mindset with hard work ethic and determination.

- Raise the bar when they get stuck, step back and reteach-DON'T GIVE UP

***we need to create an environment where they want to learn for the sake of learning**

FAIR MEANS DIFFERENT

-why aren't some Ss doing the work?

- Perhaps they lack the skills to be successful; empathize vs criticize and punish

-constant contact, and early contact, with parents of Ss who are struggling

-you are not alone, get with other Ts in the building to construct a success plan

Different kids have different needs and we need to treat them accordingly

-**How can you expect others to do what you were unwilling to do yourself via George Couros**

-actually LISTEN to kids

- ask relevant, open-ended questions

- you don't have to solve every problem; help the students figure out their own solution

ARM yourself for tough conversation: Acknowledge (focus on the other person, be empathetic, there is always a conversation to be had), Rectify (address the issue, not symptoms, with available resources, not every problem is yours to fix), Move on (take responsibility-if applicable-go into solution mode and then move on)

Barriers to Focusing on Championing for Students

-There isn't time: make the time; where are you inefficient with time?

-It's not my job: there is no more important job of the teacher; deliver quality content in meaningful ways & connect

-Dealing with challenges isn't worth the potential negative response: we all must work together through difficult times

-Poor behavior/failure to do work doesn't deserve my attention: students don't have the experience or maturity to think long-term effects of their (in)actions; **STUDENTS ARE ENTITLED TO OUR SERVICE; THEY ARE OUR WHY**

****If adults buy into the mindset that kids CAN'T, we cannot complain when kids WON'T**

-our kids are extremely resilient and we would know if we took the time to find out

Build Culture

-Recognize what is going well

-Change student behavior by changing adult behavior

-Reach out and call someone: reach out to understand and support those struggling with attendance (and other things).

Culturize-J. Casas

Expect Excellence

- you don't need a title to be a leader, you just lead.
- student discipline is an opportunity to learn and teach self-discipline
- everybody has the capacity to lead
- if students and staff are constantly asking permission you haven't done a good job of building capacity

Do the simple things

- embrace your vulnerability: try something new, we ask kids to do it daily
- don't wait, do: take initiative
- take time to see the joy in your work
- be more clear if you want less anxiety
- you're the difference between today and tomorrow
- stay the course: visualize long term
- experience is the best teacher: provide more opportunities to fail and learn to your students
- do you have a failure resume?

Leaders aren't afraid to say NO

- an unavoidable reality
- pay attention to **how** you say no & follow up with the person afterward
- being right & power don't coincide
- dealing with stressful situations & responses is part of saying NO
- sometimes a NO is beginning of deeper relationship; especially if you handle negative reactions well

Leaders don't say "Gotcha"

- forgive those you think wronged you
- makes people think the environment is set up to fail them, can't take risks, not trustworthy

Leaders don't shy away from pushback

- excellence does not equal perfection
 - "Some of the most challenging behaviors students present at school are rooted in their experience of other adults letting them down, lashing out at them, and modeling poor emotional regulation."

Leaders don't shy away from pushback

- not changing is scary. Becoming irrelevant is scary
 - Ensure time, support, resources to make change
- control what you can: your thoughts. Your actions. Your attitude.

Leaders Value Communication

- be timely
- in person vs email is best
- if you have a question, go to the source
- if a student is Failing you must reach out
- if a child is acting out of sorts, have a convo with them & follow up with the parent
- avoid sarcasm & defensiveness
- don't let non working numbers or difficulty reaching a parent be an excuse
- get to parents early with behavior concerns
- face to face meetings with students losing starting roles or positions followed with phone call to parents
- acknowledge good acts by students to students and even families with phone calls

- staff should look forward to coming to work each day
- develop trust by: controlling yourself, following through
- don't delegate team building responsibilities, participate in them
- communicate goals, collect feedback, ask for commitments from other people to realize goals
- how does your office feel and look?
- how does your main office contribute to your building's culture feel?

Carry the Banner

- Your vibe attracts your tribe: model positive interactions, body language tells the real story, show appreciation
- what you model is what you get

At the heart of every problem is a conversation to be had

- you cannot inspire greatness if you aren't aspiring for greatness
- make the best decision with the information you have; *but make a decision!*

Life-fit vs balance: do what works for your situation without guilt or worry

- address opportunity gap before achievement gap..opportunity for: leaders to come together, teachers to attend and lead PD whether new or veteran in experience, let's Ss highlight their brilliance and talents (below),

- "we have landed short of flattening the hierarchy that exists in schools today when it comes to placing a value on the student voice and developing student agency."

Future Ready change is going to require us to be more consistent and thorough in providing student-led initiatives that give students a voice in curriculum offerings, school policies, design of classroom and other learning spaces, lesson/unit design, student-led conferences, and feedback on teacher effectiveness in the classroom. In addition, we will need to see more shifts in classroom instruction with consistent implementation of practices such as genius hour, 20% time, gamification activities, project-based learning,

Culturize-J. Casas

student presentations, personalized learning models, and other student led learning options that require students to demonstrate their learning through presentation, modeling, and performance.

-the goal should be to empower your students to achieve their peak level of performance

-we need to stop directly or indirectly allowing others to say to us as educators, “I Would never want your job”, without pushing them to elaborate

-Conversations or behaviors that are deemed inappropriate for the school environment should not go unaddressed

-don’t demand use of social media, INSPIRE its use

-our profession doesn’t need more culture killers, it needs culture builders

Be A Merchant of Hope

-HOME VISITS: focus on building relationships and talking about hopes, dreams, experiences..don’t try to push the school’s agenda

-seek out those you had to discipline a few days after and ask if they understood why you had to discipline them

- Do you think I treated you fairly? Do you think I care about you?
 - Strategy above is referred to as “Picking up the pieces”

-spend time listening to their stories and help them see something more in themselves

-”Rose and Thorn” moment of the day

- Yet every now and then we are reminded that many of our students who remain closed buds during their school years often blossom into beautiful roses long after they leave us.

-you CAN choose how to respond

If you hesitate to correct poor behavior because you are worried about their response to you, you have become part of the problem.

-Thinking long-term versus short-term allows for Hope versus frustration and despair

-*Culture Builder*: personally interview new students to the school/classroom and ask about their experiences, dreams, what they’d improve, what would they do if they were you?

- Summer home visit mentor program
- Call the parents of your staff members to brag on them

It’s your choice

-focus more on experiences

-fill your cup as well as others’

-stay connected with others; don’t lead in isolation

-show them, don’t just tell them

-distribute leadership outside the core people who want it

-stop trying so hard to be successful

-differentiate for staff like we do for students

-focus on skills sets vs. knowledge when hiring staff

-if you want to change relationships with people change your manner in which you interact with them

-there are two ways to get the last word: apologize & accept an apology

-some people along their journey became lost and thus cynical, bitter, angry--find out why

If our ultimate desire is to cultivate cultures of excellence where people feel secure in striving for greatness, then we must learn to navigate around the status quo.

-we must realize that there will be times our staff cannot provide 100% every day because of external factors

-leaders behave: model the behavior they want repeated, look past the workload, cherish conversations vs. focus on problems,

gather energy, foster pride all around, don’t let others opt out of what is expected, take time to think and then follow up with action

(thinking is necessary but so is doing), don’t wait for others to change, never stop learning from others, find the balance between the ‘what ifs’, inspire people and their ideas

“I encourage you to live your life so when others think of excellence, they think of you. In the end, your legacy won’t be about your success; it will be about your significance and the impact you made on every student, every day, and whether you were willing to do whatever it took to inspire them to be more than they ever thought possible.”