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Built for Continuous Improvement: Professional Accountability in the Academic Setting¹

Most leaders know that a winning, engaged culture is invaluable. Yet, how exactly one creates and sustains this ideal workplace remains elusive, that is in the words of Stephen Covey, “where everyone (including the leader) feels listened to, respected, and valued” (Rhoades, 2011). That is the purpose of this article: To identify what those from the bus driver to the school

improvement team to the system’s cabinet need, structurally speaking, to perform beyond everyone’s expectations. As said by the former school superintendent and current New York Chancellor of the Board of Regents, Lester Young, “Standards matter, but enacted competencies matter more.”

In brief, by transcending divided attention on cyclic programs, associated teachers, and related fidelity to a united focus on striving to meet the needs of all stakeholders, one can build a long-lasting environment in which people truly participate, and, in return, traditional control is unnecessary. It is a setting where all segments of the work organization are engaged in maximizing solved problems concerning faculty-staff-leader enthusiasm, student well-being, family involvement, and community support as they relate to improved student achievement. The workforce has the authority to celebrate “wins” and be instruments of change when warranted as people know that a) they, not the boss, are responsible for beating the metrics and that b) their leaders are continuously working to exceed their expectations. The esprit de corps can evolve into an indispensable tool, commanding all necessary resources for its maintenance (Kelleher, 1977).

Five years after the start of their journey, the school leader (represented in the study summarized later) said of the work, “Our defined culture has been the most important driver of our success.”

When teachers are not content, even if it’s just one, problems ripple out to the rest of the team, to parents, and to students in their class. However, the happier they are [with their environment], the harder they work for the students and their experience. For example, following the pandemic’s shutdown of our building, our parents were hands down, nothing but complimentary of the online learning environment and support from teachers,

¹ To not be distracted by the numbers associated with the pandemic, the following article is based on findings pre-COVID, primarily between 2010 and 2019.

including progress monitoring calls. That success reflected the level of cohesion we had going into Covid. [Our shared value of] Building Community was driving those personal calls to parents in addition to the underlying support for teachers and their programming. And Growth Mindset is what helped us get us [over our perceived limitations], as well as Integrity with everyone working from home. Years ago, our shared values (see Appendix 1) helped define our culture, whereas today everyone for the most part knows what to expect and wants to be part of it.

Before lessons from the experience of the school are shared, the two predominant approaches to accountability (administrative and professional) will be briefly reviewed, and the corresponding “structural” transition will be outlined.² In closing, enabling faculty and staff to do “what they believe is good, right, and just” and guiding leaders to create related cohesion align with the world’s better-performing P-12 systems in student achievement and equity (Brown et al., 2011; NCEE, 2017; NCSL, 2017; Santoro, 2018; Schleicher, 2018), and preeminent leadership development efforts at Stanford, Harvard, Yale, and elsewhere dedicated to “the most ethical organizations of tomorrow.” Instead of trying to quantify one’s number of or percentage of supporters, those acting in positions of chief state school officer, college of education dean, superintendent, or principal, should consider how many of their people or community are capable of authentic cooperation. The former tends to drive out creative and professional members (Fullan, 2011). In summary, trust is the glue that binds people, the lubricant that allows passion and energy to flow, and represents the most promising way to advance and fuel modern education systems as command-and-control systems weaken (Barrett, 2017; Schleicher, 2018).

Administrative Accountability

Schools in the U.S. predominantly rely on administrative forms of accountability and bureaucratic command-and-control systems to direct their work (Schleicher, 2018). Through a cyclic focus on programs, related fidelity, and the personal concerns of the leader at the time, the practice is associated with no statistical change in U.S. high school achievement in recent history (NAEP, 1969-2019; PISA, 2000-2018; Tucker, 2016). This is in addition to record pre-pandemic rates of new teacher turnover and overall disinterest in the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Phi Delta Kappan Poll, 2018; Partelow, 2019). To illustrate the friction and frustration underlying the approach is a 2013 Gallup Poll of 14 major occupations that shows teachers last behind truck drivers and coal miners with supervisors who, they feel, know how to create a trusting and open environment. Thus, rather than much-needed cohesion, individuals are too often left burned out or demoralized (Gardner, 2001; Santoro, 2018). Systemically speaking, values limited to growth and performance are being allowed to dominate those that motivate, and matter to, people (e.g., bureaucracy, hierarchy, complacency, arrogance, confusion, information hoarding, blame, manipulation, internal competition, power and status-seeking, micromanagement, and short-term focus, as opposed

² Accountability in this context refers to “who is responsible for whom and for what” in the words of Ken Turner, a long-time advisor to numerous superintendents and chiefs. Also, “winning” refers to a culture that is geared toward long-term success, i.e., participatory, inspirational, team-oriented, and people-student-family-community-centered (Heskett, J. & Kotter, J., 2022). Lastly, if one’s educational setting transcends the individual school prototype, stakeholders can be defined more broadly to include *clients* (e.g., students, parents, and caregivers), *owners* (e.g., taxpayers, citizens, and board of education members), *customers* (e.g., universities, businesses, and the military), and *education partners* (e.g., faculty/staff, foundations, organized labor groups, museums, associated nonprofits, and government actors).

to vision, commitment, transparency, trust, passion, creativity, openness, humility, enthusiasm, humor/fun, and employee health) (Barrett, 2017). Organizational integrity is the inversion of the equation. System-level progress reports absent stakeholder engagement data; state agencies, larger system offices, and colleges of education without intentional cultures to distribute; and ultimately, discourse about teachers leaving the profession due primarily to salaries, only allow the system to continue to degrade. In summary, vibrant behavior, heightened performance, and long-term success cannot occur without undertaking the deeper challenges of strengthening character and cultivating trust (LRN, 2016). Culture is the hallmark of effective leadership (Fullan, 2011).

Professional Accountability

During a surge in the early 1990s of public demand for U.S. school accountability, future (2006) national, superintendent-of-the-year, Manuel Rivera, was exploring the new frontier of building trustworthy schools. While the effectiveness of each method was relatively unknown, the literature included bureaucratic accountability where rules matter most, markets in which people vote with their feet (e.g., charter schools and vouchers); performance measured by golden yardsticks (e.g., state assessments, NCLB, and ESSA), and finally, the “emerging” model of professional accountability where oversight comes from within and through fellow practitioners (e.g., teachers and principals) (1994). The latter is the form of work organization common today across the higher-performing countries in student achievement and equity (and is the focus of this article). Their ascension is a big-picture reminder of how when we, through layers of administrative structure, fail to engage superintendents, principals, teachers, and others in designing change. They will rarely help implement it, and in the end, the nation will continue to be left with a void in long-term, continuous student improvement (Brown et al., 2011; NCEE, 2017; NCSL, 2017; Santoro, 2018; Schleicher, 2018; Tucker, 2016).

Professional accountability follows rules becoming guidelines and good practice, and ultimately, good practice becoming culture (Schleicher, 2018). Through fostering a deep commitment to a purpose-inspired mission, corresponding culture, and associated metrics, the tension between administrative and individual goals can be resolved, and in its place, an ability can be cultivated to think for the long term, respond effectively to unexpected and dramatic changes, and develop the capacity to make effective, rapid decisions at all levels (LRN, 2016). In simpler terms, the discipline requires putting people first, asking what they need to excel, and then empowering them to create a reciprocal environment for those they serve (Branson, 2018). In education, it is a framework in which authentic and ethical leaders are seen not as administering a system designed and run centrally, but as collaborative designers of school organizations and programs where faculty and staff with shared values work together to frame good practice (Brown et al., 2011; NCEE, 2017; NCSL, 2017; Santoro, 2018; Schleicher, 2018). Overall, the system of governance, organization, and management has consistently shown the capacity to act as a reliable driver of continuous improvement (Boxx et al., 1991; Brinkley, 2013; Copeland, 2014; Fitzgerald & Desjardins, 2004; Flaxman et al., 2019; Kegan et al., 2016). It produces a culture in which people are consistently inspired to share information, ask tough questions, and admit mistakes; they outperform by out-behaving the competition (LRN, 2016). In summary, greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline (Collins, 2001).

Capitalizing on What Drew People to Education

So, where do we start? In the opinion of policy analysis pioneer Aaron Wildavsky, there are really three questions that matter: *Why change?*, *What should change?*, and the most challenging, *How do we accomplish the change?* (1987). This “sharpening the saw”-oriented article is organized accordingly. If interest is piqued upon reading, and the reader is inclined to address the last question as a team, the group needs to start with the preceding items. Assuming, that one or two key insights arise as a result, the deep work outlined next can be used to tune one’s organization accordingly, and in the end, momentum can be sustained through reciprocal results or “wins” (Baum, C. & Smith, D.K., 2009). Lastly, “reciprocal” in this section relates to now-deceased policy wonk, Richard “Dick” Elmore, who was a proponent of responsibility running both directions or in his words, “reciprocal accountability.” For example, state education departments and colleges of education can only expect schools and systems to be able to collectively create, transform, or sustain culture if they have already distributed or enabled access to such capacity (Fuhrman, S. & Elmore, R.F., 2004).

(1) The process of building a culture that matters to and motivates one’s constituents begins with discovering or rediscovering the significance or “song” of the immediate community, i.e., what drew everyone to education. It is the most important step to collectively generating trust, social bonds, and hope (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Schleicher, 2018). To proceed accordingly, answer the following question as a large group: What can we work on together that is a natural expression of who we are and what we stand for? Ultimately, the agreed-upon purpose should inspire, unite, and drive a commitment to one another and to those served. For instance, the long-time reason for being one of the most trusted schools in the U.S. is “To provide an educational experience that will stay with our students for the rest of their lives.” Next, while the title is important, it is much more efficient and effective if everyone is working off the same song sheet. People need to know not only know the source of their authority (shared purpose; transparent metrics), but also the limits of such and the boundaries of their creativity. Assuming, “DNA-based” decisions can be increasingly pushed to the edge of the organization (R. Charan & R. McGrath, 2023).

(2) After baseline metrics including stakeholder engagement measures have been reviewed, the reciprocal culture needs to be defined. It is a one-day values-oriented discussion (in relation to the Purpose) about the right way to be there for the students, families, and each other. To start, three to five foundational values need to be chosen, for instance, kindhearted, integrity, visionary, beyond service, and one team. Then, consensus is needed regarding the definition of each. For example, one team could be defined as uniting and including diverse perspectives to achieve the mission. Finally, specific to each value, three to five aspirations and intentions are needed to better align each day with the stated purpose (Rhoades, 2011). For instance, underlying the value of visionary could be the four behaviors of a) promote an innovative environment that embraces appropriate risk, b) be resilient and confident when faced with challenges, c) inspire continuous curiosity, and d) demonstrate and bring about a commitment to lifelong learning and personal development (*see* Appendix 2). [Overall, the behaviors should reflect the human needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000).] In summary, disciplined growth happens when we align each day with a compelling future vision, ideal future, or “song.” That ignites the brain’s emotional centers, infusing the day with meaning and helping us make better choices regarding our desired direction (Cooper, 2010).

(3) When the community finds the culture to be well understood and in alignment with their purpose, the work of building trust can begin, i.e., professional accountability. Professional, as opposed to administrative, means the leader (and their predecessors) must be willing to use the ethos that matters to and motivates their people to move through their own fear and anxiety-based tendencies to become more authentic and ethical. Assuming, they can expect their teams and the community as a whole to be able to increasingly unite behind the same authority in relation to how choices are being made, and how people are showing up. This includes reciprocal habits of communication, collaboration, problem-solving, role-specific practices, appreciation, hiring, feedback/accountability, community gatherings, resource allotment, provision of benefits, and other decision-making. In summary, organizations do not transform, people do. Through hundreds of daily decisions, our shared values can help us create the future we want to experience (Barrett, 2017).

(4) Continually improving or “redefining” the culture over the long term is the work of keeping score concerning a) organizational cohesion and b) interdependence (i.e., to what extent are relationships centered around the purpose, and, in return, impacting performance and well-being). Regarding cohesion, trust-oriented conversations should be had at least annually to better understand why any behaviors are inconsistently observed or just not “winning” as expected, i.e., what are the underlying need(s). [When such incongruencies cross teams, a survey should be used to help start the discussion as a community, and later, to celebrate associated wins as they relate to the purpose.] As to interdependence, student achievement metrics and stakeholder engagement measures should be evaluated right after the purpose has been agreed upon, and then, at least, quarterly thereafter. Lastly, in the example of the purpose provided earlier of providing an educational experience that will remain with one’s students for the rest of their lives, corresponding engagement measures include, but are not limited to, levels of faculty-staff-leader enthusiasm, family involvement, community support, and student well-being (e.g., safety, peer connections, positive behavior/leadership, hope-resilience-confidence-purpose).

(5) In closing, if members of the community are to increasingly achieve great things without constant supervision from above, they need to observe the discipline the leader is cycling through to exceed their expectations. A winning, engaged culture follows, his or her willingness to cyclically seek out values-based feedback on their values-based plans to strive to meet the needs of their people. Assuming, they may find that many, if not all, of their non-core personnel (e.g., faculty, staff, and coaches) are willing to cooperate behind concerted efforts to increase stakeholder engagement wins related to student well-being, family involvement, and/or community support. Finally, a cascading effect can give rise to distributed leadership plans from core subject teams challenging current student academic growth scores (e.g., literacy, math, science, post-secondary success) to be more authentic and ethical than they have ever been in the past. In summary, by going beyond divided attention on cyclic programs, corresponding teachers, and related fidelity to a united focus on striving to meet the needs of all stakeholders, one can build an environment in which people truly participate, and, in return, traditional control is unnecessary (Kelleher, 1977).

Five Years Along: Three Lessons from the Beginning of One School’s Journey

When reflecting back on the choice to commit to the deep, long-term work of becoming a values-driven school, the principal-director said, “I wanted everyone to be able to clearly define our culture and mission. I also wanted something to unite our school and to be able to create

a great place for our kids to learn and grow and a great place to work for our staff.” To conclude this article, three lessons are shared from the North Carolina public K-8 charter school founded in 2014. Following a very challenging opening year, the second-year leader and accomplished teacher responded to the author’s local interest in creating an “enviable culture that outperforms the competition.” The work was based on the “Built on Values” framework created by Ann Rhoades (2011), inspired by Herb Kelleher, and endorsed by Stephen Covey.

Five years after the year-long partnership and right after the height of the pandemic in the Spring of 2021, the author followed up with the school as part of Ph.D. studies to explore how well their culture had aged. All employees were again anonymously surveyed, and once more a sample of [nine] faculty and staff and [one] administrator was confidentially interviewed. The same Gallup 12Q Employee Engagement Survey and much of the same organizational values-specific interview questions were used. As to quantitative progress, the school’s academic rating had increased from a “B” to an “A,” and employee enthusiasm (eNPS) had increased from a -3 to a 54 including a 26-point jump in the first year and without a change in leadership. The following qualitative lessons are taken from the conversations with the interviewees. Each follows the original findings but they have been significantly condensed for the purpose of being included in the article.

Lesson 1: *The school bloomed once the values took root.*

Reflecting back on the period immediately following the defining of their culture, a staff member said, “One of the greatest things I remember was how quickly the principal became warmer and more engaging. [She] was very rigid when I first started, almost intimidating.” On a similar note, another added, “Prior, the school was very top-down, tight, full of initiatives, and overall, low in trust.” Lastly, a third original staff member spoke about the shift that had occurred, overall, in relation to becoming a more professional form of work organization.

I think there’s another level of ownership and in that sense, integrity within our program today that was just beginning to emerge maybe four or five years ago...The primary distinction being that there were a few more pockets of smaller conversations then, with the staff. (Concerns, complaints, dissatisfaction.) Now, it isn’t that there aren’t struggles [during COVID], but there’s a sense of individual ownership and responsibility that comes on with those struggles that I’m hearing now.

Finally, regarding the hiring and the overall decision-making process, the administrator added, “Before the values were in place, not as many staff fit. Today, no one stands out as not working. Also, our leadership team is much more adept at discussing what needs to be changed or tweaked [based on the behaviorally defined values].” In summary, organizations do not transform, people do. Through hundreds of daily decisions, our shared values can help us create the future we desire (Barrett, 2017).

Lesson 2: *To continue to improve is to better live the values.*

Of the 22 behaviors attached to their four values, only two were found inconsistent based on interviewee feedback. The state of the first, “Ask for and offer support,” from the value of Work Toward Excellence (see Appendix 1), appeared indicative of their hybrid form between administrative and professional accountability. [This is explained more in the next Lesson.] Staff members, just off the height of the pandemic, spoke of the need to cultivate a more

robust space for sharing and working through concerns. For instance, an original member said:

[The principal] has really learned that she can trust her staff. She hires good teachers [based on the values and necessary competencies], and she can trust us to work our tails off to make all this stuff happen [during COVID]. So, I think there is a whole new level of commitment that was elusive or just hadn't developed prior. The next level would be to figure out how to have all the things we have now going on and not have teachers busting their tails quite so much. I am just concerned that it is probably not sustainable at this level.

A newer member was more specific:

I think the biggest thing is teachers being able to express not just their happy things, but the things that they're legitimately concerned about, and without feeling they're going to get in trouble. I don't quite know how that could happen. But I feel like if [the principal] could [champion the specific behavior] by sometimes expressing her vulnerabilities in an honest way, maybe that would help.

This needs-oriented sentiment is an example of the importance of everyone being able to use the authority of the defined culture to face their fears, challenge the way things are, and persevere when things get tough to ultimately create a new and better future for everyone (Barrett, 2017).

The next behavior, “Embrace diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion,” is from their value of Build Equitable Community (see Appendix 1). Its state was consistent with the school’s relative absence of ethnic and racial diversity when compared to the surrounding community. As an example of the aspiration and intention underlying the behavior, one newer member longed to see “more opinions, ideas, and thoughts coming to the table from different groups of people; students seeing more diversity, and more traditions being practiced.” Next, one of the newest members added, “We need to get (Blacks and Hispanics/Latino/as) to trust our school, that we will do right by their kids and their kids will be safe here. I think it’s a long-term goal, but I do hope that our school really does start to reflect more of the local community.” Finally, in relation to overcoming the underlying limitation, a new member said, “We need to really focus on what the words of being diverse can look and feel like to families and students and go to churches and afterschool programs like the YMCA to talk a little bit about what we are about and who we are.”

In summary, the less developed behaviors of “Ask for and offer support” and “Embrace diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion” represent the importance of efficiently focusing on what matters to and motivates your people. Absent such sustenance, well-being and related performance will wane accordingly.

Lesson 3: *Lasting progress follows the culture becoming the center of things.*

At the conclusion of the study, except for the two behaviors (22 in total) referenced above, the pervasive theme was the high and consistent level of behavior across the school. [This is in significant contrast to when over five years prior the work organization was high in entropy, i.e., conflict and chaos.] The interviewees described the current culture as unified, positive, cohesive, flexible, collaborative, appreciative, resilient, welcoming, trusting, full of strong teams, very respectful of students and families, supportive, integrity from the board down,

learning from each other, vested, professional, polite, inclusive of different opinions, on the same page, people like being here, and very hardworking. In addition, everyone responded affirmatively when asked whether most employees support the mission, vision, and values of the school; whether the values are reflected in the behaviors of the school and the team leaders; and whether their own ideas receive serious consideration from leaders. Next, in relation to why the values/behaviors are important, their responses included: they are intrinsic, part of who we are; to model what we expect of the students; to provide a common language/framework, to be able to plug in differently, to recognize others; to define our mission to those coming on board; to keep us centered; to guide the principal's relationships with others; cohesion; how we approach things; it's who we are; how we hire; accountability; to have conversations/decisions around them. Finally, as to how the culture can be sustained over the long term, comments included: There would be a dramatic hole left behind based on the current leadership structure [with the principal at the center of things] if she was to leave today; We have tried [peer-to-peer accountability in the past] but it was very challenging to find ways that didn't make teachers upset; and lastly, It may be able to happen now. We have a level of professionalism and integrity with our staff that if we were really given the reins at another level, this group might be able to step right into that role and hold one another accountable. In summary, the school is at the final stage of the process specific to sustainable progress.

Gayle Watson, who for decades across work sectors has supported organizations accordingly including in patient-centered medicine and higher education (and has been my mentor), emphasized the following regarding lasting momentum. [The commentary has been edited for the purpose of brevity and clarity.]

Whether it be the intensity of the workplace; using professional accountability to build trust; or any other matter concerning the culture, peer leaders need to be charged with using the values to think through such. The principal, leadership team, or board is responsible for writing out the particular tasks, providing the necessary support (time, incentives, etc.), staying connected, and reviewing/approving any proposals. But they should not be involved with developing or refining the actual plans. Remember, strengthening character and cultivating trust is the work of long-term continuous improvement. In the beginning, when inexperienced and/or lacking in confidence, the 'culture committee' needs to be encouraged to learn from their failures and persevere. For instance, enabling the community to lean into professional feedback can be especially challenging when everyone is accustomed to administrative accountability. But later, following continually refined, need-oriented practice, it can be unforgettable to see leaders and team members consistently using the values to solicit feedback, especially for those who have never experienced a more professional form of work organization. This level of cohesion is when you will know the school has the DNA necessary to continue to improve when the founding values-driven leader departs.

In closing, through a focus on the work organization and a moral center, the school has shown the capacity to build a community in which the members share the same professional values (Santoro, 2018; Schleicher, 2018). The values have increasingly become the vehicle through which problems and challenges are addressed, defined, reframed, and ultimately solved (Quick, 1992; Warrick, 2017). Finally, their journey is a reminder that in order to gain a deeper understanding of what it takes to achieve long-term success and significance, it is necessary to move beyond our basic understanding of what worked in the past and accept uncertainty

and confusion through an ability to use the values in stride—to reconnect, reflect, rethink, and reimagine (LRN, 2016). Assuming, we can expect our students to learn from our example and to consistently build positive relationships, be aware of their behavior, develop a greater sense of who they are, and, for some, champion related cohesion as student leaders (Hawkes, 2013).

Distributors Are Needed

We have known for a while that people are not interchangeable; their professional skills and knowledge are the key to success (Drucker, 1967). But this fact assumes we know how to create, sustain, and when necessary, restore trust. Look in the mirror – have you learned over time to keep your head down or to use shared aspirations and intentions along with transparent metrics to face your fears, challenge the way things are, and persevere when things get tough to create a new and better future for everyone (Barrett, 2017)? Guessing the former, consider becoming a distributor of the latter. Follow your next school improvement or strategic planning process with the deeper work of building cohesion, and later, allow others to learn from your journey. A professional community’s purpose, principles, and performance do not have to ebb and flow as programs, people, and authorities come and go. By giving your people authority to celebrate victories and be instruments of change when warranted, one can construct a long-lasting culture where teams and individuals know that they, not “the boss,” are responsible for beating the metrics, and where leaders are continuously working to exceed their expectations (Kelleher, 1977). The world’s “highly reliable” performers in student achievement and equity made the shift to a trust mindset decades ago in return for continuous student improvement (NCEE, 2017; NCSL, 2017; Park, et al., 2013; Schleicher, 2018). In closing, if or when the values do reach “the DNA” of one’s educational setting, the likelihood will be high after each hiring cycle that the new members’ aspirations and intentions align with that of the community. As a result, accountability moving forward can rest predominantly with themselves, those they serve (e.g., students, families, staff), and their teammates. This means, in the end, following related onboarding, that each individual should feel trusted to be themselves and inclined to lean in accordingly. In summary, culture is the hallmark of effective leadership (Fullan, 2011). Distributors are needed.

Values always have been central to education, but it is time they move from implicit aspirations to explicit education goals and practices in ways that help communities shift from [limiting] values – meaning, “I do whatever a situation allows me to do” – to [positive] values that generate trust, social bonds, and hope.

– Andreas Schleicher, the preeminent authority on the world’s leading P-12 systems.

At the center of our success are our culture and our people.... What we do by way of strategic planning is we define ourselves and then we redefine ourselves.... For instance, we have a requirement that each of our [department heads] each quarter goes out into the field to act [in each role], or whatever is required, and report back to me on what they did, what they learned from the experience, and what they did to improve each job.... [I say this because] our [administrative] office is at the bottom of the pyramid. Our job is to supply the resources that our people need in order to be successful.... Fight hierarchy and bureaucracy as hard as you possibly can. Don’t ever let it become the master; always remember it’s the servant.... We’ve never treated the labor unions as adversaries, we’ve always treated them as partners.... [Lastly,] the only purpose of [each site’s] culture committee is to keep the esprit

de corps alive. 'You are our fire watchers, who make sure the fire does not go out,' I told them recently.

— Herb Kelleher, pioneer of the culture model that organizations around the world have tried to replicate for almost 50 years. (Ann Rhoades developed the corresponding framework.)

Appendix 1

The School's Values and their Behaviors (2021) (*Unnamed at the request of the school)

Building Equitable Community | We are one team.

- Work collaboratively to ensure every child has an equal chance for success
- Connect and build meaningful relationships
- Embrace diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion
- Point out the positives
- Be kind, show empathy, and help others
- Work hard and have fun together

Integrity | We make the right choices, even when they are hard choices.

- Approach others as if they have good intentions
- Talk through problems and misunderstandings respectfully
- Own the impact of your actions
- Take care of yourself and the environment
- Be honest and trustworthy

Growth Mindset | We are always learning & growing.

- Persevere, even if you experience failure
- Set and work toward goals
- Use reflection and feedback to improve
- Challenge yourself

Work Toward Excellence | We do our best.

- Strive to do your best
- Ask for and offer support
- Follow through on your responsibilities

Appendix 2

Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) Values and their Behaviors (2023)

One Team | Unite and include diverse perspectives to achieve our mission.

- Empower and energize one another to create positive growth
- Collaborate through open communication
- Hold ourselves and each other accountable by giving and accepting constructive feedback
- Foster a fun and healthy environment that encourages team spirit
- Recognize and celebrate contributions and achievements

Kindhearted | Exceed expectations with a kind heart, helping hands, and a positive attitude.

- Assume good intentions
- Listen first to understand
- Treat all consistently with compassion, respect, and an open mind
- Acknowledge each other with courtesy
- Respond rather than react

Integrity | Be honorable and trustworthy even when no one is looking.

- Be honest regardless of the outcome
- Make ethical choices in every situation
- Honor commitments
- Be transparent in your purpose, expectations, and actions
- Protect and conserve institutional resources

Visionary | Nurture innovative ideas, bold explorations, and a pioneering spirit.

- Promote an innovative environment that embraces appropriate risk
- Be resilient and confident when faced with challenges
- Inspire continuous curiosity
- Demonstrate and inspire commitment to lifelong learning and personal development

Beyond Service | Create and deliver positive defining moments.

- Anticipate the needs of each individual and respond with a generous heart
- Invest in the well-being, safety, and success of all by going the extra mile
- Be solution-oriented, create the pathway to a win-win resolution
- Deliver excellence in everything we do

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About the Author

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Rich Sinclair is a P-12 education culture specialist and is the founder of *Leading Schools Forward*. He has supported elementary, middle, and high school communities to build sustainable cohesion and system authorities to increase their related capacity. He is also a Ph.D. candidate in associated studies. Before starting LSF (in partnership with People Ink), he led the turnaround of four public schools P-12 and was upper school director of an international college preparatory school. His passion for long-term continuous student improvement follows an early teacher's transformational impact on his life and growing up in a racially diverse family including stepcousins killed and imprisoned following gang-related violence. Finally, he has the "architect" Myers-Briggs personality type and is a third-generation educator. (His grandfather led the integration of the schools represented in the movie, *Remember the Titans*.) He is from Ohio and North Carolina and lives today with his wife Amy (who works in community development) and their son Cole near extended family in Colorado. He can be reached at rsincla3@uccs.edu.