



12th Annual

Thinking & Learning

Conference



DR ANTHONY MUHAMMAD

Friday 22 May

Transforming School Culture

Part 1 of 2

Session 1

MELBOURNE



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ANTHONY MUHAMMAD

Anthony Muhammad (PhD) is a much sought-after educational consultant. A practitioner for nearly 20 years, he has served as a principal for a middle and high school, a middle school teacher and assistant principal. His tenure as a practitioner has earned him several awards as both a teacher and a principal. Dr Muhammad's most notable accomplishment came as principal of Levey Middle School in Southfield, Michigan, a National School of Excellence, where student proficiency on state assessments more than doubled in five years. Dr Muhammad and the staff at Levey used the Professional Learning Communities model of school improvement, and they have been recognised in several videos and articles as a model high-performing PLC.



As a researcher, Dr Muhammad has published articles in several publications in both the United States and Canada. He currently serves as the CEO of New Frontier 21 Consulting, a company dedicated to providing cutting-edge professional development to schools all over the world.

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Transforming School Culture:
How to Overcome Staff Division
Part 1

Anthony S. Muhammad, Ph.D.

Purpose

“The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone ultimately has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone’s business.”

Michael Fullan, *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership* (2003)

Two Forms of Change

- Technical

- Cultural

Technical Change

- Technical changes are changes in learning tools/structure
 1. Collaborative time
 2. Common assessments
 3. Data
 4. Educational Technology
 5. Support Classes

Common Misconceptions about Technical Changes

- Changing the structure will lead to higher levels of productivity (“Rearranging the seats on the Titanic”)
- Technical changes make up for human deficiencies like poor instruction or unprofessional behavior
- Technical changes will “fix” kids or “fix” schools which are broken (i.e. dress codes, longer school day)

Cultural Change

“Structural change that is not supported by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in the culture that any organization finds meaning and stability.”

Schlechty, Shaking Up the Schoolhouse: How to Support and Sustain Educational Innovation (2001), p. 52

Two Forms of Change

- Technical

- Cultural

Apprenticeship of Observation

- Educators have been socialized in their field since childhood and adopt the norms
- The average educator was a good student
- Educators subconsciously protect a system that was of personal benefit
- Educators implement practices that protect the system (academic obstacle course)

(Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, 1975)

Pause to Think!

- Have the changes in your educational environment been primarily technical or cultural?
- In your environment is it more common for educators to do things “to” students or “with” students?

School Culture

“School culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school”

Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

“Healthy” School Culture

“Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student.”

Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

“Toxic” School Culture

“Educators believe that student success is based upon students’ level of concern, attentiveness, prior knowledge, and willingness to comply with the demands of the school, and they articulate that belief in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement.”

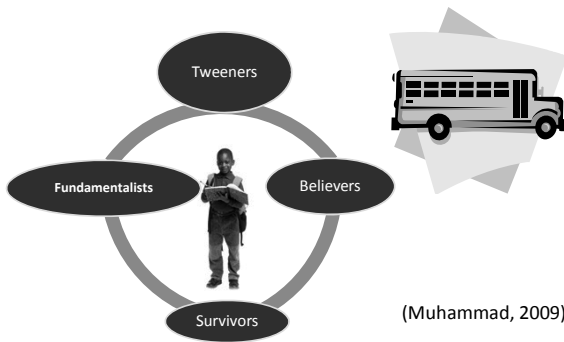
Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

Good to Great, Jim Collins

What do great corporations/organizations do differently than good/average organizations?

1. They seek and find the “brutal facts”
2. They get the right people on the “bus” and sit them in the “right seats”

The Quandary



Adult Drama

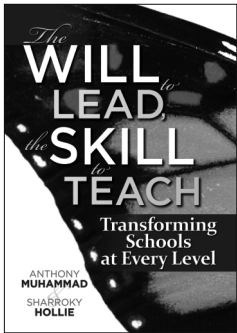
Dysfunctional social interactions between adult professionals within a school environment that interfere with the proper implementation of important policies, practices, and procedures that support the proper education of students

Pause to Think!

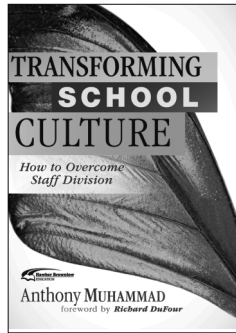
- After analyzing Kent Peterson’s definition of “healthy” and “toxic” culture, which description best describes your environment?
- When analyzing your technical changes, do you have everyone on the “bus”? If not, why?
- Do you experience any “adult drama” in your environment? If so, what?



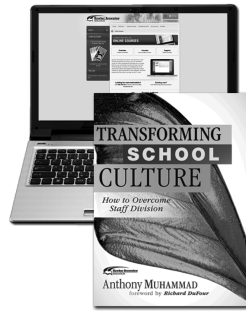
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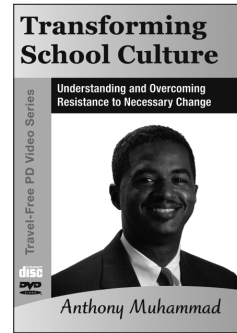
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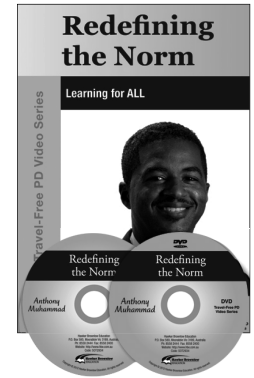
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