



12th Annual

Thinking & Learning

Conference



DR ANTHONY MUHAMMAD

Friday 22 May

Transforming School Culture

Part 2 of 2

Session 2

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 2

Anthony S. Muhammad, Ph.D.

Cultural Wars
(School Crusades)

- The **Believers**
- The **Tweeners**
- The **Survivors**
- The **Fundamentalists**

Believers

Objective:

Success for All Students

The Believers

- Very intrinsically motivated
- Flexibility with students (academically and behaviorally)
- Mission driven/connection to school or community
- Willing to confront negative talk and attitudes towards children, but only under extreme circumstances
- Varied levels of pedagogical and professional skill

Pause to Think!

- Is your school culture student-centered or adult-centered?
- Are your Believers politically active or docile?
- Are your Believers active in the informal culture?

Tweeners

Objective:

To Find Comfort Zone Within the Organization

The Tweeners

- Loosely-coupled with the school mission
- Enthusiastic about the idealistic nature of school, but have not quite hit the tipping point
- They stay out of school and district politics
- Follows instructions as given by administration creating a 'Wall of Silence' (considered "good" teachers)
- One extreme experience (Moment of Truth) can swing them to be a believer or a fundamentalist

Pause to Think!

- Do you have a significant amount of turnover among your Tweeners? If so, why? If not, what do you do to support and retain them?
- Who supports your Tweeners when they have their "Moment of Truth"?

Survivors

Objective:

Survival

Survivors

- Overwhelming nature of the job or life has caused clinical depression (Burnout)
- No political or organizational aspirations
- Create subcontracts with student to broker a “cease-fire” agreement
- Little to no professional practice is evident
- All members of the organization agree that they do not belong in the profession
- Removal and treatment is the only possible remedy

Pause to Think!

- Do you have colleagues that you feel may be Survivors or in the process of becoming a Survivor?
- If so, have you reached out to him/her? Has administration addressed the issue?
- How have your Survivors impacted students?

Fundamentalists

Objective:

**Maintain Status Quo
(Leave Me Alone!)**

Fundamentalists

- Believe not all children can learn (Social Darwinists)
- Believe that school reform is a waste of time
- Believe in autonomy and academic freedom
- Organize to resist threat(s) to status quo
- Believe that gaps in learning are due to outside forces (students, parents, administration)
- Have varied levels of pedagogical skills

**Methods:
The Three "D's"**

- Defame

- Disrupt

- Distract

Pause to Think!

- Do you have an active group of Fundamentalists at your school? If so, how have they affected the culture?

- Do your Believers challenge your Fundamentalists?

- Have you witnessed any of the three D's? If so, how has it affected your school?

The Real Difference

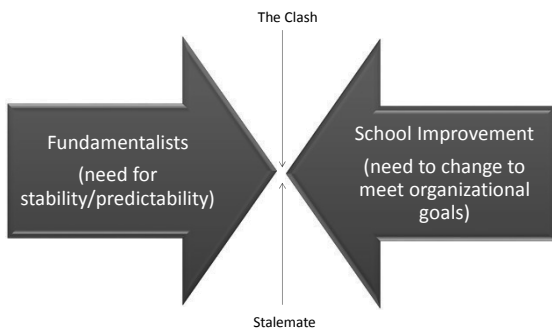
Believers

- Goal: Success for Every Student
- Accepts that change (the right change) is necessary to improve student performance
- Student interest is more important than personal interest (Public Servant)

Fundamentalists

- Goal: Maintain Status Quo
- Rejects any substantive change if it clashes with personal agenda
- Self-interest is more important than student interest (Self Servant)

The Current State of School Reform



Can Fundamentalism Be Reversed?

Fundamentalist
Change Is Not Easy

“Drop Your Tools” Research

- People persist when they are given no clear reason to change
- People persist when they do not trust the person who tells them to change
- People persist when they view the alternative as more frightening
- To change may mean admitting failure

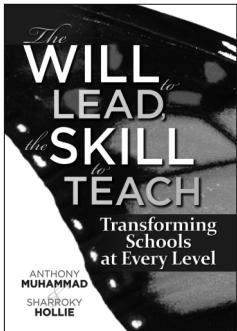
(Maclean, *Young Men and Fire*, 1992)

How do we respond?

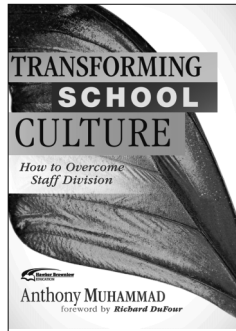
- **Level 1** – Make a clear case for change
- **Level 2** – Develop relationships, do not ostracize
- **Level 3** – Increase capacity and consider the context
- **Level 4** – Monitor Strongly



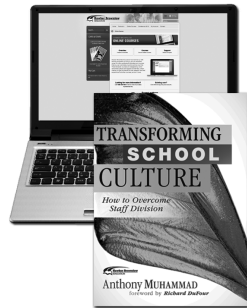
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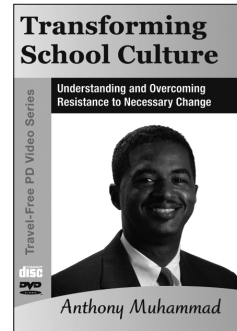
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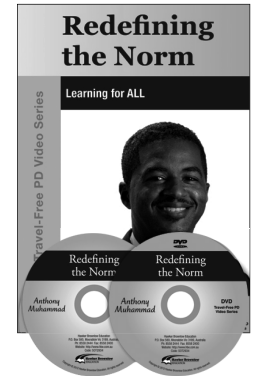
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