



Insights Alberta

Karen Power

Leadership Consultant

The Learning Bar

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Towards a Healthier Culture

November 27, 2023
Karen Power

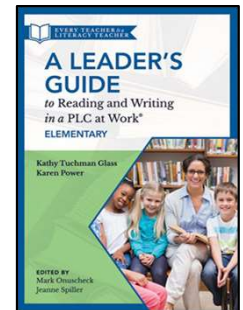
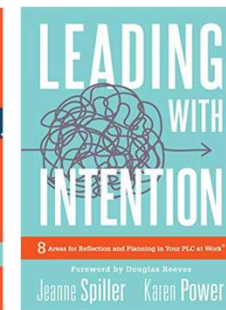


My Journey ...

Teacher Principal, LMS - 5 years

Superintendent - 10 years

Author, Leadership and School Improvement
Consultant - Since 2010



Leading Change

Changing the
Conversations



Guiding Our Work Today

- Conditions that impact the culture of an organization
- Factors that lead to a healthier culture
- Relationship between leadership and culture
- Intentional focus on student-centered
- Commitment and action for impact

Striving towards academic success leads school boards/divisions to contemplate the touchpoints and indicators impacting this goal.

The ***culture of the organization*** is first and foremost, ***a leading indicator***, of the overall ability of the system to create the conditions necessary for ***student success***.



Reflection/Discussion

What does the word culture mean to you?

If the ***culture of an organization***
is a ***leading indicator of success***,
how should this impact
leadership decisions?



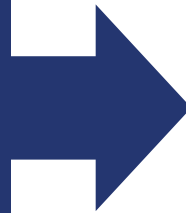
“Healthy” Culture

*“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

A healthy culture is never created by mistake.



It is the result of transparency, nurturing, hard work, & intentionally addressing adult beliefs & behaviours.

“Toxic” Culture

Educators believe that ***student success is only 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

“Frustration” – The Root of a Toxic Culture

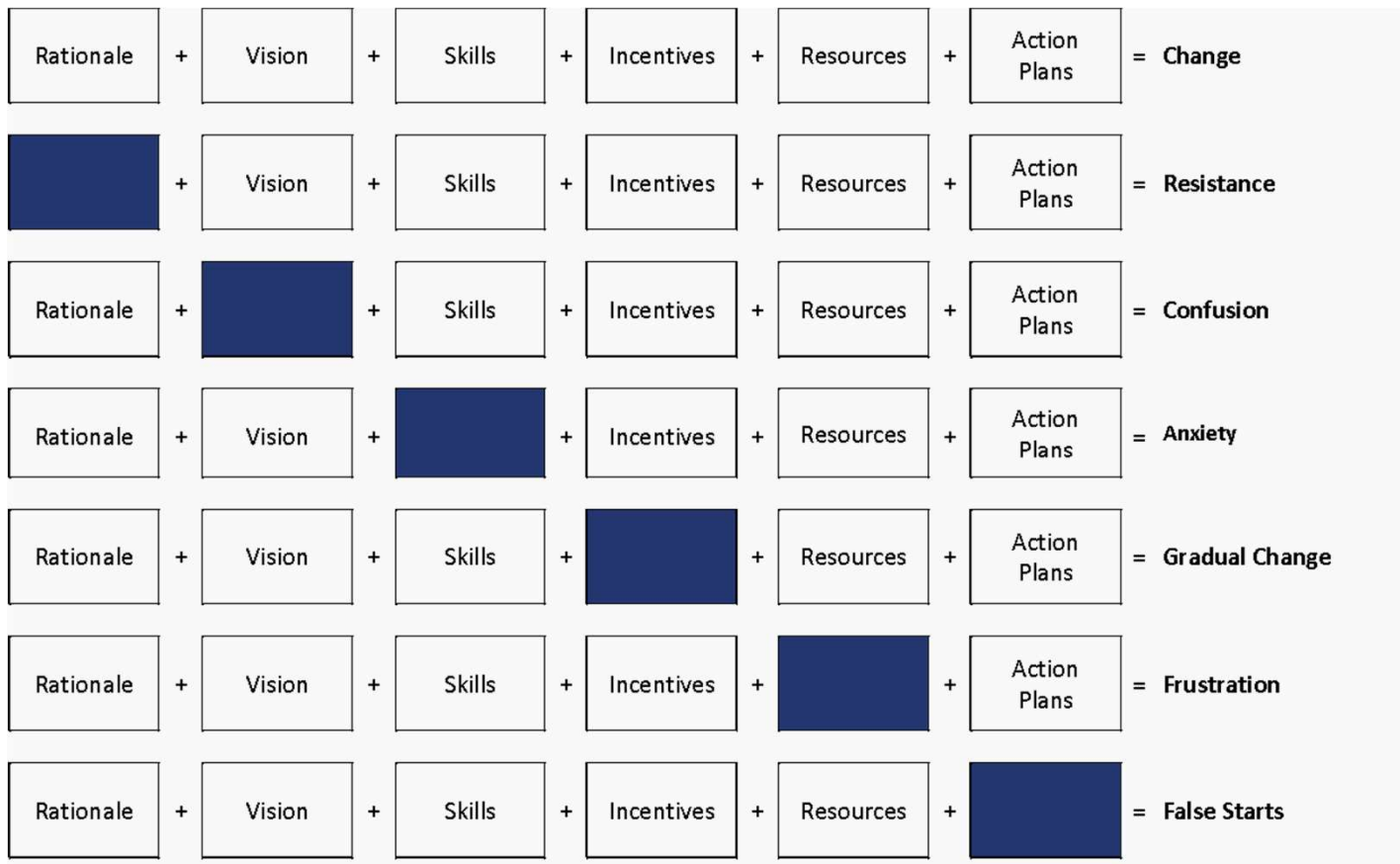
- A feeling of anxiety as a result of the inability to perform a task
- A mismatch between skill set and task
- Causes people to deflect blame onto others and create covert alliances with people experiencing similar struggle

Consider This.....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

Managing Complex Change



Creating Healthy Cultures Everyone Has a Role

Micro (Instructional Staff)

- Control the language of the informal organization
- Remove emotional tone from informal interactions
- Focus peers on mission and problem solving

Micro (Instructional Staff)

- Develop and maintain healthy organizational vision
- Develop and maintain healthy policies, practices, and procedures
- Institutionalize organizational health

Control of Language

Healthy Culture Builders

- Focus on problem and **problem solving**
- Pragmatic discussions stay within the locus of control

Toxic Culture Builders

- Focus on personal affect of the problem and constant, **emotionally-charged description of the problem**
- Emotional discussions lie outside of the locus of control

The Real Difference

Healthy Culture Builders

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)

Toxic Culture Builders

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 Bottom Line....A Focus on Learning

- Use students and moral imperative as platform for communication/policies.
- **Control of language/conversation is vital.** Consistently use this language in context of change and transformation.
- Competent, confident, and decisive articulation from leadership is essential.
- Objectivity is your friend, Subjectivity is your enemy.
- Consider skill development in relationship to change.

Relationships
Matter.

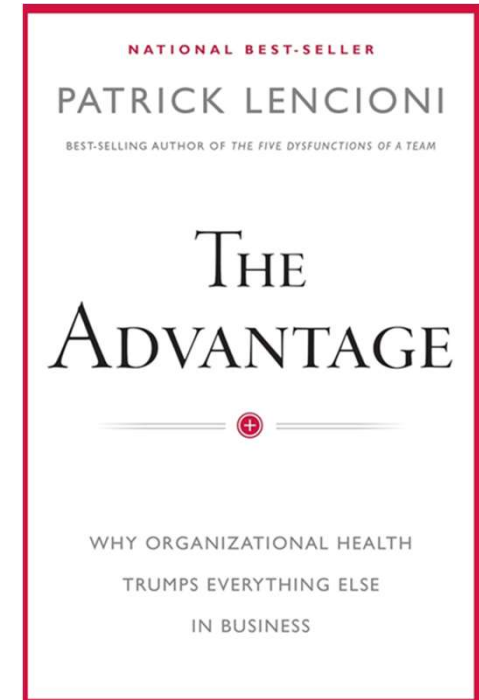
Listening Matters.

A healthy culture includes an environment of trust focused on clarity of tight expectations and ongoing commitments to the people within the organization.

This includes respect and care of both adults and students within the learning community.

*“There is just no escaping the fact that the single biggest factor determining whether an organization is going to get healthier — or not — is the **genuine commitment and active involvement of the person in charge**”.*

- Patick Lencioni, *The Advantage* (2012):

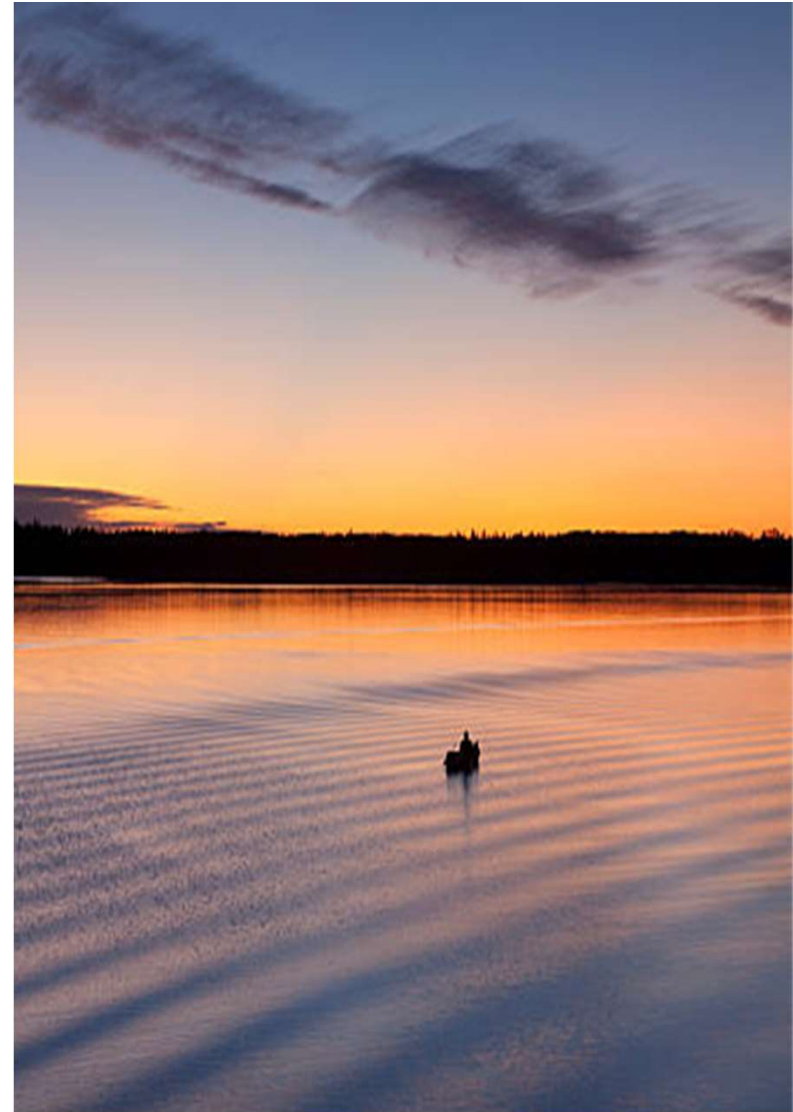


Discussion/Reflection

What are strategies that you find helpful to stay focused on building a healthy culture?

How do you intentionally work on this?

What are some suggestions for others (and for yourself) moving forward?



Collective Teacher Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is the extent to which a teacher believes he or she can engage students in learning and achieve learning goals, even for the most challenging students.

Collective teacher efficacy is the shared belief among colleagues that together they can improve student learning and well-being, even when they are working in the most demanding contexts.



Authentic Celebration as a District/ Division School

- We celebrate what we value
- “Authentic” vs. “Staged” celebrations
- Celebration is for all stakeholders (students, staff, and parents)
- Celebrate cultural shifts as you work together to achieve your goals

Change is
Hard!!

You go **FIRST!!**



**Can you make every
parent/ grandparent/
caregiver this promise?**

**“It does not matter which
teacher your child has at
our school or in our
district/division—your
child will be treated with
fairness and respect and
will learn at high levels.”**



**“Each *choice* that you make
is a choice of *intention*.”**

- Gary Zukav, *The Seat of the Soul* (2014)

Thank You!



Karen Power
Karen.power@thelearningbar.com