

PreK-3 Principal Leadership Series

Cultivating Collaborative Cultures – Session Three

Charismatic heroes will not save the day. Rather, we need leaders who create a culture of growth; know how to engage the hearts and minds of everyone; and focus their collective intelligence, talent, and commitment to shaping a new path. They recognize that what pulls people in is meaningful work in collaboration with others. They *use the group to change the group* by building deep collaborative work horizontally and vertically across their organizations. They develop many leaders who, in turn, develop others, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the organization (Fullan & Quinn, p. 47).

Overview

In their book, *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*, Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn describe four essential components for successful and sustainable system change. One of the components/drivers is Cultivating Collaborative Cultures, where the focus is on producing strong groups and strong individuals.

There are four elements of Cultivating Collaborative Cultures: Culture of Growth, Learning Leadership, Capacity Building, and Collaborative Work.

Culture of Growth

Mind-set matters. Every action leaders take sends ripples through their organizations. The messages may be intended or unintended but can either build coherence and commitment or foster tension and frustration. Organizations that support learning, innovation, and action build a culture of growth. Leaders who possess a growth mind-set build capacity in others and help them achieve more than they expected of themselves (p. 49).

Learning Leadership

Leaders at system, district, and school levels need to influence the culture and processes that support learning and working together in purposeful ways at every level of the organization if they are to produce greater learning in students. Creating a culture of growth is a start, but leaders need to intentionally orchestrate the work of teachers, leaders, and peers and keep it focused on collaboratively improving student learning (p. 53).

Capacity Building

Capacity building is a key lever for developing coherence because as knowledge and skills are being developed, the collaborative culture is deepened, sharing meaning is clarified, and commitment is reinforced. *Capacity* refers to the capability of the individual or organization to make the changes required and involves the development of knowledge, skills, and commitments. *Collective capacity building* involves the increased ability of educators at all levels of the system to make the instructional changes required to raise the bar and close the gap for all students (p. 57).

Collaborative Work

Improving whole systems requires that everyone shift their practice... People are motivated to change through meaningful work done in collaboration with others. If we want to shift the organization, we need to pay attention to both the quality of the capacity building and the degree of collaborative learning (p. 60).

Infographic 3 Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

