ON-DEMAND PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES

EPISODE 1
Building a Workplace of Trust

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EPISODE 1: Building a Workplace of Trust

Each and every school workplace comes equipped with a strong, existing culture. This invisible, but powerful, force is the primary determiner of success for the school's improvement efforts (Fullan, 2007).

Since the concept of workplace culture is, well, a concept—It is common to underestimate its power and effect size. It is abstract. It is essentially invisible. As concepts go, it is a soft concept, not quantitative, measurable, and visible like a schedule or a budget. Workplace culture is a paradox. It is invisible, yet omnipresent. It is a soft concept that yields hard hitting effects. It is easy to miss, but impossible to avoid. Like viruses, gravity, and electrical fields, workplace culture's wispy appearance belies its formidable power. Workplace culture is best examined by looking toward its effects, rather than directly at the culture itself.

Strong workplace cultures alter and align the behavior of people within the workplace. A strong culture changes what we do–it alters our behavior. It similarly alters the behavior of others around us to produce a more uniform set of behaviors among the group-alignment.

School administrators, as they become more skillful at seeing and shaping school culture, are in a position to not only understand and assess a culture, but also to participate in the culture and shape it from within. An administrator's personal characteristics, then, become important culture shaping elements. It's hard to imagine, for example, a lethargic principal leading the charge to create a high-energy school culture, or a secretive principal shaping a school's culture toward openness and transparency.

One characteristic that is present in high-performance organizations and markedly absent in low-performing organizations is trust. School leaders who can build and maintain high-trust relationships, both personally and organizationally, are in a position to optimize their school's effectiveness to the great benefit of all stakeholders. High trust workplace cultures support innovation, creativity, agility, re-invention, and improvement.

The famous American psychologist and writer Carl Rogers was one of the first and best to speak and write about the nature of human trust and its importance. Rogers maintained that although trust is a unitary concept, it was best understood by examining its parts (McLeod, 2014). Rogers' work has been popularized, amended, and widely disseminated as the four elements of trust- reliability, acceptance, openness, and congruence (Ayers, 2009). These four elements of trust can help administrators to understand the concept of trust more deeply and also serve as an assessment approach to gauge an individual's or a school's progress toward a high-trust culture.

A closer look at the four elements of trust:

> "*Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.*"
>
> **Stephen R. Covey**

RELIABILITY
Being dependable

The attribute of keeping commitments and following through on promises.

ACCEPTANCE
Being trustworthy

The attribute of being non-judgmental.

OPENNESS
Being trusting

The willingness to freely engage in dialogue and feedback, both personally and professionally. Self-disclosure.

CONGRUENCE
Being transparent

What you see (with all one's senses) is what you get. No surprises. No hidden agendas.

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There is an interesting connection between the four elements of trust and personality type as revealed in a Myers-Briggs, DISC, True Colors, or any other Jungian (four attributes) instrument.

For example, using the DISC assessment:

- Those who score high in dominance trend high in congruence, but lower in acceptance.
- Those who score high in influence trend high in openness, but lower in reliability.
- Those who score high in steadiness trend high in acceptance, but lower in congruence.
- Those who score high in conscientiousness trend high in reliability, but lower in openness.

Those not familiar with personality and/or temperament assessments can still apply this insight by considering that:

- Those who have a good bit of reliability, might be lower in openness.
- Those who have a good bit of acceptance, might be lower in congruence.
- Those who have a good bit of openness, might be lower in reliability.
- Those who have a good bit of congruence, might be lower in acceptance.

Outgoing

Dominance
- Results-Oriented
- Driver
- Competitive

Influencing
- Persuasive
- Inspiring
- Enthusiastic

Task Oriented

People Oriented

Cautious
- Analytical
- Detail-Oriented
- Systematic

Stabilizing
- Amiable
- Democratic
- Patient

Reserved

Over time, a workplace comprised of administrators and faculty members who are aware of the components of trust, can become a workplace that, itself, exhibits these components. An individual can be reliable, and a school can be reliable. An individual can be accepting, and a school can be accepting.

When school leaders are able to transfer individual trust to workplace trust, the entire school community benefits by becoming more innovative, creative, agile, and by bending the arc of improvement upward for the entire school and all its constituents.

Access to the entire KACTE/KDE On-demand Principal Leadership Development Series is available at: www.kyacte.org and www.education.ky.gov/CTE
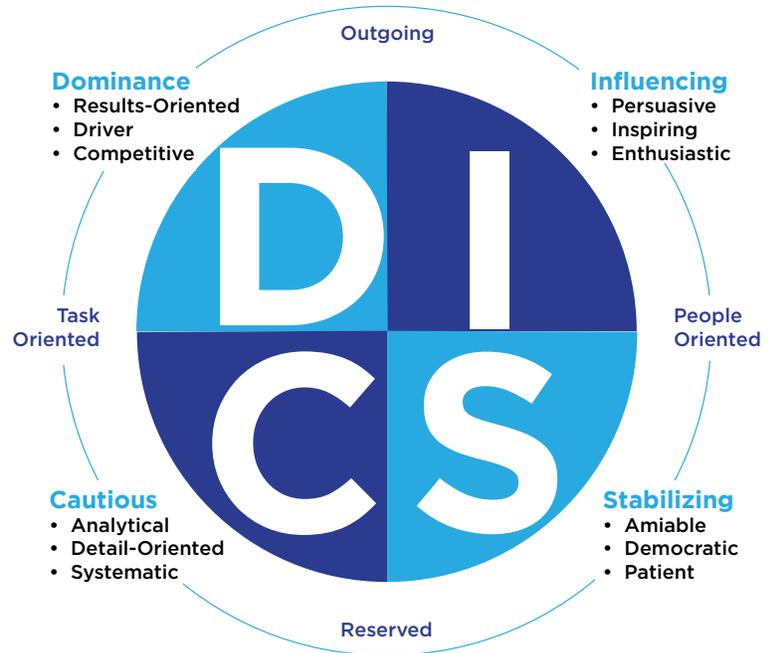
> **"**A team is not a group of people that work together. A team is a group of people that trust each other.**"**
>
> **Simon Sinek**

doodles and notes

Bibliography and Additional Resources

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"To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved."

George MacDonald