The Courage to Lead
Moving People Out of Their Comfort Zones

Anthony Muhammad, PhD
Is Change Necessary?

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

—Albert Einstein
The transformational leader (at all levels) is determined to lead a person into better behavior rather than being satisfied with identifying and criticizing current behavior.
What qualities do leaders need to possess to transform behavior?
Healthy cultures are two-way streets.
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.”

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002
Prescriptive

Commitment
Belief in all students | School goals guide behavior.

Reflection
Analyze data | Confront brutal facts.

Prescription
Collaborative | Disciplined practice
The Will to Lead

- Aligning the philosophy
- Managing frustration
- Creating a culture of collaboration
- Institutionalizing cultural health

—Hollie & Muhammad, 2011
Aligning the Philosophy
Developing Shared Purpose

“The mission question challenges members of a group to reflect on the fundamental purpose of the organization, the very reason for its existence. The question asks, ‘Why do we exist?’ ‘What are we here to do together?’ and ‘What is the business of our business?’”

—DuFour & Eaker, 1998
Four Pillars of a PLC
(Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals)

Current Reality

Our school is like a
____________________________________________________________, because we behave like

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________
Developing Mission

• Who are your students?
• How could their lives be enhanced through education?
• What collective commitment will you make to enhance their lives?
• Mission must have a service orientation!
Who Are Your Students?

Levey Middle School, 2001

• 97% African-American
• 72% at or below national poverty line
• 80% of families headed by single mothers
• 25%–40% annual student mobility rate

State achievement scores are well below state averages.
Four Pillars of a PLC
(Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals)

Future Reality

Our school will become like a
__________________________________________, because we will commit to
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________


Levey Middle School Mission

“We will work collaboratively to ensure that each student is prepared for post-secondary education.”
New Frontier 21 School
A Fresh Approach

- Character Education and Community Service
- Professional Learning Community
- Connection to Public and Private Sectors
- Parental Partnership
- University Partnerships
- Academic Skills
Nine Core Beliefs

1. Schools are places built for educating children, not for adult employment.
2. Schools play a major role in the future life success of students and their community.
3. Education is a profession, and educators should conduct themselves as professionals.
4. Education is a mission, and educators should conduct themselves as missionaries.
5. Schools are a community’s most precious institution, and they have the power to transform a community.
Nine Core Beliefs

6. Children are at the center of everything we do, and our practice should reflect their best interest.

7. We believe that schools must partner with other members of the community for the educational experience to be optimal.

8. We believe that character is important and that schools can help shape a child’s character.

9. We believe that service to the community is important and that it is essential in a democratic society.
Pause to Think

1. Are you and your colleagues clear on your fundamental purpose?

2. What would be evidence that your school has a clear and concise shared purpose?
Why Is Everyone So Resistant?

Human beings are complex!
Toxic School Culture

“Educators believe that student success is based on 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.”

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002
Descriptive and Deflective
Frustration
The Root of a Toxic Culture

Frustration: A feeling of anxiety resulting from the inability to perform a task

• Is a mismatch between skill set and task

• Causes people to deflect blame onto others and create covert alliances with people experiencing similar struggles
Recipe for Disaster

- Inappropriate preparation
- Poor support system
- Task overload
The Culture of Complaint

Two Vs

• Venting

• Validation
Time Out!

“To be a good teammate, your responsibilities must be more important than your rights”

Real Difference

Healthy Culture

Problem solvers

Toxic Culture

Complainers
Good to Great, Jim Collins

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

1. They seek and confront the brutal facts.

2. They get the right people on the bus and sit them in the right seats.
The Quandary

Tweeners

Fundamentalists

Believers

Survivors

(Muhammad, 2009)
Pause to Think

• What are your most prevalent frustrations?

• How do you and your colleagues typically respond when you get frustrated?

• Does your leadership relieve or add to your frustrations?
Creating a Culture of Collaboration

Why Collaborate?
Leadership at Every Level

Teacher

State and Federal

Healthy School Culture

Building Leadership

District Leadership
Two Important Subcultures
Managerial and Collegial
Hard Fact 4

Being **correct** is no substitute for being **effective**.
Pause to Think

• How well do teachers and site leaders collaborate in your school or district?

• In your school or district, is being effective more important than being correct?
Institutionalizing Cultural Health

Moving the bus forward
Healthy Cultures Are Two-Way Streets

Support

Accountability
Good Leaders

• Transparently communicate purpose.
• Foster collaboration.
• Build capacity.
• Hold people accountable.
Two Must-Reads for Follow-Up

The Will to Lead, the Skill to Teach
Transforming Schools at Every Level

Anthony Muhammad & Sharroky Hollie

Transforming School Culture
How to Overcome Staff Division

Anthony Muhammad
Foreword by Richard DuFour
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