

How Can We Improve Our Culture by Creating Norms and a Team Environment?

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Our culture was toxic and created adversarial relationships among teachers, staff and even parents. As a leadership team we knew change had to happen.

The tension from teachers toward administration had hit an all time high. Several factors played into this. Our district went 1:1 in three months, we had a new superintendent, curriculum director and building level administration were trying to navigate, sometimes unsuccessfully the new environment.

Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to improve our environment by creating norms and a team environment.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered how can we improve our culture by creating norms and a team environment.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering we looked first to our largest challenge, which was staffing and team make-ups. I knew I had to make changes, so I did. I had several that were given the opportunity to transfer out, I moved two and another accepted a position elsewhere.

I was able to hire 5 new teachers to my building. Almost 60% of my teachers have been hired by me. A culture flip is much easier when you have people on boards. We screened heavily for certain skill sets from the get go. Our first PLC consisted of a team building activity (Compass) that brought everyone's personality to the forefront, and broke the ice. It is amazing when you open up dialogue, what you can learn about others! We then developed school wide norms. We used PLC time for this and teachers were given examples. My team then took their ideas and compiled them into an employee accessible file.

We then conducted parent surveys to collect further data. This survey asked probing questions as to what parent perceived of us, and the school. We had a lot of great responses, and then there were those that made us examine our approach.

We also did staff surveys to learn things like "MES feels different this year" and union discussions with "no issues." We also developed a new way of sending announcement with bloopers etc to lighten the mood. we collected data the entire school year!

Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing data, we learned that you must make tough choices to bring out the best in your staff. We learned you must step out of your comfort zone and play. We learned you must listen to the public and act. We also learned to empower staff to be creative and to also be ever changing.

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Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As I reflect upon the 2016-2017 school year I can say while it seemed slow it flew by so very quickly. We accomplished so much from the summer of 2016!

I think our new wondering is "How will returning staff and new teams impact our 2017-2018 school year?"

Due to re-districting we are losing some staff, and I have one counterculture staff member coming back from a leave.

Real school improvement only happens with leader have the courage to enact change.

References:

N/A