

## “Taking People with You”

“What’s the first thing you need to do when the lights go out? Acknowledge the lights went out.”  
– Martin Luther King

Understanding and accepting your current reality is an important step for buy-in. It is what it is, now let’s change it. However, if people don’t know there is a problem to solve or what that problem even is, they will not see a reason to change.

There are two types of change: technical and cultural. Most changes are technical: block scheduling, Common Core State Standards or curriculum maps. Cultural change, beliefs, visions and goals, is harder and more complex to change. “Why is it harder and more complex? Because we are dealing with human beings.” (A. Muhammad) And although both are important, in order to foster technical change, cultural change needs to be assessed and reformed first.

Let’s start with “What is Culture?” There are many definitions in many contexts running around today. I like the one from Kent Peterson, “School culture is a set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies that make up the ‘persona’ of the school.”

A positive culture does not just happen. It must be deliberately built. It is the leader’s job to make sure everyone understands and believes in the vision of what the culture can be. How do you do this? According to David Novak, author of *Taking People with You*, first, you have to really know what your vision and beliefs are. Next, you have to make it known. And finally, you have to repeat, repeat, repeat to drive the message home.

Here are a few suggestions to accomplish this:

- Create shared experiences – shared language, shared goals, etc.
- Create new memories – people yearn for nostalgia. Create events and moments to drive images of the here and now as being the best time to be a part of this campus.
- Cast the right shadow – as a leader, you are always onstage. Make sure your actions match your intentions.
- Choose the right people – culture should be a key factor when creating teams, interviewing new people, evaluating performance, etc.
- Make culture the hero – make a big deal out of your culture. When you celebrate successes identify how culture made it possible.

“Getting alignment is very important [when developing culture], and how I gain it is by doing three things: You tell people what, you tell people how, but most importantly, and it’s something we are not particularly good at, you have to tell them *why*.” (Greg Creed, CEO Taco Bell)

So what is your plan for taking people with you?

### Points To Ponder:

- Why is it important to understand the “hidden history” of the school?
- What strategies do you believe are most helpful for reading culture?

- How will knowledge of culture affect your personal leadership journey?

**Here are some resources.**

[Simon Sinek – Start with the Why](#)

[Simon Sinek – First Why and Then Trust](#)

[Anthony Muhammad – Moving the Bus Forward \(Building Culture\)](#)

If you only have a short amount of time watch the soil and seed analogy for education reform at 27:00

[Article “Is Your School’s Culture Toxic or Positive?”](#)

Activity for building shared, common knowledge: See *Data Picture of our School*, in resource binder as a possible activity to accomplish this or at AllThingsPLC.com