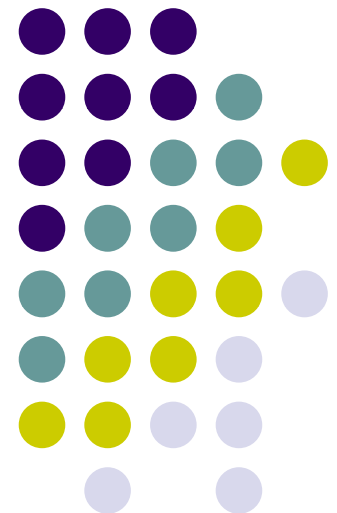
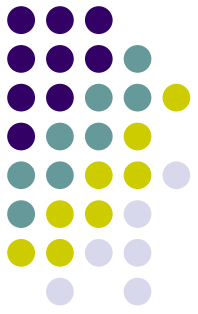


Building a Positive School Culture

*Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*
- Henry Ford



Cooperation and Communication Activity: Broken Squares



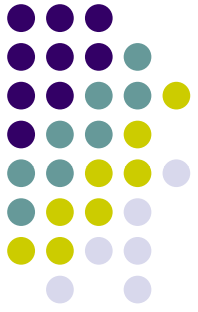
- Each group must have 5 participants
- Each participant has one envelope with pieces of squares inside
- Extra participants are musical chair observers
- **The object is for each participant to have a completed square of equal size in front of him or her for the group to be successful.**

RULES

- You may NOT ask for a piece from someone else verbally or non-verbally (no talking, gestures, taking of pieces)
- You may get a piece from someone else **only if that person gives it to you**
- If you give a piece to someone **you may NOT place it** for him/her
- You may only give away **one piece at a time**



What is school culture?

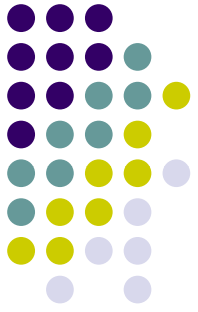


School culture consists of the norms the particular school has developed over time that cause it to function or react as it does.

The culture is based on:

- **shared attitudes**
- **values, beliefs**
- **expectations**
- **relationships**
- **traditions**

Positive vs. Toxic Culture



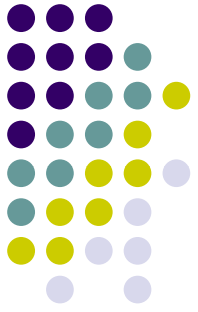
+ Positive Elements

- ↑ Widely shared sense of purpose
- ↑ Norm of continuous learning and improvement
- ↑ Collaborative collegial relationships
- ↑ Opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing practices

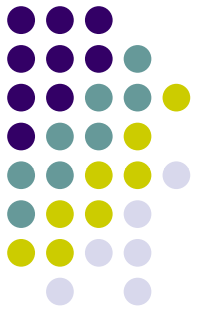
- Negative elements

- ↓ Lack of a clear sense of purpose
- ↓ Norms that reinforce inertia or resistance to change
- ↓ Collaboration restricted
- ↓ Staff “cliques” that work against building relationships

Can we help build a more positive culture?



School Culture and Professional Learning



- **The most positive school cultures value:**

- Staff members who help lead their own development
- Well-defined improvement plans
- Variety in learning experiences



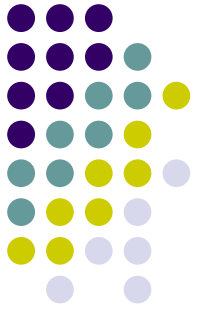
- **Negative school norms and values deplete the school culture**

- Positive experiences are attacked
- Attempts to share new ideas are ridiculed



Reference: Peterson, Kent (2002). Positive or Negative? *Journal of Staff Development*, 23:3

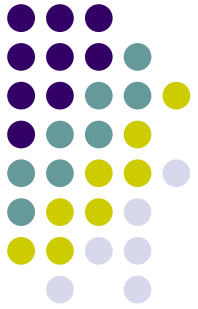
Shaping School Culture



Three processes school leaders can use to shape the school culture:

1. **Read the culture** to identify current norms and values
2. **Assess the culture** to determine which elements support the school's purpose and mission
3. **Shape the culture** by reinforcing positive aspects and working to transform negative aspects

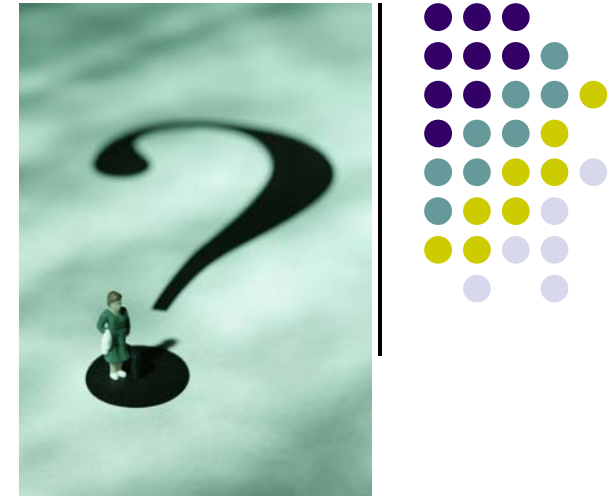
Read the culture



- Talk to the school's storytellers
- Ask about rituals and ceremonies at the school
- Ask the staff to describe the school (list six things, use metaphors, give an adjective)

Wearing the same shirts doesn't make a team.
- Buchholz and Roth

Assess the culture



Ask two questions:

What aspects of the culture are positive and should be reinforced?

What aspects are negative and should be changed?

Wild ducks make a lot of noise, but they also have the sense to benefit from occasionally flying in formation.

- Unknown

Shape the Culture

- Foster a climate of commitment to staff and student learning
- Build positive relationships through collaborative activities
- Recognize and support quality professional development opportunities
- Address the negative directly, replacing negative stories with concrete positive results



We are most effective as a team when we compliment each other without embarrassment and disagree without fear.
- Unknown

