Core Practice 35

Cultivating a Positive School Culture

All staff members in EL Education schools are part of a community of learners. They work together on behalf of students to improve the school's program, share expertise, build knowledge in their disciplines, and model collaborative learning. Staff culture is characterized by trust and respectful collegiality. Teachers focus on solutions free of judgment, blame, and defensiveness and support each other in improving their practice. School leaders, teachers, and students join together to maintain a school culture characterized by self-discipline, compassion, collaboration, and joy in learning.

A. Modeling an EL Education School Culture

1. School leaders champion a positive student culture schoolwide. They devote time and attention to developing and maintaining traditions, systems, and structures necessary to support school culture.

2. School leaders celebrate and define the values of EL through their daily words and actions, displays and materials related to the school vision, and community meetings and public events.

3. School leaders model and promote EL traditions such as opening readings, team-building activities, and staff and student recognition for achievement and acts of character to build and sustain both staff culture and whole-school culture.

4. All staff members take responsibility for all students, not just the ones they interact with regularly, and act proactively to ensure that the school's code of character is demonstrated in hallways and common spaces, and during school-sponsored events off the school grounds.

5. All staff members model the school's code of character in their words and actions.

6. All staff members frame and address issues related to student discipline constructively, in line with the EL commitment to fostering a strong school culture and individual student character.

7. All staff members believe in all kids, appreciate diversity, and apply a problem-solving orientation. They always discuss students and their families respectfully.

B. Building a Professional Culture of Learning

1. School leaders model and actively foster the critical attributes of trust necessary for achievement: respect, integrity, competence, and personal regard for others.

2. School leaders intentionally model effective instructional practices in staff meetings, professional development, and team meetings.

3. School leaders ensure that new teachers have strong mentoring and professional development suited to their needs.

4. School leaders establish and maintain structures such as mentoring, teaming, and peer observation to build trust and promote professional growth.

5. School leaders reflect regularly on their own progress toward personal goals and toward addressing school goals, modeling for staff and students an ethic of self-improvement.

6. All staff members in the school are themselves learners, willing to implement and master new practices and model learning for students.

C. Promoting Effective Collaboration

1. School leaders and staff establish norms for working together. They build systems that compel and support the group to adhere to those norms in all settings (e.g., protocols, check-ins, reflections).

2. School leaders use protocols that foster productive, collaborative inquiry and conversations focused on teaching and learning, including working collectively to examine and evaluate instructional plans, assessment plans, student work, and data.
Cultivating a Positive School Culture (continued)

3. Through statements, structures, and actions, school leaders regularly reinforce the notion that trust in one another is a foundation for success.

4. School leaders support teachers to expand their repertoire of practices by drawing on the strengths of colleagues in other disciplines.

5. School leaders cultivate shared ownership of successes, challenges, and change initiatives.