
Culture Playbook

Culture Starts with You

2021



Okmulgee Public Schools

Culture Starts with You

Okmulgee Public Schools strives to ensure the school environment is psychologically safe for students and staff. This is done by investing in the understanding of what School Culture is and what School Culture is not. School Culture is not an environment where teachers move around the school either isolated or in groups and are empowered to teach whatever and whenever they want, with the focus solely on teachers having fun and being happy. There are a lot of happy schools in this country where students are not learning. ***Highly effective School Culture is the alignment of Beliefs, Values, Behaviors, and Practices in pursuit of Ambitious Goals.*** And happiness is more than a mood; it is a mindset. According to Shawn Achor in *The Happiness Advantage*, “Happiness is the joy we feel striving after our potential.” In Okmulgee Public Schools, teachers and students are always striving to reach their full potential.

IN PURSUIT OF A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND HARMONIOUS SCHOOL CULTURE, WE HAVE DEVELOPED A CULTURE PLAYBOOK FOR ALL STAFF. INCLUDED IN THIS PLAYBOOK ARE THE DISTRICT GOALS, EXPECTATIONS, AND RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE THAT CULTURE.

Goals

- To Understand what Culture Is
- To Understand Culture Begins with You
- To Have a Common Language Throughout the District
- Understand and Model Above the Line and Discourage Below the Line Behaviors
- No BCD (Blame, Complain, Defend)
- Understand the Concept of Having Control of Your Own 20 Feet
- To Possess and Demonstrate Strategies that Prevent Your Emotions from Getting Hijacked
- To Have Rituals to Prepare Your Mind to Present the Best Version of You
- To Create Positive Events for Others
- To Understand $E + R = O$ (Event + Response = Outcomes)

Expectations

- Hold Each Other UP & Be Responsible for Commitments
- Use a Common Language
- Develop and Practice Above the Line Behaviors and Skills to Use in and out of School
- Strive to Bring the Best Version of You to School Every Day
- Coach Others When They Drift Below the Line

Documents don't build cultures, people do. It is more than a Poster on the wall. It's what we PRACTICE, PROMOTE, and PERMIT.

The Best Version of You

Each staff member owes it to his/her family, students, colleagues, and themselves to thrive to be the "Best Version of You." Not only is it more harmonious and healthier, it will allow you to be more successful. For years we have been taught the formula backwards. We were told to work hard, become successful, and then we will be happy. There are lots of examples of people who are not happy. The correct formula is to choose happiness, your brain and body will work better, and you will be successful. You owe it to yourself to get your mind right, use the strategies that lead to happiness, and own your 20 feet. When you can focus on owning the 20 feet around you, you will be always have positive contributions to school culture.

The Formula (Backwards)



The Correct Way



Scientifically, greater success does not lead to greater happiness, but greater happiness dramatically increases success outcomes. You can pick up on negativity like secondhand smoke.



SOURCE: Shawn Achor

Strategies for a Happiness Mindset



GRATITUDE EXERCISES

Write down three things you are grateful for that occurred over the last 24 hours. They don't have to be profound. It could be a really good cup of coffee, the warmth of a sunny day, or collaboration with a colleague.

THE DAILY HAPPINESS DOUBLER

Take one positive experience from the past 24 hours, and spend two minutes writing down every detail about that experience. As you remember it, your brain labels it as meaningful and deepens the imprint. It's a double-dose of daily happiness.



THE FUN FIFTEEN

Do 15 minutes of fun cardio activity, like dancing, gardening, or walking the dog every day. The effects of daily cardio can be as effective as taking an antidepressant.

MEDITATION

Every day, take two minutes to stop whatever you're doing and concentrate on breathing. Even a short, mindful break can result in a calmer, happier you.



CONSCIOUS ACT OF KINDNESS

At the start of every day, send a short email or text praising someone you know. Our brains become addicted to feeling good by making others feel good.

DEEPEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

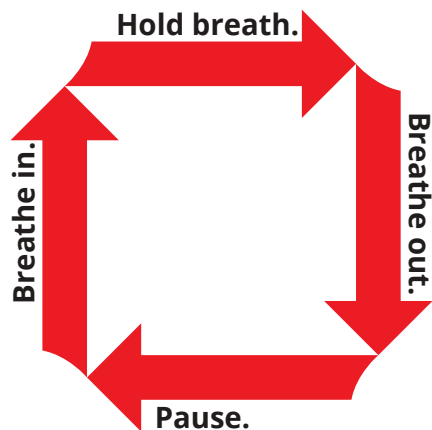
Spend time with family and friends. Our social connections are one of the best predictors for success, health, and even life expectancy.



SOURCE: Shawn Achor

Mindfulness Training for Staff

EQUAL PART / BOX BREATHING



HOW

Inhale through the nose deeply from the belly for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 4 seconds, exhale from either the nose or the mouth for 4 seconds, and pause for 4 seconds. REPEAT for a minimum of 4 cycles = 1 minute of mindful breathing. Variation: Mix up the number or count up and/or down.

WHY

To BALANCE the Central Nervous System and feel calm, focused, and centered resulting in the ability to access the rational part of the brain (prefrontal cortex). This is KEY for RESPONDING instead of REACTING to stay ABOVE the line.

WHEN

Before school, during school (in between classes/transitions), or whenever you notice you feel challenging emotions such as anger, stress, frustration, and anxiety.

4—7—8 OR DOUBLED BREATHING



HOW

Inhale through the nose deeply from the belly for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and exhale through the mouth or nose for 8 seconds and repeat a minimum of 3 times = 1 minute of mindful breathing. Variation: Pick a number (2-5) as your inhale and make the exhale twice as long.

WHY

To activate the calming and relaxing part of the nervous system.

WHEN

This technique should be used for the following: extreme stress, anxiety, anger, or as an aid to help fall asleep at night when the brain cannot shut off.

MORNING MINDFULNESS



HOW

Take 5-10 minutes each morning to do one or more of the following:

1. **Gratitude.** Write or think about 3 things you are grateful for that morning and why.
2. **Mindful Breathing.** Set a timer for 3-5 minutes and try to focus on your natural breathing. When the mind gets distracted, gently remind yourself to return to your breath.
3. **Mindful Eating.** Eat your breakfast and drink your coffee/juice/tea mindfully. Remove all distractions (phone, laptop, TV) and pay attention to the taste, temperature, texture of the breakfast and incorporate the three S's: eat/drink SLOWLY, SMALL bites/sips, and SAVOR each moment.

WHY

The goal of showering in the morning is to cleanse the body, but what is equally important is to take the time to cleanse the mind. Eliminating distractions from a morning routine will start the day with a clean slate resulting in a much calmer, clearer, and more positive start to the day.

Above the Line Behaviors

INTENTIONAL POSITIVE BEHAVIORS THAT ADD VALUE TO OTHERS, SCHOOL AND CULTURE.

- Call Staff Members by Name
- Embed the District's Beliefs & Values in our Work
- Acknowledge Staff in Hallways
- Embrace Productive Discomfort
- Listen Intently
- Ask for Help when Needed
- Avoid Gossip
- Model Appropriate Behaviors for Students & Staff
- Practice Mindfulness & Happiness
- Be Empathetic to Others
- Display Respect
- Don't Judge Others
- Ask People to Sit at Your Table
- Share our Happiness
- Check in on Staff & Family
- Press Pause & Respond Appropriately
- Be Respectful
- Share our Story
- Know Your Triggers
- Embrace our Diversity
- Have Courageous Conversations on Race, Equity, Systemic Racism, & Prejudice
- Wait 24 Hours to Address a Problem with a Person and then Let it Go



ABOVE the LINE

Discipline Driven Response

Who have I been today?

What kind of person did my colleagues meet or experience?

For Better Outcomes

Learn how to control your emotions for better outcomes. Always *respond* and never *react*. When there is an event that challenges your emotions, 1) Press Pause—Count to Five, 2) Deep Breathing, 3) Get Your Mind Right and Respond. Remember your job is to create positive events for others.

$$\mathbf{E + R = O}$$

Events + Response = Outcomes

SOURCE: Jack Canfield, Focus 3



NO
Blame
Complain
Defend

SOURCE: Focus 3



BELOW the LINE

Impulsive Default Reaction

Who have I been today?

What kind of person did my colleagues meet or experience?

Below the Line Behaviors

IMPULSIVE BEHAVIORS THAT THAT ADD NO VALUE OR SABOTAGE OTHERS, THE SCHOOL, AND THE CULTURE.

Gossips

Ignores Inappropriate Behavior

Complains

Never Checks in on Others

Can't Keep Secrets

Is Judgmental

Is Disrespectful

Has a Dirty Classroom

Is Unreliable

Does not Accept Feedback

Makes Excuses

Prioritizes Me over We

Doesn't Listen

Distorts the Truth

Interrupts Others

Borrows without Asking

Is Unprepared

Isn't Coachable

Doesn't Clean up After Self

Uses Sarcasm toward Others

Walks by Trash in the Hallway or Outside

Talks behind Someone's Back

Makes Fun of Others

Is Dishonest

Doesn't Take Responsibility for Mistakes

Lacks Integrity

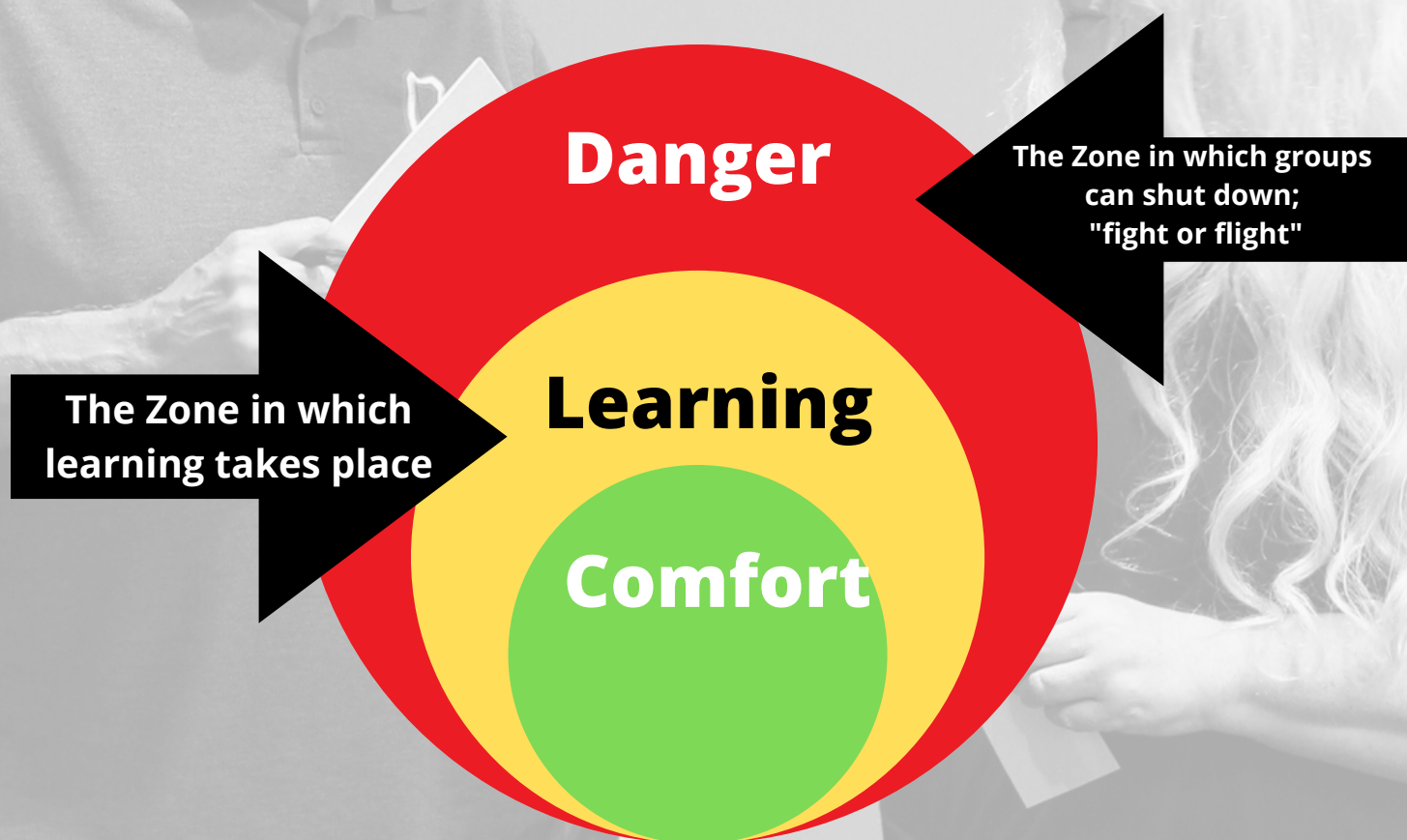
Isn't Open to Learning

Doesn't Embrace Diversity

Culture of Learning

Culture of Learning / Penalty-Free Learning Zone / Embrace Productive Discomfort

We embrace the Learning/Risk Zone and will demonstrate resiliency. We learn from mistakes and “Fail-Forward.” We are curious and dare to challenge, take risks in the classroom, and learn from our mistakes. We understand students learn from rigor, and we will create *Penalty-Free Learning Environments* for our students, and for ourselves. Mistakes are part of the learning process. We only grow and learn when we are uncomfortable. We can lead and have courageous conversations on race, equity, systemic racism, and prejudice.



JUST BECAUSE I AM OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE, I'M NOT IN DANGER.

I CAN TAKE RISKS, ASK FOR HELP, MAKE MISTAKES AND FAIL, AND I WILL ALWAYS BE VALUED AND UTILIZED.

Alignment of Beliefs, Values, & Behaviors

Culture is the *Alignment of Beliefs, Values, Behaviors, and Practices in Pursuit of Ambitious Goals*. While it is impossible to change staff members' Beliefs and Values, in a great School Culture, all staff members still reflect the District's Beliefs and Values in all the expected Behaviors and Practices. Otherwise, school leaders must have courageous conversations with any staff member who is sabotaging the School Culture. However, do not waste any energy trying to change any staff members' Beliefs and Values, but hold that staff member accountable for the work.



Ambitious Goals

All schools must establish Ambitious Goals for their schools. It is not a sin to fail to meet your Ambitious Goals, but it is a crime not to set them for your students and staff. It's important to revise your SMART Goals to SMARTER Goals. In SMARTER Goals the A now stands for Ambitious and the E and R stand for Evaluate and Reflect.

SMARTER Goals

Change the A for Attainable to Ambitious, and add an E and R for Evaluate and Reflect. That's the pathway to SMARTER Goals.

SOURCE: John Hattie

Research-Based Practices & School-Based Practices

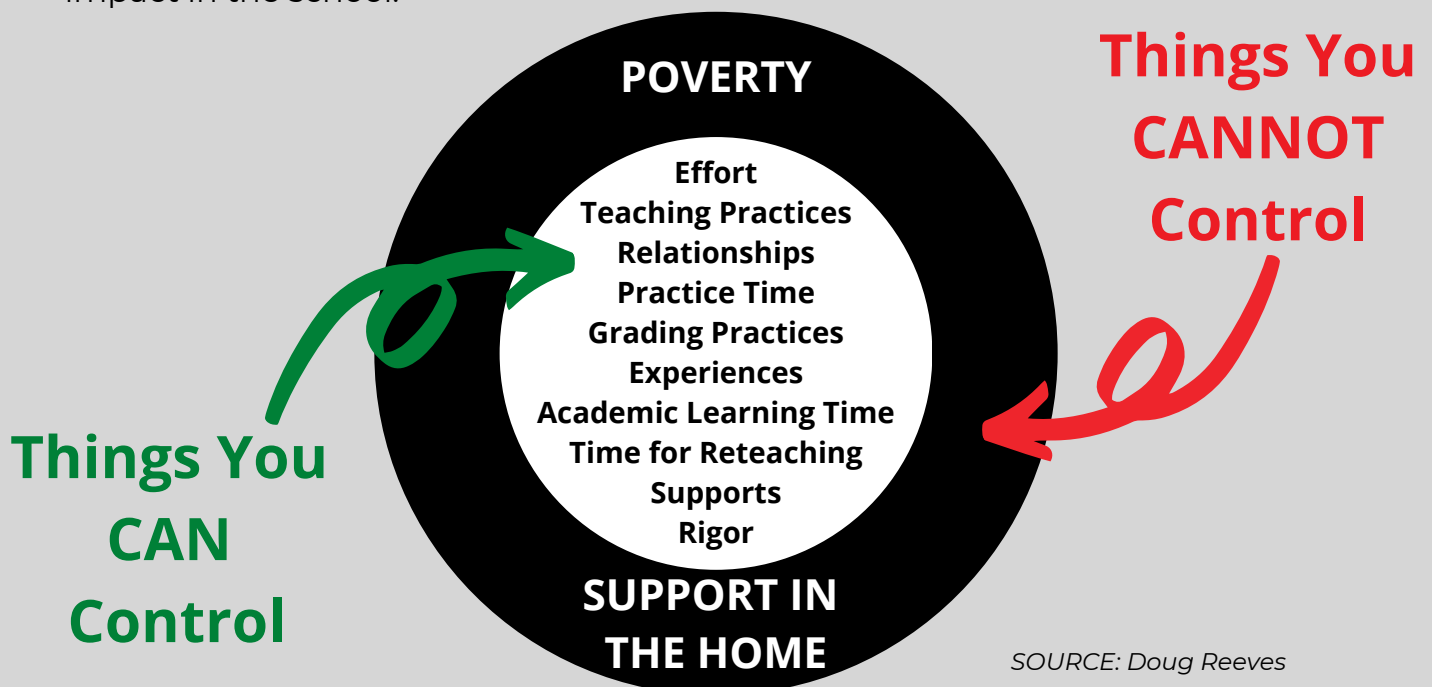
Every building will adopt and implement Research-Based Practices. Once a practice has been adopted by a school, has become part of the culture, and is responsible for accelerating student learning, it may be referred to as a School-Based Practice. Contrary to what some school administrators think, not all practices cost money. Many of the practices that have the greatest impact on student learning are free. It just takes the time and effort to learn how to implement each practice with fidelity.

What Matters Most in Raising Student Achievement?

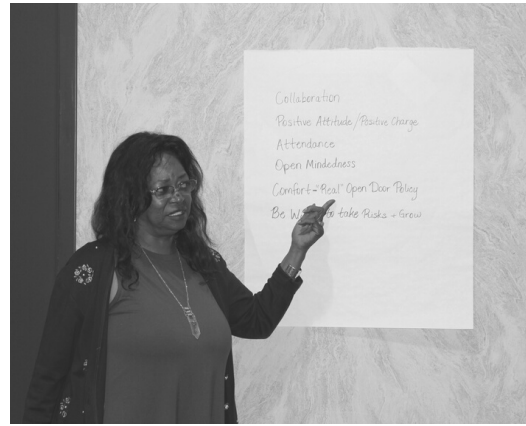


SOURCE: John Hattie

Also, conversations around Poverty and the Lack of Support in the Home are Below the Line Conversations. Teachers should focus on what they can control and impact in the school.



SOURCE: Doug Reeves



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