

Breaking Barriers

How can your team improve AP access? Remove those barriers!

Cultural Barriers (beliefs) ----- ----- -----	Climate Barriers (attitudes) ----- ----- -----
All means All	
Logistical Barriers (Sequencing, etc.) ----- ----- -----	Barrier Courses (Where are the students from AP Potential?) ----- ----- -----

Turn and Talk:

1. What exists in your school relative to these items?
2. We made changes to sequencing, barrier courses/course requirements, personnel, community involvement, vision statements, programing, and school goals. Which of these would need to be altered for increased AP access in your school/ district?

TYOLOGY DESCRIPTIONS

Once the Cultural Typologies Worksheet is completed, add the number of points assigned in each column and record that number at the bottom of the worksheet. The total points provide a picture of your school's culture. Each column represents a typology that describes the culture of the school. Schools typically have a mix of typologies, with one or two that are predominant and a few points in one or two other columns. Discuss the (a) the accuracy of that picture and (b) the issues you must address to move toward a truly collaborative culture.

COLUMN A Toxic – A culture where teachers focus on the negative aspects of the school's operations and personnel. Energy is expended to prevent change. Past failures resurface regularly and staff tend to place their personal need and convenience ahead of students' interests and needs. Communication is directive and one-way. Quality teachers view the school as a place to get away from while average and complacent teachers remain. There is a pervasive sense of hopelessness and pessimism. Ceremonies that attempt to celebrate student success seem phony and become a point of contention and ridicule.

COLUMN B Fragmented – A culture where a teacher is isolated from other teachers and is insulated from outside interference. This culture fosters individualism and discourages collaboration and external support. Teachers are usually unaware of what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. Autonomy is valued; teachers are very self-reliant. Nothing new is considered because staff members are content with their existing practice. Leaders are seldom available. Help is viewed as arrogance on the part of the giver and incompetence on the part of the receiver.

COLUMN C Balkanized – A culture where collaboration and sharing occur within like-minded groups, friends, or cabals. This culture has subcultures of teachers that are strong and compete for position, resources, and territory. These groups may be departments in high schools, teams in middle schools, or grade levels in elementary schools. The collective acceptance about learning, teaching styles, discipline, or curriculum is restricted to members of the smaller groups. Sharing views with other groups creates conflict. This culture leads to poor communication, indifference, and groups (even the most effective teachers) going separate directions.

COLUMN D Contrived Collegiality – A culture where the forms of collaboration are determined and structures are created by the school leadership. The school leaders try to speed up the process by forcing collaboration and controlling the situations that foster it. The teacher becomes regulated and predictable. This culture is meant to support new approaches and techniques, but it is superficial and actually reduces teacher motivation to cooperate beyond normal expectations. This culture initially discourages true collegiality, although that is a credible starting point. Some contrivance is necessary for the development of a true collaborative culture.

COLUMN E Comfortable Collaboration – This culture finds teachers engaging in conversations that do not ask critical questions about their work and how to improve. It is limited to advice giving, trick-trading, and material sharing. Teachers meet frequently and discuss new ideas, but conversations are restricted to comfortable support for each other. Criticism is non-existent or minimal. Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are doing in their classrooms and occasionally visit each other to discuss successes they have had with problem students.

COLUMN F Collaborative – A culture where teacher development is facilitated through interdependence and the majority agree on educational values. There is a commitment to change and improvement among teachers. Help, support, trust, openness, collective reflection, and collective efficacy are at the heart of this culture. Teachers are aggressively curious about teaching and learning. The focus of discussions among teachers is student achievement. Teachers spend time observing each other as a means of critically analyzing teaching methods. School leaders are adamant in challenging ineffective teaching practices while encouraging the individual development of each teacher.

A significant portion our work on this typology activity reflects the writings of Fullan & Hargreaves (1996) and Deal & Peterson (1999). In addition, we have used the work of other culture experts and the findings from our research as the basis for our working definitions of the six typologies. These definitions and accompanying Cultural Typology Worksheet were designed for use by school improvement teams attempting to assess and describe their existing school culture.

School Culture Survey (SCS)

The School Culture Survey provides insight about the shared values/beliefs, the patterns of behavior, and the relationships in the school. Each factor measures a unique aspect of the school's collaborative culture. The factor definitions are underlined; the additional sentences provide more detail about the concepts associated with each factor. Each item can be answered "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or "strongly disagree."

Collaborative Leadership measures the degree to which school leaders establish and maintain collaborative relationships with school staff. The leaders value teachers' ideas, seek input, engage staff in decision-making, and trust the professional judgment of the staff. Leaders support and reward risk-taking and innovative ideas designed to improve education for the students. Leaders reinforce the sharing of ideas and effective practices among all staff.

Example: Leaders value teachers' ideas.

Teacher Collaboration measures the degree to which teachers engage in constructive dialogue that furthers the educational vision of the school. Teachers across the school plan together, observe and discuss teaching practices, evaluate programs, and develop an awareness of the practices and programs of other teachers.

Example: Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.

Professional Development measures the degree to which teachers value continuous personal development and school-wide improvement. Teachers seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, organizations, and other professional sources to maintain current knowledge, particularly current knowledge about instructional practices.

Example: Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.

Collegial Support measures the degree to which teachers work together effectively. Teachers trust each other, value each other's ideas, and assist each other as they work to accomplish the tasks of the school organization.

Example: Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.

Unity of Purpose measures the degree to which teachers work toward a common mission for the school. Teachers understand, support, and perform in accordance with that mission.

Example: Teachers understand the mission of the school.

Learning Partnership measures the degree to which teachers, parents, and students work together for the common good of the student. Parents and teachers share common expectations and communicate frequently about student performance. Parents trust teachers and students generally accept responsibility for their schooling.

Example: Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.

The School Culture Survey was developed by Gruenert and Valentine at the Middle Level Leadership Center. To obtain permission to use this instrument, print and complete the permission form found at www.mllc.org.

Read the description for each row. Complete a row at a time by assigning 10 points for each row. Distribute 10 points as appropriate in proportion to how each statement best describes your school; i.e., if one statement is exactly accurate, assign 10 to that box; assign 5 each to two equal descriptors or maybe a 5, 3, 2 as appropriate, etc. Distribute exactly 10 points per row.

ROW 1 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	many teachers believe that if students fail it is the students' fault__	teachers usually do not discuss issues related to student achievement__	most teacher discussions related to student achievement are restricted to within departments, cliques, or close friends__	teachers are given time to discuss student achievement and are expected to do that during this time__	teachers are given time to discuss student achievement but most of this time is spent on giving advice and trick-trading__	teachers are given time to discuss student achievement and this time is spent critically analyzing each others' practice__
ROW 2 COLLEGIAL AWARENESS	many teachers do not care about the effectiveness of other teachers__	most of the teachers are unaware of what other teachers are teaching__	most teachers are aware of only what their friends in the school are teaching__	the school leadership expects teachers to know what the other teachers are teaching__	teachers occasionally observe and discuss what other teachers are teaching__	teachers seek out opportunities to observe and discuss what other teachers are teaching__
ROW 3 SHARED VALUES	values shared by many teachers are contradictory with student needs__	there is little agreement among teachers concerning educational values__	there are small groups of teachers that share educational values__	the school leadership provides teachers a list of school values__	there is general agreement among teachers concerning educational values__	there is strong agreement among teachers concerning educational values__
ROW 4 DECISION MAKING	decisions are easily made because many teachers do not care__	teachers are usually not interested in participating in decisions that concern students__	there are small groups of teachers that attempt to control the decisions made concerning students__	school leaders expect teachers to participate in all decisions concerning students__	teachers occasionally show an interest in the decisions made concerning students__	there is an expectation among teachers to participate in decisions concerning students__
ROW 5 RISK-TAKING	many teachers protect their teaching style from "innovation"__	most teachers typically do not experiment with new ideas__	innovations are usually initiated within a single grade or department__	school leaders mandate teachers to try new ideas__	teachers occasionally like to experiment with new ideas__	teachers are constantly looking for new ideas__
ROW 6 TRUST	teachers talk behind other teachers' backs__	trust among teachers is not considered necessary__	there are teachers who only trust certain teachers__	teachers are placed in situations where they are required to trust each other__	trust is assumed and therefore not a critical issue__	there is a strong interdependence among teachers at this school__
ROW 7 OPENNESS	teachers who are committed to students and to learning are subject to criticism__	teachers usually are not interested in suggestions concerning instruction made by other teachers__	teachers usually keep their opinions and advice concerning instruction among their friends__	teachers are expected to contribute to discussions about effective teaching at meetings__	teachers are occasionally open to giving or receiving advice concerning instruction__	teachers are very interested in the opinions of their colleagues concerning instruction__
ROW 8 PARENT RELATIONS	many teachers avoid parents whenever possible__	teachers would rather not have parents' input regarding instructional practice	there are cliques of teachers that parents perceive as the better teachers__	school leaders require teachers to be in contact with parents regularly__	most teachers are comfortable when parents want to be involved with instructional practices	teachers aggressively seek the involvement of parents in classroom instruction__
ROW 9 LEADERSHIP	school leaders are seen as obstacles to growth and development__	school leaders are not visible in the school very much__	school leaders frequently visit and/or praise the same teachers__	school leaders monitor the meetings that are designed for teacher collaboration__	school leaders encourage teachers to give each other advice without being too critical__	school leaders challenge ineffective teaching and encourage teachers to do the same
ROW 10 COMMUNICATION	school policies seem to inhibit teachers' abilities to discuss student achievement__	communication among teachers is not considered important at this school__	it is difficult to have productive dialogue with certain groups of teachers__	communication is dominated by top-down mandates__	warm and fuzzy conversations permeate our school__	any teacher can talk to any teacher about their teaching practice__
ROW 11 SOCIALIZATION	new teachers are informally indoctrinated by negative staff members quickly__	teachers at this school quickly learn that it is "every man for himself"__	new teachers are (informally labeled, then) typecast into certain teacher cliques__	there are many mandatory meetings for new teachers to attend__	new teachers are encouraged to share their experiences with other faculty members__	all teachers assume some responsibility in helping new teachers adjust__
ROW 12 ORGANIZATION HISTORY	teachers are quick to share negative stories about this school__	"teachers asking for help" has traditionally been considered as a professional weakness__	some grades, departments, or teams consider their successes as separate from the whole school__	school leaders have established strong control over much of what goes on at school__	this school is known for celebrating everything__	at this school there is an understanding that school improvement is a continuous issue__
TOTAL	Column A: _____	Column B: _____	Column C: _____	Column D: _____	Column E: _____	Column F: _____

**District Strategic Planning Worksheet
College Readiness Programs**

Action Steps	Responsible Person(s)	Resources Needed
Clear and consistent message (vision for change)	Example: Superintendent and other district personnel	Example: Thorough examination of data and programming, stakeholder input, etc.
Build marketing plan		
Identify and inform community (students, parents, teachers, community members) of new program and opportunities		
Ensure program consistency across grade levels		
Hire and staff class with the right highly qualified personnel		
Examine course sequencing (remove prerequisites where possible)		
Examine classroom strategies		
Consider student groupings		