TRANSFORMING SCHOOL CULTURE

How to Overcome Staff Division

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foreword by *Richard DuFour*

Transforming School Culture: Understanding and Overcoming Resistance to Necessary Change

Anthony Muhammad

What Is a PLC?

A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of "educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators."

—DuFour, Eaker, & Many (2006)

Three Big Ideas

* **Ensuring that students learn**

* **Collaborative culture**

* **Focus on results**

Two Forms of Change in a PLC

* **Technical**

* Cultural

Technical Change

Technical changes are changes in learning tools and structure, such as:

* Creating collaborative time
* Developing common assessments
* Interpreting data
* Utilizing educational technology
* Attending support classes

Common Misconceptions About Technical Changes

* **Changing the structure will lead to higher levels of learning ("rearranging the seats on the Titanic").**

* **Technical changes make up for poor instruction or unprofessionalism.**

* **Technical changes will *fix* kids or *fix* schools that are broken (for example, dress codes or a longer school day).**

Two Forms of Change in a PLC

* Technical

* **Cultural**

Two Underlying Assumptions in a PLC

* **All children can learn.**

* **All children will learn because of what we do.**

All children DO learn, but they don't always learn what we want them to learn.

Predetermination

* **Perceptual (everything is relative)**

* **Intrinsic (victims remain victims)**

* **Institutional**

*Winners remain winners,
and losers remain losers.*

Cultural Wars
(School Crusades)

* The **Believers**

* The **Tweeners**

* The **Survivors**

* The **Fundamentalists**

The Believers

Objective:

Success for all students

The Believers

* Are very intrinsically motivated
* Are flexible with kids (academically and behaviorally)
* Are mission driven, with a connection to school or community
* Are willing to confront negative talk and attitudes toward children
* Display varied levels of pedagogical skill
* Carry the banner of *learning for all* whether students are learning or not

Objective:

To find a comfort zone within the organization

The Tweeners

* Are loosely coupled with the school mission
* Are enthusiastic about the idealistic nature of school, but have not quite hit the tipping point
* Are not quite convinced that all children can learn, but not Darwinistic in their approach
* Follow instructions as given by administration (and thereby considered to be good teachers)
* Try to avoid school and district politics

One bad or good experience can swing them to be a Believer or a Fundamentalist (referred to as the *moment of truth*).

The Survivors

Objective:

Survival

The Survivors

* Are affected by the overwhelming nature of the job or life; it has caused clinical depression or burnout
* Have no political or organizational aspirations
* Create subcontracts with student to broker a *ceasefire* agreement
* Display little to no professional practice
* Are those who don't belong in the profession (as agreed upon by all other members of the organization)

Removal and treatment is the only possible remedy.

The Fundamentalists

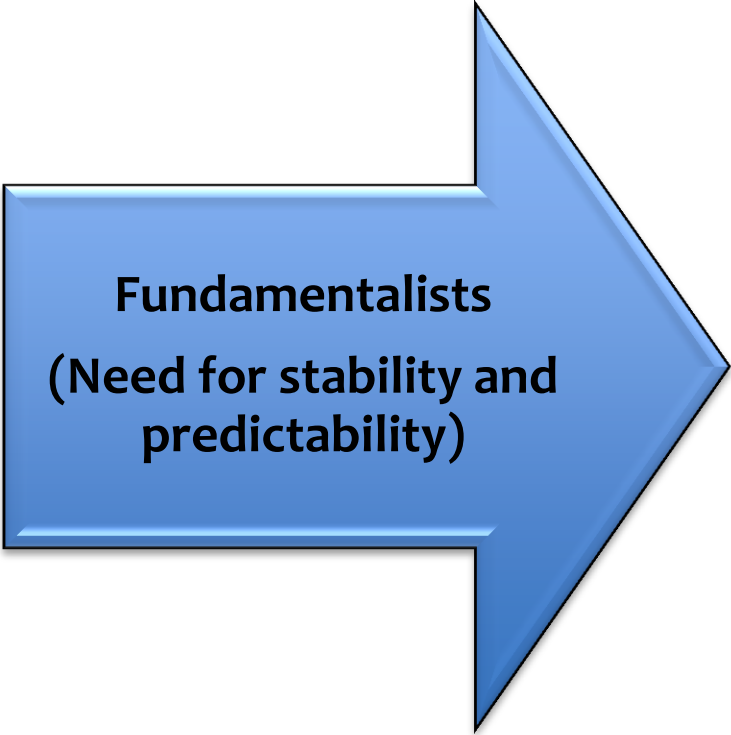Objective:

Maintain the status quo

Combat With the Three D's

* **Defame**

* **Disrupt**

* **Distract**

The Clash

Fundamentalists
(Need for stability and predictability)

School Improvement
(Need to change to meet organizational goals)

Pause to Think!

* **Estimate (by percentage) the presence and power of your Believers, Tweeners, Survivors, and Fundamentalists.**

* **How effective has your school or district been at mentoring and nurturing your Tweeners?**

* **What strategies might be used to strengthen your Tweeners' attachment and commitment to your school or district?**

Change Is Not Easy

"Drop Your Tools" Research

* People persist when they are given no clear reason to change.

* People persist when they do not trust the person who tells them to change.

* People persist when they view the alternative as more frightening.

* To change might mean admitting failure.

—From *Young Men and Fire* (Maclean, 1993)

How Do We Respond?

* **Level 1**: Make a clear case for change.
* **Level 2**: Develop relationships and do not ostracize.
* **Level 3**: Increase capacity and consider the context.
* **Level 4**: Monitor strongly.

Thank You!

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KNOW	NEED TO KNOW

HERE'S WHAT!	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?