

# Transforming School Culture Online Course – Graduate Credit

## Introduction to the Course

This course provides the framework for understanding dynamic relationships within a school culture and ensuring a positive environment that supports the changes necessary to improve learning for all students. The course explores many aspects of human behavior, social conditions, and history to reveal best practices for building healthy school cultures.

## About Solution Tree Online Courses

Solution Tree partners with noted experts and authors to develop online courses that provide engaging and rigorous professional development. Each course is highly interactive and is facilitated by experts who provide direct and timely feedback to every learner. Courses are comprised of 30 hours of work, including videos, reflections, eBook readings, online quizzes and writing assignments. Courses can be taken for CEU credit where states and districts support.

Educators can access Solution Tree's online platform anytime and anywhere there is Internet connectivity. Learners can use desktops, laptops and tablets to access their online courses.

Each course is facilitated by expert teachers and administrators who provide practical and timely feedback on all written assignments. Students can send emails to course facilitators at anytime from within the online course.

## Course Objectives

1. Learn how leaders can overcome staff division to improve relationships and transform toxic cultures into healthy ones.
2. Examine educators' motivations for hanging on to paradigms that are contrary to those articulated by their school or district.
3. Understand the underlying tensions that impact school culture among four different groups of educators: Believers, Fundamentalists, Tweeners, and Survivors.
4. Attain specific strategies for working with each group of educators to transform school culture.
5. Create positive environments in which staff not only tolerate change, but also seek and embrace the changes that maximize organizational effectiveness.

## Opportunities for Assessment & Application

Each module of this online course will contain two assessments:

1. A reflection in which educators will be asked to state their learnings or thoughts on the topics covered in the module, defended by evidence from the content in the module. Reflections are given a pass/fail grade and constructive feedback is provided to the learner by the course facilitator.
2. An online quiz containing between 5 and 10 multiple-choice questions on the topics covered in the module. Online quizzes are automatically graded and learners are provided immediate feedback.

In addition to these assessments, the online course contains two "Apply what you've Learned Assessments". As the name indicates, these assessments are written projects requiring research, synthesis and application of the concepts covered in multiple modules. Apply what you've Learned Assessments occur at the mid-point and end of the course.

## Readings & Supplemental Support Material:

*Transforming School Culture – How to Overcome Staff Division* by Anthony Muhammad (ISBN: 9781934009451)

# Scope and Sequence

## Module 1

- Video Introduction
- A Deeper Read – Chapters 1 and 2
- Key Things to Remember
- Reflective Conversation
- Quiz

## Module 2

- Video Introduction
- A Deeper Read – Chapter 3 and 4
- Key Things to Remember
- Reflective Conversation
- Quiz

## Module 3

- Video Introduction
- A Deeper Read – Chapter 5 and 6
- Key Things to Remember
- Reflective Conversation
- Quiz

## Mid-Term: Apply What You've Learned

In this case study, you were hired because the interview committee believes that you understand school culture and can help shape it. To that end, you have been asked by the committee to

give a report at an upcoming faculty meeting on the topic of school culture. This report should include the following elements:

Section I: What is school culture? How do we define it? How can we get specific about what we really mean by the term “school culture?”

Section II: What do we mean by toxic school culture? Clearly, there are many schools that define themselves as having a toxic culture. How would we know it if we see it? How can we be specific in knowing exactly what to look for when this kind of school culture manifests itself?

Section III: What is a positive school culture? How will we know a positive school culture when we see it? How can it be defined?

Section IV: Who are the believers and why should we be looking for them? In this section, you are to describe what is meant by the term believers from this text. What specific attributes do believers have and why are they important in shaping the school culture we hope to establish?

Action Steps and Conclusion: In the conclusion, describe any steps that you believe participants can or should take to help create conditions wherein believers are more likely to emerge. What kinds of recommendations would you make that would help to create a situation where more teachers could become believers? What kinds of specific, actionable steps could faculty take to make this a more commonplace expectation? Remember, you were hired because they wanted you to help lead a reform in school culture. Be specific on the steps you see in making it happen from your assumed role in the case scenario (teacher leader or principal).

## Module 4

- **Video Introduction**
- **A Deeper Read – Chapters 7 and 8**
- **Key Things to Remember**
- **Reflective Conversation**
- **Quiz**

## Final: Apply What You’ve Learned

This Final is scenario based. For the final, you are to once again working in a proposed, new leader scenario assuming the role of teacher leader or principal. Under both scenarios, you are once again going to be asked to make a presentation to your staff regarding the all-important topic of school culture. Below find a description of what this next presentation should entail.

School Culture Starts with Us: One of the points you have made throughout the year in your role in leadership in your new school is to enforce the notion that school leadership is everyone's responsibility. Furthermore, the actions of every educator in the building help to create the kind of culture that the school collectively enjoys. To that end, you are reminded that in your last discussion, you reminded them of school culture's definition and its importance. You also defined toxic culture and even identified the importance of emerging as "the believer" as a model of culture-driving, teacher leadership.

For this presentation, you are going to drill down and get even more specific. You will be defining to a greater extent some of the various behaviors that exist and how the staff should reflect upon them. Your presentation should include the following:

Section I: Reviewing School Culture. Provide a brief review of school culture, addressing toxic culture and the desired positive school culture.

Section II: Revisiting the Believers Review for the staff the role of the believer and provide a quick synopsis of the steps the school can take to ensure that more teachers become believers.

Section III: A Deeper Look Provide an overview of the three other emergent leadership archetypes that shape school culture. You are to reflect/define each of these archetypes. Secondly, you are to describe what you think the school can do in situations where this type of teacher behavior emerges.

- Tweeners
- Survivors
- Fundamentalists

Conclusion: To end this assignment, bring together some concluding thoughts on school culture, the importance of the believer, and the steps the school can take to make each of these elements fit together effectively.