

Why Should We Articulate Collective Commitments?

With the democratization of organizations, especially schools, the leadership function becomes one of creating a “community of shared values” (Lezotte, 1991, p. 3).

“Values describe how we intend to operate, on a day-to-day basis, as we pursue our vision. . . . Values are best expressed in terms of behavior: If we act as we should, what would an observer see us doing? . . . If values are made a central part of the organization’s shared vision effort, and put out in full view, they become like a figurehead on a ship: a guiding symbol of the behavior that will help move people toward the vision” (Senge et al., 1994, p. 302).

Both profit and nonprofit organizations should be grounded on “a timeless set of core values and an enduring purpose” (Collins & Porras, 1994, p. xxiv).

“The language of complaint essentially tells us, and others, what it is we can’t stand. The language of commitment tells us (and possibly others) what it is we stand for” (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, p. 32).

High-performing districts “tended to rely more on a common culture of values to shape collective action than on bureaucratic rules and controls. The shared values typically focused on improvement of student learning as the central goal” (Elmore, 2000, p. 26).

“Values provide guidelines on how you should proceed as you pursue your purpose and picture of the future. They answer the question . . . ‘How?’ They need to be clearly described so that you know exactly what behaviors demonstrate that the value is being lived” (Blanchard, 2007, p. 30).

Values must be driven into the policy, the decision-making, and ultimately the culture of the organization, otherwise value statements are just words. When values become part of an employee’s DNA, they not only guide day-to-day work but also empower employees to act in unique situations (Berry & Seltman, 2008).

“Values represent the *commitments to action* necessary to ensure the vision is realized. . . . In the best PLC cultures, vision and values ultimately become the driving force behind the decision-making process that takes place every day” (Kanold, 2011, p. 13).

To bring a mission statement to life “educators must be willing to transparently communicate their commitment to students as it relates to their stated mission and challenge one another to live up to that commitment” (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012, p. 28).

The key to values impacting the organization in a positive way is that people have to “live by them, reinforce them every day, and not tolerate behavior that is at odds with them” (Bryant, 2014).

References

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