Culture

Culture is established whether it is intentional or not. Culture must be purposely developed and managed to optimize the opportunity for a safe, educational, and inspiring environment. Your onsite school culture will not necessarily roll over to distant learning, instead, intentional structures and procedures have to be in place in order to have positive culture live and thrive in your new context. If you are in a space where your school culture may not be in a desired state or if you have not thought intentionally about your culture, consider how your distance learning Working Group(s) can be a model from your school community. Think back to Harry Wong's book, <u>The First Days of School,</u> consider what procedures and routines need to be in place for your students to have the structure they need to thrive in the first days of distance learning. Being online brings a unique set of circumstances that we may not be able to control, **<u>however, there are circumstances that we can.</u>**

Four Phases of Implementing Culture

Below you will find guidance broken into four phases of planning as your school creates its culture for distant learning. The questions within each phase are to guide you and can be used as discussion questions for the team, independent processing questions to ponder, or other formats that fit your school as you plan. There are suggested actions and examples/ resources in each phase to support you in the process. While the phases are intended to be chronological, each can also be used independent of the other.

- **Phase 1** will support schools in thinking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and whether basic (physical, emotional, nutritional, etc.) needs are met before sharing expectations for academics with families.
- **Phase 2** guides you through building your culture working group, defining your recent onsite school culture, creating your intended experience for your distance learning context, and finally, establishing a plan to communicate your desired culture experience.
- **Phase 3** will support you in establishing the structures you need to sustain your desired experience for the culture that you established in Phase 2.
- **Phase 4** provides guidance and resources to think through challenges on two scales-- minute challenges and crisis management. We provide resources and recommendations on potential ways to proactively mitigate these.

Phase 1: The Foundation for Culture

In this phase, you will consider what information is critical for you to know before moving forward to adapt your school culture and what information is peripheral.

Consider the impact on students, families, and staff if we knew and understood their needs before holding them to norms, values, routines, or systems. While we may not be able to meet all of their needs, being able to make some of the statements below in this time of uncertainty, we implore you to hold these in tension as you create your distance learning culture.

- *I know that my students all have shelter, food, and running water.*
- *I know that all my students have an adult in the home.*
- *I know that all of my students will have at least one school staff member to speak to weekly.*
- *I know that all the students who have IEPs or who are learning English are...*
- *I know that all of my students who live in poverty are...*
- *I know that my needs are...*
- *I know that all my families' needs are...*
- *I know that all my staff needs are ...*

Action Step 1: Assess the socio-emotional needs of yourself, your team, and your students' families to determine potential foundational steps prior to shaping culture. **Additional Resource: [Deeper Exploration of Foundations for Culture - Assessing the Need of Yourself, Team, School Families](#)**

Assessing Needs	**Consider how you will ensure...**
Who are my students and categorically, what do they need to feel safe, seen, and supported?	How will I ensure students feel safe, seen, and supported? • [Student Health, Safety, and Nutrition](#) Resource
How am I, my students, my families, and my staff receiving love and support during this time?	How will I ensure that myself and my school community is receiving love and support during this time? What resources can you and your staff provide? • [Taking Care of Yourself](#) • [Student Health, Safety, and Nutrition](#) • [Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

	• [Ten Strategies for Educators' Wellbeing: A Handbook for Schools During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) • [Secondary Traumatic Stress for Educators](#)
Do all my students have the tools they need to succeed?	How will I ensure my students have the tools they need to succeed? If not, how can my team support? • [Technology Access](#)
Do all my students and families know what is expected of them during this time?	How will I ensure all my students and families know what is expected of them during this time? How do you know? • [School and System Communication](#) Resource
Do my staff know the expectations for connecting with families and students?	How will I ensure that staff are connecting with families and students? Is there a system for this? • [School and System Communication](#) Resource

Phase 2: Defining and Communicating Your Desired Experience for School Culture in a Distance Learning Context

The resources in Phase 2 guides you through building your culture working group, defining your recent onsite school culture, creating your intended experience for your distance learning context, and finally, establishing a plan to communicate your desired culture experience.

Action Step 1: Gather or establish your working group for culture.	Action Step 2: Working group surveys stakeholders or looks at your most recent culture/climate data and summarizes your culture findings.
Determine the influencers	**Examine school culture**
• Who are the key stakeholders in establishing your school culture? • Who do you rely on to support/who are major influencers?	• What is true about your school culture? • What evidence supported that truth?

- What roles & responsibilities exist pertaining to culture? - What is your desired culture for your working group? - Norms/values - Routines/Systems	- What are your school's values? - How does student voice influence your school culture? - What is working? What is not working? Why? - Survey families and students
Action Step 3: Working group convenes to establish a desired experience for culture in distance learning. **[Example Desired Experience for School Culture in a Digital Context](#)**	**Action Step 4:** Working group or leadership team convene a meeting to share the desired experience and gather feedback from stakeholders.
Refine the desired experience for school culture	**Communicate the desired experience to stakeholders**
- What do you want to be true about your school culture? - What will stay the same from your onsite desired experience for culture? What might be altered? - What do you want students, teachers, parents, and staff to say, think, and feel? - How will your working group culture be a model for what you want your school community to experience?	- Who has additional capacity and can contribute to the communication plan? - Who will lead the messaging? - What will be the timeline for sharing the desired experience? - How will there be opportunities for feedback?

Phase 3: Creating Structures to Support your School Culture

The resources in Phase 3 will support you in establishing the structures necessary to support the desired experience you refined in Phase 2. Once you have audited your existing structures and considered how they may transfer in your current context, there are guiding questions to consider for execution of these structures to support your desired experience for school culture.

Action Step 1: Working group assesses existing structures that contribute to culture. [Example Assessment of Culture Structures](#)	
Existing Structures	- What structures support culture in your school? - Of the structures you listed, which will you prioritize in distance learning? - What norm/value is present? - What systems/routines are in place?
Action Step 2: Working group determines alternatives to existing culture structures. [Example Options for Alternative Structures](#)	
Alternative Structure for Distance Learning	- Which structure(s) will we select to accomplish the outcomes of our existing structures? - What will be different? - What norm/values are transferable? - What systems/routines need to be in place? - Survey families and students
Action Step 3: Working group convenes to establish a desired experience for culture in distance learning	
Executing the Prioritized Culture Structure	- Who will be part of the team? - What will this execution look like in distance learning?

	• When will this happen and when will it be monitored? • How will this structure be established, communicated, implemented, and refined?

The below table models Phase 3 for commonly used structures that support school culture, and it is categorized by school community stakeholders. The first column lists the common structures, the middle column defines some of the norms/values and systems/routines that may be present in those structures, and the final column lists alternative structures that can be harnessed to transfer norms/values and systems/routines into your distance learning context.

Example Assessment of Culture Structures & Options for Alternative Structures

Existing Structures	Assessment of Culture Structures *Norms/Values and Systems/Routines*	Alternative Structures
Whole School Community		
Students • Morning Meeting • Bulletin Boards • Assemblies/ Announcement Families • Newsletters • PTO/ PTA/ PTSA Staff • Staff Meetings • Mailboxes	Norms/Values • Model values • Everyone can ask questions & give feedback • New information is shared at the same time • Acknowledge & celebrate staff and students Systems/Routines • Introduce systems • Updates on current issues • Review calendars - what's on deck?	• Zoom Meetings • FB Live • YouTube Videos • Family Messaging System • Email • Conference Calls • Mailed Newsletters
Staff		

• Grade Level Meetings • Collaborative Planning Time • Department Meetings • PLCs • Student Work Analysis Meetings	Norms/Values • Ask questions peer to peer • Solutions oriented Systems/Routines • Collaborate to support students: academics & socio-emotional • More granular - what's on deck? • Sharing parent concerns • Review data	• Zoom Meetings • Text Groups • Conference Calls • Email
Students		
• Classroom routines • Advisory/ Homeroom • PBIS	Norms/Values • Peer to peer collaboration • Students are valued as individuals • Culture of Joy Systems/Routines • Intro Routines: Attendance, Bell Ringer, Do Now • Greetings/Community Circles • Restorative Meetings & Behavior Support • Student leadership opportunities • Select Student work to share • Positive call home • Individual acknowledgements • Planned shout out time • Gratitude circle	• E-learning Apps/ Platforms • Streaming video platforms • Text groups • Email • Conference Calls • Digital awards show • Mailed Letters • In-home PBIS • Online PBIS
Caretakers		
• Drop-off/ Pick-up	Norms/Values	• Family Messaging System

• Calls, texts, or letters home	• Timely sharing of information • Transparency Systems/Routines • Feedback on student progress: academics & socio-emotional • Celebrate students	• Texts • Phone calls • Email • Mailed letters

Phase 4: Planning to Address Challenges

In Phase 4, provides guidance and resources to think through challenges on two scales-- minute challenges and crisis management. We provide resources and recommendations on potential ways to proactively mitigate these.

Action Step 1: Working group considers potential challenges that may impact desired experience for culture and considers resources to potentially mitigate challenges.
Determining Challenges & Proactively Planning
What are everyday scenarios that might present challenges to our culture and how do our plans proactively address them?

Physical accessibility	• [How to Create Closed Captioning on YouTube](#) • Reach out to the school's occupational therapist to determine physical accessibility needs for students • Work with school social worker/counselor to determine any physical accessibility needs for parents (ie parent's capacity to travel to a site to pick up food, packets, etc)

Language needs	• Consult your policy and guidance regarding translation and interpretation for school-wide family communications • Work with teachers to ensure they can follow translation and interpretation policy and guidance for class/individual communications
Laptop or device breaks	• Create a contingency plan for providing access to families with a broken computer or device. For guiding questions, refer to Key Action 2, [here](#).
Student is absent	• Track communications with students/families proactively in order to ensure all students are accounted for • Reach out to a sibling's teacher to determine if contact can be made within the family • Use your guidance regarding if and when intervention from Child and Family Services is warranted

Teacher is absent/ extended leave	• Create a contingency plan for brief and extended absences for each teacher that includes a coverage plan for:
	    • referring the staff member to appropriate resources and policies
	    • instructional responsibilities
	    • student/family communications
	    • leadership/working group responsibilities

Student communicates inappropriately/ Bullying	• Proactively address your expectations around communication and technology usage policies with students & families
	    • [Prevent Cyberbullying](#)
	• Consulting your current policy on bullying, including cyber bullying
	    • [Laws, Policies & Regulations](#)
	    • [Respond to Bullying](#)

What are some worst-case scenarios and how can we proactively address them?	
Students facing health, wellness challenges, or	• Proactively track student and family communications in order to determine what

living situation challenges	additional supports students and families may need • Consult your policy and guidance student health, safety, nutrition, abuse, and homelessness • Work with school social worker/counselor/community outreach coordinator to determine any local organizations providing emergency resources • [Student Health, Safety, and Nutrition](#) Resource • [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#)
Loss of Principal/ Teacher/ Student/Family	• Consult your policy and guidance for crisis management • [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#) • [Coping with the Death of a Student or Staff Member](#) • [Coalition to Support Grieving Students: Home Page](#) • [Student Death--The Empty Desk](#)