

## Climate vs Culture

Throughout reading several different texts and articles regarding climate and culture, I reflected upon something I found interesting about the topics. They both play a vital role the environment within a school, yet, are seldom discussed between colleagues at weekly meetings or brought up in a Powerpoint by your principals. Climate is the idea that overtime an attitude can transform itself into a culture or what Gruenert and Whitaker refer to as a personality (2015, p. 15). When I think of this analogy that these authors have shared with us, I think about the same relationship shared between a short-term and long-term goals. The correlation being that a short-term goal can be part of the process to reaching your long-term. There are many connections between climate and culture, but every great leader should know their differences to succeed.

The amount of time it takes to instill a new climate or culture is a key factor when noting their differences. Gruenert and Whitaker discuss this instance happening within a school, “climate can occur instantly, a change in culture is necessarily a slow evolution. If, starting tomorrow, a heretofore distant principal decides to act in a positive and friendly manner, others may quickly adopt similar behavior and the school climate will have suddenly changed. If the principal soon reverts back to her previous attitude, the force of the school culture will strongly encourage everyone else to revert back as well; if, however, she sticks to the new attitude for the long run, then positivity and friendliness will slowly become entrenched as a part of the school culture,” (2015, p. 19). This notes that climate can be changed by a leader merely showcasing a specific attitude. However, for the culture to shift, the attitude would have to remain consistent overtime. While reflecting on this I was reminded of an afterschool staff meeting where our principal was sick, but still came. It was not her fault, but due to

being sick, her energy level was quite low throughout her presentation. As a result, the energy and enthusiasm lowered a bit while colleagues were having collaborative discussions. This one meeting did not have an affect on our school's overall culture, because it was not our personality, it was merely an attitude

Along with time, comes the amount of effort needed, which is the second difference between climate and culture when establishing them. Kukreja (2020) states in her article that organizations do not adopt a culture in a single day and in fact learn from past experiences and start practicing it every day thus forming the culture of the workplace. When I think of the climate of any environment it almost seems accidental, as if it were never planned out, but just happened out of cause and effect. On the other hand, when I think of culture I think of words like intentional and meticulous. The school I currently teach at is K-5, but two years ago it was only a kindergarten center. Our principal had to transform the school's current culture to adapt it to a different student body and staff. I would reflect on this matter by asking what is my overall mission and what is my vision to help us get there?

The last difference between climate and culture is how they are viewed by the people within that environment. The framework of climate is concrete, easily seen and possibly even talked about, whereas culture can be more abstract and need more time to be fully understood. Gruenert (2008) say that these expectations evolve into unwritten rules to which group members conform in order to remain in good standing with their colleagues. Groups develop a common culture in order to pass on information to the next generation (p. 57). It is this format of unwritten rules that leaves the culture of an environment up for interpretation. When I moved to the school I am currently at, two years ago, I was given the opportunity to explore and translate what I believed to be the culture. In the case, Gruenert (2008) believes new teachers want to fit

in and to feel like experienced teachers, they are vulnerable to the school's culture and all the unwritten rules that have been passed on through the decades (p. 57). Although there was no handbook on how to follow the school's culture, through observation I was able to adhere to their traditions.

After reading through several texts, I reflected on three main differences between climate and culture. The amount of time and effort needed when establishing either of these varies greatly. Also, the climate of an environment is more easily observed than its culture. As a leader, these are very important distinctions to be aware of when trying to establish either climate or culture.

## References

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