

Model for Promoting Inclusive School Cultures Around Mental Health



Culture is Connections

A culture will be strong or weak depending on the interactions between the people in the school.

Beliefs, values, and actions will spread the farthest and be tightly reinforced when everyone is communicating with everyone else. In a strong school culture, leaders communicate directly with teachers, administrators, counselors, and families, who also all communicate directly with each other.



Culture is Core Beliefs & Behaviors

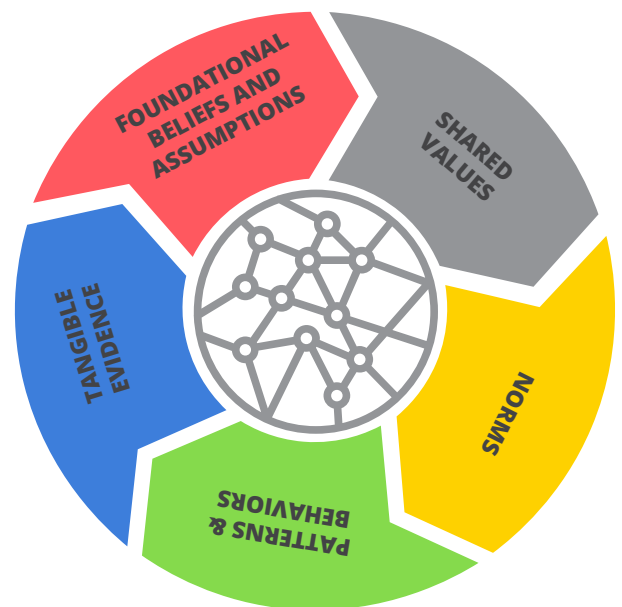
What people believe and how they act depends on the messages — both direct and indirect — that the leaders and others in the school send. A good culture arises from messages that promote traits like collaboration, honesty, and hard work.

Culture is shaped by five interwoven elements, each of which principals have the power to influence:

- **Fundamental beliefs and assumptions**, or the things that people at your school consider to be true.
- **Shared values**, or the judgments people at your school make about those beliefs and assumptions — whether they are right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust.
- **Norms**, or how members believe they should act and behave, or what they think is expected of them.
- **Patterns and behaviors**, or the way people actually act and behave in your school.
- **Tangible evidence**, or the physical, visual, auditory, or other sensory signs that demonstrate the behaviors of the people in your school.

Shaping Your School Culture

- **Look in the mirror.** Be a role model and present with the behaviors you expect.
- **Select a team wisely.** Choose the leadership in your building carefully for what project you are leading and leverage best practices in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- **Teach behavior.** Professional development, classroom education, student and family engagement can all play a role in demonstrating a vision.
- **Broadcast the vision.** Use consistent, purposeful messaging to reinforce the culture.
- **Make the vision tangible.** Demonstrate the commitment to culture with visible messaging promoting the vision.
- **Restructure social networks.** Promote multi-disciplinary engagement on initiatives and activities to promote collaboration, connections and help set culture.
- **Ensure cultural alignments.** Review your other cultures, frameworks, policies and beliefs. Weave them together.



Framework for Promoting Inclusive School Cultures Around Mental Health

Erika's Lighthouse believes every school community can be an inclusive, empathetic and supportive environment around mental health. This framework is a template that your school or district can leverage to promote a positive school culture.

FOUNDATION BELIEFS & ASSUMPTIONS

- Mental health is just as important as physical health.
- Everyone deserves good mental health.
- Good mental health is important to student academic success.
- Mental health is everyone's responsibility.

SHARED VALUES

- Empathetic - We recognize every student and we all have a role in supporting their mental health.
- Collaborative - We work together to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking.
- Resilient - We are determined to withstand adversity and bounce back from challenges - together.
- Inclusive - We meet every child where they are and ensure a safe and comfortable environment.
- Empowering - We are all in this together and will equip every educator, staff, student and family with the tools to thrive.

NORMS

- Every staff person and adult in the school is educated and prepared to be a trusted adult.
- Recognizing when a student may be struggling with mental health challenges is everyone's role.
- Families are engaged and involved in student mental health initiatives.
- School protocols are up-to-date and communicated to everyone.

PATTERNS & BEHAVIORS

Staff and adults are:

- inclusive and accessible to their students, parents and peers.
- using the same shared vocabulary and understanding of mental health.
- communicating and collaborating regularly on student mental health initiatives and challenges.
- respectful and purposeful towards one another, students and parents.

Students:

- seek help for themselves and others.
- are empathetic and working to reduce stigma.

TANGIBLE EVIDENCE

- Focus on universal prevention, education and awareness
- Proactive about mental health messaging and help-seeking
- Empower teens through peer-led campaigns and stigma reduction
- Focus on school policies, professional development, staff culture and self-care
- Engage families in student learning and mental health awareness
- Promote interconnected, multi-disciplinary collaboration and implementation

Practical examples:

- Posters around school
- Classroom education
- Family workshops & resources
- Regular communication w/ community
- Good mental health or wellness clubs

Contact the education team with Erika's Lighthouse about how we can help you.