

Community Coalition for Children

Presents practical solutions for everyday living & working with children

Child & Family Agency
Children First
New London Initiative
Connecticut College
Connecticut PTA
The Country School
Groton Early Childhood
Community Collaborative
Groton Education
Foundation
Integrated Day
Charter School
Jewish Federation
LEARN
Mashantucket Pequot
Tribal Nation
Mitchell College
Pine Point School
New London County Youth
Service Bureaus
Regional Multicultural
Magnet School
Williams School
Norwich Free Academy
Interdistrict School for Arts
and Communication
United Community &
Family Services
Lawrence & Memorial
Hospital
The William W. Backus
Hospital
Three Rivers Community
College
Friends of CCC
Public Schools of:
East Lyme • Groton
Montville • New London
Norwich • Region 18
Salem • Waterford



Professional Luncheon Workshop Summary “Signs of an Unhealthy School Culture”

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D. gave the following presentation on October 25, 2005. His comments were captured by Deb Heminway of ISAAC School.

School culture is a critical aspect of effective change within a school. If the school culture is unhealthy, its parts function less well and any changes that are introduced do not last. A new principal or schedule may feel different for a limited amount of time, but the underlying problems remain and resurface.

- The culture is unhealthy when the staff is unwilling to take responsibility for an outcome. When blame is placed on parents, the board, etc., the staff is not taking responsibility for itself. In a healthy culture, the staff has a “can do” attitude and moves forward.
- An unhealthy culture is riddled with a complacent attitude. “Oh, that’s just the way it is.” When/if we hear this at school, it probably means that we haven’t created effective opportunities for students to learn. The status quo remains.
- The school culture is unhealthy if the staff does not want to work together. If the staff has an attitude that “this is my kingdom,” members are not helping one another, sharing strategies that work well, or communicating and adequately integrating their teachings. Finger pointing or teaching in isolation leads to low morale. A coherent strategy does allow for independence. Ideally, staff members are a part of something because they want to be and are internally motivated.
- If a school culture has an anti-intellectual peer culture, the culture is unhealthy. Students make conscious choices about their education, so a healthy culture wants to motivate and engage all students in their education. A healthy culture actively negates stereotypical beliefs and enables the “cool kids” to be intellectual and esteemed leaders.

A school culture can change once there is a “clarity of vision.” The staff needs to know what the roles are and who fulfills each of the roles; they need to know what strategies are needed to attain the goals and how to monitor progress. The staff needs to know what it will look like when they have made successful changes.