Why Should We Articulate Collective Commitments?

"Culture and core values will be increasingly recognized as the vital social glue that infuses an organization with passion and purpose." (Bolman & Deal, 2000, p. 185)

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

To change culture, leaders must create a process to identify and articulate the shared values that people will commit to, examine structures to ensure they support the values, teach and model the values, and address behavior that is contrary to the values (Champy, 1995).

"Leaders of the best-performing organizations defined their jobs in terms of identifying and constantly communicating commonly held values, shaping such values to enhance performance, ensuring the capability of people around them, and living the commonly held values." (Heskett & Schlesinger, 1996, p. 112)

Both profit and nonprofit organizations should be grounded on "a timeless set of core values and an enduring purpose" (Collins & Porras, 1997, p. xxiv).

"Leaders must be able to build a community of shared values. Consensus about values creates commitment to where the organization is going and how it is going to get there." (Kouzes & Posner, 1996, p. 105)

"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)

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).

The three strands of strong school cultures are academic focus, shared beliefs and values, and productive professional relationships (Saphier, King, & D'Auria, 2006).

A professional community is characterized by "shared values and purpose" (Little, 2006, p. 14).

"Systems successful in improving student learning are characterized by articulated norms and values." (Garmston, 2007, p. 55)

"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)

"When people gather together to . . . commit themselves to ideas, their relationships change—they have made promises to each other and are likely to feel morally obliged to keep their promises." (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 32)

"Winning leaders are missionaries for their organization's values. They preach the values, embody them in their own actions, and encourage others to think about them and their application in everyday situations." (Tichy, 1997, p. 105)

"Clear shared values, collectively reinforced, increase the likelihood of teacher success." (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996, p. 181)

"The core values of an institutional culture are the fundamental beliefs and commitments that drive what the organization does and how its members behave. Effective leaders begin the job of shaping a culture by leading the discussion about the institution's core values and beliefs." (Johnston, 1995, p. 12)