

# Activity 5: Defining School Success through Culture

<b>Purpose:</b>	By answering a set of questions, participants can come together and plan for the ways in which they can help develop and support a successful school culture. These questions are centered on what makes a school successful, ranging from school culture to family engagement. After teachers consider their own answers, they compare their answers with colleagues and arrive upon three things they can do to contribute to a successful school year by building school culture.
<b>Length of Time:</b>	50 minutes
<b>Materials:</b>	Photocopies of this activity
<b>Essential Questions:</b>	What do we as a group define as a successful school culture? How can we help develop and sustain a successful school culture?

## Background:

From the NCREL Monograph: *Building Collaborative Cultures: Seeking Ways to Reshape Urban Schools*

“Knowing what members of the school define as success is a way to know what is valued (Schein, 1985). Success in schools can be defined in many ways – giving students basic skills and knowledge, providing a safe and secure environment, ‘surviving’ until the next day, preparing students for the world of work or college (Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone, 1988), and so forth. What teachers, administrators, and others view as the measures of success often shapes how they spend their time, what problems they try to solve together, and what gets their attention. Several questions can be asked to understand these definitions.”

## Activity Steps:

**1 Individual Reflection (15 minutes):** Take 15 minutes to deeply consider and write your responses in the “My Response” column about your definitions of a successful school culture below.

- What is a successful school culture?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- What are examples of a positive school culture?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- What socio-emotional conditions for students, parents, and teachers would you like at your school?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- What would good relationships among students, staff, and community look like?

My response	My colleagues' responses

*Note: School culture has a critical effect on the possibilities for academic success. Once you have defined what a successful school culture looks like for your school community you can plan for ways to utilize your school culture to build academic successes. The two must work in tandem for schools to succeed.*

- What will define our academic success this year?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- What should students know and be able to do at the end of the year?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- What professional learning should we prioritize to achieve those goals?

My response	My colleagues' responses

**Reflection:**

- How does our definition of successful culture support or impede our priorities for academic success this year?

My response	My colleagues' responses

- 2 Small group Conversation (20 minutes):** Share and compare your answers with the three people nearest you. Use the column on the right side to record their answers.
- 3 Next steps (15 minutes):** Finish by identifying three things you and/or your team can do to contribute to the success of the school this year and list three ways you will know they have been accomplished.

## After discussion:

- What are three things I/we can do to contribute to a successful school culture this year?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- What are three things I/we can do to contribute to academic success this year?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- How will I/we know that they have been accomplished?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.

Source: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le0pet.htm>