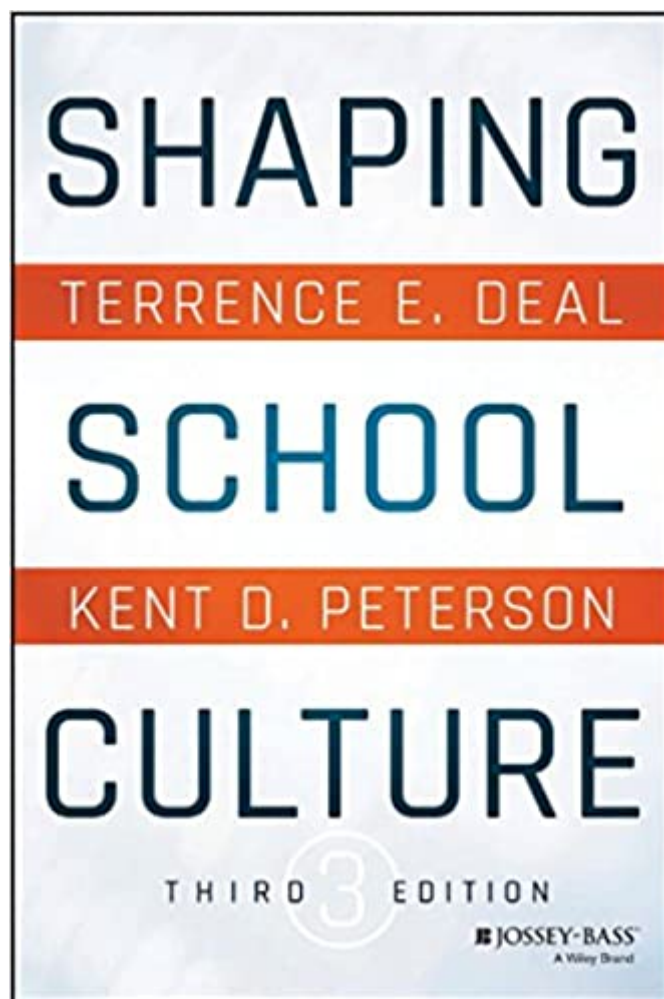


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# Shaping School Culture



## Synopsis

The most trusted guide to school culture, updated with current challenges and new solutions

Shaping School Culture is the classic guide to exceptional school leadership, featuring concrete guidance on influencing the subtle symbolic features of schools that provide meaning, belief, and faith. Written by renowned experts in the area of school culture, this book tackles the increasing challenges facing public schools and provides clear, candid suggestions for more effective symbolic leadership. This new third edition has been revised to reflect the reality of schools today, including the increased emphasis on high-stakes testing, federal reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), state sponsored improvement programs, and other major issues that impact organizational culture and the role of school leaders. Each chapter features new examples and cases that illustrate persistent problems, spelling out key cultural implications and offering concrete examples of overcoming the challenges while maintaining a meaningful learning environment. The chapter on toxic schools continues to provide the field's most trusted advice on navigating this rocky terrain, and the discussion's focus on how to manage negativity remains especially integral to besieged school administrators across the U.S. Recent years have jolted the nation's school system with a number of new developments that spell problems for the cultural tapestry of schools. This book provides expert perspective and sage, doable advice for administrators tending to external pressures while sustaining or evolving a more positive school culture. Navigate new challenges including Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and waning confidence and faith Turn around a toxic school culture with confidence and success Foster a culture of passion, purpose, and meaning Adopt a more active form of symbolic leadership to support students, faculty, staff, parents, and community Test scores as the primary metric, relentless reforms, waning public support, and timid initiatives wrapped in bureaucratic packaging: while among the most prominent issues administrators face are only the tip of the iceberg. Shaping School Culture charts a route through competing pressures to help educational leaders hew a positive learning environment for schools.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

THE CLASSIC GUIDE TO SCHOOL CULTURE; UPDATED TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S SCHOOLS Now in its third edition, *Shaping School Culture* has become the go-to guide to exceptional school leadership. This classic work can help any education leader foster passion, purpose, and meaning within their school. The authors' experts in the area of school culture offer practical guidance for influencing the subtle symbolic features of schools that provide meaning, belief, and faith. Deal and Peterson also include a wealth of illustrative stories and meaningful advice for dealing with timely issues such as test scores determining school effectiveness, challenging federal reforms, loss of confidence in our schools, and unproductive state initiatives. The authors show how school leaders can recognize external pressures for reform while simultaneously tending to their vital leadership role of shaping culture. Praise for *Shaping School Culture* "Deal and Peterson understand the reality of school culture while also knowing it is the profound role of the leader to shape that culture. This book is a must-read for any school leader who yearns for something more than the day-to-day frustrations of the work." PAUL HOUSTON, executive director, emeritus, American Association of School Administrators and president, Center for Empowered Leadership "The world of American schools has been spinning furiously since the first edition of *Shaping School Culture*. What has been missing until now was a road map to navigate the new and perplexing twists and turns as leaders attempt to understand, craft, and sustain their school cultures." ROLAND S. BARTH, author and educator "Deal and Peterson use contemporary examples, cases, and policy trends to provide a fresh perspective on schools. Throughout the volume the reader is re-oriented to the elements of school culture that matter most. Folklore, heroes, revival of old ways, paradox, and even the avoidance of toxic cultures all have a role to play. An essential read." SHARON CONLEY, PHD, professor, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

TERRENCE E. DEAL has been a professor at Stanford, Harvard, Vanderbilt and (as Irving R. Melbo Professor) the University of Southern California. He is the coauthor of *Corporate Cultures*, *Leading with Soul*, *Reframing Organizations*, and *How Great Leaders Think*. KENT D. PETERSON is an emeritus professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Deal and Peterson are also coauthors of *The Leadership Paradox*.

I wish there were a way to return this book. It does not have page numbers that are accurate/coordinate to the page numbers in the paperback copy, so I cannot reference quotes with page numbers, meaning I cannot use the book with APA citations.

Great book for strategies, inspiration, practical info. real success stories.

*Shaping School Culture*, at 287 pages, excluding references, and index, is an academic tome on school culture. Although the authors define culture through others (on page 8); the authors do not exactly define it within their scope of reference to begin at their on starting line, but without a foundational consensus definition, continue on from there. That is not to say that it is detrimental. Culture may be one of those intangibles that are unable to be tangible. "Parents, teachers, principals, and students have always sensed something special, yet undefined about their schools—something very powerful yet difficult to describe or put your finger on" (p 8). That is an extremely apt quote for the majority of the book. It tries to lay out a paradigm for changing the school culture into something more positive, productive, and prosperous. And, it may very well be a quagmire at times, quicksand in others, yet freedom for most of the book. The authors admit that the book grew out of their previous book for principals. But that does not mean that anyone else will not benefit from the book. While principals may indeed be the only ones that can truly move the school culture where they want it to go, teachers and other employees have every bit of stakeholder ownership in the school they work for. The authors offer a clear simple thesis: shaping school culture is in everyone's best interests. They reveal their theme through stories of business, management, and education. They insist that every school can become a great one, as long as everyone involved is in it together and that no one is the salmon swimming upstream. The writers sharpen their focus through stories of well-known companies, IBM, Starbucks, Costco, and extremely well-regarded schools. This may be a double-edged sword to many: is this book a dog wagging its tail or the tail wagging the dog? Do they use well-known prosperous companies as the examples, or the exceptions? Is this book in

search of a thesis or a thesis ins search of a book? The authors did a remarkable job of placing their theme within the confines of well-establish entities that have successful cultures and try to show how a weaker school can improve their school culture, grow, become prosperous, attain the culture that the school officials desire. It is definitely not an easy task, but a definitely achievable goal. The authors provide a great amount of research to back up their propositions, almost too much. Research paper after research paper is rolled out with theoretical question frameworks to start with. This may seem overwhelming to some; but in the ends of an average principal, answering the questions that begin in the book will definitely shed light on the present culture and can move one out of the darkness. It does take some resilience to go through the myriad of questions; but, real progress is never easy to achieve. It requires effort to want to change for the better. Credible, accurate details fill out the stories that are told and provide real things to grip on and inflate the storytelling arcs of the book. The details provide the impetus to emulate the best-of-the-best schools in the country, and provide the “data: that is sorely lacking on which to hang anything on. The authors are extremely knowledgeable about school culture and cite their own research throughout the book. The writers are able to grab the attention from the start by re-telling stories famous companies with outstanding business culture: IBM, Starbucks, and Costco. The examples foreshadow what is to come as they move to the age-old question: If schools are run like businesses, will that make them much more profitable and successful? The movement is subtle but necessary to demonstrate that if enormously bureaucratic companies can change and flourish, so can;t small or medium-sized schools and districts. A variety of carefully selected phrases and sentences are placed wisely to guide the reader through the book by showing them how ideas progress, relate, and, or diverge. The two-section book is laid out in a familiar format. The first section spells out “this is culture”, and the second section spells out “this is what you should do to change it.” This is definitely a book that is easy to follow. The details fit together logically, the pace slows down to spotlight important points or ideas and speeds up to where necessary to move the reader along. The authors care about school culture and it shows. The tone is very straightforward, congenial, and professional. One can feel the author convictions, authority, and integrity. The book is definitely told in a way that makes the reader want to listen. They have carefully considered what the education leader, or any other interested school employees, knows, and the best way to share a fascination with the subject, feelings about school culture, and opinions about why a culture is the most important aspect of any school organization. It can mean triumph or defeat. School

culture is not something new but the way the writers express culture through new ways make the book interesting and original. The writing is crisp and clear. Distinct words and just-right phrases round out the completeness of the book. Active descriptions give the piece punch and pizzazz. The book does have its limited jargon, but this is necessary and infrequent. All unusual words are defined and illustrated, making sure the reader is clearly in the driver's seat and never a passenger. The piece is full of energy and the sights and sounds of active, vivacious school systems. Words capture the reader's imagination and enhance the meaning of culture. There are a definite and deliberate attempt to use the best words and sentences that come to mind. Carefully and creatively crafted sentences enhance impact. If the book were read out loud, it would be easy on the ear. The book has a typical font with rustic-type paper that should probably be read in a better-than-average lighting system. It seems to be the typical bookshelf off-white color that may provide a near-sterile quality if the writing was average, or less than average at best. The writing overcomes the shortfall of its legibility. The book could definitely use some charts and graphs, and even more importantly, videos from CDs or Web-access materials that would give the book more depth for readers to see school culture in action for better or worse. The authors eventually sum up their thinking in a natural, thoughtful, and convincing way. The conclusion anticipates and answers any lingering questions the reader may have providing a strong sense of closure.

Well written! Positive tones! Informative! These are just a few words that come to mind when discussing this eyeopening book about the importance of school culture. The authors have provided administrators, educators, parents and other stakeholders with a guide that shows not only the importance of school culture but also the importance of a strong stakeholder relationship. Reading the section on the functions and impact of culture is like a breath of fresh air. It is refreshing to read about the influence that culture has on the success of the school. We have known for years but it is important that the leaders have a guide highlights this! All stakeholders are the focus! For example: the author stresses the importance of respect among all stakeholders and it's effects on the overall school culture. They focus on the importance of transforming toxic cultures. It is often that we forget the effects our attitudes and actions have on those around us. But when we create a toxic culture, we are effecting all of those around us and even deterring new educators from becoming a part of or even staying in the field of education. This is detrimental to the field of education and this is where this guide is needed. The words seem to flow off the pages and before you know it, the end is near! It is an informative, insightful piece that provides leaders with a guide that points them in the right

direction when they are trying to increase the success of their school. A successful culture is a happy culture! But there is more to this book than culture, this is also a guide that helps leaders deal with many situations that are uncomfortable such as test scores and their effect on the overall culture. A must read for educators, leaders, administrators, parents and anyone who has any ties to the field of education. The world of education would be more harmonious and successful if more people took the time to read and internalize all of the knowledge the author has created from beginning to end!

Shaping School Culture is a good book written for those in leadership positions within school systems. I have read many books on the importance of nurturing culture in schools, but this book is very different from others. The author uses stories to show how artifacts, routines, symbols, history, tales, rituals, ceremonies, and traditions can shape the culture of an organization. The book is divided into two sections: The Elements of Culture and The Symbolic Role of School Leaders. I found the second section to be of much greater use and more interesting to read. In this section, the author provides specific actions that can be taken to promote a positive culture, whereas the first section is much more philosophical. If you are looking to completely overhaul the culture in your school, or if you are just looking for small ways to promote a more positive atmosphere, this book can be a helpful, thought-provoking resource.

As a 4th year teacher, I now feel like I have the big overview of what is necessary. Thankfully I am a fellow for Teaching Trust in Dallas, Texas that also has the big picture in mind. I read this book a few weeks before that nonprofit assigned its fellows its Campus Action Plan on classroom culture. I am so glad I have this book to support my work and to tie it all together in terms of working with my administrators to make not only my classroom culture better but the entire school's culture better too!

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