

Appendix A.5 • Creating a Culture of Learning, Belonging, and High Expectations for All

Fostering an environment in which everyone is learning and in which every learner is genuinely known, celebrated, and expected to succeed

Dimension	Substantially off Track	Getting Started	Looking Promising	Well on Track	Geared for Success
Providing the freedom to learn, share, celebrate, and improve	Learning partners' requests and ideas for changes that deepen learning are most often met with "No." They don't feel welcomed or supported to share mistakes and challenges, which are treated as "failures" as opposed to opportunities for further learning. Embedded fear of failure undermines excitement for learning.	The focus has shifted from assigning blame for mistakes and challenges to learning from and improving upon them. The school or school system is beginning to encourage and support ideas for improvement from a wider range of learning partners but hasn't created an environment where partners feel able to try new approaches and share their needs.	Mistakes and challenges are met head-on with consideration of how to work through them together. Empowered by the school or school system's increasing capacity for encouraging and saying "Yes" to new opportunities, learning partners are actively sharing their learning and ideas for taking it deeper.	When learning partners share evidenced ideas of new approaches for deepening learning, they're given the freedom to run with them. Sharing of learning is followed by active implementation of the approach or solution, and there's a growing excitement around deepening learning experiences and improving practice.	The school or school system provides the freedom and support necessary for developing, sharing, implementing, measuring, and improving approaches that deepen learners' outcomes. Learning, sharing, improvement, and celebration are continuous and common practices among all learning partners.
Engaging in deeper learning experiences and teaching for 100 percent success	Learning activities are designed and implemented with the knowledge that they won't connect with or facilitate the development of deeper learning outcomes for every learner. The school or school system takes a standardized, test-centric approach to teaching and learning, and professionals have only a general understanding of who is and who isn't succeeding in real time.	Learning partners recognize the need to design learning that connects with and works for every learner, not just those who are traditionally successful. They're beginning to design individual activities or assessments with explicit attention to whether they'll directly facilitate the development of intended learning outcomes.	Language in the school or school system is starting to shift from "tests" and "activities" to "experiences" that facilitate the assessment and measurement of learning outcomes. Learning partners talk about "authentic instructional practice," and teachers are beginning to engage learners in designing learning around their interests and needs.	Deeper learning experiences are an emphasis throughout the school or school system. Teachers are learning to engage their students in every element of the learning experience (inquiry) process and to align the curriculum with deeper learning goals. They're working to keep their finger on the pulse of how each learner is doing in real time.	All learning is treated, understood, and facilitated as a deeper learning experience. Learning is connected and fluid, and every learner is represented in what they learn. Teachers teach in partnership with their students, students' parents, and other learning partners, and they use equitable, real-time assessment to fully inform the measurement of deeper learning outcomes.

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Dimension	Substantially off Track	Getting Started	Looking Promising	Well on Track	Geared for Success
Embedding a deep commitment to and expectation of success for all learners	The school or school system operates with the understanding that it's acceptable for a certain number of learners to fail—"Some students just won't succeed." The tendency is to blame learners and factors outside the school's immediate control rather than focus on what can be done for each learner to improve learning outcomes.	Learning partners recognize the importance of having high expectations for every single learner and committing themselves to all learners' success. Teachers and other school and school-system leaders are beginning to take responsibility for most learners' outcomes.	There's an expectation that almost all learners can and will be successful. Teachers, school leaders, and other learning partners still have difficulty lifting learners whose outcomes are the hardest to accelerate and staying committed to their success by continuing to adapt practice and approaches.	Although some learners may not be succeeding, learning partners have made a deep, collective commitment to every student's development of deeper learning outcomes. Action plans are in place for learners most in need of acceleration, and new approaches are constantly adapting to achieve the greatest possible impact.	There's an unshakable system-wide belief and expectation that every learner will succeed. A "never-give-up" attitude pervades the culture, and everyone takes collective responsibility for the success of every learner. New approaches are monitored, measured, and adapted to ensure real and sustainable impact.
Cultivating genuine personal relationships	Students don't feel connected to their teachers or to other learning partners within their school, who haven't taken the time to develop personal, trusting relationships built on genuine care and a shared knowledge and understanding of one another. Professionals are there to "do their jobs," not to know and connect with their learners.	Learners know that their teachers care about their success in the classroom. Teachers have yet to connect with more than a small number of learners on a personal level but are starting to recognize that finding out who their learners are and what's important to them is a powerful lever for improving learning outcomes.	Teachers and other professionals within the school or school system are beginning to connect with each of their learners and their interests. Personal relationships are forming among students and their learning partners, and they're widely encouraged between and among teachers and learners within classes.	Genuine personal relationships are starting to have a measured impact on teaching and learning. Connecting around a shared respect for and knowledge and understanding of one another is becoming the norm, and relationships are widely facilitated both within and among classes, grade and system levels, and communities.	Learners know that their teachers and other learning partners genuinely care about them and their success now and throughout their lives. Professionals spend time with learners and their families in order to discover what makes them who they are, and they know their duty is to develop deeper learning outcomes—"connection" is in their job description.
Celebrating students' learning and identities everywhere and in all things	Who learners really are as individuals doesn't show up in their learning or the culture of the school. Individuals from non-dominant cultural backgrounds don't feel comfortable sharing their culture, language, or identity with others or in their learning, and it damages their overall experience and outcomes. Learning is "what we have to do." It's not exciting, shared, or celebrated.	Students' learning partners are starting to recognize the importance of individual identity and expression in learning. They're working on ways to bring learners' identities into teaching and other practice, reflecting who learners are in what and how they learn.	Students and their learning partners regularly share about who they are and what matters to them, and a shared understanding is beginning to show up in teaching and learning. Outcomes are beginning to improve, but learning partners are still working to identify changes that could more deeply reflect learners' identities across the school or wider system.	Learning partners are proud of who they are and are confident sharing their identities. They're beginning to form and celebrate strong connections between cultures and experiences. Parents are supported to share about their learners' identities, and curriculum and other system-wide changes are taking shape.	Knowing and celebrating who learning partners are and how they're connected is an integral part of the learning experience. All languages, cultures, and identities are embedded in practice, in the curriculum, and in everything students learn. All learning partners are celebrated, and all learning is a celebration.

Source: The Learner First, 2018

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