

Create an Aspirational Culture Contract

(This is a continuation of Helpful Workplace Behaviors activity from Section 6 of the toolkit.)

Create an agreement for compassionate staff culture by defining behaviors that lead to a positive culture. This activity is a continuation of the healthy workplace behaviors activity from section 6. Between section 6 and 7, the facilitation team needs to consolidate the “Yeses” brainstorm from the healthy workplace behaviors activity into themes. A compassionate culture is also one that is trauma-informed and equitable. Where in the themes generated do you see trauma-informed and equity practices? Is more needed in your themes to highlight these two components?

Directions for staff meeting:

1. Share this list from the healthy workplace behavior activity that supports a compassionate staff culture generated in the section 6 healthy workplace behavior activity.
2. To have a truly compassionate culture, you need one that is centered in equity and trauma-informed practices. Ask the group how they see these in the themes generated. What additions do they feel are needed to ensure these two components are incorporated into our list? *Add any additions to the list and support the group in identifying behaviors instead of broad concepts.*
3. If there are more than ten items brainstormed on the list, ask each staff person to put a dot/mark/sticker next to what they see as the five most important items to achieving a compassionate culture.
4. When voting is complete, circle the 10 items that receive the most votes. These will become the base for the Aspirational Culture Agreements generated between Sections 7 & 8.
5. Ask participants to answer the following questions based off the 10 circled items. *Facilitator note, please decide as a facilitation team how you would like your group to respond to the following questions, taking the size, the amount of time you have available, and the psychological safety of your group into consideration. Some options for the group to engage with the questions include use of the go-around, open mic, pair share, and individual journaling formats.*
 - Looking at these ten items, what are your strengths regarding these behaviors?
 - Where would you like to see growth in your ability to think and act in these ways?
 - What help could you use from other team members in fulfilling these behaviors?





After the staff meeting:

1. The actions are written into an aspirational culture agreements document. The document is enlarged and hung in a staff gathering area for all staff to sign.
2. Copies are made available to staff to keep in their room. The individual copies should include four self-reflection questions on the back. The questions are:
 - a. What behaviors do I regularly demonstrate as a colleague?
 - b. What behaviors might I enhance to be the colleague I want to become?
 - c. What steps can I take to maintain my strengths and grow in areas I identified in B?
 - d. Who of my colleagues can I talk to about these commitments I have made?
3. Examples of two staff aspirational culture agreements are on the following page. Limiting the agreements to no more than 10 specific behaviors is best.

Aspirational Culture Agreements Example

The staff at XYZ school seek to consistently behave in these ways towards each other and those we serve:

1. Be open and welcoming to all through our presence, tone, words, and body language.
 - Work to minimize the impact personal biases have on your treatment of others.
 - Respect various cultural values surrounding communication.

Practice mindful presence with colleagues.

2. Speak up when we see problems or conflict in the workplace with a solution-focused, strength-based perspective.
3. Seek to understand and value diverse perspectives.
 - Pause to set aside judgments. Be curious. Embrace discomfort.
 - Assume positive intentions.
 - Practice active listening.

Determine if broader understanding needs to lead to consensus on action or not.

4. Work together as a team to accomplish goals.
 - Take responsibility for contributing to team and share credit for positive results.
 - Identify and engage team members' strengths.
 - Seek out the voices of colleagues traditionally not included.
 - Set and ask for clear expectations and boundaries.
5. Seek support when needed, respond to requests for help, and offer to assist team members when possible.
6. Prioritize and support work life balance and individual well-being.
 - Consider balance when scheduling, setting expectations, and making requests.
7. Use transparent and direct communication.
 - Practice two-way, proactive, respectful, clear, and concise communication.
 - Choose language that is equity-focused, respectful of diversity of all people.
 - Be strategic about communication methods based on the individual situation (face-to-face, email, phone, text, and Teams chat).
8. Practice effective use of communication technology.
 - Respond to email in a timely manner (teams determine maximum response time).
 - If urgent and requiring response, text or call as appropriate.
 - Avoid unnecessary and lengthy emails and blind copying (Bcc).
 - Leverage daily huddles to reduce email and increase direct communication.
 - We uphold these agreements and other commitments through individual responsibility and in respectful conversations with our colleagues. Address concerns early and directly with the person involved. Start with self-reflection and compassion for self and others.
 - Encourage healthy dialogue, then, if possible, move forward and let it go.
 - Seek and accept constructive feedback.
 - Allow space for growth – self and others.

An Example of Culture Agreements from a Leadership Team

(Note that these leaders also did a survey to determine the level of perceived importance of each and how the team was currently living up to the agreements. This allowed them to prioritize and focus on bringing a few up to par.)

Importance	Current State	Gap	My Behavior
108	79	29	1. Represent one another as a unified team and address conflicts with doing so.
104	66	38	2. Encourage productive conflict and move forward (with forgiveness) when needed.
102	64	38	3. Hold oneself, others, and the organization accountable to clearly defined expectations and deadlines with understanding.
101	69	32	4. Be strategic about communication methods based upon the situation and individual limits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Respond to emails within 2 business days b. If urgent and requiring response, (1) text or (2) call c. Ensure email communications are clear and concise d. Avoid unnecessary email or BCC e. Leverage daily huddles to reduce email communications and increase direct engagement
100	64	36	5. Engage in proactive communication to identify impact of our work on others
98	72	26	6. Ensure effective collaboration and increase strength-based problem solving
97	78	19	7. Assume good intention and seek clarity when it's difficult (hard on process, not on people).
97	81	16	8. Express viewpoints to individuals directly with kindness.
92	64	28	9. Acknowledge when struggling and ask for help when needed.
92	66	26	10. Be willing to take risks for innovation and learn from failure.