



Executive Director's Communique
August 2021

What is the Culture of your School?

Culture is defined by Paul G. Hiebert as “the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society” (1983, 25). He adds that “culture is the creation of a group of people” (1983, 33). We usually think of culture in terms of a people group with their own language and particular way of living. But every corporation, denomination, church, and institution has a culture. Your school has a culture. Are you aware of it, and is it producing the patterns of behavior you want from all those who are part of your “society”?

Ultimately, our calling and mission as ministers and trainers is to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. A disciple is a learner who loves Jesus and is being transformed into the ethical character and behavioral patterns modeled by him. The culture of your institution must provide the atmosphere that shapes students to become Christ's disciples. They will be sent out to pastor, church plant, reach the unreached, and make others into his disciples. Your school's culture must include values and behaviors, which are consistently modeled by you, your leadership team, every faculty member, and the support staff, so that this integrated system molds the students to be Christ's disciples committed to fulfilling his Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

The culture of your institution is established first and foremost by the leader of the school, but must be reinforced by the administration, faculty, and staff. While culture is shaped by the leader, it takes a team, a society, to establish the culture that will influence the patterns of behavior of students exhibited by them over a lifetime of ministry. As a leader, you must not only disciple your students, you must disciple those who work with you to train the students.

The shaping of a culture begins with underlying beliefs and worldview (the way a group of people perceive, organize, understand, and explain reality). Worldview and beliefs will determine your values. Values will guide behavior. And the behavior modeled by your school's leaders and teachers will generate a product: the graduates of your institution. Once again, the goal of the culture of our schools is the production of men and women, filled with the Spirit, grounded in the Scriptures, serving God and people in humility, committed to making disciples among all nations.

Our schools have a mission, values, and code of conduct. These components shape the culture. Are the values of your institution truly being practiced by all who are part of the school? Are the values merely written on the walls or in a document, or are they practiced by everyone in the halls? You may need to review your institution's values and make sure they address the critical aspects of your relationship with God, others, the church, and the world. Are they being lived out in the classroom, cafeteria, and chapel? You need to examine the culture and evaluate if your product is what God expects.

Hiebert, Paul G. 1983. *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.