

# Reflecting on our lives as the school

Reflect on your section. These are elements of superior school cultures. On scale of 10-1 where 10 is excellent and 1 is where the culture element is least developed, reflect on the following 10 features.

\* Indicates required question

## Untitled Section

1. \*

Example: January 7, 2019

2. 1) **Values:** "[We're a values first organization](#)," said Kurtz of [DSST Public Schools](#). "Each human being strives to be fully known and affirmed for who they are, and to contribute something significant to the human story." "Character starts with the adults," said Kurtz. That means core value commitments, modeling, 360 degree evaluations, and celebrations. Getting Smart teacher [blogger Susan Lucille Davis](#) says time, trust, and connections are what teachers want most. \*

**Reflecting on our school, our learners right from Grade 3 can mention the 3, 4 or 5 values of the school. And this is always the basis for our conversation, we speak, we emphasize and live our values. We can say comfortably say that: LET OUR LIVES SPEAK**

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3. 2) **Equity**: Good schools engage all students—not just honor students—in powerful learning experiences; they develop academic mindsets scaffolded by strong supports. According to principal Stephen Mahoney, “The accomplishments of [Springfield Renaissance School](#)’s students prove that a child’s zip code does not determine his or her destiny.” \*

**On the surface, we may appear to be dealing with children of the same characteristics, backgrounds, and intelligence (emotional, social and even IQ). We are of different faiths, children from different backgrounds, children who live and those who do not live with both parents, emotionally tortured ones, and children who live with one or multiple forms of disabilities. We are of different personalities and preferences, come from different communities, live in different neighbourhoods, attended different types of schools/pre-schools/lived in different neighbourhoods.**

**We can now say that a learner's participation and success in this school are guaranteed regardless of the background.**

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4. **3. Innovation:** schools will need to build cultures of “failing forward, faster” \*  
undergirded by next-gen human capital development. “We’re committed to lean startup strategies,” said Diane Tavenner, CEO of [Summit Public Schools](#). In support of what Tavenner calls, “Build, measure, learn cycles,” Each course, grade level, and school team receives a weekly data packet, in Google Drive for easy visualization, including student demographics, course progress, and assessment results. Course teams from all six Summit schools meet weekly via video conference.

**When we started, we had a goal, when we joined we had expectations. But then we recognise that we are a melting pot of expectations. We have lived through different generations, watched different political regimes, watched giants in education, watched technology evolve, and we have seen how MPESA has transformed lives. We have seen how democracy has found its way into schools. Our learners have since become parents in our schools. And all these have shaped how we now do things. We are not how we started. We made mistakes, some very costly, and we made some assumptions that turned out not to hold. But with a second chance, we learnt from all these.**

**We can say that we have learnt from our history of doing things, from the failures and successes of others, and from learning with others. Let us just say that we are what we are today because we deliberated to learn from all these.**

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5. 4. **Good habits:** Launch expeditionary learning charter school starts the day with Crew, a 30 minute advisory period where they practice and talk about the shared Habits of Heart and Mind central to the Launch culture: accountability, craftsmanship, wonder, mindfulness, and compassion. The Habits are integrated into the culture and every learning experience at Launch. \*

**Steve Covey lists 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, his son Sean Covey even shares the 7 habits of Happy Kids. Let us just say that we are deliberate and we teach our children, oh yes, the learners to be deliberate to do the following 8 things: 1) Be proactive 2) Start with the end in mind 3) Put first things first 4) Think win-win 5) Seek first to understand before being understood 6) Synergise 7) Sharpen the saw 8) Find your voice.**

**To us, we preach and realise the 7 habits above.**

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6. 5). **Care:** Morseville North Carolina receives attention for their successful “digital convergence” but [culture is the secret sauce](#). “Schools with a sense of spirit thrive,” and conversely superintendent Mark Edwards said, “Tech plans will collapse without a strong cultural foundations.” Edwards, whose enthusiasm is infectious, says, “The works starts with love and care for students.” They use [Capturing Kid’s Heart](#), a professional development (PD) program from the [Flippen Group](#) that has infected the language of the district \*

**We may or may not be Jainsts but we all agree that harm is not just physical, and where harm and hurting exist, it can be vicious, often playing itself out. But then, this is not just about not harming other people, we have plants and animals, we have our water sources, we have our energy sources and we have helpless animals. Because of what nature has given us, we soar and thrive. We all agree that we cannot be the same, we have different opinions, but when we are in pain, we all cry and when pricked, our blood will trickle out the same. Kindness is a language that even the deaf understand. Care comes with empathy, “I don’t think that it is good for the other person”.**

**We preach and live this as a school**

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7. 6) **Big questions:** We want people to be perplexed—to embrace the paradox of starting new schools,” said High Tech High founder Larry Rosenstock. Great schools, like [DSST](#) Public Schools, incorporate this “perplexity” into the curriculum that, according to teacher Jim Stephens, “requires empathy, ideation, and prototyping before they can arrive at a solution—they learn that they can solve any problem, in or out of school, with this approach.” \*

**We are all here to teach and learn, to pass exams and go away and make our lives better. And that is what education should guarantee for every child; a better tomorrow. But come to think of it, what happens if our population grows three or even four times? What would happen if the areas that feed us if we went without rain? Probably, we are not just about the timetable, the classrooms, the routine at the assembly, or our beautiful school uniform. We are united in seeing a better world, probably, a world where all can have something to eat, a world where one’s tribe is not the determinant of what opportunities they get. We are here for something bigger.**

**And we all affirm that we are clear on what world we want for all people. And if anyone asked our guard at the gate of that world, he would not hesitate to tell you of that world.**

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8. 7. **Support:** New employees in Mooresville are [paired with a mentor](#). Tech facilitators at each school focus on the needs of new employees. One teacher said, "The best part of the PD was having a Tech Facilitator at my beck and call." \*

**Our vision bearer(s) thought a lot about this school. The vision bearer even went further to think of the location, even the uniform, the school motto and most importantly gave us a name. Probably, the vision bearer is gone or is still here with us. But definitely, we are not where we started. New members (parents, children, teachers including non-teaching staff and even neighbours) have come. But that which made our founders establish this school still lives in us. For those who read the Bible, it is the story of Timothy, the faith that lived in his grandmother Loice and even his mother Eunice equally landed on him. And as new members come in, we help them to get into this community. We know, understand and appreciate that we are only stewards of that vision, with its big questions, it may or may not have been clear to our founders, but it lives in us. It is here with us.**

**We are committed that each day, we pass on this heritage to everyone who comes and this will happen even 50 years from now because there will be someone to help them through it.**

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9. 8. **Collaboration:** Rocketship Education teachers receive an average of 250-300 hours of professional development each year. New teachers learn all the tools that students use, CEO [Preston Smith said](#), "Time is also spent on data analysis, real-time coaching, co-teaching with school leaders, collaborating with our Individualized Learning Specialists and special education teachers, and integrating our online programs into instruction." \*

**We are all battling with so much, there is work, there is family, our messy financial situation, the spiritual battles and our social lives can also be in shambles often if not at many times. In our lives here, we also recognise that not all would be at the same level. Sometimes, what we just want is to get the task done. We can discuss it later. But still, we are convinced, we believe and practice working together, to jointly analyse our problems, and brainstorm solutions, sometimes they may be right, and sometimes they backfire, but then we walk together. It gets us far at times, sometimes though late but we still get there.**

**We can stand here as a school community and say, "This is a school of collaborators."**

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10. 9. **Mastery:** Success [Academy] teachers are positive, enthusiastic, and believe in kids,” Eva Moskowitz of Success Academy explains. “We have a culture of daily mastery- we believe children should intellectually struggle with challenging content and the teachers should insist on mastery.” \*

**They say that if you must be a sweeper, then sweep your way to heaven. Let us just say that one must be good at what they do, and this is the case with teachers, non-teaching staff and even our consultants. Honestly, you can’t afford to call MS Word MS Excel. You just need to know your stuff, you should do it effortlessly. Wake me up at night and I will tell you what I do with ease, as a teacher, I will teach that subject/learning area without a textbook. I am a master in my work. I am the specialist.**

**Here, we can confidently stand and say, "We congregate here as specialists."**

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11. 10. **Execution:** “If we’re really going to meet the needs of children every hour, every minute, it takes executorial competence to deliver at that high level—it’s much more profound than most people realize—it requires enormous execution talents,” said Moskowitz. \*

**It's then one thing to be a master of your area, I could dribble the ball with finesse on the basketball court. I can tell with ease the Greek Mythology, but then I have this class of 30 learners with different needs, learning abilities, different motivations. But first things first, let us agree that we need to start somewhere. And when am done and I look at their scores, they haven't all scored the same, but they have each scored their best.**

**Our school is about each person getting their best, and we deliberately set high standards, and each person gets their best.**

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