

# LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

*CLOSING THE GAPS BETWEEN  
WHAT SOUNDS GOOD & WHAT GETS DONE*



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“ONE AFTERNOON IN JULY 1968 THE THEORETICAL PHASE OF MY MARINE TRAINING ENDED AND THE PRACTICAL PHASE BEGAN—WITH A BANG!”  
THE RELENTLESS SEARCH FOR BETTER WAYS, JIM BEARDEN, 2006

**They Came in the Evening**  
*Takeaways*

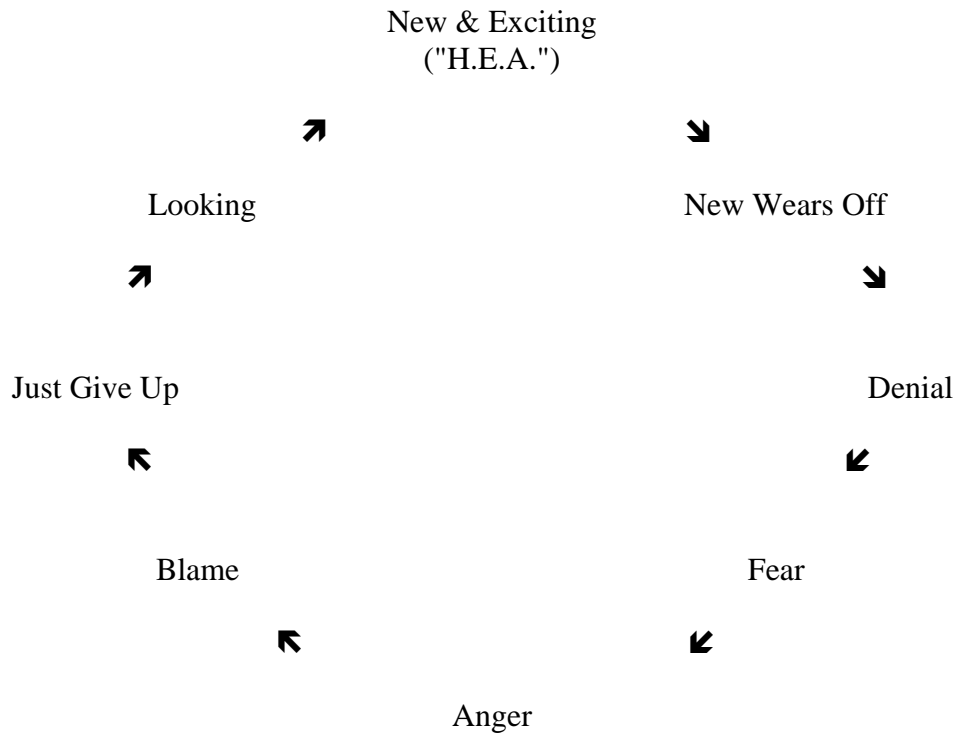
1. **The people, situations & circumstances that impact district success change, sometimes unexpectedly & with negative, or potentially negative, consequences (*setbacks/adversity are inevitable*)**
  - Cultural dynamics
  - Budgetary considerations
  - Governmental/political priorities
  
2. **Dealing effectively with those ever-changing factors often requires a willingness to change internal processes**
  - District success is a “moving target”
  - The processes that worked under different circumstances may prove ineffective as those circumstances change (*what got you where you are may not get you to where you want to go*)
  
3. **District responses to changes & setbacks vary**
  - Some “hunker & hope” for survival (stick with what we’ve been doing & hope it starts working again)
  - Others look for ways to win, regardless of the hands they’re dealt (make heroic choices)
  
4. **District responses to changes & setbacks *are driven by the behavior of people in leadership positions***
  - Words & behavior are leaders’ tools for influencing the choices others make
  - People respond far more readily to heroic behavior than they do to grand speeches

**WHAT THEY SEE FROM YOU**  
**IS WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO GET**  
**FROM THEM**

5. **In the real world, *Happily Ever After(s) Don’t Just Happen***
  - No “happily ever after” strategies, tactics or models
  - This widely-held illusion can be the kiss of death for the initiative required to achieve & sustain success

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**The "Happily Ever After Cycle"**



**Two Requirements for Achieving & Sustaining District Success**  
*Regardless of the Hands You're Dealt*

1. District cultures that reinforce & support behavior essential to district performance & student achievement (*Heroic behavior*)
2. People who are able & willing to lead:
  - **Consciously create "Hero-Friendly" cultures**
  - Expand & enhance employee engagement
  - Facilitate collaborative processes

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**YOUR DISTRICT'S CULTURE**

1. A composite of the behavior of your district's employees
2. What gets noticed, honored and/or confronted
3. *Your actual culture may differ from the culture described in your foundational documents (there may be gaps between what sounds good & what gets done)*

**TWO APPROACHES TO CREATING CULTURE**

1. **Unconscious approach (the more common)**
  - Leaders consciously identify & define the characteristics they want their cultures to express, e.g., words & phrases often found in mission statements, core values & core beliefs
  - Little or no conscious effort made to bring those words & phrases to life
2. **Conscious approach (the only approach that works)**
  - Leaders consciously identify & define the characteristics they want their cultures to express, e.g., words & phrases often found in mission statements, core values & core beliefs
  - **Leaders take conscious steps to:**
    - Bring those words & phrases to life
    - Close the gaps between what sounds good & what gets done
  - *The cultures created consciously will be far more likely to reinforce & support behavior essential to district success*

**“Hero-Friendly” Cultures**

1. Cultures that support expanded & enhanced employee engagement in crucial district processes
2. **Ones in which people will:**
  - Step up (do the right things/things in the best interest of the district and its constituents)
  - Speak up (respectfully challenge the status quo & offer alternatives for consideration)
  - Listen up (understand & consider alternatives offered by others)
  - Risk making mistakes in pursuit of better ways (*cultures in which it is safer to try and fail than it is to hunker & hope*)

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**LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR**  
*FOR CONSCIOUSLY CREATING A HERO-FRIENDLY CULTURE*

- 1. Ensure that others understand what you expect from them**
  - Situation(s) in which employee behavior is most important
  - The types of behavior you expect in those situations
  - Three reasons people fail to meet leaders' expectations
    - They know what's expected but are unable
    - They know what's expected but are unwilling
    - *They don't know understand the behavior that is expected*
  - *Telling them what you expect is how you inform them*
  
- 2. Identify & eliminate barriers to those behaviors**
  - Reasons employees may be unwilling to do the things you expect
  - The things you and other district leaders can do to eliminate those barriers
  
- 3. Model that behavior**
  - Using the same or similar situation(s)
  - Demonstrate for them the behavior you expect from them
  - *Showing them what that behavior looks like is how you lead them*
  
- 4. Measure their performance using those expectations**
  - What gets measured gets done
  - Reinforces the importance you place on that behavior
  
- 5. Honor efforts & progress toward meeting your expectations**
  - Acknowledge their effort, progress, successes, mistakes & lessons
  - Mistakes can be signs of progress (focus more on lessons than on mistakes)
  - *Don't blow smoke!*
  
- 6. Confront unwillingness/bad faith**
  - Most people will make good-faith effort to meet your reasonable expectations – *Some Won't*
  - You do a disservice to those who will by tolerating/ignoring those who won't – *So Don't*

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**CONSCIOUSLY CREATING CULTURE**  
**THEORY TO PRACTICE**

**Review your district’s foundational documents (mission statement, vision, core values, core beliefs) and pick out words, phrases or concepts from one of those documents**

**Next, identify situations in which district employees & administrators have opportunities to bring those words, phrases or concepts to life – situations in which employees’ behavior can translate “what sounds good” into “what gets done”**

**Some situations to consider:**

- Situations in which employee behavior has direct or indirect impacts on student achievement
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Situations in which employee behavior has direct or indirect impacts on your constituents’ perceptions of your district
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Situations in which employee behavior has direct or indirect impacts on other employees’ job satisfaction/their ability to achieve their objectives



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**HOW DISTRICT SUCCESS IS ACHIEVED & SUSTAINED**  
*IN THE REAL WORLD*

**1. Progressively**

- Cultures aren't formed—or changed—overnight
- Changing district cultures & performance are processes, not events
- *Leaders must persevere beyond the points at which the new wears off the process*

**2. A little theory & lots of effort**

- The words in your district's foundational documents all sound good
- In the absence of effective leadership, they'll never be anything more than words
- *Effective leaders close the gaps between what sounds good & what gets done*

**1. Some Success; Some Failure**

- If the gaps between your current culture & the one you desire are wide, you can be sure that you will experience failures in your attempts to close those gaps
- *In the real world, setbacks are \_\_\_\_\_*

**Success & failure will characterize  
your efforts to create a “Hero-Friendly” culture.  
Your commitment to doing so is best measured  
by your responses to your failures**

**3. From the inside out**

- The setbacks you and your associates encounter do matter
- *The choices you and your associates make about those setbacks matter more*

**THE MORNING AFTER ON HILL 512**  
*GET OVER IT & GET ON WITH IT*