

# Vignettes About School Cultures

James E. Walter  
University of Missouri-St. Louis

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## Conflicting Values

### Scenario

You have become the principal of school in which the students, parents, and teachers have not agreed upon a norm to guide actions which maintain a safe and orderly environment. One group insists on a standardized and consistent enforcement of the district's and school's code of conduct. Another group argues strongly for a more personalized approach using research from psychology and counseling to support their values. Both groups assert their views are "what's good for the kids."

- What is your assessment of the situation and how will you proceed to establish a solution with which all participants can agree?
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## Honoring Non-Dominant Cultures

### Scenario

Your school has a sizeable minority of students from the poorest section of the school's attendance area. A look at the records shows you, unsurprisingly, that these students are more likely to have low grades and are least likely to behave according to the standards of the dominant culture group. Like many schools, the teachers tend to represent the dominant culture group (even though some of them come from marginalized groups) and believe their job is to socialize students into the values and norms of the dominant culture. It is good for the kids; it helps them become prepared for an economic future.

The site-based team is to help develop a vision of how to serve all the students in the school. As the discussion with the site-based team and individual teachers and parents proceeds, you begin to realize that some individuals want the curriculum and instructional methods to ensure their children will be able to attend college and get good jobs. While many of the homes of the poorer students want the same thing for their children, there are others who resist the school's efforts.

- As you prepare for this evening's meeting of the site-improvement team, you reflect on these issues and begin to write down some thoughts.
  - What are your thoughts on making the curriculum more responsive to the different expectations that the different culture groups have for schooling?
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## Praxis: Transforming a School

### Scenario

You have been a principal in your current school for a year, and you have started the process of engaging members in your school community in transforming the "logic-in-place." You have been "problemitizing" that which is taken-for-granted and resides in the "background." You have asked staff to reflect on the daily things they do which are seen as the normal way of doing things. Those things are not necessarily bad, but they are potentially dangerous to helping students participate in their own formation. Problemitizing unmasks any dangers, exposes them, so that which is transparent becomes visible.

It has not been easy. Those who want "what is" have resisted your efforts. Nonetheless, you and others of the staff have been able to make some progress in transforming the situation. As the next step in the process, you will draft, for the school community to consider, a proposed vision statement, a mission statement, and a set of goals that begin to shape the educational programs of your school.