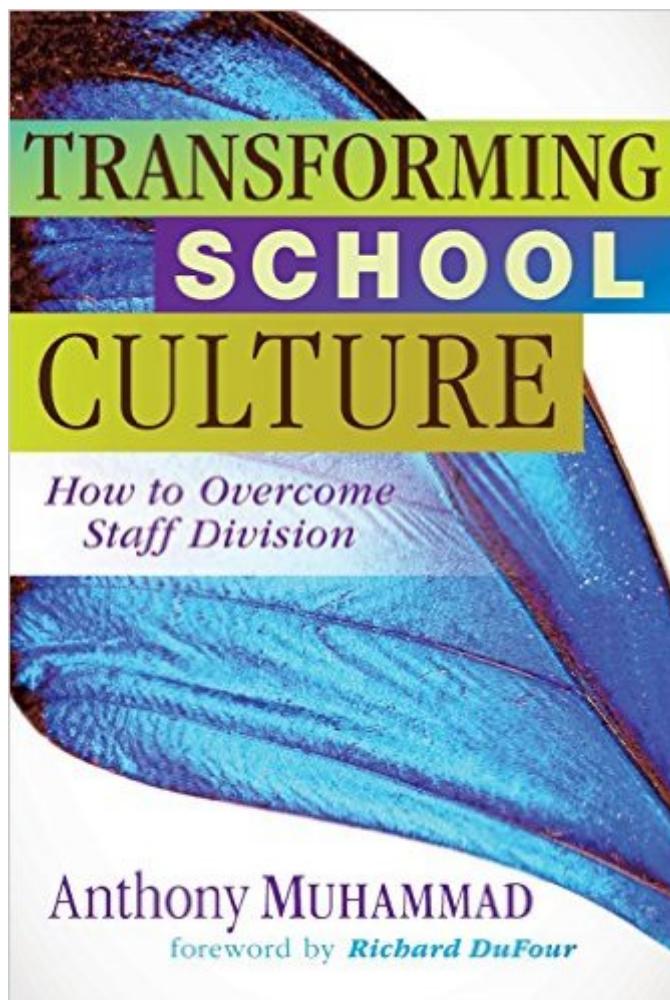


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# Transforming School Culture: How To Overcome Staff Division



## **Synopsis**

The goal of Transforming School Culture is to provide a framework for understanding how school cultures operate and how leaders can overcome staff division to improve relationships and transform toxic cultures into healthy ones with the ultimate goal of improved learning for all students. Anthony Muhammad contends that in order to transform school culture, we must examine and understand educators motivation for hanging on to paradigms that are contrary to those articulated by their school or district. In this book, Dr. Muhammad explores many aspects of human behavior, social conditions, and history. Drawing upon his study of 34 schools (11 elementary, 14 middle, and 9 high schools) from around the country, Dr. Muhammad describes the underlying tensions that impact culture among four different groups of educators in a school. Much of the book is devoted to introducing readers to these groups: The Believers are those who are committed to the learning of each student and who operate under the assumption that their efforts can make an enormous difference in that learning. The Fundamentalists are preservers of the status quo. The Tweeners are members of a staff who are typically new to a school and are attempting to learn its prevailing culture. The Survivors are those who have been so overwhelmed by the stress and demands of the profession that their primary goal becomes making it through the day, the week, and the year. Dr. Muhammad describes the prevailing beliefs and assumptions of each of these groups and the dynamics within and among the groups. He argues that it is the outcome of these dynamics that will ultimately determine the culture of a school. He provides specific strategies for working with each group of educators to transform school culture and intentionally create positive atmospheres that not only tolerate change, but also seek and embrace the changes that maximize organizational effectiveness.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

A creepy catalog of "cultspeak", this book is insidious in its recommendations. "Believers" are mindless sheep who unquestioningly accept any and all rhetoric, accepting "100% responsibility" and "doing whatever it takes". "Fundamentalists" are teachers who dare think critically and consider their own experiences and observations as being somehow relevant to their teaching decisions. They work against the aims of the "new school paradigm" by suggesting that teachers have a right to a personal life, to devote time to their families, to not be overworked into oblivion. According to this book, the way to overcome staff division is to "coerce" these teachers into compliance with the Party Line or forcing them to "relocate". According to this author, "due process" (his quotation marks) is only a nasty inconvenience that complicates the process of getting rid of individuals who refuse to drink the Kool-Aid. I was around at the time the concept of "Whole Language" instruction was implemented. The idea was certainly appealing, and policymakers jumped on the Whole Language bandwagon completely. As time passed, however, it became obvious that Whole Language was deeply flawed and that those teachers who had continued teaching phonics in their classrooms had actually been the most successful in developing literacy in their students. In the dystopia of this book, those teachers would have been removed from the teaching profession and their insight and wisdom lost to education forever. The very idea of our democratic society is that various viewpoints, opinions, experiences, awareness, work together for the greatest good. This book recommends destroying this very strength.

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