

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

**Fostering a Culture of Change in Schools: Exploring  
Leadership for Culture Change and Sustaining Change**

by

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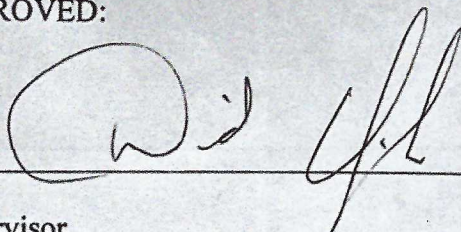
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**Fostering a Culture of Change in Schools: Exploring  
Leadership for Culture Change and Sustaining Change**

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**Abstract**

School leaders are faced with the challenge of guiding schools through rapid change and development in the world. Research has indicated that fostering a culture of change in schools allows them to adapt and engage in meaningful change. This capstone reviewed relevant literature regarding cultures of change, culture change, and sustaining culture change. In addition, relevant implications for stakeholders presented in the literature review were explored. Lastly, recommendations for leaders attempting to foster a sustainable culture of change were presented. Altogether, this capstone serves as an overarching document to help leaders to learn about culture change and implement methods into their own practice to foster a culture of change.

*Keywords:* culture of change, culture change, shared vision, principal, school leader

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## **Fostering a Culture of Change in Schools: Exploring Leadership for Culture Change and Sustaining Change**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**

#### **Introduction**

The role of a school principal is a multi-faceted and complex job. A school principal must be able to fit a variety of categories and lead a school in a variety of ways. In this capstone, the focus is on how a principal can effectively change school culture to foster a culture of change. According to Coyle (2018), “culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal” (p. xx). This parallels the idea of visionary leadership, as outlined in the Alberta Education’s (2020a) *Leadership Quality Standard (LQS)*, in which a school leader is responsible for working together “with the school community to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning, and well-being” (p. 3). The practice of visionary leadership includes “leaders performing, challenging work, creating new innovation, and enhancing others in having new initiative and challenged thinking” (Yordsala et al., 2014, p. 93). Quality leadership is essential to culture change. Muhammad (2018) explained, “If school and district leaders do not get strategic in their approach to change ... their cultures will remain toxic and ineffective” (p. 141). Thus, this capstone explores strategic methods for culture change to ensure positive school improvement with the future in mind.

#### **Background**

The world today’s educators are moving into is dramatically different from the world they are coming from. As Vodonick (2018) explained, “we cannot be sure of many things, but one thing that we can be sure of is change. Everything changes. People change, the climate changes, organizations change, cultures change, and of course, political entities change” (p. 459).

Furthermore, “worsening climate change, unknown job markets, greater superficial closeness via technology but less closeness, more stress and anxiety, and less trust decade by decade, and corresponding erosion of trust” all contribute to the need for culture change in schools (Fullan, 2020, p. xi).

The changing world will force change in education practice (Odiaga et al., 2021). According to Fullan (2020), “there is no question that the environment is changing at an accelerating rate” (p. 139). An example of this is the modern mathematics classroom, in which “students spend thousands of hours in classrooms learning sets of procedures and rule that they will never use, in their lives or in their work” (Boaler, 2016, p. 27). Because “the future is rapidly changing and unpredictable” (Zhao, 2022, p. 47), students have changed, and it is the responsibility of a school leader to make sure schools change as well.

One of the challenges to change is sustainability. Maintaining change “requires continuous improvement, adaptation and collective problem-solving in the face of complex challenges that keep arising” (Fullan, 2006, p. 119). Talking about change is not enough. Starting change is not enough. Real change must be sustainable and will “alter the culture of learning in the organization away from dysfunctional and non-relationships toward the daily development of culture” (Fullan, 2006, p. 119). The LQS responsibility to embody visionary leadership calls for such change, and it is the role of the school principal to create a culture that strives for continuous improvement and adaptation (Alberta Education, 2020a).

Furthermore, leaders do not fit into the traditional mold they once did. They are no longer the “charismatic decision maker” but are instead “designers, teachers, and stewards” (Senge, 1994, p. 9). Senge noted that a leader is responsible for carrying a vision forward in everything they do (p. 9). Instead of just claiming a vision or mission statement, the vision must be evident

in “policies, practices, procedures, and systems” to ensure the success of the vision (Senge, 1994, p. 9). Coyle (2018) explained that these types of visions should feel “as subtle as a punch on the nose” (p. 178). Explaining the power of culture, Wankhade et al. (2018) stated, “The effectiveness of a wide variety of organizations has been linked to the culture of the organization” (p. 923). Therefore, successful leaders must create a culture with a very evident vision for the future.

### **Statement of the Issue/Problem**

According to Vodonick (2018), “the system that we define as relevant to our condition today may not be the system that is relevant to our condition tomorrow” (p. 459). Furthermore, “education is more critical than ever,” as a world without borders has brought skilled workers from across the globe into the workforce (Muhammad, 2018, p. 9), and “new technologies have displaced millions of people from their jobs and created millions of new possibilities” (Zhao, 2022, p. 3). School leaders need to find ways to prepare students for the future while balancing the traditional responsibilities of schools to plan and evaluate curricula, manage budgets and resources, engage the community, and develop teachers (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018, p. 552). Vodonick (2018) stated, “Unless the organization accommodates the changing environment the chances of it continuing to serve the needs of its stakeholders will diminish” (p. 458). These problems are directly addressed by the LQS (Alberta Education, 2020a) in the “Visionary Leadership” category and also fit the responsibilities of the classroom teacher outlined in the *Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS; 2020b) under “Demonstrating a Professional Body of Knowledge”: Teachers must “consider relevant local, provincial, national and international contexts and issues” (p. 5).

Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) present several possible indicators of a toxic culture. Indicators include a decrease in morale and motivation, as well as higher rate of teacher turnover (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). According to a poll of Alberta teachers completed in 2021, 37% of teachers likely would not be teaching the next year. Furthermore, “fatigue is extreme at 92%. ... Depression remains higher than the general public. ... [And] hopelessness sits at 45%” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2021, p. 2). Moreover, low morale and teacher turnover in Alberta indicate for the need for culture change, as outlined by Gruenert and Whitaker (2019).

According to Zhao (2022), “another issue with the current model of education is that it fails to help children meet the challenges and needs of the world of today and tomorrow” (p. 19). Furthermore, “each day it is more obviously clear that the guidelines of the factory model of schools is no longer capable of educating citizens of the digital age” (Lomba Portela & Pino-Juste, 2020, p. 83). Fullan (2020) justified the need for a culture of change: “With all the challenges facing the world—and the world is increasingly troubled—we need greater proactivity about the future” (p. 5). In addition, Fullan noted that, “if you don’t change and adapt you become obsolete or extinct” (p. 1).

Kotter et al. (2021) stated, “The amount, complexity, and volatility of change going on around us has been in general *expanding* in waves since even before the start of the industrial revolution. And virtually all of the data says that this trend will continue” (p. 3). Fullan (2020) stated that people today are living in a time during which “world problems continuously emerge and show up at our doorstep” (p. 154). As Kotter et al. (2021) explained, “artificial intelligence, other disruptive technologies, global integration, as well as social and political movements” are a few of the many potential causes for change (p. 4). According to Fullan (2020), “the world has become much more complex, but worse than that—the world is becoming ever more troubled”

(p. xi). Due to these impending changes and influences, “principals are under direct pressures to improve schools” (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 131), and “a gap is clearly growing between the amount of change happening around us and the change we are successfully, smartly implementing” (Kotter et al., 2021, p. 4).

Traditionally, leaders have been selected primarily based on confidence and assertiveness (Fullan, 2020). As a result, “it is accurate to conclude that leadership has not yet found its niche in leading dynamic complex systems” (Fullan, 2020, p. 136). Furthermore, new leaders are often put into a position in which “they’ve received no formal leadership training prior to starting,” and if they did receive training, it “focused largely on the mechanics or *management* aspects of the position” and not the human aspects (Richert, et al., 2020, p. 18). Muhammad (2018) suggested that “schools and districts place the same premium on supporting leaders” that they do on supporting teachers (p. 140). Leaders need to grow in their ability to impact school culture; “if leaders do nothing ... schools will devolve into toxicity” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 108). Thus, the complexities of modern leadership demand improvement from leaders (Fullan, 2020).

A culture of change offers a possible solution to this problem. Innovative and successful cultures “navigate the challenges of achieving excellence in a fast-changing world” (Coyle, 2018, p. xx). Muhammad (2018) explained that current challenges “demand that schools make substantial improvements so that students have a fighting chance in the world that continues to become more competitive” (p. 20). There is a need for improvement in schools, yet, “ironically, our public school system has undergone sweeping changes, yet it has remained largely the same” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 5). A culture of change offers a solution for schools at all levels to ensure they keep up with the emerging problems in the modern world (Fullan, 2020).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This capstone addresses the problem that “leadership needs to change because the situation has changed in irreversible ways” (Fullan, 2020, p. 139). Starting with the concept of a culture of change, this capstone explores the components and requirements of a culture of change. Next, leadership strategies for preparing for and implementing a successful culture change are explored. Lastly, this capstone explores how school leaders can sustain a culture of change. The desired outcome is that this capstone will serve as a resource for school leaders to understand how to foster a culture of change within a school.

### **Research Questions**

To properly address the requirements of fostering a culture of change within a school, the research has been separated into three questions:

1. What is a culture of change?
2. What strategies can school leaders use to foster culture change?
3. How can a school leader sustain a culture of change in a school?

### **Significance of the Study**

Fostering a culture of change is relevant for school leaders in Alberta due to its inclusion in the LQS. Leaders are mandated to “create a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning, and well-being,” and more specifically, they are responsible for “promoting innovation, enabling positive change, and fostering commitment to continuous improvement” (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 3). Therefore, understanding and utilizing strategies for change is the professional responsibility of leaders in Alberta schools.

The creation of a culture of change has impacts on all parties within a school. A school culture is composed of “the unseen human factors of a school,” which contribute to “the day-to-

day practices and behaviours within a school” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 20). The value of a culture of change is felt in everything done in the school. According to Coyle (2018), culture “is not something you are. It’s something you do” (Coyle, 2018, p. xx). As the world changes at a rapid rate, a culture of change holds value for everyone within the culture, including leaders, teachers, students, and parents.

According to Fullan (2020), “most organizations do not change, or at least do not change in time.” (p. 5). However, a culture of change allows schools to adapt and respond to better respond to a constantly changing world.

### **Scope of Study**

This capstone examines research concerning cultures of change, culture change processes, and sustaining change. The findings are from relevant books, articles, and papers primarily from the past five years.

### **Summary**

Schools are faced with the challenge of keeping up with a rapidly changing society. According to Griffin (2015), “traditional skills of reading, writing and mathematics are important but no longer sufficient” (p. 1). There is a need for a school culture in which “innovation and experimentation are not view as tasks to be accomplished or projects to be completed; rather they become ways of conducting day-to-day business—forever” (Dufour et al., 2004, p. 5). Thus, there is need for a culture change in schools to better respond to societal changes and demands (Fullan, 2020).

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Paper**

Chapter 1 addresses the requirement for creating a culture of change in schools. As the world changes, schools must keep up with new practices (Zhao, 2022). Chapter 2 is a review of

the literature regarding cultures of change and culture change processes in schools. An exploration into the meaning of culture of change is followed by existing research on strategies for leading a culture change. Lastly, strategies for sustaining a culture of change are explored. Chapter 3 is a summary of the research regarding cultures of change, culture change, and sustaining changes, followed by implications and recommendations for educational leaders.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

To fully achieve a culture of change within a school, a culture change process must be undertaken by a school leader and the school itself. After exploring the concept of a culture of change, this capstone reviews the different aspects of achieving a successful culture change. In sections below, the relevant literature on the following topics is presented: Defining a Culture of Change, Preparing for Culture Change, Implementing Culture Change, Sustaining a Culture Change, and How Leaders Can Improve.

The world continues to evolve at rapid rates (Zhao, 2022). As Fullan (2020) explained, “the more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become” (p. ix). In a culture of change, “leaders begin to ask better questions, listen better, synthesize, and challenge the status quo” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 15). With dedicated effort, “leaders can focus on certain key change themes that will allow them to lead effectively under messy conditions” (Fullan, 2020, p. x).

The first task of a leader is to create a shared vision and purpose (Coyle, 2018), but the leader needs to make change safe by allowing mistakes and growth. Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) explained, “We need trust because we will make mistakes, and we need to be able to share them and learn from them” (p. 65). Lastly, leaders should plan specific actions for change based on brainstorming from as many parties as possible (Richert et al., 2020).

Once a school is prepared for a culture change, the school leader can then consider the matter of implementing the change. While leaders might be eager to roll changes out at a rapid pace, it is important to “go slow to go fast” and allow the appropriate amount of time to make lasting change (Richert et al., 2020). In addition, leaders need to be aware of the

“implementation dip” because, “even if there is some preimplementation preparation, the first few months are bumpy” (Fullan, 2020, p. 49). Similarly, failures should be seen as an opportunity to adapt and adjust the plan to refine the implementation (Richert et al., 2020). Lastly, during a culture change, leaders should celebrate their early successes to increase the chances of long-term success (Muhammad, 2018).

Change processes often fail when leaders declare total victory too soon (Kotter et al., 2021). Thus, to ensure long-term success, they should aim to make sustainable and meaningful changes to the school and should “engage in school culture change thoughtfully, not fashionably” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 97). To protect the new culture, leaders should strive to reduce the influence of toxic teachers (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Lastly, significant effort should be contributed to engage new and undecided teachers to join the new culture (Muhammad, 2018).

The demand for change in schools requires improvement from school leaders (Kotter et al., 2021). In addition, as Muhammad (2018) noted, “if schools and districts are serious about transforming culture then careful selection, development, and retention of leaders is important” (pp. 135–136). Leaders must be a part of the growth process and engage in continuous learning to better support change processes and culture change (Fullan, 2020).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Culture*: Refers to “a pattern of shared assumptions as it solves its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

*Culture of Change*: Refers to a culture with emphasis toward “morale purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge creation and use, and coherence making” (Fullan, 2020, p. 145).

*Leader*: Refers to “a principal or school jurisdiction leader” as outlined in the *Leadership Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 2).

*Leadership Quality Standard*: Provides the standard to support the professional growth, supervision, and evaluation of all principals and school jurisdiction leaders (Alberta Education, 2020a).

*Principal*: Refers to “a principal as defined in the Education Act, assistant principal, associate principal or vice principal” (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 2).

*Teaching Quality Standard*: Provides the standard for the preparation, professional growth, supervision and evaluation of all teachers (Alberta Education, 2020b).

*Shared Vision*: Simplifies “a complex world into a single organizing idea, a basic principle, or concept that unifies and guides everything” (Collins, 2001, p. 91).

## **Defining a Culture of Change**

### ***Responding to Change***

One of the major contributors to the concept of a culture of change comes from the work of Fullan (2020), who defined this concept as follows:

I use the phrase in two ways. One is the fact that changes are always rolling into and over all our organizations these days. One form of leadership in this latter case is protecting the organization from constant, superficial change. The second and more fundamental use is how to change the existing culture so that it has the capacity to manage and incorporate

change on a continuous basis that serves the goals of the organization, including deliberately incorporating new goals and their implementation. (Fullan, 2020, p. ix)

More simply put, a culture of change is one in which leaders “build the capacity to change” (Fullan, 2020, p. 105). Vodonick (2018) had a similar view of the role of a leader in a culture of change:

To make change more easily recognizable and therefore less frightening and seen as a threat, it is necessary that small changes be allowed in an organization on a frequent basis and to allow those small changes to develop into ever larger changes. (p. 463)

This explanation is in line with one characteristic of a successful culture. According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2019), in successful cultures, “the notion of improvement spreads like a virus” (p. 51). A school with a culture of change is a school that is dynamic and alive and that strives for continuous change (Lomba Portela & Pino-Juste, 2020).

### ***Preparing for the Future***

Fullan (2020) elaborated on the concept of a culture of change, stating that “it prepares students for the future that turns out to be now, not tomorrow” (p. 114). Therefore, “the mission for today’s schools is to educate students so they know how to face jobs that have not been created yet, to handle technologies not yet invented, and deal with unknown future problems” (Lomba Portela & Pino-Juste, 2020, p. 83). Since “the future is rapidly changing and unpredictable,” the school’s role is “to help children develop the capacities for creating a better future when they grow up and to help them work with uncertainties and unknowns” (Zhao, 2022, p. 47). Those creating cultures of change understand that “change is not the enemy, and it is not a problem that must be dealt with as many organizations do; it is an opportunity that can be taken advantage of” (Vodonick, 2018, p. 466). Fullan (2020) explained, “Creative ideas and novel

solutions are often generated when the status quo is disrupted” (p. 117). Ultimately, in a culture of change, “people rise to the occasion when they are helped by leaders who develop others to do something that is individually and collectively worthwhile” (Fullan, 2020, p. 150).

## **Preparing for Culture Change**

### ***Establishing a Shared Vision***

The first act in any change is creating a vision (Senge, 1994), and that vision must become the backbone of every subsequent action. Visionary leadership is a powerful tool for change. According to Yordsala et al. (2014), “visionary leadership is said to have positive effects on follower outcomes, resulting in high trust in the leader, high commitment to the leader, high levels of performance among followers, and high overall organizational performance” (p. 93). Therefore, to prepare for any culture change in a school, a leader needs to “uncover the necessary wisdom—the thinking, beliefs, and skills—within” the school (Richert et al., 2020, p. 107). Thus, it is important to build a collective understanding of the desired values of the school. According to Muhammad (2018), culture change is more likely to succeed when staff show “a high level of efficacy where the school mission and purpose were concerned” (p. 121). In the effort to strengthen a shared vision, leaders should “foster cross-organizational communication by intentionally fostering relationships between people in different parts of the organization and across levels of management” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 110). Odiaga et al. (2021) suggested that, “without developing a shared vision that employees are willing to support, change will likely fail” (p. 4). To combat this, a leader should “deliberately open up channels for harnessing your people’s intelligence and their concerns relative to the proposed change” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 111). Challenge often comes when leaders try to force a new vision without finding out what the teachers in the school want (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Richert et al. (2020) explained that

changes fail when teachers “have a hidden, or competing, commitment” (p. 92). According to Lomba Portela and Pino-Juste’s (2020) study, 56.27% of the teachers were resistant to changes imposed solely by the administration. Fullan (2020) explained that, in successful cultures, “purpose is jointly determined by leaders and members through focused work” (p. 122). The act of finding a “common vision is an uplifting and powerful activator” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 114), and “a strong vision will get you through the challenging times” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 76). Furthermore, Wilson (2019) summarized the value of a shared vision as follows: “Every school has a story to tell about overcoming obstacles and becoming victorious amid crisis. It defines their culture and the pride they feel to be a part of the institution” (p. 387).

### ***Making Change Safe***

To complete a successful culture change, leaders along with their team “must be willing to suspend judgment and defensiveness and be willing to open up to what is actually going on” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 115). Muhammad (2018) observed, “In many of the toxic cultures observed, it was unacceptable to struggle” (p. 130). Likewise, Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) found, “In unhealthy cultures, people may choose to hide mistakes that they perceive as embarrassing or damaging to their reputation” (p. 65). Thus, according to Vodonick (2018), “the single most important factor in the intersection of the organization and change is the attitude towards change that the organization has nurtured” (p. 466). In addition, Lomba Portela and Pino-Juste (2020) found, “The highest influence on the resistance to education changes are teachers’ attachment to the established practices, fear of failure, [and] personal insecurities about implementing changes” (p. 95). Therefore, school leaders should

create an intentional activation environment—a space where people can share their discomfort, admit to not knowing yet, bring up difficult subjects, tell the truth as they see

it, acknowledge missteps, communicate opinions, change their minds, feel conflicted, take a position, and express appreciation and gratitude. (Richert et al., 2020, p. 111)

In their exploration of innovative school cultures, Tait and Faulkner (2019) found that leadership teams “encouraged a schoolwide acceptance of risk taking and experimentation” (p. 130). To prepare people for change, they must be comfortable making mistakes and growing (Coyle, 2018). In a safe culture, staff have an openness to change:

An openness to discovery leads to a proactive attitude toward change. Research on creativity shows that people tend to be “fixed” in their thinking, so traditional brainstorming tends to produce only a limited set of ideas. To get more and different ideas, you need to disrupt people’s normal ways of thinking. You can use many methods to break this *fixedness*, such as meeting in a special place, using warm-up activities, introducing an element of fun or surprise, and mixing and mingling different people in groups. (Richert et al., 2020, p. 116)

Creating an environment in which discovery and failure are accepted is difficult because people’s “brains are hardwired to hate uncertainty and to crave predictability” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 91). Fullan (2020) posited that this issue can be overcome if leaders “frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem” (p. 41). Furthermore, “there is an explicit and intimate link between knowledge building and internal commitment on the way to making good things happen” (Fullan, 2020, p. 96). The success of a culture change “is the product of the ability of the school to cope with cultural and creative challenges” (Benji-Rabinovitz & Berkovich, 2020, 83). If change is safe and challenges are viewed as learning opportunities, culture change is more likely to succeed (Fullan, 2020).

### ***Brainstorming Actions for Change***

The last remaining step before moving forward on a culture change process is to “pull all of your thinking together and convert it into an actual plan of action” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 122). Fullan et al. (2021) recommended the following:

Plan for execution. Will you need to reorganize, move people around, hire in new talent, or add temporary task forces? Will training some people in how to work with the new strategy or culture or quality process be necessary? Do key initiatives need an executive sponsor, and, if yes, who? (p. 47)

This is the phase of the process in which team members identify what will be challenging and brainstorm ways to execute the change (Richert et al., 2020). However, Fullan (2020) cautioned against overplanning during this stage and found that the action from “brief focused documents, not from large documents” led to more success in change processes (p. 55). This phase can be seen as an opportunity to strengthen commitment from teachers and team members. Richert et al. (2020) explained,

After you have a clear sense of what could be beneficial about a concept, then you are ready to think about what makes it challenging. Instead of feeling like people’s resistance is getting in the way, encourage everyone to see it as an opportunity to learn more that will allow you to adapt ideas and make them stronger. Articulate the real challenges—allow your team to explore what makes the idea challenging to fully execute. (p. 120)

Furthermore, when school leaders face these challenges and plan for execution, they should leave nothing to chance (Muhammad, 2018). Plans should be focused and understandable so that nothing slips through the cracks (Dufour et al., 2004). Furthermore, all the actions should be guided by the school’s “shared vision in order to make a change in the organization by changing

the status quo” (Yaseen et al., 2018, p. 44). In a successful culture, every action planned and completed should stem from the common shared vision (Coyle, 2018).

## **Implementing Culture Change**

### ***Go Slow to Go Fast***

In regards to beginning a culture change process, Fullan (2020) observed the “too-slow-too-fast” dilemma. He explained this dilemma as follows: “If the leader comes on too strong, the culture will rebel. ... If the leader is overly respectful of the existing culture, he or she will be absorbed into the status quo” (p. 47). Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) found. “Slow and purposeful is as fast as leaders should go when aiming to shift the culture” (p. 78). In addition, Richert et al. (2020) found, “Everyone responds to change differently. ... A little creative tension in the building is a good thing, but it’s not helpful if you’re breaking people” (p. 135). This concept is further examined in an excerpt from *Leading in a Culture of Change*:

This is the leader’s dilemma. On the one hand, failing to act when the environment around you is radically changing leads to extinction. On the other hand, making quick decisions under conditions of mind-racing mania can be equally fatal. Robert Steinberg said it best: “The essence of intelligence would seem to be in knowing when to think and act quickly, and knowing when to think and act slowly.” (Gleick, 1999, p. 114, as cited in Fullan, 2020, p. x)

In the process of going slow to go fast, it is important for school leaders to take the necessary time to properly train teachers for new changes (Lomba Portela & Pino-Juste, 2020). Regarding specific training, Richert et al. (2020) found that, early in cultural changes, leaders “develop a regular practice of formally or informally coaching individuals and teams” (p. 134). This informal coaching can be as simple as “asking questions as you casually interact with staff

on building walks” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 134). Providing ample time for development and growth will increase the likelihood of success in a culture change (Fullan, 2020).

### ***Implementation Dip***

Culture change is not likely to follow a linear path of growth. According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2019), “with any change, there will be implementation dips as well as improvement spikes—which means there will be times when everything seems great, and times when things are not so great” (pp. 75–76). Richert et al. (2020) explained that, during this time, successful leaders “coach members to learn from early results and refine the implementation accordingly” (p. 127). To explain the cause of an implementation dip, Gruenert and Whitaker stated,

For a culture to change, it must be weakened. In this case, weakened does not mean made worse or ineffective. It simply means some values and beliefs need to be challenged.

Some beliefs been around a long time and have become a part of “who we are around here.” (p. 100)

From this perspective, “it is more development than dip” (Fullan, 2020, p. 51). Ultimately, the implementation dip is expected and unavoidable (Richert et al., 2020). However, “one way of thinking of change leadership is that the goal is to shorten the duration of the implementation dip to the point where benefits outweigh costs” (Fullan, 2020, p. 50).

### ***Adaptability***

Culture change is “a never-ending process of trying, failing, reflecting, and above all, learning” (Coyle, 2018, p. 228). To better adapt and serve the change process, leaders should listen and communicate carefully (Fullan, 2020). Fullan (2020) explained,

Communication during implementation serves a double function. On the one hand, it gives the leader an opportunity to learn how implementation is going. As the leader gets

specific insights about what is working, he or she can feed that back in both small and large forums. On the other hand, problems get identified more readily and can be addressed. (pp. 58–59).

Leaders should “listen for resistance, understanding, speed bumps, thoughtfulness, ingenuity, and energy” while adapting plans to better fit the needs of the school (Richert et al., 2020, p. 134). With the right vision fueling the change, as Tait and Faulkner (2019) stated, “you can persevere, based on the belief that with a few changes based on the feedback you received in the test, the idea is still worth going after” (p. 163). Richert et al. (2020) found, “Even when adopting an evidence-based model that has been tested and proven in other schools, you will need to find what works given your unique situation and strategic goal” (p. 127). When leaders know that changes will need to be made, “even setbacks are seen as problems to be solved, resulting in an even greater sense of fulfillment once they are addressed” (Fullan, 2020, p. 59).

### ***Celebrate Successes***

According to Muhammad (2018), “celebration in a school provides consistent reinforcement on what is important” (p. 126). Celebrating early successes allows staff members “to feel the momentum you’ve developed around this change initiative and helps them stay aligned with the project” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 136). Similarly, Kotter et al. (2021) found, “The visibility of the successes and the support from leadership encouraged more and more employees to exhibit” desired behaviors and attitudes (p. 117). In addition, according to Fullan (2020) “knowledgeable leaders strive for small early successes, acknowledge real problems, admit mistakes, protect their people, and celebrate success along the way” (p. 59). Akin to that, Richert et al. (2020) noted the value of acknowledging progress to “champion thinking and problem solving” (p. 136). Celebrations do not have to be planned or institutionalized; rather, impromptu

celebrations can serve a similarly impactful purpose (Muhammad, 2018). Ultimately, in successful culture changes, leaders “use any early wins and learnings as opportunities to grow and celebrate” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 127).

## **Sustaining Cultures of Change**

### ***Why Change Fails***

Culture change is not always successful or sustainable. Richert et al. (2020) found that “70 percent of all complex change initiatives fail” (p. 139). According to Kotter et al. (2021), “at first, a new or changed culture is still fragile. But if the behavioral norms and shared values are reinforced ... the culture will solidify” (p. 108). Wilson (2019) noted that “failure to successfully integrate context, clarity, direction and competition with its interconnectivity of systems and procedures results in unsustainable change” (p. 385). In a sustainable culture of change, there should be a sense of flourishing and fulfillment (Fullan, 2020). Kotter et al. (2021) found that, often, “there was a tendency to declare victory too soon and stop short of the finish line. People also underestimated how fragile new changes were, and didn’t take the time to truly institutionalize them in the organization’s systems and structures” (p. 30).

### ***Make Changes Thoughtful (Not Fashionable)***

A culture of change does not imply that every possible change must be undertaken; instead, it implies that schools are able to respond to changes in appropriate ways (Fullan, 2020). Not every change is worth pursuing; however, “if the leader can demonstrate how helpful a change or an initiative is, commitment will follow” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 71). Richert et al. (2020) found, “Purposeful change—the adaptation of the current situation—should be entered into to support your school’s or district’s why, the outcomes you want to achieve, and the impact you want your organization to have relative to those it serves” (p. 139). Generally,

“navigating lasting culture change is about providing meaning and weaving emotional threads throughout the setting” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 78). Richert et al. (2020) further explained the value of thoughtful change and the danger of fashionable change:

To increase the likelihood that their change accomplishes its goals, smart and healthy school cultures are not afraid to undertake a high-impact change over an extended period of time and generally eschew flash-in-the-pan, shiny-object panaceas. They create coherence by ensuring a consistent focus. (p. 143)

Therefore, leaders should take the necessary time to discover where the school needs to go next and determine a reasonable plan; this process should not be rushed (Tait & Faulkner, 2019). Furthermore, Fullan (2020) found that leaders who actively learn within the staff have the most impact moving forward. Yaseen et al. (2018) found, “Organizational culture is crucial in sustaining the employee commitment towards change which ultimately leads the organization to success” (p. 49). By making thoughtful changes aligned with the vision of the school, leaders increase the likelihood of sustained culture change (Fullan, 2020).

### ***Reduce the Influence of Toxic Teachers***

Regarding protecting the new culture, Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) suggested reducing the influence of teachers still holding on to past values:

Toxic teachers cannot thrive alone. Their strength relies on the support of others who sympathize with them, which means they are constantly recruiting. If you can drain the toxic club of its members, you can rid the school of toxic sentiments held by any teacher. Making sure the numbers in a toxic group never increase is an essential first step to turning the culture around. Once you stop the influx of membership in a toxic subculture, you can work to dismantle the group by reducing its reach and influence. (p. 82)

Muhammad (2018) referred to such toxic teachers as “fundamentalists” and found that “fundamentalists pose the biggest and most critical challenge to schools seeking to create a healthy school culture” (p. 97). School leaders need to identify toxic influences that are keeping old values alive in the school to build a new, stronger culture (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Muhammad (2018) suggested recruiting fundamentalists to convert them from toxic influences to healthy team members. Similarly, Fullan (2020) stated, “Effective leadership means guiding people through the differences and, indeed, making differences a source of new insights as they lead to more integrative and focused solutions” (p. 132). The goal of reducing toxic influences should not be to fire toxic teachers; rather it should be to slowly convert them (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). According to Muhammad (2018), “a leader’s job is to transform and positively impact behaviour” (p. 115). Moreover, “it is the healthy mindset, talents, and behaviors that leaders and staff bring to the task that ultimately determine change success” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 140). Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) suggested that, while in the process of converting toxic influences, leaders should protect new teachers by “proactively ensuring that they don’t connect with teachers who are the gateway to negativity or toxicity” (p. 83). In their study, Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) found that, by slowly removing teachers from toxic mindsets, each teacher “helped recruit the second-least committed negative teacher. In the end, there weren’t many teachers left in the negative group” (p. 22). Completely getting rid of toxic teachers is likely not an option; instead, leaders should protect the values and vision of the school, help toxic teachers learn and grow, and strive for a healthy cohesive culture.

### ***Engage New Believers***

Muhammad (2018) referred to teachers who have not fully joined a change process but are not fully against the change process as “tweeners” (p. 57) and those who have engaged with

the new culture as “believers” (p. 43). Tweeners are often teachers who are new to the profession or the school, and successful school leaders “put the majority of their energy into properly grooming their new teachers as the catalyst for turning their toxic school culture into a healthy one” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 129). Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) suggested that leaders strategically place new teachers with mentors “based on whom you want new staff members to emulate or influence” (p. 83). Muhammad (2018) explained the importance of engaging new believers:

Tweeners are important for two major reasons: first, as noted in the previous chapter, a school cannot gain momentum if it lacks organizational memory. Members of an organization who are connected to a long-term plan for improvement and participate in that improvement incrementally over time carry with them the experiences, training, and expertise necessary to make that long-term vision a reality. ... Tweeners are also important to the evolution of a school and its culture because they present the best opportunity for the growth of the believers. (p. 67)

While all schools have staff turnover, “coherent systems have lower turnover of staff” (Fullan, 2020, p. 122), increasing the likelihood of a sustainable culture change (Muhammad, 2018). To engage new believers, “knowledge is constantly received and given, as organizations provide opportunity to do so and value and reward individuals as they engage in the receiving and sharing of knowledge” (Fullan, 2020, p. 99). Tait and Faulkner (2019) found that, due to successful training and learning, “most effective new school networks promote the majority of their staff internally rather than relying on new recruits” (p. 224). In addition, Richert et al. suggested that, to increase sustainability, leaders “look for ways to institutionalize new activities so they fit into your normal policies and procedures and become easy, repeatable, and expected”

(p. 137). Successfully engaging new believers produces a culture immune to standard turnover of teachers and leaders and carries the change forward with sustainability (Fullan, 2020).

## **How Leaders Can Improve**

### ***Focused Efforts From Districts and Leaders***

The path to improvement comes from focused efforts from districts as well as individual leaders (Fullan, 2020). Furthermore, “the good news is that almost all of us can get better over time through deliberate practice” (Fullan, 2020, p. 145). One factor that influences the ability of leaders to grow is self-belief and motivation: “Leadership development is, and should be, aspirational and normative” (Newstead et al., 2021, p. 1). Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) found that successful growth comes from the leaders “who devoted a high enough level of passion and drive to see it through” (p. 108). Unfortunately, formal training is often arranged only when things do not go well (Richert et al., 2020). However, since “skillful leadership and a focus on key areas of school operations are critical” to culture change, districts should be proactive with finding ways to develop leaders (Muhammad, 2018, pp. 135–136). Fullan (2020) found “that becoming context-literate is essential so you become oriented and committed to learning about each new context” (p. 147). A system that “helps create an environment that allows for and promotes leadership from everywhere” is beneficial in a change process (Kotter et al., 2021, p. 186). A major factor in achieving growth is “hours of cumulative deliberate practice” (Fullan, 2020, p. 145). Thus, specific focus and direction from districts allow leaders to develop and grow (Muhammad, 2018).

### ***Skill Inventory Practices***

Often, improvement efforts from districts or individual leaders are not effective because they are not “built to address the root cause of participants’ poor leadership, which is usually

mindset” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 18). Furthermore, growth efforts should be well defined, be focused, involve feedback, and get leaders out of their comfort zone (Fullan, 2020). For these reasons, Richert et al. (2020) found it beneficial to complete a self-assessment to direct growth efforts. An example of a self-assessment is the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), created by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. As Kouzes et al. (2016) explained, “the LPI is one of the most widely used leadership assessment instruments in the world” and can be used to direct leadership growth (p. 6). Furthermore, “research shows that gathering 360-degree feedback is the first important step to improving performance and making behavior changes over time” (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 15). Completing a self-assessment allows development to become individualized, context-based, and measurable (Richert et al., 2020). In addition, collecting and receiving data and feedback helps leader to see “that their behavioral changes could make a difference” (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 16). Leadership development is much more impactful when it is focused based on accurate assessments of strengths and areas for improvement (Richert et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

This literature review focused on four main sections. The first section, “Defining a Culture of Change,” directly answers the first research question of this capstone. The second question of this capstone is addressed by the middle two sections, “Preparing for Culture Change” and “Implementing Culture Change.” Lastly, the final section, “Sustaining Cultures of Change,” addresses the needs of the final research question. Together, they form a comprehensive exploration of the literature regarding fostering a culture of change in a school.

Fullan (2020) defined a culture of change in two ways: (a) It is a culture that can endure changes and (b) a culture that predicts upcoming societal changes and responds quickly to newly developed needs. A culture of change is one “that constantly looks for ways to sustain progress

toward achieving their organizational why through a series of coherent activities” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 15). Furthermore, a culture of change is one that prepares staff and students for a world of uncertainties and unknowns (Zhao, 2022). A culture of change is constantly adapting and improving to keep up with society and better serve students (Fullan, 2020).

Before beginning a culture change process, a school leader must first establish a shared vision among the staff (Muhammad, 2018). Gruenert and Whitaker (2019) found, “When a group of people come together for a common purpose, things get done better and faster” (p. 66). A leader must make their school a place in which failure is safe “by nurturing a genuine environment of curiosity, experimentation, and learning” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 95). Muhammad (2018) found that schools that have succeeded in culture changes “made it acceptable to struggle and seek help” (p. 130). The last step before a culture change is to brainstorm real actions for change (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). A school leader must consult a variety of stakeholders to create physical changes (Richert et al., 2020). After achieving these steps, a school is ready for culture change.

While implementing actual change in a school, leaders should be aware of several concepts to ensure sustainability. In the early stages, a leader should “go slow to go fast,” meaning they should take time to allow the change to properly develop (Fullan, 2020). Furthermore, “there will be implementation dips as well as improvement spikes—which means there will be times when everything seems great, and times when things are not so great” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, pp. 75–76). A leader must weigh the balance of too slow versus too fast to achieve change (Kotter et al., 2021). In addition, while navigating the implementation dip, leaders must allow for adaptability in plans to respond to new challenges and needs (Richert et al., 2020). Leaders must be adaptable and “relentlessly committed to solving problems” as they

arise (Fullan, 2020, p. 143). Early in a change process, a leader should also share and celebrate successes with all stakeholders (Richert et al., 2020). Doing so allows leaders to “shift the narrative in a positive way” that ultimately “drowns out the negative noise with hope” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 75). By acknowledging and acting on the issues outlined above, leaders can better support the implementation of a culture change.

To ensure a culture change does not fail, a school leader must commit time and energy to ensuring success and sustainability (Kotter et al., 2021). One thing a leader can do is make thoughtful changes instead of trendy and fashionable changes (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Those who implement cultures of change “are not afraid to undertake high-impact change over an extended period of time and generally eschew flash-in-the-pan, shiny-object panaceas” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 143). Another thing successful school leaders can do to sustain a new culture is to reduce the influence of toxic teachers in the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Leaders must make toxic teachers uncomfortable and “send the message that the standards have changed, and the only way someone will be allowed to be comfortable is through compliance with the new school paradigm” (Muhammad, 2018, p. 113). Lastly, leaders should focus on engaging new believers in the culture (Richert et al., 2020). New teachers should be supported and directed to the desired culture as a way of “proactively ensuring that they don’t connect with teachers who are a gateway to negativity or toxicity” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 83). Muhammad (2018) observed that focusing on engaging new believers is a conscious effort of successful leaders of culture change. By making purposeful choices and targeting specific types of teachers, leaders can create a sustainable culture of change within a school.

Furthermore, developing leaders to improve their ability to change school culture must be a deliberate effort from districts and individual leaders (Muhammad, 2018). According to Fullan

(2020), “leading in systems of growing complexity requires another level of leadership than was hitherto required,” and leaders must be supported in development (p. 139). In addition, commitment in terms of mentality and time from all parties involved increase the likelihood of growth (Kotter et al., 2021). To accurately focus the development of leaders, a self-reflection tool, such as the LPI, can be utilized (Kouzes et al., 2016). Furthermore, properly directed training for leaders is beneficial in growing change leaders (Richert et al., 2020). Growth is not an individual feat; leaders need “coaches to rally, inspire, and accompany them on their journeys” (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 19).

### **Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Chapter 2 served as an exploration of the relevant literature regarding culture change and cultures of change. Chapter 3 presents a brief summary of the findings, the implications and recommendations for leaders, and a brief conclusion.

First, the findings presented in Chapter 2 revolved around the concept of a culture of change. Fullan (2020) explained,

Leading change is about helping others focus and learn. As we move into an era where more innovation is required, not the least because existing institutions are failing, we need leaders who will help the group achieve new, more effective steady states with the parallel capacity of adjusting to and taking advantage of new opportunities. (p. 60)

Thus, leading in a culture of change is about creating a sustainable culture that embraces and utilizes change (Richert et al., 2020). Next, Chapter 2 focused on research regarding the culture change process, starting with preparing a school for a culture change. Before starting a culture change, the school leaders and staff must come together with a shared vision of what the school wants (Coyle, 2018). Furthermore, leaders must make sure the school is a safe place to fail and learn from mistakes (Muhammad, 2018). Once this has been achieved, school leaders, along with their staff, need to brainstorm a tangible action for change to begin the process (Richert et al., 2020). While implementing a culture change, leaders need to “go slow to go fast” to establish lasting change (Fullan, 2020). Then, while encountering the implementation dip, “a strong vision will get you through the challenging times” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 76). Leaders should be willing to make changes and adapt as needed to better support the change process (Fullan, 2020). During all stages of a culture change, celebrating successes allows leaders to align

priorities and support staff through the process (Richert et al. 2020). Furthermore, in their efforts to sustain change in a school, leaders should prioritize thoughtful changes instead of fashionable changes (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Whenever possible, leaders should remove influences from toxic teachers and focus on engaging new believers into the culture (Muhammad, 2018). Lastly, districts and leaders must put time and effort into growth and development (Fullan, 2020). Finally, a reflection tool, such as the LPI, can direct growth and lead to higher levels of success (Kouzes et al., 2016).

### **Implications**

Based on the research covered in this capstone, school leaders must look at the existing cultures within their schools to ensure students are provided with an education that is fitting for the changing world (Zhao, 2022). A culture of change offers a solution for combatting this issue (Fullan, 2020). Furthermore, Fullan (2020) suggested, “If you don’t change and adapt you become obsolete or extinct” (p. 1). Embarking on a culture change process is significant to school leaders because “a strong culture will lift up and organization; a dysfunctional one will bring it down” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 38).

Before starting the process of changing a culture within a school, leaders should take the time to determine a shared vision within the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Regardless of minor details and disagreements in a school, a shared vision is a “common agreement about the most critical or urgent mission” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 40). A school leader needs to develop a shared vision to guide all action within the school (Muhammad, 2018).

In addition, while implementing culture change, school leaders should be aware of the implementation dip (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Setbacks will occur, but “effective leaders make people feel that even the most difficult problems can be tackled” (Fullan, 2020, p. 13). An

adaptable attitude toward problems and change will serve in the best interest of leaders (Kotter et al., 2021). It is also important for school leaders to celebrate successes during a culture change (Richert et al., 2020). Both structured and unstructured celebrations allow leaders to reinforce desired values across a staff (Muhammad, 2018). Additionally, celebrations help improve morale during stressful sections of a culture change process (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019).

To properly sustain a culture of change, leaders should ensure that decisions and new changes are also determined with the shared vision in mind (Richert et al., 2020). As stated by Gruenert and Whitaker (2019), leaders should "engage in culture change thoughtfully rather than fashionably, and avoid culture change that is too rapid" (p. 81). Furthermore, to strengthen a new culture, leaders should be aware of toxic teachers and find ways to diminish their impact (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Those holding onto traditional values "pose the biggest threat to change and improvement" during a culture change (Muhammad, 2018, p. 78). Leaders should separate new and vulnerable teachers and engage them in the new culture through targeted mentorship and training programs (Muhammad, 2018). Engaging new believers in a culture increases the likelihood of sustainability (Richert et al., 2020).

Growth will not occur without effort. To properly support leaders through challenging tasks, it is beneficial for districts to designate time, resources, and efforts to grow leaders (Richert et al., 2020). Districts can assist school leaders with opportunities to "reflect and comment key actions and results towards goal completion" (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 17). The use of a reflection tool, such as the LPI, can guide districts and leaders through various growth efforts (Kouzes et al., 2016). Each leader will require unique attention, and training should be individualized to fit the needs of specific leaders (Richert et al., 2020).

## **Recommendations**

### ***Make the Vision a Priority***

One of the most important recommendations to come out of the literature review is the need to determine a shared vision (Coyle, 2018). Any school leader embarking on a change process should start by determining the goals, values, and beliefs of the school and using them to foster a shared vision for the future (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). The shared vision will then become the reason people commit to a new change (Fullan, 2020). Once a shared vision is formed, it should drive every decision and action within a school (Muhammad, 2018). Furthermore, it should be “shared with key stakeholders, such as boards of education, state administrators, parents and families, and the broader community of the school” (Richert et al., 2020, p. 43), and the shared vision should become extremely evident to anyone who enters the school (Muhammad, 2018). Thus, it is recommended that any leader embarking on a culture change process take the necessary time to develop a shared vision and embed it into every decision and action moving forward in the process.

### ***Design Celebration Rituals***

Another recommendation based on the findings of the literature review is for leaders to design celebration rituals (Fullan, 2020). Celebrations can be either formal or informal, but both serve the same purpose of sustaining a culture change (Muhammad, 2020). Richert et al. (2020) explained the value of these celebrations as a “visible manifestation of your organizational culture, and they are an effective way to engage and activate the invisible beliefs, values, and views that determine your success as a whole” (pp. 52–53). Formal celebrations may be presented and acknowledged at monthly staff meetings, while informal celebrations may happen with a passing conversation in the hallway (Muhammad, 2018). Both instances serve as ways for

a leader to encourage or reenergize staff members throughout a culture change (Richert et al., 2020). Thus, designing and focusing on celebrations is highly recommended for leaders working to change the culture in a school.

### ***Establish a Strong Mentorship Program***

Since new teachers are susceptible to falling under the influence of toxic teachers, it is recommended that a mentorship program be utilized to protect and engage new teachers (Muhammad, 2018). Failing to properly mentor new teachers creates “opportunities for negativity to flourish” and increases “the power and influence of toxic players” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, p. 86). However, specific training on school guidelines and cultural expectations increases the likelihood of new teachers’ engaging with a positive school culture (Richert et al., 2020). A leader should be “proactive and explicit about the culture” they want to develop through the use of planned mentorship and training activities (Fullan, 2020, p. 144). Therefore, establishing a mentorship program to engage new teachers is highly recommended to leaders attempting to change a school culture.

### ***Participate in a Skill Inventory Reflection***

According to Kouzes et al. (2016), “leaders need to be aware of how well they are doing with their own leadership commitment” (p. 15). Therefore, it is recommended that districts or leaders looking to grow utilize a skill inventory to assess areas for growth (Richert et al., 2020). One example of such an inventory is the LPI, which “helps individuals and organizations measure their leadership competencies by providing a structured means of collecting and processing data” (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 15). In this process, leadership is viewed “as a measurable, learnable, and teachable set of behaviors” that can be honed and developed (Kouzes et al., 2016, p. 15). The collection and analysis of data can be used to direct training to be

individualized and more impactful (Richert et al., 2020). Thus, it is recommended that districts and leaders use a skills inventory, such as the LPI, to guide and direct the learning and growth of leaders for culture change.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this capstone was on creating and sustaining cultures of change. Schools have a need for a culture of change because “with all the challenges facing the world—and the world is increasingly troubled—we need greater proactivity about the future” (Fullan, 2020, p. 5). While many schools are resistant to change, ultimately, “change is not the enemy, and it is not a problem that must be dealt with as many organizations do; it is an opportunity that can be taken advantage of” (Vodonick, 2018, p. 466). Furthermore, as explained by Richert et al. (2020),

You and your people are sitting with the problem that calls out for change, but at the same time, you’re holding the solution. Whenever we work with organizations on a change scenario, we find that there are already people in the organization who have potential insights about why the problem is happening, what the root causes might be, and what the potential solutions might be. (p. 105)

Culture change allows a leader to help the existing people within a school to solve problems and make improvements (Fullan, 2020). In the effort to foster a culture of change, there should be an emphasis on developing a shared vision and making failure safe (Richert et al., 2020). The culture change process will have ups and downs, so leaders will have to be patient adaptable during early struggles (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Furthermore, sustaining a culture of change will involve working with people to change perspectives and support them through challenges (Muhammad, 2018). On an optimistic note, “the world is currently going down an extremely

challenging path—one that calls for urgent, joint action that has leading in a culture of change as its common theme for salvation and flourishing” (Fullan, 2020, p. 154).

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