

# Building and Sustaining Positive, Collaborative School Cultures – Part II

With  
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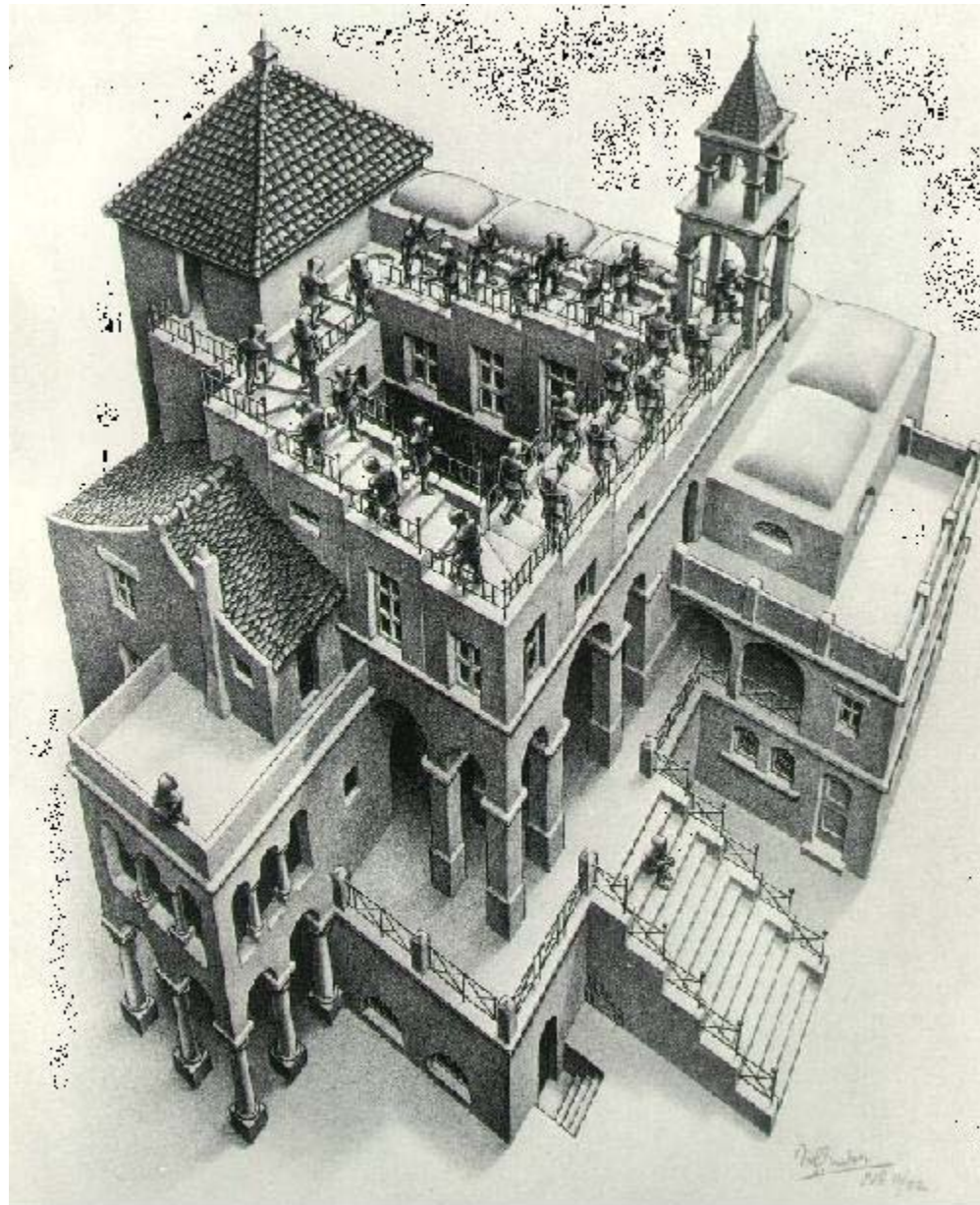
# Reading the Culture

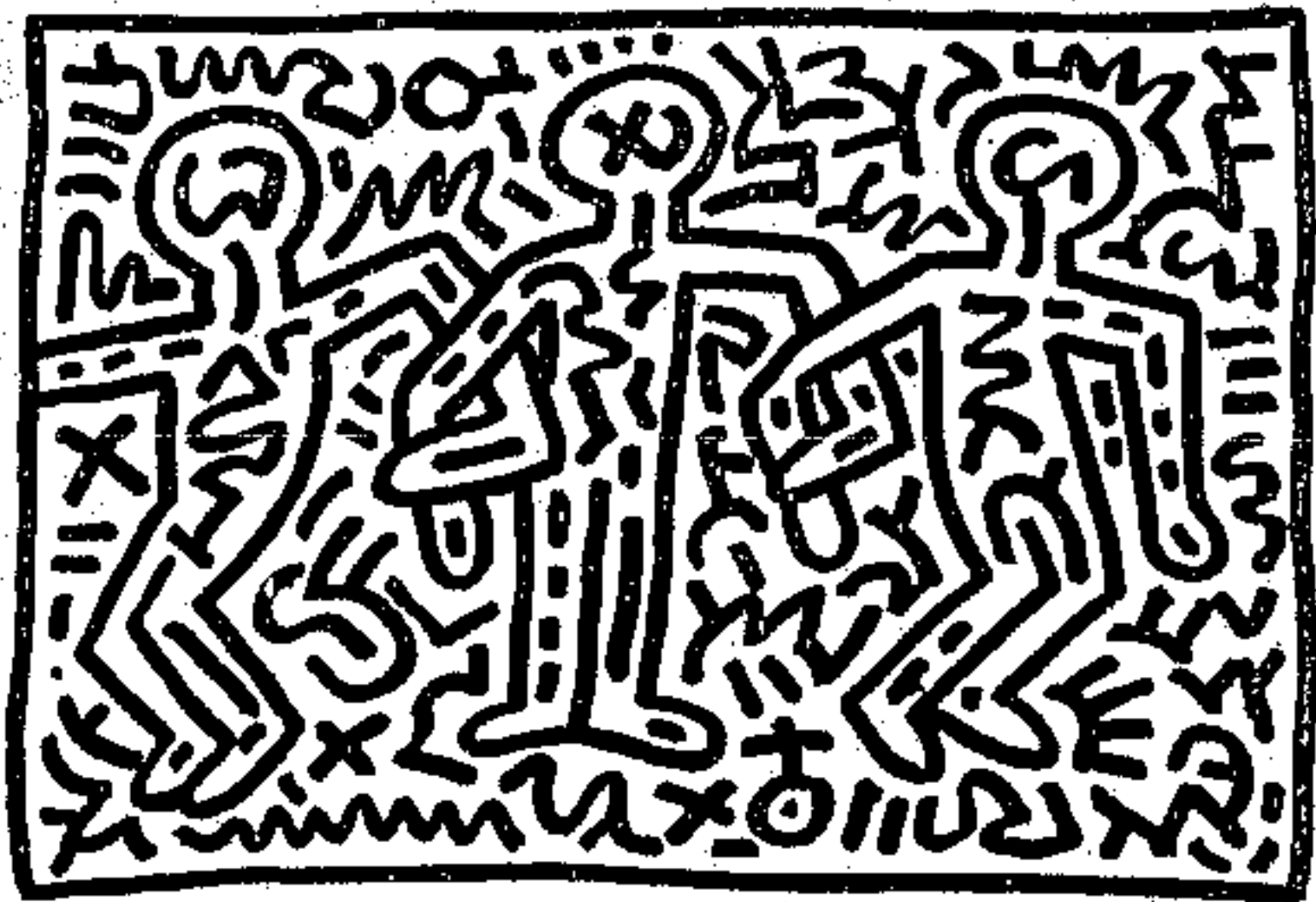
*One should read and  
assess the culture before  
beginning to transform it ...*

# Tools to Read and Assess School Culture

- Draw a picture
- Metaphor
- 6 adjectives
- Song
- Timeline
- Conduct a school history
- Artifacts
- Story
- "Walk the halls and talk to the walls" (T. Deal)
- Sociogram
- Staff room archeological dig
- "Feeling Walk" (M. Elias)
- Select a picture
- Name a vehicle
- Your ideas:







by Keith Haring







# Come Up With a Song for Your Culture

Identify a song that represents the school or district's essence or a major feature of the culture. Some of the songs (or their identifying lyrics) mentioned by educators include these:

*Anticipation*

*RESPECT*

*(I Can't Get No)*

*Satisfaction*

*Eight Days a Week*

*9 to 5*

*Hard Day's Night*

*Wind Beneath My*

*Wings*

*We are Family*

*Movin' on up a Little Higher*

*Lean on Me*

*Ball of Confusion*

*We Are the World*

*You Can't Always Get What*

*You Want*

*Don't Fence Me In*

*Yesterday*

*The Hero Is In You*  
*The World is a Rainbow*  
*The Way We Were*  
*On the Road Again*  
*We Are the Champions*  
*Let's Get Ready to*  
*Rumble*  
*The Power of the Dream*  
*Bad to the Bone*  
*Imagine*  
*The Long and Winding*  
*Road*  
*I Will Survive*

*Sixteen Tons*  
*Whistle While You Work*  
*Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now*  
*Living La Vida Loca*  
*If I Could Fly*  
*Take This Job and Shove*  
*It*  
*It's a Small World*  
*Help!*  
*My Way*  
*Tomorrow*  
*It Don't Come Easy*

List songs representing positive aspects of culture:

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List songs representing negative aspects of culture:

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Idea: During major reform projects, stress and conflict often arise. Use this technique of identifying songs to assess how the culture is coping with major changes.

Idea: If the staff comes up with mostly negative songs, ask them what song they would like to represent the culture if they could reinvigorate the school.

Source: Kent Peterson and Terry Deal, *The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

# Creating a Timeline

## **Materials Needed:**

- Butcher paper
- Colored markers
- Masking tape

## **Directions:**

- Prepare the activity by papering the walls with butcher paper which will serve as the medium for the timeline that is to be created.
- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to enable all staff members to gain a sense of the history of the school.

# Creating a Timeline

- Invite staff members who have been at the school the longest to think about key events that transpired during their first years in the building and jot down dates, events, people, and any emotions they recall (“highs” and “lows”). Suggest that they can use words or graphics to express their emotions.
- Ask other staff members to join in completing the timeline, according to the year that they entered the building.
- When the timeline is finished, provide time for a dialogue, questions, and answers. Invite staff to ponder, “Are there trends or patterns that emerge as you look at the timeline?”
- If possible, leave the timeline up for a while so that it can continue to serve as a basis for conversation

School leaders must learn how to:

- Read the culture signs and cues – the history, strengths and weaknesses
- Assess what is working and what is not
- Reinforce, refine or transform the culture

# Reflections and Personal Next Steps

- Imagine someone walks into your school or your office next week.
- What cultural elements do you hope they will notice?

# Reflections and Personal Next Steps

- Thinking about your school, which tools might you use to read the culture?
- How would you assess the culture of the school? Is it positive, negative, toxic or fragmented?



*... for your time  
and reflections.*