

Culture & People Management

You have identified “culture & people management” as an area of weakness in your school and one that needs improvement.

The uncommon Christian school hires, trains, and develops “living curriculum” faculty, coaches, and staff who are both highly competent in their areas of professional expertise and able to effectively disciple students and partner with parents.

Luke 6:40 tells us that students become like the teachers who train them.... that’s why it’s so important that one hundred percent of individuals working at your school be equipped and empowered to speak Biblical truth to every student and to model a life of commitment to Christ. Their example is the “living curriculum.”

Living Curriculum faculty, staff, and coaches understand that students flourish when they have opportunity to participate in a school where there is engaging instruction, compelling content, authentic leadership, and different opportunities for students to express what they know.

The uncommon Christian school knows that, in the 21st century, learning goes beyond the memorization of facts or athletic performance on the field; instead, it challenges students to solve real-world problems and practically apply what they have learned in authentic and experiential learning opportunities.

The uncommon Christian school invests in all its students’ character and learning habits. It makes an intentional investment that ensures that students will not only have knowledge, but also the character traits and skills necessary to be successful in life after school.

The faculty, staff, and coaches are the ones who deliver the mission, vision, and values every day in 1:1 and group situations with students, parents, and with each other in meetings and in the teacher’s lounge. They determine the culture. In other words, no matter how great the board and school leadership are, no matter how great your strategy might be, no matter how eloquent your mission, vision, and values are stated, if the right faculty, staff, and coaches aren’t on your campus, the school will fail to achieve its mission and vision. It will also fail to achieve strategic and operational priorities each year and in the long term.

Getting the right faculty, staff, and coaches is one of the hardest jobs facing a school. The task begins with the recruitment policy, practices, process and continues with performance evaluation, training, and development.

Culture is not just what you see; it is what you do, how you do it, and why you do it. Culture is what marketing markets, what teachers teach, what activity leaders lead, what coaches coach, what operations operates, what finance funds and what Human Resources measure in performance. The culture of your school must be one that people perceive to be valuable and want to follow on a routine, repeatable basis. They must trust that if they adhere to the culture, it will lead to success for them and the school.

An uncommon Christian school can unlock the power of its people but shaping employee beliefs, behaviors and norms in an environment that supports the school’s desired culture. Maintaining a desired culture requires organizational alignment around what is expressed (through written and spoken word), modeled (by leadership through actions and resource allocation), and reinforced (through performance management, rewards, and consequences).

We have found that the most essential element of building and maintaining a desired culture is in the reinforcement element. That is why a well-managed performance management process with clearly defined criteria fosters growth in individuals, drives transformational change in a school, and leads to success in achieving operational and strategic priorities.

Lastly, the uncommon Christian school needs to concern itself with the retention of personnel by providing competitive compensation, retirement, and employee benefits. These elements are very specific to the local market of any school.

How to –

The following detailed suggestions aim to hire, train, and develop highly competent “living curriculum” faculty, staff, and coaches:

1. Begin Strategic Recruitment:

- Establish a 12-month recruitment plan to strategically recruit faculty, staff, and coaches, emphasizing the importance of hiring personnel who not only possess exceptional subject matter expertise but are also deeply aligned with the school's mission, vision, and values and able to disciple to students as the “living curriculum.”
- Leverage various recruitment channels, including networks, professional organizations, and online platforms, to attract the best-suited candidates for your school.

2. Implement a Clear Evaluation Process:

- Implement a transparent and fair evaluation process that aligns with the school's mission, vision, values, and educational/learning philosophy.
- Define clear performance levels, criteria, and expectations.
- Consider utilizing the Living Curriculum Development Model criteria and teacher evaluation process.
- Provide constructive feedback and facilitate professional growth.
- Ensure the evaluation process includes opportunities for self-assessment and goal setting, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

3. Utilize a Strong Performance Management Tool:

- Implement and maintain the evaluation process in a well designed and easily accessible tool that tracks progress and maintains documentation.
- Consider the Living Curriculum Development Model tool.

4. Align the Performance Management with Learning Management:

- Provide learning opportunities directly related to performance and evaluation.
- Offer internal and external learning opportunities to all levels of experience and performance.
- Consider the Living Curriculum Development Model tool as a Learning Management System.

5. Remove Low Performers:

- Develop a robust system for identifying and addressing underperforming faculty, staff, or coaches, ensuring that the evaluation process includes mechanisms for intervention, support, and, if necessary, appropriate corrective action.

- Create a supportive environment where struggling employees are given the opportunity and resources to improve, while also recognizing the importance of decisive action when necessary for the overall health and culture of the school.

6. Inspire and Grow Employees:

- Implement an evaluation and development program.
- Utilize the model to inspire and grow employees, providing a framework for continuous professional development, mentorship, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Recognize and celebrate achievements, fostering a positive and motivated community.

7. Align Professional Development:

- Ensure that each professional development opportunity aligns with the school's mission, vision, and values.
- Encourage employees to participate in workshops, conferences, and training sessions that enhance both subject matter expertise and the ability to discipline students.

8. Mission-Driven Incentives:

- Design incentive programs that are directly tied to the school's mission, vision, and values, motivating teachers to excel in areas that contribute to the overall objectives of the school.
- Consider recognition programs, awards, and professional growth opportunities as incentives to inspire and retain exceptional employees.
- Investigate “pay-for-performance” to be the best steward of your salary dollars. Our Living Curriculum Development Model evaluation tool can help in implementing such a program.

9. Cultivating a Collaborative Environment:

- Foster a collaborative culture among employees, encouraging the sharing of best practices, collaborative lesson planning, and a sense of shared responsibility for the school's success.
- Facilitate regular team-building activities and professional learning communities to strengthen the sense of community and collaboration among faculty, staff, and coaches.

The above provides background and some suggested steps for improvement in this area based on best practices. To make more detailed and specific suggestions, we would need to know more about your circumstances. Please contact us if you would like to discuss your unique circumstances or would like assistance in facilitating the above steps.

Disclaimer

Once again, we emphasize that these ideas and suggestions may or may not address your school's specific needs as they are based on your responses to the survey. The feedback is limited to the questions asked and your responses. There is a whole lot more to every school.

We pray that God will lead you in your journey to becoming an uncommon Christian school and we do hope the input is helpful in this journey. If you want more detailed feedback, have questions, or would like assistance in any of these areas, please don't hesitate to contact us.