6 Types of School Cultures

-Brief Descriptions-

Below are abbreviated descriptions of the 6 types of school cultures used in the *School Culture Typology Worksheet*. The first five types were introduced by Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) and the sixth by Deal and Kennedy (1999). Of course, these are general types. In reality, school cultures are very complex. However, one type is likely to predominate.

1. **Collaborative**: Teachers share strong educational values, work together to pursue professional development opportunities, and are committed to improving their work. They are very interested in best practices for teaching and learning.
2. **Comfortable-Collaborative**: Schools are polite places where most of us learn to get along and fit in with others. Teachers are generally aware of what their colleagues are doing. Deep reflection is not the norm and can result in a “fixed mindset.” This is a very common type of culture.
3. **Contrived-Collegial**: Leadership determines how staff is to behave. Meant to support new approaches and techniques in teaching, but it can feel superficial and may reduce teachers’ motivation to embrace change.
4. **Balkanized**: Collaboration occurs only within cliques of like-minded staff. Teachers who feel the need to compete for position, resources, and territory may recruit others to join the clique. If a conflict exists between the administrator and the prevailing clique, the latter will often win out.
5. **Fragmented**: People pretty much do their own thing. Meetings may feel like meaningless rituals, with teachers watching the clock. There is a lack of professional interaction among teachers, especially regarding best practices or student achievement.
6. **Toxic**: It isn’t uncommon for teachers to focus on the negative aspects of the school’s operations and personnel may use flaws as justifications for poor performance. Their purpose may be to protect their beliefs and might not align with the goal of fostering student achievement.