

The logo features the letters 'IB' in a large, bold, red font. To the right of 'IB', the word 'THE' is written vertically in a small, red font. Next to 'THE' is the word 'CULTURE' in a large, bold, yellow font. Below 'CULTURE' is '4-7' in a large, bold, black font, followed by 'of LEARNING' in a smaller, red font. Below '4-7' is 'OCT' in a large, bold, black font, and '2012' in a smaller, black font. To the right of 'OCT 2012' is the word 'MADRID' in a large, bold, yellow font. The background consists of a white gradient with a blue-to-white gradient at the bottom. Two large, curved, overlapping bands in red and yellow arch across the top of the page. On the right side, there is a vertical, semi-transparent watermark that reads 'IB CULTURE of LEARNING MADRID 2012' in a yellow font.

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# School culture and students' achievement

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# Introduction

- What is school culture and students' achievement? Climate? Schools Character?- activity 1
- **Theory and practice**
  - My role as a Chief Education Officer – Taaleem Management group
  - Different curricula schools in Taaleem (Dubai/Abu Dhabi)
  - My previous experiences in Kuwait and Jordan
- The role of school leaders and staff in promoting students' achievement. The case of DBS and AAM
- The role of parents in students' achievement
- School culture and hosting country. Activity 2
- How can we build a positive school culture that enhances learning and achievement?
- Conclusion

# What is a School culture?

“The deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic ‘taken-for-granted’ fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment”. These produce group norms, sentiments, values and interactions in the work place. It gives the school its unique identity or character.

*W.K. Hoy, C.G. Miskel, Education Administration. Theory research and practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.*

TABLE 8.9 Profile of Four Cultures

	Transactional Expectations or Governing Rules			
	<i>Rational Culture</i>	<i>Ideological Culture</i>	<i>Consensual Culture</i>	<i>Hierarchical Culture</i>
Organizational purpose	Pursuit of objectives	Broad purposes	Group maintenance	Execution of regulations
Criteria of performance	Productivity, efficiency	External support, Resource acquisition	Cohesion Morale	Stability Control
Location of authority	The boss	Charisma	Membership	Rules
Base of power	Competence	Values	Informal status	Technical knowledge
Decision making	Decisive pronouncements	Intuitive insights	Participation	Factual analysis
Leadership style	Directive, Goal oriented	Inventive, Risk orientated	Concerned, Supportive	Conservative, Cautious
Compliance	Contractual agreement	Commitment to values	Commitment from process	Surveillance and control

Source: Robert E. Quinn and Michael R. McGrath, "The Transformations of Organizational Cultures," in Peter J. Frost et. al. (eds.), *Organizational Culture* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985), pp. 326-327.

**Harvard educator Roland Barth's observed: "A school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have."**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. Elbot & D. Fulton, *Building an intentional school culture*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> R. Barth, "The culture builder," *Educational Leadership*, 2002, 59 (8), 6-11.

“Drawing on research on “smart and good schools”, CEP defines “character” broadly to include both moral character—treating others well (through kindness, honesty and respect)—and performance character, doing things well (as demonstrated by perseverance, critical thinking, and a commitment to quality). **A true school of character has a school culture that requires the best of students and teachers in both realms—doing one’s best work and being one’s best ethical self”.**

*Developing and Assessing School Culture - A New Level of Accountability for Schools  
A Position Paper of the Character Education Partnership (CEP)*

**“Performance excellence and ethical excellence** are born from a culture. As Ron Berger observes in his book *An Ethic of Excellence*, students’ achievement and character are shaped by the culture around them. Regardless of their background, when students enter a culture that demands and supports quality work and moral character, they tend to work to fit into that culture. Once they enter a school culture with a powerful virtuous ethic, that ethic becomes their norm. It’s what they know.”

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**“Students** themselves testify to this power of school culture to change how they experience school and approach their work. A sixth-grade girl was asked how her current school, in which students regularly presented their work to classmates and other audiences, differed from her previous school. She described the difference in terms of school culture: “In this school, everyone looks at my work. In my old school, only my teacher knew anything about my work. I have to try much harder in this school because the work is more important.”

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## What Educational Research Shows

- Of the 134 secondary schools in England that were part of the 2004 Hay Group study, **“the successful schools had a much more demanding culture—hunger for improvement, promoting excellence, holding hope for every child—while less successful schools had less of a press on improvement.”**

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## What Educational Research Shows-School improvement through change of culture

- A review of research on school success finds that high staff productivity and student achievement are both linked to “positive school climate.”

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## A positive school culture broadly conceived includes the school's:

- Social climate, including a safe and caring environment in which all students feel welcomed and valued and have a sense of ownership of their school
- **Intellectual climate, in which all students in every classroom are supported and challenged to do their very best and achieve work of quality; this includes a rich, rigorous, and engaging curriculum and a powerful pedagogy for teaching it**
- Rules and policies that hold all school members accountable to high standards of learning and behavior
- Traditions and routines, built from shared values, that honor and reinforce the school's academic and social standards
- Structures for giving staff and students a voice in, and shared responsibility for, solving problems and making decisions that affect the school environment and their common life
- Ways of effectively partnering with parents to support students' learning and character growth
- Norms for relationships and behavior that create a professional culture of excellence and ethics.

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# My role as a Chief Education Officer at Taaleem

The following are my three main roles at the organization:

1. Professional responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness, availability and value for money of the Taaleem schools and educational services
2. Leadership both within Taaleem to secure and sustain the necessary changes to culture and practice, and beyond it so that Taaleem schools and educational services achieve excellent outcomes for all and are organized around children and young people's needs
3. Building and sustaining effective partnerships with and between those local, regional and international bodies who also provide educational services in order to focus resources (financial, human, physical or any other resources) jointly on achieving excellent outcomes for children and young people

# The role of school leaders in promoting Students' achievement

**Dubai British School – Good DSIB rating** “Dubai School Inspection Bureau”

“One of the most important actions that a **school leader** takes is to pay attention to the culture within a school.. **A principals' impact on learning is mediated through the climate and culture of the school and is not a direct effect. If the culture is not hospitable and conducive to learning, then student achievement will suffer.** School principals are responsible for establishing a pervasive culture of teaching and learning in their school to ensure that student attainment is always improving. Focusing on the development of the school's culture as a learning environment is fundamental to improved teacher morale and ultimately student achievement”.

Mark Ford  
Principal  
Dubai British School

# Photos of good practice

Dubai British School



## **American Academy in Al Mizhar- Good DSIB rating “Dubai School Inspection Bureau”**

“The school principal plays a key role in establishing a school’s culture. The school principal ensures that all decisions made in his/her school align with the school’s mission and vision, and all stakeholders embrace this mission and vision. That is a school’s belief system.

However, I believe it goes beyond the mission to fundamental insights on people. **Students** who are comfortable in the school’s surroundings-they feel nurtured and safe want to come to school and learn. **Staff** respected and empowered to make decisions for their students-they love to come to school each day. They do not want to leave after their contract ends. **Parents** who are encouraged to be part of the school community and provide feedback to help improve the school- do not want to transfer to another school. **Visitors** to the school can feel the school’s pulse upon entering the lobby. There is a feeling that says students are happy and successful in this school.

From the day we opened our doors at AAM, I have tried to develop a family style environment/t culture. Yes, student progress and subsequently attainment is improving each year. I believe that the secret ingredient that makes it happen is the family environment that exists in our school community”.

Delice Scotto

Principal

American Academy in Al Mizhar



# Photos of good practice

American Academy in Al Mizhar



# School culture and hosting country culture

Effort vs. Ability

Activity 2-Does the hosting country culture impact on the school culture?

**Conclusion: There is a positive correlation between school culture and students' achievement.**

Let us all work towards a positive school culture which includes high expectations for learning and achievement, a safe and caring environment, shared values and trust, a powerful pedagogy, a meaningful and relevant curriculum, high student motivation and engagement, a professional faculty culture, and partnerships with families and the community.

## References

- *W.K. Hoy, C.G. Miskel, Education Administration. Theory research and practice, 3rd edition, 1987.*
- *Developing and Assessing School Culture - A New Level of Accountability for Schools. A Position Paper of the Character Education Partnership (CEP), taken from the internet on Sep 30, 2012*
- *C. Elbot & D. Fulton, Building an intentional school culture. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008).*
- *R. Barth, "The culture builder," Educational Leadership, 2002, 59 (8), 6-11.*
- *Interviews with Mark Ford, DBS principal and Delice Scotto, AAM principal – Taaleem schools, September, 2012, Dubai – UAE*
- *Introduction to Taaleem 2012 booklet.*

# Appendices

# tāaleem different schools

## ***American Academy in Al-Mizhar (AAM), Dubai***

Launch year: 2005

Curriculum: American Curriculum

(Based on Michigan State and US national standards)

Faculty: North American and International

Classes: Pre-K – Grade 12

Status: CIS Accredited and NEASC Accredited

## ***Dubai British School (DBS), Dubai***

Launch year: 2005

Curriculum: English National Curriculum

Faculty: Mainly British

Classes: Foundation – Year 13

Status: CIS Accredited

## ***Greenfield Community School (GCS), Dubai***

Launch year: 2007

Curriculum: PYP and MYP

Faculty: International

Classes: KG1 – Grade 12

## ***Jumeira Bacallaureate School, (JBS), Dubai***

Launch year: 2010

Curriculum: IPC, MYP, DP

Faculty: International

Classes: KG 1 up to Grade 12

Status: IB World School

## ***Raha International School (RIS), Abu Dhabi***

Launch year: 2006

Curriculum: PYP, MYP, DP

Faculty: International

Classes: KG1 to Grade 12

Status: IB World School, Regular Member of ECIS

## ***Uptown Primary School (UPS), Dubai***

Launch year: 2005

Curriculum: PYP IB World School

Faculty: International

Classes: KG1 – Grade 6

Status: IB World School, Regular Member of ECIS

# tāaleem different schools

## ***Uptown School (UTS), Dubai***

Launch year: September 2012

Curriculum: International Baccalaureate, intending to offer the following three IB programmes: PYP, MYP & DP

Faculty: International

Classes: Pre-K to KG 2 in September 2012, Grade 1 to 8 in September 2013, Grade 9 to 12 in September 2014

Student body: Co-educational

## ***The Children's Garden (TCG) 3 campuses, Dubai***

Launch year: 2005, new campus in 2012

Curriculum: International Curriculum for Languages and Creative Arts (ICLCA)

Faculty: International

Classes: Pre-nursery– KG2