Culture Building Ideas

1. ***Joke of the Day*** – Done during morning announcements. It sets the tone so that everyone starts on a positive note. Everyone likes a good joke. Everyone likes a bad joke too ☺. The students and staff could reflect on the joke when they meet in class. It can be used as an icebreaker for family discussion… instead of asking "how was your day?" and receiving the usual response of "fine," the conversation could start with "what was the joke of the day?" …this could lead to better dialogue. You can put a box in the office to collect jokes and if you use one of the student's jokes, he/she can be recognized and receive a small prize. Eg. *How does a crazy person get through the forest?* _____☺ *Where does Captain Hook keep his treasure chest?* _____

2. ***Birthday Wall Calendar*** –locate a large empty wall and measure out blocks for days of the month. Use blue painters tape to tape off the blocks. At the start of the year, have students write their name on the front and birthday on the back. Have a small committee of students that organizes the birthdays for each month. It adds to the climate as it recognizes every student for at least one day. Other shapes could highlight special events for the school.

3. ***That's My Spot*** – grades take ownership of hallways and decorate it to their liking. It adds to a sense of school community as all the grades are represented. Also reduces the chance of vandalism as each grade would be "watching out for their space."

4. ***A Sense of Belonging -*** do you have students that often sit by themselves having lunch? How do you think they feel? Wouldn't it be nice to make them feel included? At Yale Secondary, students are invited to a pizza luncheon by a Leadership student. Conversation needs to be established between the leadership student and the invitee. The Leadership student must also present for the luncheon.

5. ***School Vision*** – senior students take time to visit the feeder school students in grades 5-7 to connect with them and gently guide them in learning the expectations of the high school so that positive behaviors and attitude are in place before entering the school.

6. ***Music to greet students*** – before school starts, energizing music is played in the foyer and Lead students are there to "high-five" kids as they arrive. A great way to start the day!

"As teachers, we have the opportunity to foster positive changes to the everyday experience in our schools. Investing time in improving school culture is worth the effort." - Brad Kuntz, from the Sept 2012 issue of Education Update