

Shifting School Culture: 5 Small Moves with BIG IMPACT



Companion Handout for the Podcast with Dr. Julie Causton and Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak

Why Small Moves Matter

Culture can feel big and hard to change — but often, it's the small, daily moves that create the greatest shifts. Every message, moment of connection, and inclusive practice sends a signal about who belongs and what we value.

When we focus on simple, consistent moves, we begin to create a school where every student, staff member, and family feels seen, valued, and welcome.

1. SHIFT LANGUAGE: WORDS SHAPE EXPERIENCE

Actions to Consider:

- Review signage, hallway displays, and newsletters to ensure they communicate warmth and inclusivity.
- Use affirming, welcoming language in announcements, emails, and daily conversations.

2. MAKE INCLUSION VISIBLE: WHAT WE HIGHLIGHT EXPANDS

Actions to Consider:

- Spotlight inclusive practices in staff newsletters, announcements, and visual displays.
- Share stories of student success and moments of inclusion to reinforce shared values.

3. INVITE VOICE AND PARTICIPATION: FOSTER BELONGING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Actions to Consider:

- Create welcoming greetings in the front office and throughout the school.
- Provide opportunities for students, staff, and families to share feedback, ideas, and experiences.

4. MODEL CO-LEARNING: LEAD WITH CURIOSITY AND OPENNESS

Actions to Consider:

- As an administrator or teacher leader, model ongoing learning about inclusive practices by sharing articles, posing questions, and inviting collaborative dialogue.
- Recognize and celebrate staff learning and innovative practices related to inclusion.

5. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

Actions to Consider:

- Offer interest-based seating options or conversation starters during student and staff gatherings.
- Incorporate brief connection routines in staff meetings, classroom morning circles, or school-wide events to strengthen relationships.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- **Which small move resonated most with me—and why?**
 - *What feels both doable and meaningful in my current role?*
- **What's one inclusive action I will commit to in the next 5 days?**
 - *Be specific—who, what, when, and where.*
- **Who can I bring along in this work?**
 - *Who might benefit from an invitation to co-reflect, co-lead, or co-create?*
- **Where will I intentionally look for signs of progress or change?**
 - *What data, feedback, or stories will help me notice growth in our school culture?*
- **How will I celebrate the small wins—mine or others'?**
 - *How can I make moments of inclusion more visible and contagious?*