

Why Celebrate?

Celebrations reinforce the endorsed vision and values, and help the school to sustain its improvement initiatives.

An important strategy for shaping the culture of any organization is celebration. The celebration, ceremonies, and rituals of an organization reveal a great deal about its culture, what behaviors are reinforced, and what is valued. There may be grand ceremonies for special occasions, but organizations also need simple rituals that infuse meaning and purpose into daily routine. The importance of attention to celebrating individual and collective accomplishments has been cited as a major factor in influencing organizational culture, an essential way to enhance effectiveness and a necessary condition for creating a learning community.

Why celebrate? There are several important benefits to the school that uses celebration to foster the culture of a learning community.

- **The recipients of the recognition feel noted and appreciated.** Public recognition of individuals is likely to have a positive effect on the recipients of that recognition. The research on what motivates people has offered a consistent finding: Individuals are more likely to believe their work is significant, to feel a sense of achievement, and to be motivated to give their best efforts to tasks when they feel that those efforts are noted and appreciated.
- **Celebration reinforces shared values and signals what is important.** Celebrating behaviors that are consistent with a school's values reminds participants of the importance of those values. Recognition provides an opportunity to reinforce the specific behaviors essential to the school's continued improvement.



- Celebration provides examples of the values of the school in action, and encourages others to act in accordance with those values. People tend to assess their own performance not on the basis of some arbitrary standard, but in relationship to the performance of others. Recognizing individuals and teams provides other staff members with examples and models that motivate them to engage in similar behavior.
- **Celebration fuels momentum.** Calling attention to the presence of behaviors consistent with the school's values, and highlighting the positive results reinforces the improvement initiative. Acknowledging, honoring, and thanking everyone who contributes to building a learning community increases the likelihood that the effort will be sustained. What gets celebrated often gets repeated.
- **Celebration is fun.** Even the most serious commitment to school improvement should include time for play.
- **How to incorporate celebration into a school:**
 - ◆ State the purpose for the celebration.
 - ◆ Make celebration everyone's responsibility.
 - ◆ Establish a clear link between celebration and the advancement of values and vision.
 - ◆ Create opportunities where many staff members have opportunities to be recognized for their contributions.
 - ◆ Celebrate progress as well as accomplishments.

Adapted from: DuFour, R. (1998). Why celebrate? *Journal of Staff Development*, (19)4, 58-59.

