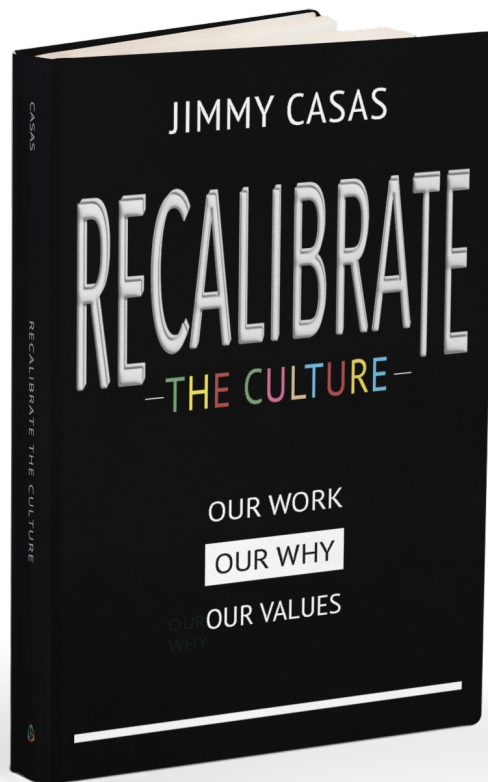


JIMMY CASAS

RECALIBRATE

THE CULTURE

Study Guide



RECALIBRATE

– THE CULTURE –

This study guide was created for you, the reader, to encourage you to reflect on your work as an educator and more importantly, to inspire you to act. My hope is that you will use this guide with teachers, support staff, and building and district administration to intentionally examine your classroom, building, and district office culture and practices to ensure that all members of the school community are modeling what excellence should look like at each level. As you work through the study guide, you will see that it aligns with the Four Premises of the best-selling book, *Culturize*, which I have shared below which served as the mantra by which we aspired to impact others with whom we had the honor to serve as educators:

LEAD FROM A
CORE SET OF
VALUES

CULTIVATE A
COMMUNITY OF
LEADERS

SEE THE
CULTURE
THROUGH THE
EYES OF
OTHERS

AVERAGE
EXISTS IN EVERY
ORGANIZATION

As you read through the guided questions, you may choose to discuss each question before reading the chapters or you may wait until you finish reading each chapter before engaging in a dialogue with your team. Each chapter is filled with content, strategies, ideas, frameworks, stories, reflections, anecdotes, quotes, and challenges to provoke honest and meaningful discussion and inspire meaningful change.

Thank you for investing in *RECALIBRATE THE CULTURE* but more importantly, for investing in yourself and others to recalibrate your why, your work, your values, yourself, and each other. By working collectively, strategically, and systemically, you will begin to reframe your thinking and rekindle your passion for working in schools again.

It is time to Recalibrate!

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Our profession experienced a brutal awakening in the form of a global pandemic. Shaken but determined, our students, staff, and families did the best they could under the most difficult circumstances imaginable. Take a moment to revisit those early months and discuss your biggest worries at the time and share the powerful stories of how your school community responded.
2. Some educators have reached a point in their careers where they are questioning if they can continue to do this work and whether it is even worth it anymore. Take a moment to reflect and share with your colleagues how you are currently feeling.
3. A healthy culture is critical to the success of any organization. Describe what a healthy culture looks like to you. Are these things present in your current school? If not, why do you think that is?
4. Examine the definitions of the following two terms: *Recalibrate* and *Reframe*. Discuss with your colleagues why these two words are important in promoting a healthy culture.
5. Casas believes that the classroom, building, and district office must see themselves as one and be intentional in replicating the processes, protocols, and frameworks to bring about positive systemic-wide change. Share what current practices are aligned across the campus that promote a healthy culture.
6. On pages 8-9, Casas revisits the 4 Premises of Culturize. Take a moment to review and discuss these premises in detail with your colleagues and share your takeaways. What thoughts would you add based on your own experiences?
7. Let's re-examine your current system. What inequities do you believe exist in your classrooms, buildings, and district office? Do you believe the necessary processes, protocols, and structures are currently in place to foster a culture of equity for all students and staff? Where have you fallen short? Explain.
8. Casas states that healthy cultures are transparent cultures and changing any culture starts with small steps across all levels - classroom, building, and district office. What small steps have already been taken at each level and what steps still need to be taken?

Chapter 2: Lead From a Core Set of Values

1. Pause for a moment and envision yourself back in the interview chair. Reflect on how you answered each question that was asked by the committee. Do your answers from your interview match your current behavior? Share where you believe it does and where you may be falling short.
2. Casas states that added life stresses just don't come from more work being piled on people; they are also compounded when people are treated in ways that devalue them. What are ways that you and your staff (can) ensure that people feel valued and appreciated?
3. Why is it important that we take time to understand why people behave the way they do? Can you describe a time when you didn't take the time to try and understand the behavior of a student or colleague? What was the result?
4. Take a look at the graphic on page 25. Who are you currently placing in your inner circle? Describe the reason(s) why this happens. What can you do to recalibrate who should be there?
5. Does the behavior of all staff reflect the core values that were created to help define the standard of how adults are to treat students and colleagues in your school? Give specific examples where the staff is living the core values and where they are not.
6. How does staff currently respond to other staff who are violating the collective agreements/values set forth by the school or district? Is the response appropriate? What needs to change to improve the overall morale and relationships among staff?
7. Casas believes that students, teachers, and support staff are more likely to put forth their best effort when they have a legitimate voice in the process. Describe what giving everyone a voice looks like across your campus. Where is improvement needed?

Chapter 3: Cultivate a Community of Leaders

1. In the story of the two lumberjacks, Casas shares an analogy to building leaders being like sharpening an axe. In your current role, how do you continue to sharpen your axe, and how does this support growing a community of leaders in your classroom, building, or district office?
2. In what ways do you and/or your colleagues intentionally foster a sense of belonging for all members of the school community? List several ways this can be done. Now ask yourselves, "Are you willing to commit to doing these things?"
3. Casas states that it is not about the Direction, but rather the Re-Direction, especially when it comes to asking people to do one more thing. He claims that people who feel depleted often work in isolation and are on the verge of burning out, but those who work together in partnership can become re-energized when they see their collective efforts produce positive results. Share your thoughts on his perspective.
4. On pages 44-45, Casas shares a framework for delegating tasks to others in order to build capacity and garner a better result. What are the potential benefits of following such a protocol? How does this framework support the Core Principles of *Culturize*?
5. Time is the one commodity that educators often express there is not enough of. Casas disagrees and states that it is about trading time from the back end to the front end. He feels strongly that either way you are utilizing the time and that staff would be better off investing time on the front end rather than paying for it on the back end. Do you agree with this notion? Why or why not?
6. Casas believes that leaders should lean into their building leadership team to help them lead the school. He offers several things to consider when putting a team together. Review your current building leadership team and identify what points resonate with you from his example.
7. Meetings are at times described as a waste of time. What is one suggestion that you would make to improve the overall experience for meetings on your campus so they would be something you would look forward to attending?

Chapter 4: See the Culture Through the Eyes of Others

1. Casas discusses the dangers of labeling students and colleagues to open the chapter and encourages the reader to be more curious. Describe a time when you may have labeled a student, parent, colleague, or supervisor and what you learned from that experience.
2. The 4 Most Powerful Words In Leadership - I Need Your Help. Using the Culturate Vision Framework on page 70, discuss how this framework could be used with students in a classroom or staff in a staff meeting to help you identify and avoid potential pitfalls.
3. At times, there can be a disconnect when it comes to managing student discipline. On page 72, Casas discusses Avoiding Delayed Consequences. As a team, read the summary paragraph on page 73 and discuss your current practices and determine if you believe the recommendations made would produce a better result.
4. Casas feels strongly that Anonymous Surveys are an unhealthy practice for school districts because they promote distrust. Discuss the pros and cons of anonymous surveys and the overall impact on the culture of an organization.
5. Examine the student, staff and principal interview questions on pages 78-80. What questions would you add in order to see the culture through the eyes of others and elevate your culture to a healthier level? What would need to happen for you consider taking part in such interviews?
6. Casas shares his concerns regarding the data on educators who are considering leaving the profession and the narrative that is being shared publicly about education. In what ways can staff rally around all of the positive things and carry the banner for our schools and profession?
7. Avoiding negative undercurrents can be challenging at times for all educators, regardless of our role. Casas believes there are times when we must question the origin of the undercurrent - Teacher Issue or Principal Issue? Student Issue or Teacher Issue? Principal Issue or District Office Issue? Discuss with your team a time where upon reflection, you may have been the undercurrent?
8. The mental health of our students and staff is an ongoing concern. Casas worries that our response to many of the issues we are facing in schools could be exasperating our stress levels. Discuss the section on page 96, Not Everything Is a Level 10 and share your takeaways with your team. What resonated with you most about this section?

Chapter 5: Average Exists in Every Organization

1. Systemic trauma can look different across all levels, including classroom, building, and district offices because of the differences in people's natural responses to serving in an environment where they do not feel safe. Describe your experiences, both positive and challenging, at the current level in which you work.
2. At one time or another, most of us have asked ourselves, "Is it time for a change?" After reading pages 105-108, what thoughts come to mind?
3. When we fail to communicate effectively, it can cause an increased level of stress and anxiety in people due to the lack of clarity. When people are not sure what to do or what is expected of them, they tend to hesitate in their decisions and actions for fear of messing up. Based on your experiences, discuss the impact poor communication and a clear lack of expectations have on students, families, and staff.
4. Examine the illustration on page 121. Casas explains when teachers, principals, and district office staff spend the majority of the time working on their systems and people, they spend less time in the fire. With a partner discuss your system in detail. What does that look like for you and your level?
5. Healthy cultures at all three levels - classroom, building, and district office, are intentional about working on their system and giving people a voice. Share ways in which you currently give people a voice and discuss the benefits you have seen by doing so. If this has been absent at your level, discuss why this has been the case? What steps would you be willing to take to give others more of a voice?
6. Working on your people is a critical component of recalibrating your system because, over time, it allows you to minimize the number of fires at your community level. Look at the illustration on page 132 and discuss the different ways you can influence the individuals to support their growth and development and maximize their potential?

Chapter 6: Conclusion

1. Each day we have a choice. And when our day is not going the way we hoped it would, we can choose to behave our way to a better day. What changes do you make to change the course of your day when things aren't going your way?
2. It is time to Recalibrate. Casas believes it is vital to come together a minimum of four times a year as a staff to recalibrate; to intentionally list and share all of the things that collectively as a staff, have been accomplished. If you were to list all of the things that you feel you have accomplished individually, as a team, department, classroom, building, district office, etc, what would you include on that list? Make a list and share out.