



# UPPER ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

## CULTURE PLAYBOOK

---

UPPER ARLINGTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



## THE POWER OF CULTURE AT UPPER ARLINGTON SCHOOLS

Upper Arlington Schools is a national leader in education, providing exceptional learning experiences that respect the intellectual, emotional and social growth of all students. Our culture is at the heart of our district, and it makes our schools special places to learn and work. Building and sustaining this culture requires intentional effort from everyone in the district, and this Culture Handbook is part of that effort.

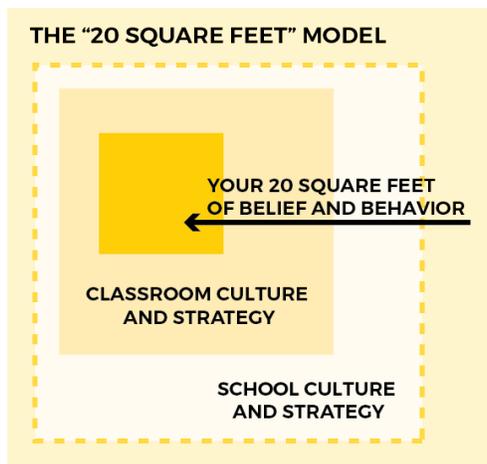
### WHAT IS CULTURE, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Culture is what we believe, how we behave and the experiences our behavior produces for the people around us. It is the foundation upon which our learning community is built. Although written statements such as our mission to “challenge and support every student, every step of the way” help clarify culture, only our actions build culture.

Our core values provide the standards for how we behave toward one another, our students and our community. Because our culture shapes our behavior, it determines how effectively we fulfill our mission and execute our strategic plan. Strategic planning is critical, but it cannot succeed without a culture to support it. Culture eats strategy for lunch. Our success depends on the ability to collaborate and perform in a constantly changing environment. Culture aligns everyone in the district to a common set of values and behaviors that ultimately determine how we prepare our students to serve, lead and succeed.

### 20 SQUARE FEET™

20 Square Feet is simply a metaphor that expresses that each person in the district has a sphere of influence. It illustrates that the way we behave personally – the way each of us manages our 20 Square Feet – determines our culture.





## VALUES → BEHAVIOR → OUTCOME (VBO)

The VBO serves as a blueprint for our culture. It makes clear the specific behaviors and results we want to achieve with each of our values. The behaviors outlined in the VBO are essential to how we engage students in the classroom and how we operate our schools. Our goal is to create an educational environment in which everyone consistently engages in behaviors that produce exceptional outcomes.

 <b>UPPER ARLINGTON SCHOOLS' VBO</b> This is our culture blueprint. It spells out the standards for how we behave toward one another, our students and our community.		
VALUE	BEHAVIOR	OUTCOME
<b>Start with Heart</b> It begins within us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to caring, listening and understanding.</li> <li>• Have courage to act with integrity.</li> <li>• Use the best of you to bring out the best in others.</li> </ul>	<b>We make a difference.</b>
<b>Strength in Team</b> Work together, act as one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think we, not me.</li> <li>• Focus on what matters.</li> <li>• Be accountable.</li> </ul>	<b>We achieve better relationships, better insight and better results.</b>
<b>Contagious Drive</b> Relentlessly pursue growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be coachable.</li> <li>• Embrace productive discomfort.</li> <li>• Persevere on the journey.</li> </ul>	<b>We grow together.</b>

### START WITH HEART | IT BEGINS WITHIN US

We understand that culture is personal first and organizational second. If it isn't happening in us, it won't happen through us. Therefore, we believe in a "Start with Heart" mindset characterized by the three key behaviors listed below.

1. **Commit to caring, listening and understanding.** Listening is one of the most important things we do. It is how we connect with our students and one another.



When we care about our students and one another, we pay better attention and give better effort. When we listen to our students and one another, we create the personal connections that enable us to communicate and collaborate. We seek first to understand, then to be understood.

2. ***Have courage to act with integrity.*** This is about doing the right thing, even when it's hard. We follow through on our commitments. If we say we will do something, we do it. We understand that trust is earned through behavior, not granted by position. We are open and candid with one another, even when it's difficult.
3. ***Use the best of you to bring out the best in others.*** We create the environment for students to learn. We make sure that everything we touch and everything we're involved with is better because of our participation. We choose to bring the best version of ourselves to work every day, and we seek to bring out the best in others. We ask for help and give help. We make each other better.

We are a constant source of encouragement. We think and act in ways that motivate each other to perform at the next level. We support each other and invest in the growth and success of our colleagues. Whatever the situation we ask, "What can I do to make a difference?"

***Outcome: By behaving this way, we make a difference  
in the lives of our students as well as the effectiveness of our colleagues.***

## **STRENGTH IN TEAM | WORK TOGETHER, ACT AS ONE**

When we commit to a course of action, we get behind it and fully apply ourselves. We disregard personal agendas. We understand we will not agree on every decision, but we commit to team decisions and align our efforts in one direction. Great things happen when we act in the best interest of the district. This requires a deep commitment to the "Strength in Team" mindset. Three key behaviors are listed below.

1. ***Think we, not me.*** We are proactive about communicating our ideas and perspectives, and we put the team first. We support one another and invest in the growth and success of our colleagues. We ask, "How can I help my colleagues be successful?" We think and act in ways that motivate each other to perform at the next level. We are all responsible for creating a positive learning and working environment that inspires excellence. When we work together, we perform better.
2. ***Focus on what matters.*** We live and work in a noisy, busy world. Many things compete for our attention. We battle distractions every day, but we are relentless in our commitment to finding and focusing on what really matters.



3. **Be accountable.** We understand that everyone has a responsibility to help make Upper Arlington Schools a special place to learn and work. Therefore, we take ownership of our attitude and actions. We take responsibility for our 20 Square Feet.

***Outcome: By behaving this way, we achieve better relationships, better insight and better results.***

## CONTAGIOUS DRIVE | **RELENTLESSLY PURSUE GROWTH**

Our culture is energized by the relentless pursuit of growth: the growth of our students and the growth of our staff. It is a contagious drive to continuously improve. It is grounded in the three behaviors listed below.

1. **Be coachable.** Sometimes others see things we cannot see. We can often benefit from the insight of others. We are open to receiving ideas, thoughts and feedback. We don't assume. No matter how much we think we know, we always work hard to improve our understanding of the situation. We want our students to be coachable, but for that to happen we must be coachable.
2. **Embrace productive discomfort.** Growth requires struggle. If we want to improve and get better, we must get out of our comfort zone. This is true both for our students and for us. Therefore, we embrace the productive discomfort that is necessary for continuous improvement and growth. We adjust our plans and actions. We adopt new behaviors. We learn new methods. It's not only the key to surviving; it's the key to success.
3. **Persevere on the journey.** The "secret" to success isn't a secret; it is a discipline — the cumulative impact of daily action repeated over time. We pursue growth with unrelenting perseverance. There will be obstacles, but we will overcome them. There will be times when the journey will be tedious and tiring, but we will press forward. There will be problems, but we will solve them.

We are proactive. We accept the reality that there will be problems and challenges. And then we run toward the problem. We invest our energy in solving problems, not complaining about them.

***Outcome: By behaving this way, we grow together.***