

SCHOOL COACHING CO

Thriving Staff Culture Starter Kit



Team-Building
Activities | PD
Session Outlines |
Culture Diagnostics

www.schoolcoachingco.com

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Why Staff Culture Matters?



A thriving school doesn't just happen. It's built on the daily atmosphere your staff walk into. When culture is strong, people:

- Bring energy and creativity to their roles
- Feel safe to share ideas and concerns
- Collaborate instead of compete
- Model the very behaviours we want our students to live out

The reality? Many school leaders know culture matters but struggle to carve out time to build it intentionally. That's where this kit comes in.



SECTION 01

Team-Building Activities

Simple, ready-to-run exercises you can use in staff meetings, PD days, or even quick huddles. Each activity is designed to:

- Break down silos between departments
- Spark laughter and connection
- Reinforce your school's values

1. The Future Headlines Exercise

Purpose: Reignite vision and align the team. How it works:

- Give small groups A3 paper + markers.
- Ask them to imagine it's 2028 and a major newspaper is running a story about your school.
- Each group designs the front-page headline + photo + 3 bullet points about what the school is known for.
- Groups share their “future headlines” with the team.

Impact: Staff rediscover shared aspirations, not just daily grind.

Debrief: What themes do we see across groups? What does this say about the culture we want to build?

2. Stop–Start–Keep Lightning Round

Purpose: Cut through frustration and surface quick wins. How it works:

01 Hand out sticky notes in 3 colours.

- Pink = “Stop”
- Green = “Start”
- “Keep”

02 Staff write one idea per sticky

(e.g., “Stop long emails,” “Start celebrating small wins,” “Keep Friday coffee catch-ups”).

03 Post notes on 3 large sheets, then cluster themes.

Impact: Gives staff a safe, structured voice to influence culture.

Debrief: Which “Start” ideas excite us most? Which “Stop” ideas could we realistically change now?

3. Culture in One Word



Purpose: Measure the “temperature” of school culture in a creative way. How it works:

Ask: “If you had to describe our school culture in one word, what would it be?”

Collect responses anonymously on cards or digitally (Mentimeter/Slido).

Generate a live word cloud and display it.

Impact: Immediate snapshot of how people feel → opens powerful, honest discussion.

Debrief: What words inspire us? What words concern us? What needs to shift?

4. The Empty Chair



Purpose: Shift perspective to students, parents, or community. How it works:

- *Place an empty chair at the front of the room.*
- Tell the group: “Imagine a [student/parent/community member] is sitting here. How would they describe the culture of our school? What would they thank us for? What would they challenge us on?”
- Staff share responses in pairs or small groups.

Impact: Anchors culture conversations in real stakeholders, not abstract ideals.

Debrief: What would that student/parent/community member want us to change first?

5. Speed Appreciations

Purpose: Create positive emotional energy in 10 minutes. How it works:

- 01** Staff form 2 facing lines (like “speed dating”).
- 02** Each pair has 60 seconds to give each other one specific encouragement (“I appreciate how you...”).
- 03** After 60 seconds, one line shifts down. Continue until time’s up.

Impact: Every person receives multiple affirmations. It’s fast, powerful, and shifts the room’s atmosphere instantly.

Debrief: How does appreciation fuel our energy and resilience?

6. The Culture Compass

Purpose: Help staff articulate and align behaviours that define culture. How it works:



01 Draw a compass with 4 points:

- North = “What we want more of”
- South = “What we want less of”
- East = “What gives us energy”
- West = “What drains our energy”

02 In small groups, staff brainstorm post-its for each quadrant.

03 Share and cluster themes on a big wall compass.

Impact: Creates a visual culture map that leadership can act on.

Debrief: If we acted on just one “North” and one “South” item this term, what would shift?



SECTION 02

PD Session Outlines

Structured outlines you can run as-is or adapt to your staff context. Each comes with learning objectives, a facilitator script, and discussion prompts.

PD Session Outlines – Thriving Staff Culture Starter Kit

1. Resilience Reset: Thriving Through Change

Objective: Equip staff with simple, research-backed tools to stay resilient during stress and transition.

Flow (60 mins):

- (5 min) Opener: “Stress Temperature Check” – staff rate stress on a 1–10 card.
- (15 min) Mini Input: What resilience actually is (bouncing forward, not just back).
- (15 min) Pair Activity: Share one recent stressor + one strategy that worked.
- (20 min) Tool Practice: Introduce the “3-Minute Reset” (breathing, reframing, micro-goals). Try it live.
- (5 min) Wrap-Up: Each person writes 1 resilience habit they’ll try this week.

2. Feedback Without Fear: Building a Growth Culture

Objective: Normalise giving and receiving feedback as a growth tool, not a threat.

Flow (45 mins):

- (5 min) Opener: “Worst Feedback Ever” story-sharing (safe, funny).
- (10 min) Mini Input: 3 rules of fearless feedback (timely, specific, kind).
- (15 min) Triad Practice: In groups of 3 → one gives feedback, one receives, one observes. Rotate.
- (10 min) Debrief: Observers share what made feedback effective.
- (5 min) Wrap-Up: Each person writes 1 thing they’d like feedback on this term.

3. Thriving Under Pressure: Energy & Wellbeing for Educators

Objective: Help staff identify energy leaks and build habits for sustainable performance.

Flow (60 mins):



(5 min) Opener: Quick poll – “What drains your energy most at school?”



(10 min) Mini Input: The 6 Self-Care Tanks (spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, sensory, relational).



(20 min) Small Groups: Map what fills and drains each tank in their role.



(15 min) Activity: Each person designs a “Daily Micro-Routine” to top up at least one tank.



(10 min) Wrap-Up: Share ideas gallery-style on sticky notes.

4. Collaboration that Works: From Compliance to Contribution

Objective: Move staff meetings and teamwork beyond box-ticking into true collaboration.

Flow (45 mins):

- (5 min) Opener: “Best vs Worst Collaboration” quick stories.
- (10 min) Mini Input: The Collaboration Spectrum (compliance → cooperation → collaboration).
- (15 min) Group Activity: Solve a school-relevant problem in mixed teams.
- (10 min) Debrief: What helped/hindered collaboration?
- (5 min) Wrap-Up: Each person names 1 way they’ll collaborate differently this week.

5. The Story We're Telling: Culture Shaping Through Narratives

Objective: Help staff see how daily stories and language shape school culture.

Flow (60 mins):

- (10 min) Opener: Staff share one “story” they’ve heard students/parents tell about the school.
- (10 min) Mini Input: Why narratives drive culture (stories > policies).
- (20 min) Group Work: In teams, identify the dominant staff stories (positive & negative).
- (15 min) Rewrite Exercise: Choose one negative narrative and reframe it into a positive “future story.”
- (5 min) Wrap-Up: Share 1 story each person will amplify this term.

6. Leading with Clarity: Simplifying the Complex

Purpose: Help staff articulate and align behaviours that define culture. How it works:

- (5 min) Opener: “Lost in Translation” – staff recall a confusing message they’ve received.
- (10 min) Mini Input: The 3 Cs of Clarity (concise, concrete, consistent).
- (15 min) Pair Activity: Rewrite a jargon-filled school statement into plain language.
- (10 min) Gallery Share: Post rewritten statements on the wall, vote on the clearest.
- (5 min) Wrap-Up: Each person commits to one communication they’ll simplify this week

If even with these guides, you’d rather have someone external run these, reach out to us at schoolcoachingco.com



SECTION 03

**These tools make the
invisible visible so you can
measure growth over time.**

Australian Diagnostic Tools & Surveys for
School Culture / Wellbeing

Tool / Survey	What It Measures / Who Runs It	Suitability / Notes
Australian School Climate and School Identification Measurement Tool (ASCSIMT)	Measures school climate & school identification among students, staff, and parents/carers. Includes areas like shared values, relationships, academic emphasis, safety, well-being, etc.	Very strong. Runs in ACT government schools. Useful if your clients are in ACT, or to use as a benchmark. Longitudinal data means you can compare over time. Might require permission or affiliation if outside ACT.
School Surveys — Staff Well-Being Survey (VCPS / National School Surveys)	Designed for both teaching & non-teaching staff. Key domains: culture support, stress, welfare, empathy, inclusiveness, relationships, workload, role clarity, processes, etc.	Good fit for most schools. Provides a well-rounded picture of staff wellbeing. Likely has cost involved. Since it covers many domains, captures a wide set of levers for culture improvement.
NSI Partnerships — School Climate Suite®	Comprehensive, empirically validated instruments for staff, students, parents. Measures multiple dimensions of climate: community relationships, safety, academic atmosphere, institutional environment + risk & protective factors.	Very powerful, especially for schools that want depth. Might require budget and time to administer properly. Great if you want “professional-grade” diagnostics.
School Staff Wellbeing Toolkit (Women & Leadership Australia)	A programme/toolkit for school communities to build staff wellbeing and social capital. Multiple modules, evaluation before & after. Measures wellbeing & staff social capital.	Very useful for schools wanting action + diagnostic feedback. It's more than just a survey; it includes interventions. Good if the school is ready to commit to a programme rather than just survey.
Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey	Focused specifically on principal / school leader wellbeing — stress, burnout, work practices, health, workload etc.	Excellent for leadership-level insights. If your product or coaching is partly for or with leadership teams, this is valuable. But less useful for whole staff culture (it's more about leaders).

Diagnostic Tool Comparison Sheet

Tool / Survey	Approx Cost*	Time to Run & Analyse	Depth / What You Get	Best For ...	Things to Check / Drawbacks
SchoolSurveys (VCPS / National School Surveys)	Staff Wellbeing or Staff Climate Survey packages **~ AUD 1,499** for one survey. Package of 3 surveys costs **~ AUD 3,999** for full administration, analysis & reporting.	Survey deployment + responding might take 1-2 weeks; report generation maybe another 1-2 weeks depending on how fast data comes in.	Covers staff climate, wellbeing, parent opinion etc. Graphs, summary + comprehensive reporting. Key domains include morale, leadership, workload, role clarity, communication etc.	Schools wanting solid whole-staff / parent / stakeholder feedback with clear reporting, without needing custom tool-building.	Cost scales with school size; some smaller schools may find price high. Need to ensure good response rates. Reports are useful but still need a leader to act on them.
NSI Partnerships – School Climate Suite®	Not publicly listing a fixed cost on the website. You must “enquire” for pricing.	Time depends on how many respondent groups (staff, students, parents). Also includes longitudinal, monitoring options. Probably 2-4 weeks from deployment to receiving usable data.	Very rigorous; validated instruments across multiple school stakeholder groups. Produces feedback packages, baseline data, reporting, ability to monitor improvements over time.	Schools serious about culture change and wanting depth, continuous improvement, comparisons over time.	Might be more expensive; requires commitment and time; leaders need capacity to interpret and act on deeper data.

Tool / Survey	Approx Cost*	Time to Run & Analyse	Depth / What You Get	Best For ...	Things to Check / Drawbacks
ASCSIMT (Australian School Climate & School Identification Measurement Tool, ANU/ACT)	Unknown publicly for non-ACT / outside jurisdiction — generally available to ACT government schools as part of their system. No publicly posted cost for external / outsourced access.	Survey deployed annually; data collection + benchmarking takes part of the term(s). Analysis reports (system-level + school-level) produced.	Measures climate & school identification among staff, students, parents; tracks change over time; longitudinal; good benchmarking.	Schools in ACT; or schools wanting a model of what high-quality, longitudinal, benchmarked data looks like. Useful for leaders wanting system-level perspective.	Outside ACT, access may be restricted or require special agreement. Benchmarking data specific to ACT, so less useful elsewhere unless adapted.
MYP – School Results Surveys (Australia / NZ)	From ~ AUD 462 + GST for subscription for one school/centre, unlimited respondents.	Can be deployed within a week or two; summary and comprehensive reports are included.	Offers key stakeholder surveys (students, parents, staff); unlimited respondents; graphical reports; relatively cost-effective	Smaller schools or centres who want reliable surveys but with lower cost; schools wanting flexible stakeholder data.	If heavily customising, costs may go up. Depth may not match the most validated tools. Might require more leadership time to interpret raw responses.

Tool / Survey	Approx Cost*	Time to Run & Analyse	Depth / What You Get	Best For ...	Things to Check / Drawbacks
School Voices 360	Plans start from USD "some price per school / student" with minimums . E.g. packages with advanced reporting, multiple groups etc. (depending on US-based model) — perhaps less local for AUS but useful for comparison or international schools.	Time depends on how many surveys you run, translation/customisation, stakeholder groups. Likely similar 1-3 weeks for decent response, another week or so for reports.	Strong dashboards, stakeholder groups, advanced reports, good for tracking over time.	Schools wanting more sophisticated dashboards and maybe external benchmarking.	Currency differences, local relevance of items/questions; might require adapting language/cultural context for Australian schools.

How to Use This Kit



1. Pick one team-building activity to try in your next staff meeting.

2. Choose one PD session to run this term.

3. Use a diagnostic tool before and after to measure impact.

That's it. Small, consistent actions will compound into big culture wins.

Final Word

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” – Peter Drucker

You can have the best programs, curriculum, and strategies in the world, but if your staff culture is flat, everything else suffers. This kit gives you the building blocks to create an environment where your teachers — and students — can truly thrive.



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