

TITLE | REFLECTING ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: DEEPENING THE WORK

CATEGORY | Garden Educator Training

SUB-CATEGORY | Leadership for Community Engagement & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

OVERVIEW | This training provides ideas for unpacking organizational culture and proposes a path to a culture that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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Training Rationale:

Much of this training originates from an Education Outside staff-facilitated retreat that was aimed at unpacking organizational culture and how it supported or didn't support diversity, equity, and inclusion. The purpose of this training is to support deeper reflection among garden educators.

Suggested Time of Year:

This training should occur near the middle of the program/school year once staff have settled into their sites/roles and have a better sense of organizational culture.

Suggested Workshop Length:

4 hours

Training Objective:

1. Uncover and unpack organizational culture.
2. Define the current culture and imagine the possibilities for a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse organizational culture.

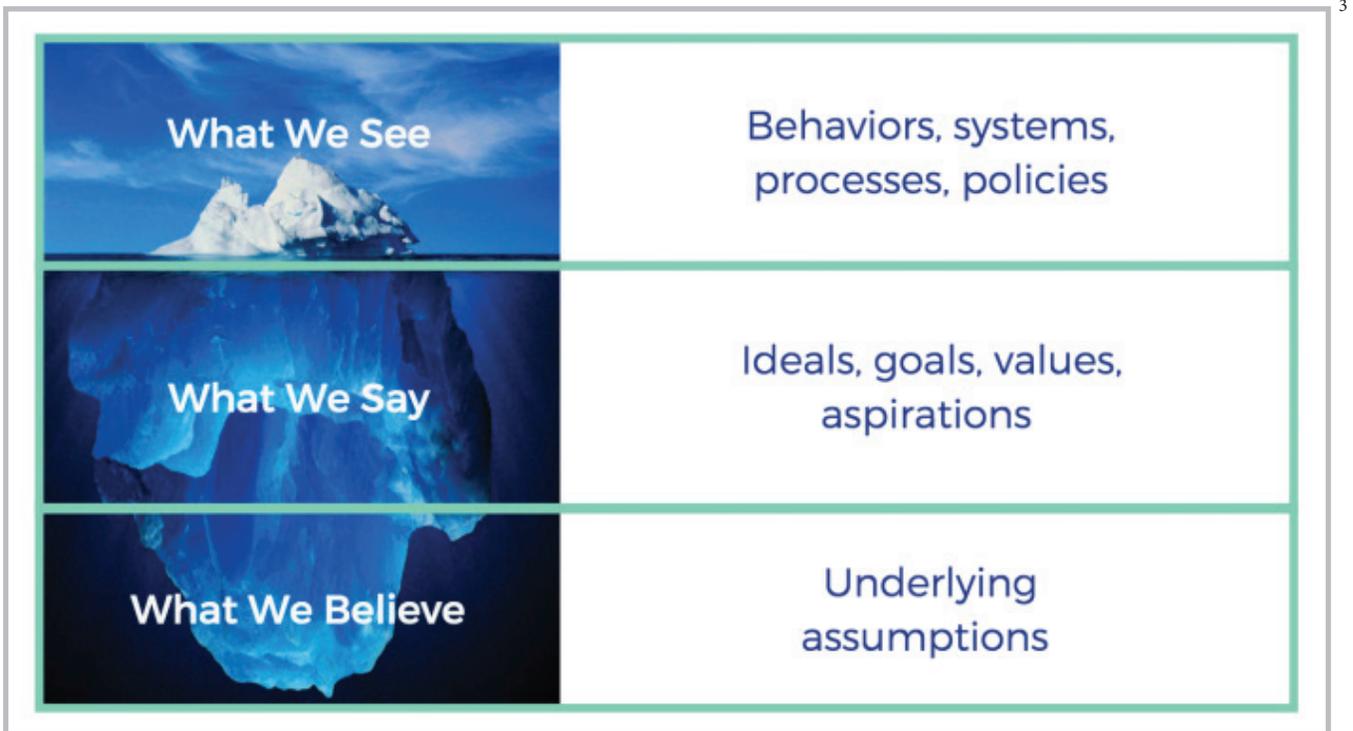
Organizational Culture

Note: Before providing this training, make a plan for how the information gathered and discussed will be used. It's then important to communicate that plan so participants know how their thoughts and ideas will be used.

This training begins by exploring and defining the dominant organizational culture. In its most basic form, organizational culture is the social and psychological environment of an organization. We did a simple search on youtube for "what is organizational culture" and used a video that discusses the foundations of the concept. We shared [this video](#)¹ that shares a succinct snapshot of what the concept of organizational culture means. To deepen and focus the conversation, we also introduced Schein's Iceberg theory that illustrates the components of organizational culture. This is discussed further below. Before our conversation, we watched [this video](#)² that outlines the concept.

The Iceberg theory³ is as follows:

- Top of the Iceberg: Artifacts
 - Characteristics of the organization which can be easily viewed, heard, and felt by individuals, might be different for varying staff or educators
- Sea level: Beliefs and Values
 - The overarching beliefs and values of the individuals working in the organization
 - shows up in implicit bias and the makeup of the organization
- Underwater: Underlying Assumption
 - Assumed values of the employees which can't be measured but do make a difference to the culture - The inner aspects of human nature



After reviewing the Iceberg Theory, hold a group discussion covering the following questions:

- What defines your dominant culture?
- What biases may be at play in your organization?
- What situations arise that challenge your goals of inclusivity, and how could they be mitigated or avoided?

After the group discussion, do a sticky note brainstorm of words/phrases/experiences that define your organization's artifacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. Break into small groups, one for each level of the Iceberg. After 10 minutes of generating thoughts, come back together and have each group shared-out their main reflections, then answer the following:

1. What do we want to keep?
2. What do we want to shift?

Pick the top 3-5 to focus on for the rest of the session. We tracked this discussion on a sheet of poster paper that had a drawing of an iceberg.

Once the visualization of organizational culture is complete, continue with more group conversation with educators and use the following questions as prompts:

- What are you most proud of at this organization?
- What is the purpose of this organization?

- Why is the work you do important?
- How are you making a difference in society through your work?
- What is your contribution to society through your work?
- What special attribute does the founder/leader possess that has influenced the character of the organization?
- Describe the ideals that drove the founding of this organization.
- What value is fundamental and distinctive to this organization since its founding? Give examples.
- What makes this organization feel different or unique from other outdoor education programs?
- Describe the personality or character of this organization.
- What is central to who we are as an organization that should never change?
- What did you notice most when you first joined the organization?
- What situations arise that challenge our goal of inclusivity? Create space for participants to discuss personal experiences in more depth if desired.
- What biases might be behind these situations or at play in our organization?

Shifting culture

After thoroughly exploring what organizational culture is, create space for educators to propose a new future. Put educators in groups of 4-5 and pose the following questions:

- As a group, rewrite the organizational culture to reflect the organization you would like to see. What would the ideal organizational iceberg look like? Take time to explain how one might achieve these aspirational attributes. What organizational structures, systems, or processes are preventing us from getting there? (25-minute group discussion)
- Each group then presents their vision to the entire group.

Moving Forward

Close out by determining which areas of growth to prioritize in the coming year with the following prompt:

- Based on the current organizational culture that we've defined today and the visions that have been generated in small groups, what tangible projects or learning should we prioritize to fulfill our commitment to shifting our organizational culture in the right direction?

Assessing Understanding:

At the end of the training, ask garden educators to share one "got" and one "need" (something they learned and something they are still curious about) related to the training on post-it notes.

References:

1. Consulting, D. (2016, August 15). What is Organizational Culture? Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cBN8xH-5Qw>
2. HumberEDU. (2015, November 13). Leadership and Management | Part 4 of 4: The Iceberg of Organizational Culture. Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjziCs-R2S4>
3. The Role of Leadership in Changing Organizational Culture. (2019, March 19). Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://cultureiq.com/blog/role-leadership-changing-organizational-culture/>
4. Organizational Transformation Without Equity and Allyship Is Meaningless. (n.d.). Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://www.compasspoint.org/blog/organizational-transformation-without-equity-and-allyship-meaningless>