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Week 3 Discussion

Hobby of the Hay Group lists five kinds of "reinforcing behaviors" as follows that send strong signals about school vision and values:

1. **Rituals:** celebrations and ceremonies, rites of passage, and shared quirks and mannerisms.
2. **Hero Making:** role models, hierarchies, public rewards, and mentors.
3. **Storytelling:** shared humor, common anecdotes, foundation myths, and both oral and written history.
4. **Symbolic Display:** decoration, artwork, trophies, and architecture.
5. **Rules:** etiquette, formal rules, taboos, and tacit permissions.

Which of these five "reinforcing behaviors" do you think have the strongest influence on the culture of your school? Why do you think this is so?

This is a really interesting question, because if someone were to visit our school, I'd guess that they would pick #1. **Rituals** and #4. **Symbolic Display**, as mentioned in Jerald's article (2006). We are the **Merit Knights**, and we use chivalry, the medieval era, etc. a lot in almost everything that we do. For example, we have a **knighting ceremony** for our top seniors when they graduate, and it's frankly pretty awesome. We have an annual **Renaissance Fair**, and I even went so far as to create my very own **pillory** for the event, which you may know were used to restrain medieval ragamuffins as a method of public humiliation. We used that connection to raise money for our inaugural **Speech and Debate Team**, by subjecting ourselves to that same public humiliation for a good cause. Though we did get tomatoes, water balloons and even some egg on our faces, it was quite popular, we raised a lot of money, and fun was had by (mostly) all. The students who joined me and a few other volunteer teachers in the pillory were pretty good sports, seeing as we were willing to join them in the public humiliation as well.

So yes, these are **powerful parts** of our school culture. Artwork, traditions, etc. revolve around these themes as well, and even the architecture of our school is reminiscent of a castle and medieval times. It is truly an important part of who we are. Less well perceived by a guest at the school however would be #2 **Hero Making**. We have invited and are connected with a lot of good role models and programs, including a sister school in Africa that we work to help by having annual fundraisers, etc. Students and teachers at our school make sure to watch out for one another, and that **welcoming culture** is one (if not the most important) of our greatest strengths in my opinion. Many of our teachers have been at Merit for a very long time, and many of the students that start attending in 7th grade go on to graduate from here.

I believe these are true because we can see and hear illustrations of all of these examples every day, and we work hard as a faculty to promote the many positive aspects of that culture. Our students promote it as well, and while our school is not perfect, we do pretty well, all things considered.

Sources:

Jerald, C. (2006). School culture: The hidden curriculum. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/school-culture-hidden-curriculum>