**Effective principals actively shape a positive culture for their school.**

Organizational culture is powerful and persistent in its ability to alter and align human behavior. School administrators, as they become more skillful at seeing and shaping school culture, are in a position to not only understand and assess a culture, but also to participate in the culture and shape it from within. An administrator’s personal characteristics, then, become important culture shaping elements. It’s hard to imagine, for example, a lethargic principal leading the charge to create a high-energy school culture, or a secretive principal shaping a school’s culture toward openness and transparency.

One characteristic that is present in high-performance organizations and markedly absent in low- performing organizations is **trust**. School leaders who can build and maintain high-trust relationships, both personally and organizationally, are in a position to optimize their school’s effectiveness to the great benefit of all stakeholders.

The famous American psychologist and writer Carl Rogers was one of the first and best to speak and write about the nature of human trust and its importance. Rogers maintained that although trust was a unitary concept, it was best understood by examining its parts (McLeod, 2014). Rogers’ work has been popularized, amended, and widely disseminated as the *four elements of trust-* ***reliability, acceptance, openness, and congruence*** (Ayers, 2009). These four elements of trust can help administrators to understand the concept of trust more deeply and also serve as an assessment approach to gauge an individual’s or a school’s progress toward a high-trust culture.

A closer look at the four elements of trust:

1. **Reliability**–Being dependable. The attribute of keeping commitments and following through on promises.
2. **Acceptance**–Being trustworthy. The attribute of being non-judgmental.
3. **Openness**–Being trusting. The willingness to freely engage in dialog and feedback, both personally and professionally. Self-disclosure.
4. **Congruence**–Being transparent. What you see (with all one’s senses) is what you get. No surprises. No hidden agendas.

Note that these elements can be used to describe an individual or a group.