

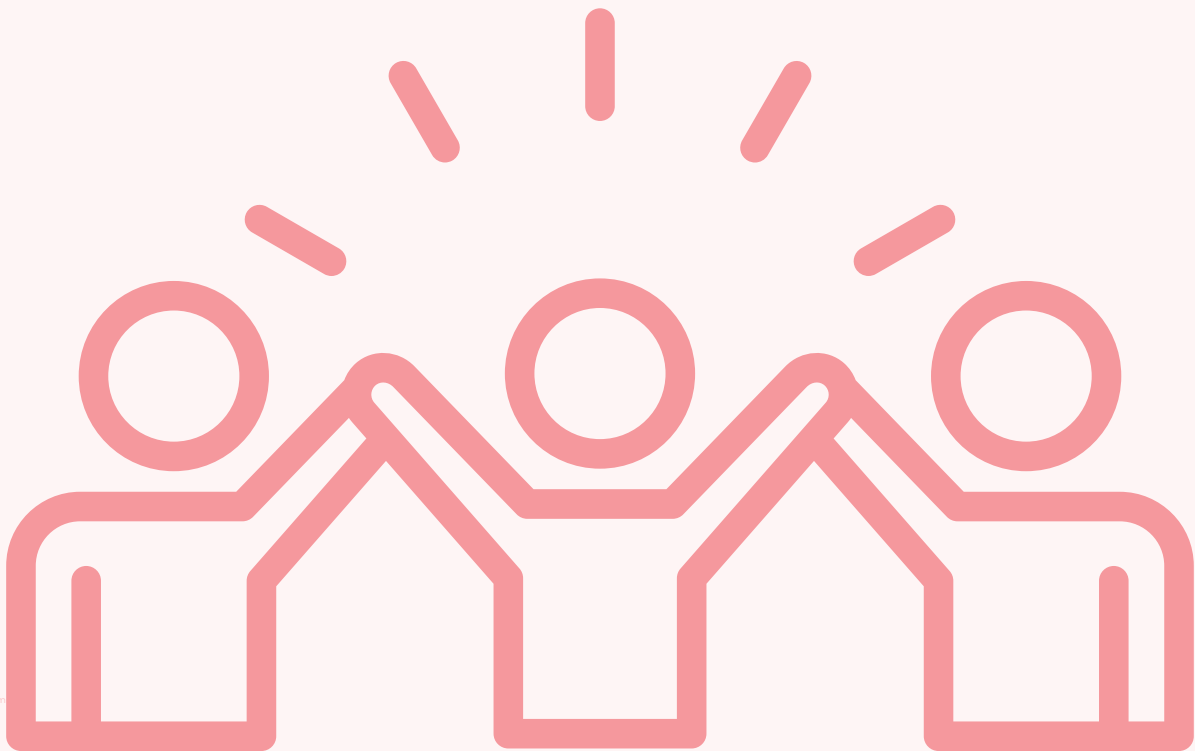
GUIDE

The Power of Having Each Other's Back

Shift your school culture from "gotcha" to "I've got you" with practical steps, reflection prompts, and activities that build trust, celebrate support, and strengthen community.

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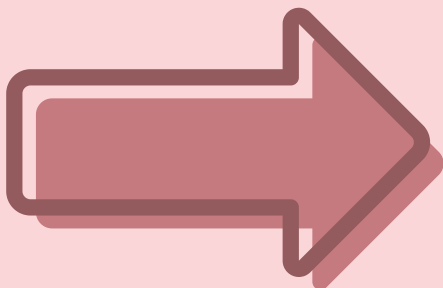
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FROM GOTCHA TO GOT YOU

In thriving schools, people don't walk around waiting to catch mistakes — they step in to catch each other when they stumble. Instead of looking for flaws, they look for ways to lift one another up. Moving from a "gotcha" culture to an "I've got you" culture means creating a community where support is the default, encouragement is the norm, and success is something we build together.

When that shift happens, people feel safe to take risks, try new ideas, and know they'll never have to face challenges alone.



Pro Tip: Culture shifts don't happen overnight—start small. Choose one simple "I've got you" practice, repeat it often, and let the ripple effect grow across your school.

Step 1: Name the Mindset

Every culture starts with language. Naming the shift helps staff see the difference between calling out mistakes and calling each other up.

Three Keys to an “I’ve Got You” Culture

Shared Success: We want every person in our building to thrive.

Open Doors: We welcome support, coaching, and encouragement from others.

Everyday Care: We show up for one another with actions that say: “I’ve got you.”

Reflection prompt: Circle the marker you see most often in your school. What does it look like in action?



Step 2: Reflect Together

Shifting culture begins with reflection. Use these questions with your team, or try them personally.

Reflection Questions for Leaders:

- Do I model "I've got you" moments in my everyday leadership?
- When was the last time I supported someone before they had to ask?

Reflection Questions for Staff:

- What helps me feel like someone's "got me"?
- How can I make it easier for others to step in and support me?



Pro Tip: Give staff a simple reflection slip that says "One way I can show 'I've got you' this week is..." — it's a quick way to turn the mindset into action and make support intentional.

Step 3: Put It Into Practice

Little actions build big culture shifts. Try one of these activities to bring “I’ve got you” moments to life:

Choose one of these activities to start with, or mix and match to fit your team.

- **Sticky Note Shout-Outs:** Leave quick notes of encouragement on a colleague’s desk.
- **Commitment Cards:** Staff write “This week, I’ve got you by...” and post on a shared wall.
- **Pass-It-On Chain:** Each person who receives a note writes one for someone else, creating a ripple effect.
- **Meeting Opener:** Start with one “I’ve got you” story from the week.
- **Student Version:** Give kids “I’ve got you” tickets they can hand to peers when they notice helping behaviors.



Pro Tip: Pick one activity to introduce at a time — layering them in slowly helps the habit stick and keeps the culture shift feeling natural, not forced.

Step 4: Keep It Going

Culture shifts when small habits are repeated again and again. The goal isn't to do everything at once, but to build steady rhythms of care that become second nature for your team.

Ways to Celebrate:

Rotate new activities each month so it stays fresh and gives staff different ways to engage.

Bring students into the practice to create a whole-school ripple that extends beyond the staff lounge.

Connect “I’ve got you” moments back to your core values — like belonging, trust, and support — so they reinforce the foundation you’re building.

Make it visible and celebratory by sharing stories in newsletters, posting them on a wall, or opening meetings with gratitude.



Culture grows in the little moments we repeat — and those moments, stacked together, become the heartbeat of your school.

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