



A Student Services Symposium: Supporting Students to Success
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Measuring & Improving School Climate: A school improvement strategy that supports the whole child and the whole school community

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I Goals:

1. To learn about and consider *current school climate theory and research*.
2. To learn about *school climate policy* standards, which integrate research from school reform, social-emotional learning, character education, community schools, risk prevention and health/mental health promotion.
3. To learn about *practice guidelines* that support school communities actualizing school climate standards: tasks and challenges that support students, parents/guardians and school personnel learning and working together to create even safer, more supportive, engaging, and helpfully challenging schools.

II. School climate – An Overview:

- *Past understandings*: A long-standing educational tradition
- *Current understandings*: A growing focus of attention at the school, district, state and federal levels

“School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures.”

“A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.”

- *Essential dimensions*:
 - 1) *Safety*: Rules & Norms, Physical Security, Social-Emotional Security
 - 2) *Relationships*: Respect for Diversity, Social Support – Adults, Social Support - Students
 - 5) *Teaching and learning*: Support for Learning, Social and Civic Learning, Professional Development, Leadership
 - 4) *Environmental*: School Connectedness/Engagement, Physical Surroundings
- *Research*:
 - *Academic Achievement*: Positive school climate is strongly correlated and/or predictive of high quality teaching and student academic achievement.

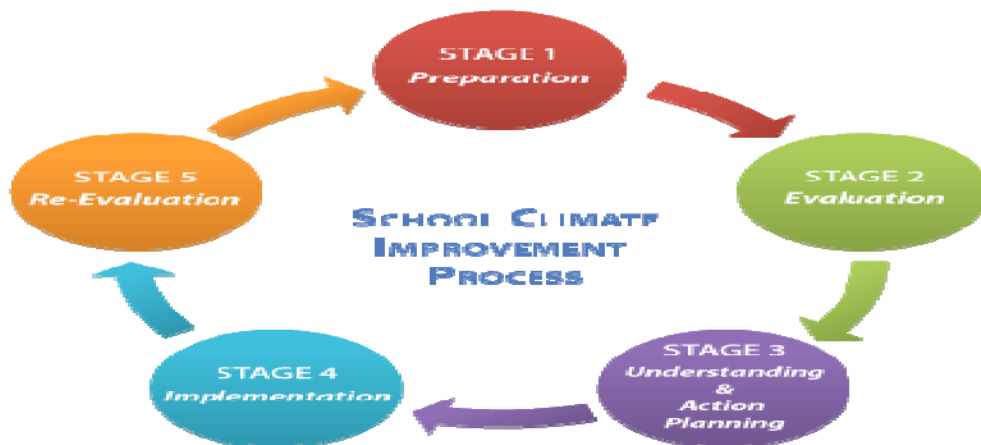
- *Risk Prevention and Health Promotion*: Effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts are positively correlated with safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate settings.
- *Individual Experience*: A positive school climate affects student’s self-esteem and self-concept in positive ways.
- *Teacher Retention*: Positive school climate is associated with greater teacher retention.

III. School Climate Standards: Defining goals and setting the bar

- National School Climate Council (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php)
- Pennsylvania State Department of Education
- U.S Department of Education

IV. School Climate Practice: Actualizing standards

- Measurement options:
 - ▣ Many options!
 - ▣ Recommended option: Reliable and valid, 15 to 20 minutes survey that (i) students, (ii) school personnel, and (iii) parents/guardians complete about (ii) Safety, Relationships, Teaching and Learning, and the Institutional Environment. These surveys should also be yoked to reports and other information, resources and road maps that provide implementation guidelines and tools that support the community understanding - how to use the data to set in motion meaningful instructional and/or school wide improvement efforts.
- School climate improvement strategies



Stage One: Preparation and Planning

- Forming a representative school climate improvement leadership team and establishing ground rules collaboratively
- Building support and fostering “Buy In” for the school climate improvement process
- Establishing a “no fault” framework and promoting a culture of trust
- Ensuring your team has adequate resources to support the process
- Celebrating successes and building on past efforts
- Reflecting on Stage One work

Stage Two: Evaluation

- Systematically evaluating the school’s strengths, needs and weaknesses with any number of school climate as well as other potential measurement tools
- Developing plans to share evaluation findings with the school community
- Reflecting on our Stage Two work

Stage Three: Understanding the findings; Engagement & developing an action plan

- Understanding the evaluation findings
- Digging into the findings to understand areas of consensus and discrepancy in order to promote learning and engagement
- Prioritizing goals
- Researching best practices and evidence-based instructional and systemic programs and efforts
- Developing an action plan
- Reflecting on Stage Three work

Stage Four: Implementing the Action Plan

- Coordinating evidence-based pedagogic and systemic efforts designed to (a) promote students’ social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual competencies; and (b) improve the school climate by working toward a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school community
- The instructional and/or school-wide efforts are instituted with fidelity, monitored and there is an ongoing attempt to learn from successes and challenges
- The adults who teach and learn with students work to further their own social, emotional and civic learning
- Reflecting on Stage Four work

Stage Five: Reevaluation and Development of the Next Phase

- Reevaluating the school’s strengths and challenges
- Discovering what has changed and how
- Discovering what has most helped and hindered further the school climate improvement process
- Revising plans to improve the school climate
- Reflecting on Stage Five work

V. Next steps

- What are one or two or three “next steps” to which you want to commit?

VI. Resources that support school climate reform:

The Center for Social and Emotional Education and the National School Climate Council have developed the following school climate policy and practice resources to support your school mobilizing the “whole village” to support students’ social, emotional, ethical and civic as well intellectual learning.

Policy resources:

- *National School Climate Standards*: CSEE and the National School Climate Council (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/council.php) have developed School Climate Standards to support schools, districts, and states in effectively aligning education policy with practice. The National School Board Association and the Character Education Partnership have endorsed these standards.

Related publications:

- National School Climate Council (2007). *The School Climate Challenge: Narrowing the gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines and teacher education policy*. On www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php

Research resources:

- Cohen, J, McCabe, E.M, Michelli, N.M & Pickeral, T. (2009). School Climate: Research, Policy, Teacher Education and Practice. *Teachers College Record*, Volume 111: Issue 1: pp. 180-213. (Available on: <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15220>)

- *School Climate Research Summary: January 2010* (available on: www.schoolclimate.org/climate/research.php)

Measurement Resources:

- *Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI)* – The CSCI is one of the most recognized and comprehensive school climate measures today that assesses to what extent students’, parents’ and school personnel feel safe, “connected’ and engaged in school life. Developed over seven years of research and field-testing, the CSCI is a scientifically sound survey tool that thousands of schools, districts and networks of schools have used. The CSCI is yoked to a web-based portal system that supports school teams to effectively administer the survey and use the resulting data as a springboard for school improvement efforts. (www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php)

School Improvement Resources:

- *The School Climate Guide for District Policymakers and Educational Leaders* –This guide is designed to support superintendents and school board leaders understanding how important and possible it is to measure and improve school climate. (To download this guide go to www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php). The National School Board Association has endorsed this Guide.
- *School Climate Implementation Road Map* –This Road Map is organized around a series of tasks and challenges that define each of the five stages of the school climate improvement process. The Road Map includes information, guidelines and, most importantly, tools designed to support school leaders and community members addressing these tasks and challenges. (To learn more about this Road Map, see: www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php)
- *Breaking the Bully-Victim-Bystander Tool Kit: Creating a climate for safety and responsibility* – This tool kit is organized around a series of modules that support school leaders and school communities understanding what a school looks like that has developed this programmatic effort; a series of team building exercises that build trust and collaborative working relationships: the foundation for effective school improvement efforts; a six step implementation process; and, scores of activities that support sustainability. (To learn more about this Road Map, see: www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php)
- *BullyBust*: This is a nationwide bully prevention awareness campaign designed to reduce bullying in our schools. In addition to providing a range of information and guidelines for students, parents/guardians and school personnel about bully-victim behavior and the importance of becoming an upstander (rather than a bystander), this site encourages students to show how they are “standing up” to bully-victim behavior in their own communities. (www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/)
- *Professional Development Offerings that create a climate for learning* –Based on our learning and work over the last decade, CSEE has developed professional development (PD) offerings for schools, districts and States that support schools being places that are safe, “connected” (or relationally healthy) and engaged. (www.schoolclimate.org/programs/pd.php).

CSEE’s 13th annual Summer Institute (July 6-8, 2010) *Creating the Foundation for Comprehensive School Climate Reform* includes a keynote from Kevin Jennings (Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education, Office of Safe & Drug-Free Schools) and is designed to support school teams, districts and states, as well as other school, family and community leaders, in developing school climate improvement plans to promote safe, caring and civil schools that support positive youth development, democratic school communities, student learning/achievement and "up-stander" behavior (or the inclination and ability to say "no" to bully-victim behavior). The institute is grounded in the notion that effective and equitable school reform needs to honor and support the whole child and the whole school community. For details see: www.schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php

Additional and related publications:

Beland, K. (2003). *Eleven Principles Sourcebook: How to Achieve Quality Education in P-12 Schools*. Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.

Cohen, J. (2006). Social, emotional, ethical and academic education: Creating a climate for learning, participation in democracy and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2, Summer, pages 201-237. (www.hepg.org/her/abstract/8)

Cohen, J., Shapiro, L., & Fisher, M. (2006). Finding the Heart of Your School: Using School Climate Data to Create a Climate for Learning. *Principal Leadership* (The journal of the National Association of Secondary School Principals), Vol. 7, 4, pages 26-32.

Cohen, J., Pickeral, T., & McCloskey, M. (2008). The challenge of assessing school climate. [Online article]. *Educational Leadership*, 66 (4). Available at: www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/toc.aspx

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Cohen, J., Fege, A., & Pickeral, T. (2009). Measuring and improving school climate: A strategy that recognizes, honors and promotes social, emotional and civic learning - The foundation for love, work and engaged citizenry. *Teachers College Record*. Retrieved June, 25, 2009, from <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15698>

Cohen, J., Pickeral, T., & Levine, P. (in press). The Foundation for Democracy: Social, emotional, ethical, cognitive skills and dispositions in K-12 schools. *Inter-American Journal of Education for Democracy*

Comer, J. P. (2005). *Leave no child behind: Preparing today's youth for tomorrow's world*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Deal, T.E. & Peterson, K.D. (2009). *Shaping school culture: Pitfalls, paradoxes, & promises* (second edition). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Devaney, E., O'Brien, M.U., Resnik, H., Keiter, S. & Weissberg, R. (2006). *Sustainable school-wide social emotional learning (SEL): Implementation guide and tool kit*. Chicago, IL: CASEL

Elbot, C. & Fulton, D (2008). *Building an intentional school culture: Excellence in academics and character*. Corwin Press

Freiberg, H. J. (Ed.). (1999). *School climate: Measuring, improving and sustaining healthy learning environments*. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.

Gangi, T.A. (2009). *School climate and faculty relationships: Choosing an effective assessment measure*. A doctoral dissertation in school psychology, St. John's University New York.

Preble, W. & Taylor, L. (2008-09). School Climate Through Students' Eyes. *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 66, No 4, pgs 35-40.

Quaglia Institute for Student Aspiration (2010). *Data from My Voice™ Student Survey*. Unpublished raw data, found at www.qisa.org

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