

SCHOOL CLIMATE REFORM:

A DROP OUT PREVENTION STRATEGY THAT
MOBILIZES THE “WHOLE VILLAGE” TO SUPPORT THE
“WHOLE CHILD”

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National School Climate Center:

Educating minds and hearts ... Because the three R's are not enough;

Long Island Regional Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships:
Keeping Kids In School And Out of Court
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SCHOOL CLIMATE REFORM: PAST AND CURRENT EFFORTS

- ❖ School climate reform
- ❖ A data-driven, continuous school improvement strategy that recognizes the “voice” of the whole school community
- ❖ Recognizing the social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual aspects of learning and school life
- ❖ Supporting the “whole village” to support the whole child

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH: HELPFUL AND LESS HELPFUL “DRIVERS” OF CHANGE*

Unhelpful *Primary Drivers*:

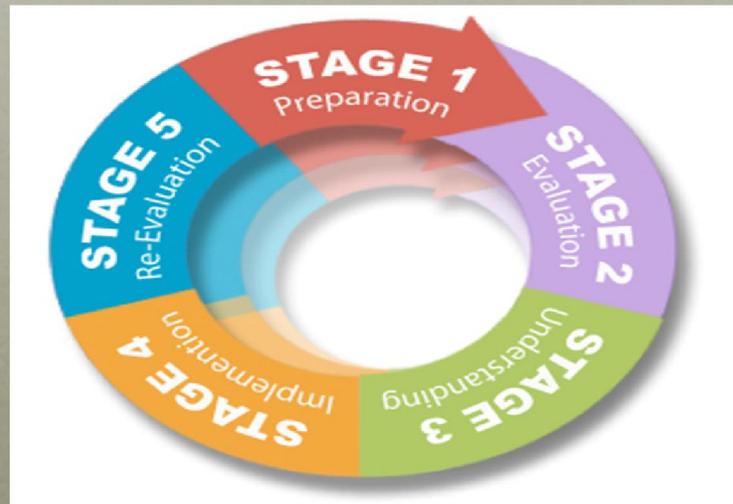
- 1) Accountability systems that use data as a “hammer” rather than a “flashlight”
- 2) Primary focus on the individual teacher and/or administrator
- 3) Technology
- 4) Specific “evidence-based” programs

Helpful *Primary Drivers*

- 1) Fostering the intrinsic motivation of students, parents and school personnel: “igniting” the process
- 2) Engaging students & educators in a continuous process of social-emotional & civic as well as intellectual learning
- 3) Inspiring team work and a collaborative problem solving process
- 4) Affecting the whole community

* Bryk, et. al. 2002 & 2010; Fullan, 2011; Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010; Tucker 2011.

THE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS: A DEMOCRATICALLY INFORMED CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT



SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Under the leadership of the Principals, supporting students, parents/guardians, school personnel and community members:

- 1) Developing a shared vision about our school
- 2) Understanding/evaluating current strengths and needs
- 3) Developing goals: Systemic, instructional and other wise
- 4) Implementing them
- 5) Learning from experience and revising goals

SCHOOL CLIMATE RESEARCH

- I. **Individual Experience:** Promoting a positive school climate effects students' self-esteem and self-concept.
- II. **Risk Prevention and Health Promotion:** Effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts are positively correlated with safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate settings.
- III. **Academic Achievement:** Student academic achievement is strongly correlated to a safe, caring and responsive school climate setting. Positive reinforcement and attentiveness improves student performance.
- IV. **Teacher Retention:** Positive school climate is associated with greater teacher retention.

(For a summary of this research, see: Thapa, Cohen, Guffey & Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013). A Review of School Climate Research, *Review of Educational Research*, DOI: 10.3102/0034654313483907.)

SCHOOL CLIMATE MATTERS

- ❖ **A paradox!**
- ❖ **Growing recognition and support from:**
 - Federal agencies: US DOE, Justice, CDC, SAMPSA and IES
 - State DOEs
 - Districts: from Westbrook, Connecticut to Chicago
- ❖ **Great need for practice and policy guidelines**

SCHOOL CLIMATE MEASUREMENT

- ❖ Today: Measurement practices focus on cognitive learning
- ❖ School climate measurement: Recognizing the social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual and engage the whole community
- ❖ Measurement: An engagement strategy as well as benchmarking
- ❖ Recommended: School climate surveys that are:
 - Reliable and valid
 - Recognize student, parent/guardians, school personnel and community “voice”
 - Can be completed in under 20 minutes
 - Linked to realistic systemic and instructional improvement plans

POLICY TRENDS

- ❖ **Growing interest in school climate standards and laws that support engaging the “whole village” in the continuous process of improvement**
- ❖ **National School Climate Standards: Benchmarks to promote effective teaching, learning and comprehensive school improvement (Appendix A)**
(www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php)
- Five Standards that support school communities addressing three essential questions:
 - (1) What kind of school do you want yours to be?
 - (2) Given this vision, what policies, rules and supports do we need?
 - (3) What practices – educational, risk prevention and health-mental health promotion – do we need to actualize our “vision” and polices?

SCHOOL CLIMATE PRACTICE TRENDS

- ❖ **Measurement trends:** Utilization of school climate measurement to compliment and extend current accountability measures
- ❖ **Practically, what to do when?**
 - Growing interest!
 - Confusion about what to do when: On the importance of implementation road maps
- ❖ **Common Core and/or School Climate and/or PBIS?**

PBIS & SCHOOL CLIMATE PROCESS: SIMILAR AND/OR DIFFERENT?

Overlapping and complimentary efforts:

PBIS	&	School Climate Reform
<p style="text-align: center;">Similarities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) School wide efforts; 2) Supporting positive change; 3) Supporting student learning; 4) Supporting student-family-educator and community partnerships; 5) Data driven; 6) Appreciate that adult behavior and “adult modeling” matters; and 7) Focused on advancing policies and procedures that support effective practice. 		<p style="text-align: center;">Differences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Goals; 2) Different data sets; 3) Behaviorally informed model that is focused on student problems vs. a intrinsically grounded motivational model focused on school wide, instructional and one-on-one coordinated efforts; 4) Adult driven vs. community driven; 5) School Climate Reform – grounded in adult learning & PLC’s

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- ❖ Concern about and exclusive focus on the cognitive aspects of learning and teaching
- ❖ Confusion about school climate reform and/or PBIS
- ❖ Current educational accountability systems are punitive and – inadvertently – undermine a long term view and commitment to continuous improvement
- ❖ School leaders who are:
 - Reactive (rather than pro-active);
 - Anxious about being attacked; and/or
 - Not sure what to focus on to support an effective school climate improvement process.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? POLICY EFFORTS THAT SUPPORT THE WHOLE CHILD AND THE WHOLE VILLAGE

- 1) Understand recent school climate research findings.
- 2) Consider adopting or adapting the National School Climate Council's definitions for school climate and an effective school climate improvement process.
- 3) Create standards for school climate assessment and school reform efforts that support a continuous process of school wide and instructional improvement efforts.
- 4) Support social, emotional, ethical/character and civic as well as intellectual aspects of learning for students and adults, and do so in a manner that recognizes and embraces the diverse needs and perspectives of all learners.
- 5) Measure school climate comprehensively in ways that recognize student, parent, school personnel and community "voice" – with scientifically sound surveys and use findings to shape school-wide and instructional improvement efforts.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? (CONT.)

- 6) Use school climate assessment as a measure of school system performance to inform school, district, and statewide decision-making and policy development.
- 7) Support students as well as parents and school personnel reviewing and amending current codes of conduct so that they function more as learning supports rather than as punishment.
- 8) Ensure that pre and in-service educator efforts are aligned with high-quality school climate and prosocial educational (e.g. social emotional learning and character education) related standards for educators.
- 9) Address barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., student and school readiness; safety; sense of belonging and connectedness; and collaboration) and re-engage those who have become disengaged; and, ensure that an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting school climate standards are developed and sustained.

THANK YOU!

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