

SCHOOL CLIMATE REFORM: WHAT IS IT? MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES AND WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D. and Jessica Savage, Esq.

National School Climate Center:

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

Workshop

NEW YORK CITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT ON SCHOOL-JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS:

KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF COURT

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WORKSHOP GOALS

❖ Understanding school climate reform:

- ✓ What is it?
- ✓ Research findings: Why is it important?
- ✓ In practice what does this mean?
 - Mobilizing the “whole village”
 - For school leaders?
 - PBIS and school climate reform
 - Measurement options?
 - Challenges?

❖ What can you do?

REFLECTING

What kind of school do you want for your/our children?

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Definition:

School Climate*

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

(* National School Climate Council, 2007)

- "School climate", "culture", "supportive learning environments" and "conditions for learning"

A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE: THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE COUNCIL'S SUGGESTED DEFINITION

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 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 attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

A POSITIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

1. Decision making is collaborative, democratically informed and involving all stakeholders
2. Psychometrically sound surveys
3. Improvement goals tailored to schools needs
4. Capacity building – adult learning and PLCs
5. Prosocial as intellectual learning & teaching
6. Improvement process strengthens (a) policies and (b) operational infrastructure

*National School Climate Council (2012). *The School Climate Improvement Process: Essential Elements. School Climate Brief*, No. 4. Available online at: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/schoolclimatebriefs.php>

WHY DOES IT HELP?

- Mobilizing the whole village to support the whole child
- Engages students, parents/guardians, school personnel and even community members to be co-learners and co-leaders
- Data-driven: Recognizing the social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual aspects of learning and school life
- Uses data as a “flashlight” rather than a “hammer”
- Motivates students and adults to consider what they(i) really want school to be, (ii) learn about current strengths and needs, (iii) what kind of school-wide, instructional and/or one-on-one goals need to be developed and focused on
- Inspires team work and collaborative problem solving

WHY DOES IT HELP? REFLECTIONS

Considering why school climate reform is helpful:

The Four A's Protocol:

1. What are the **A**ssumptions that underlie these ideas?
2. What do you **A**gree with about these ideas?
3. What do you want to **A**rgue with?
4. What do you **A**spire to about these ideas?

SCHOOL CLIMATE RESEARCH

- I. **Individual Experience:** Promoting a positive school climate effect 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 RESEARCH (CONT.)

Strengths:

CP2

- Growing body of ethnographic, experimental and multi-level model studies that appreciate the complexity of factors that shape experience in schools

Weaknesses:

- Largely correlational
- Growing but still small body of experimental studies that appreciate the complexity of school life

Slide 10

CP2

word missing?

Charlotte Pope, 10/7/2013

POLICY TRENDS

❖ Being supported by:

- Research
- 49 State Anti-bullying laws
- Growing concern about the school to prison pipeline
- State level concerns about the exclusive focus on cognitive learning (NCLB)

❖ Federal *Safe and Supportive Schools* programs

❖ National School Climate Standards

POLICY TRENDS (CONT.)

- **National School Climate Standards - Five Standards that support local communities addressing three questions:**
 1. What kind of school do we want ours to be?
 2. Given this “vision” what policies, rules and supports do we need?
 3. Given this “vision” and policies, what practices (educational, risk prevention and health promotion) do we need to support?

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS: REFLECTING

The Four A's Protocol:

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SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICE

What does this mean in practice?

MOBILIZING THE “WHOLE VILLAGE” TO SUPPORT THE “WHOLE CHILD”

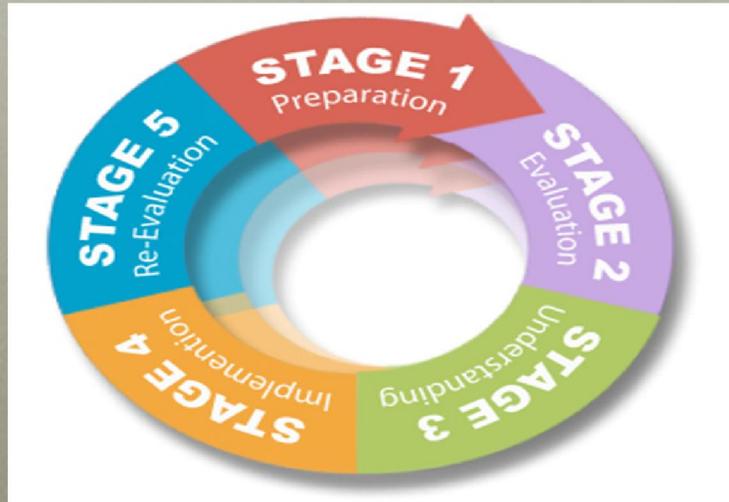
- A shared understanding and goal ... but rarely practiced!
- *Promising Neighborhoods* informed projects and Community or “full service” schools
- PBIS and/or school climate reform: Similar and/or different?

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

Overlapping and complimentary efforts:

PBIS	&	School Climate Reform
<p style="text-align: center;">Similarities</p> <p>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>		<p style="text-align: center;">Differences</p> <p>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</p>

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



APPENDIX A THE FIVE STAGE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS: TASKS AND CHALLENGES

- 1) **Planning for the next phase of improvement**
 - Creating a representative leadership team
 - Fostering a shared vision: Understandings, vision, vocabulary and engagement!
 - Moving from blame/distrust to a more "no fault"/trusting culture
 - Celebrating success and building on past efforts
 - Community Engagement/Outreach
 - Learning and Reflecting
- 2) **School climate assessment/evaluation**
 - Measurement Process
 - Interpretation of Results
- 3) **Understanding findings and action planning**
 - Understanding and Digging Deeper
 - Prioritizing goals
 - Researching instructional and/or school wide improvement programmatic efforts
 - Action Planning: Benchmarks & Timelines
- 4) **Implementing the action plan: Instructional & school-wide**
 - Coordinating instructional and/or school-wide improvement efforts with fidelity
 - Promoting adult social, emotional and civic learning
- 5) **Beginning the cycle anew**

PLANNING AND PREPARATION: REFLECTIONS

**What do you imagine that this can and
should entail?**

THE FIVE STAGE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Creating a representative leadership team
- Developing a 'shared vision'
- Moving toward a "no fault" framework & culture
- Celebrating success and building on past efforts
- Community Engagement/Outreach
- Reflecting on and learning from successes and challenges

STAGE TWO MEASUREMENT

- *Readiness, Comprehensive and Process* measures
- Recognizing the “whole village” – *Options:*
Focus groups, semi- structured interviews, disciplinary data, “walk throughs”
- *Recommended:* Comprehensive surveys that recognize student, parent/guardian, school personnel and ideally, community “voice”
- Finding a survey?

SCHOOL CLIMATE DIMENSIONS*

Safety

- Rules and norms
- Sense of physical safety
- Sense of social-emotional security

Teaching and Learning

- Support for learning
- Social and civic learning
- Leadership (staff only)

Relationships

- Respect for diversity
- Social support – adults
- Social support – students
- School connectedness/engagement
- Professional relationships (staff only)

Institutional Environment

- Physical surroundings

* National School Climate Council, 2007

STAGE THREE
UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION PLANNING

❖ **Educators, students and parents learning and working together to:**

- Understanding findings
- “Digging deeper” into consensual and discrepant findings
- Prioritizing goals
- Researching evidence based programs/efforts
- Action planning

STAGE FOUR
IMPLEMENTATION THE ACTION PLANNING

❖ **Educators, students and parents learning and working together implement with fidelity:**

- School wide improvement
- Instructional improvement
- One-on-one improvement

STAGE FIVE
**BEGINNING ANEW IN THE CONTINUOUS PROCESS
OF LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT**

- ❖ **Schools – like people – are never perfect.**
- Ideally, we are ongoing learners!
- On the importance of adult/educator learning and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

THANK YOU!

National School Climate Center (NSCC)
www.schoolclimate.org

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.,

President, NSCC;
Adjunct Professor in Psychology and Education,
Teachers College, Columbia University
jonathancohen@schoolclimate.org

Jessica Savage, Esq.,

NSCC Law and Policy Fellow
jsavage@schoolclimate.org