

**Indicator: The school's Leadership Team/Health Council regularly reviews data which reflect the school's health, nutrition and safety policies, school environment, work-site wellness, attendance and discipline records and uses the data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs. (5859)**

**Evidence Review:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created a model for coordinated school health that includes eight key parts:

1. Health education in grades K-12 curricula that addresses the physical, emotional, mental, and social aspects of health—designed to help student improve their health, prevent illness, and reduce risky behaviors.
2. Physical education in grades K-12 curriculum that promotes lifelong physical activity.
3. Health services that provide preventive services, education, emergency care, referrals, and management of acute and chronic health problems—designed to prevent health problems and ensure care for students.
4. Nutrition services that integrate access to nutritious and appealing meals, nutrition education, and an environment that promotes healthy eating.
5. A healthful school environment that provides a safe, healthy, and supportive climate for learning.
6. Counseling and psychological services that include individual and group assessments, interventions, and referrals—designed to prevent problems early and enhance healthy development.
7. Health promotion for staff that includes assessment, education and fitness activities for school faculty and staff who serve as role models for students.
8. Family and community involvement that includes community-school health advisory councils and coalitions to build support for school health programs.

**Source:** Kathlene Larson, *Promoting Healthy Youth, Schools, and Communities: A Guide to Community-School Health Advisory Councils*.

**Evidence Review:**

Students feel more connected to their school when they believe that the adults and other students at school not only care about how well they are learning, but also care about them as individuals. Young people who feel connected to school are more likely to succeed academically and make healthy choices. All school staff, including teachers, principals, counselors, social workers, nurses, aides, librarians, coaches, nutrition personnel, and others, can have an important and positive influence on students' lives. The time, interest, attention, and emotional support they give students can help them learn and stay healthy. This fact sheet provides guidance for fostering school connectedness and creating a more welcoming and supportive school environment for all students.

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important and positive influence on students' lives. The time, interest, attention, and emotional support they give students can help them learn and stay healthy. This fact sheet provides guidance for fostering school connectedness and creating a more welcoming and supportive school environment for all students.

***Participate in professional development opportunities to enhance your abilities to meet the diverse needs of your students.***

- **Further** develop your expertise in child and adolescent development, and **share** lessons learned with other school staff to increase understanding about the needs of the students.
- **Participate** in professional development opportunities on implementing required school curricula, using effective teaching methods, and organizing the classroom and school to promote a positive environment.
- **Attend** workshops and trainings on communicating effectively with and involving parents in school activities, and **share** ideas for involving parents with other staff at your school.
- **Request** materials, time, resources, and support to use the skills you learn in training.
- **Form** learning teams to observe experienced teachers who effectively manage classrooms and facilitate group work.
- **Coach** or **mentor** other teachers and staff to develop effective teaching techniques and classroom management strategies, and **engage** in creative problem-solving.

***Promote open communication, trust, and caring among school staff, families, and community partners.***

- **Communicate** expectations, values, and norms that support positive health and academic behaviors to your peers throughout the school community.
- **Provide** opportunities for students of all levels to interact, develop friendships, and engage in teamwork.
- **Support** student clubs and activities that promote a positive school climate, such as gay-straight alliances and multi-cultural clubs.
- **Create opportunities** for students to partner with and help adults, such as internships and service learning projects.
- **Commit to** and **model** respectful behavior toward principals, other teachers, and school staff.
- **Challenge** all school staff to greet each student by name.
- **Encourage** teachers, counselors, health service professionals, coaches, and other school staff to build stronger relationships with students who are experiencing academic or personal issues.
- **Request** access to a school counselor, psychologist, or other expert for consultations or student referrals when needed.

**Source:** US Department of Health and Human Services, *Fostering School Connectedness: Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement*

### **Evidence Review:**

#### **Establishing a common understanding about the definition of school climate among building staff is the first step in identifying the extent to which the school climate is positive and conducive to learning.**

This newsletter takes a look at the topic of school climate and sets out to determine:

- What is school climate?
- How can schools assess their school climate?
- What are some practical examples of how schools are assessing school climate?
- What resources are available to support schools interested in improving or enhancing their school climate?

Measuring student achievement is fairly straight-forward. State standardized tests and regular benchmark tests are routinely scored, disaggregated, and analyzed to provide a picture of how well students have mastered subject matter. On the other hand, assessing school climate can require a review of multiple data sources. Some potential data sources include:

- Perception surveys gather data on how teachers, students, and parents feel about their school. Perception surveys can assess the extent to which the school's climate is viewed positively by students, parents, and faculty. Survey data can be used to call attention to areas of weakness and can complement other, more specific or objective school climate data. Survey data also can offer information on how the community perceives the school; if students believe the school is safe and meeting their needs; and/or if parents, students, and teachers have a sense of pride in the school. Survey data often reveal perceptions about the school administration that can assist principals in reflecting on their own practice.
- Student discipline records such as office referrals, suspension records, and expulsion records can provide useful information on school climate, especially if the data are detailed. These records can provide information on the number of students referred for discipline; whether any one subgroup is disproportionately referred for discipline, suspended, or expelled; and if frequent offenders may benefit from more intensive support or intervention. Student discipline records also can supply data about which rules are most frequently violated and which teachers most frequently refer students. These data can help inform the identification of research-based strategies to improve the school climate.
- Attendance records can reveal tardy and absentee patterns by subgroup, season, teacher, or subject. These data can inform educators about which students may need additional support to attend school regularly. Records regarding participation in extracurricular activities and schoolwide activities can show whether students are broadly represented or whether activities tend to be limited to a small subgroup of students. Student attendance and participation in school activities also may provide important indicators of the school climate.

Each of these data types can reveal different aspects of the climate in the school. When considered together, they can help drive strategies to build a positive school climate.

**Source:** The Center, *Developing a Positive School Climate*

### **Evidence Review:**

When asked what they expect from their schools, most parents, teachers, administrators, and students will answer: "I want my school to be safe." Unfortunately, there is ample evidence that schools are not as safe as we would like. The National Center for Education Statistics 1998 Report showed that one in ten schools in their sample reported at least one violent crime over the past year. Fifty-seven percent reported experiencing at least one crime incident that was reported to law enforcement officials (Morrissey, 1998).

To promote school safety, educators have relied primarily on traditional law enforcement methods, including metal detectors, security guards, closed circuit television, locking all doors and windows except one or two entrances, and conducting "shake-down" searches and locker checks. These law enforcement methods rely heavily on surveillance, penalties, and

punishments, such as suspensions, expulsions, alternative school placement, arrests, and fines placed on parents or guardians.

While sometimes effective, traditional law enforcement methods applied to schools carry major negative side effects. These include a significant financial burden, a reduction of time for classroom instruction, and a decline in teacher and student morale. Metal detectors, security guards, surveillance cameras, locker checks, and body searches create a pervasive atmosphere of apprehension among faculty, staff, students, and parents. The purpose of this digest is to present an alternate approach to creating and maintaining safe schools called "Invitational Education" (Purkey & Novak, 1996; Juhnke & Purkey, 1995; Shoffner & Vacc, 1999.)

Invitational Education provides a framework for making schools a more exciting, satisfying, and enriching experience for everyone - all students, all faculty and staff, and all visitors. This framework goes beyond reforming or restructuring; its goal is to transform the fundamental character of the school. Invitational Education asserts that everybody and everything in and around schools adds to, or subtracts from, school safety. It centers on four guiding principles of respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality

Respect: Everyone in the school is able, valuable, and responsible and is to be treated accordingly.

Trust: Education is a cooperative, collaborative activity where process is as important as product.

Optimism: People possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor

Intentionality: Safe schools are best realized by creating and maintaining inviting places, policies, processes, and programs and by people who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others, personally and professionally by centering itself on respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality.

Invitational Education provides a common language of transformation and a consistent theory of practice.

The "Five P's" of Invitational Education, standing for people, places, policies, programs, and processes, provide the means to address the global nature and symbolic structure of the school. It expands the educative process by applying steady and continuous pressure from a number of points, much like a starfish conquers oysters.

Starfish live to eat oysters. To defend itself, the oyster has two stout shells that fit tightly together and are held in place by a powerful muscle. When a starfish locates an oyster, it places itself on the top shell. Then gently, gradually, and continuously, the starfish uses each of its five points in turn to keep steady pressure on the one oyster muscle. While one point pulls, the other four rest. The single oyster muscle, while incredibly powerful, gets no rest. Inevitably and irresistibly, the oyster shells open and the starfish has its meal. Steady and continuous pressure from a number of points can overcome the powerful muscle of the oyster, and by analogy, the biggest challenge in schools, that of school safety. Here is how the Invitational Education starfish looks when the "Five P" approach is applied.

The following activities illustrate how Invitational Education is woven into the fabric of the school.

People: Faculty and staff work as a school family. Activities include training in stress reduction and conflict management, long-term relationships between faculty and students, courteous staff, and respect for everyone. Special attention is given to personal grooming and professional dress.

Places: Careful attention is given to the physical environment, including adequate lighting, well-maintained buildings and grounds, clean rest rooms, attractive classrooms and cafeterias,

and displays celebrating student accomplishments. Ways are found to enhance the physical environment of the school, no matter how old the building.

**Policies:** Attendance, grading, promotion, discipline and other policies are developed and maintained within a circle of respect for everyone involved. Families are kept informed through newsletters, bulletins, phone calls and meetings. Every school policy is democratically developed, easy to understand, and made available to everyone involved.

**Programs:** Among the many programs that help to create safe schools are community outreach, wellness, and enrichment opportunities for everyone in the school. Programs that involve parents are strongly encouraged. Guidance counselors play a central role in arranging beneficial programs.

**Processes:** Process is the way in which things are done in the school. A democratic ethos is valued along with an academic orientation. All activities and procedures are designed to honor and include everyone. Ideas, suggestions, and concerns are welcomed in the inviting school.

To date, Invitational Education has been successfully applied to over 140 schools throughout North America. The success of these programs has been documented and described in professional research articles (Clover & Alexander, 1992; Stanley & Purkey, 1994; Purkey & Strahan, 1995). For detailed information, please contact the International Alliance for Invitational Education, c/o School of Education, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, P.O. Box 26171, Greensboro, NC 27402-6171

**Source:** ERIC Digest, *Creating Safe Schools Through Invitational Education*

#### **References and other resources:**

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