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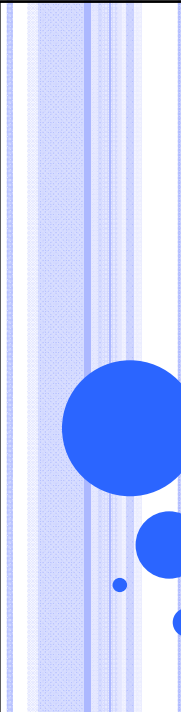
Boosting Success for 21st Century Learners Webinar Series

Assessing and Enhancing School Climate and Culture

This webinar provides participants with an overview of research concerning school climate and connectedness, tools to assess current school climate, and resources to create and maintain a positive school climate.


Disclaimer

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center is committed to the sharing of information regarding issues of equity in education. The contents of this practitioner brief were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.



Assessing and Enhancing School Climate and Culture

Tuesday, September 25, 2012
1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)



mid-atlantic equity
CONSORTIUM, INC.

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center

Housekeeping Notes

Question and Answer Opportunities

Online Evaluation

Recording of Session and Slides

Please type in the following for each participant at your location:

- Name
- Title
- Organizational affiliation



Center for Schools and Communities Online Learning

Blackboard
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Presenter



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Center for Schools and Communities Online Learning



Mid-Atlantic Equity Center

The Center is one of ten equity assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Center provides technical assistance and training services FREE of charge to school districts in the areas of:

- Race
- Gender
- National origin/English language learners



Assessing and Enhancing School Climate and Culture

Michelle Nutter
Safe and Supportive Schools Manager
Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools



Mid-Atlantic Equity Center

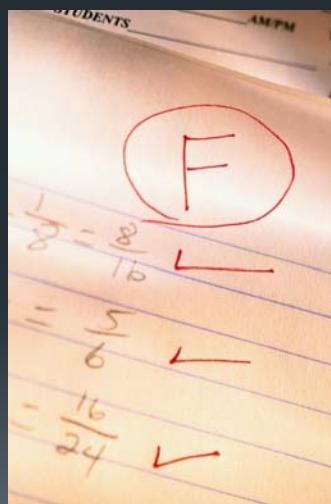


CENTER FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

Why Address Climate/Culture?

Failure to address school culture only produces unintended discrepancies between school improvement efforts and intended outcomes for student achievement.

Sarason (1982)



What is Climate?

- Quality and character of school life
- Students', parents' and school personnel's experience
- Norms, goals and values
- Interpersonal relationships
- Teaching and learning practices
- Organizational structures

Dimensions of School Climate

- Physical Dimension
- Social Dimension
- Academic Dimension



The Components of Climate

- Environmental
- Structural
- Safety
- Teaching and learning
- Relationships
- Sense of school community
- Morale
- Peer norms
- Home-school-community partnerships
- Learning community

Research Says

Four essential areas of school climate focus:

- Safety
- Relationships
- Teaching and learning
- Institutional environment



Safety

- Social
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Physical



Relationships

- Self
- Peers
- Adults



Teaching and Learning

- Teacher support
- Cooperative learning
- Civic learning
- Service learning



Instructional Environment

- Classroom layout
- Student supervision
- School tone
- Connection to community



Climate versus Culture

Climate

- The emotional atmosphere of the school.
- Also described as atmosphere, tone, feeling, setting or milieu.
- “How it feels to be here.”

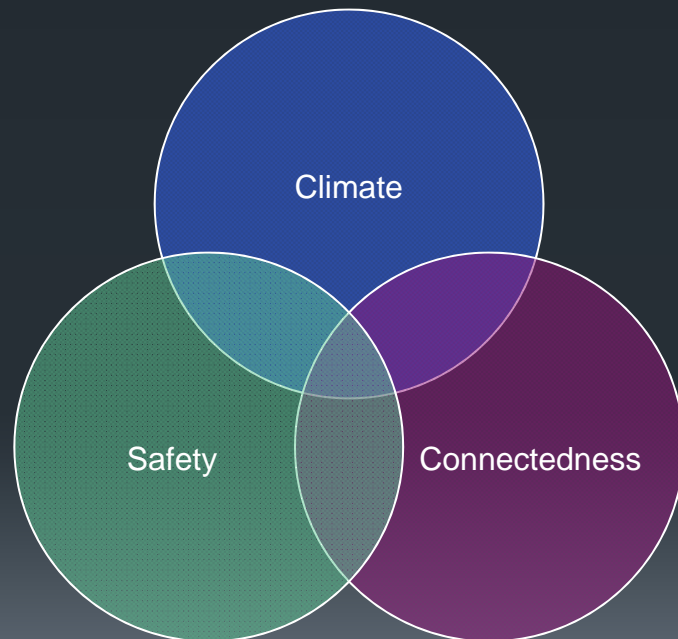
Climate versus Culture *Cont.*

Culture

- Shared norms, values, beliefs and goals which result in agreed upon processes and procedures that produce consistency in practice.
- “How we do things here.”

School Culture and Fairness

- Academic opportunity
- Extracurricular opportunity
- Application of rules
- Disciplinary measures



School Connectedness

How do students feel about attending school?

Also known as:

- School bonding
 - School climate
 - Teacher support
 - Student engagement
- (Blum, 2005)*

Why School Connectedness is Important

Research shows that disconnected students have increased risk of negative outcomes, including:

- Higher dropout rates
- Higher unemployment rates
- Reduced lifelong earnings
- Higher crime rates

Measuring Connectedness

Factors that impact climate/connectedness:

- Academic engagement
- Belonging
- Discipline/fairness
- Extracurricular activities
- Likes school
- Student voice
- Peer relations
- Safety and teacher support

Climate and Culture Surveys

- Radon
- Carbon Monoxide
- Bullying
- Racial discord



 **The 12 Dimensions of School Climate Measured**

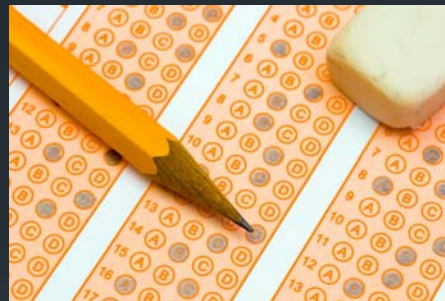
Dimensions	Major Indicators
Safety	
1 Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence; clearly communicated rules about verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.
2 Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.
3 Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.
Teaching and Learning	
4 Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenge; and individual attention.
5 Social and Civic Learning	Support for the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.
Interpersonal Relationships	
6 Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school—student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.
7 Social Support—Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students' success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students' problems.
8 Social Support—Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including: friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.
Institutional Environment	
9 School Connectedness/Engagement	Positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.
10 Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.
Staff Only	
11 Leadership	Administration that creates and communicates a clear vision, and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.
12 Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.

Accessed 9/24/12 from www.schoolclimate.org/programs/documents/dimensions_chart_pagebars.pdf

Climate and Culture Assessments

Considerations:

- Technology
- Cost
- Time



Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)



www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/index.htm

School Climate Questionnaire

MIDDLE/UPPER GRADES ACTIVITY



Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree Strongly					Disagree Strongly				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
a. Students in our school get along well.										
b. Students choose to interact primarily with people most like themselves.										
c. Students in my school know how to report harassment, bullying and racial abuse to school officials.										
d. Students in my school would feel comfortable reporting harassment, bullying and racial abuse to school officials.										
e. Teachers in my school actively work to create a safe and welcoming environment for every student.										
f. Every student in my school feels like he or she belongs here.										
g. My school creates opportunities for students to get to know each other.										
h. At my school, adults and students listen to each other.										
i. I look forward to coming to this school in the morning.										

True or False?

In the last 3 months...

	True	False
1. I've seen biased vandalism or graffiti at school.		
2. I've heard a student use a slur, epithet or other derogatory put-down.		
3. I've heard a student tease or ridicule another student.		
4. I've heard a teacher or other adult in the school make disparaging remarks about a particular group of students.		
5. I've seen — and analyzed — our school's safety data and reports.		
6. I've had a conversation with someone about our school's climate.		

HOW TO USE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

- As a tool to diagnose differences in perception between teachers and students
- As an opening activity for professional development programs dealing with school climate and safety
- As part of a larger school-climate assessment that also includes face-to-face interviews, focus groups and other tools

Adapted from Responding to Hate at School (www.tolerance.org/rthss/index.jsp), *Mix It Up* (www.mixitup.org) and the U.S. Department of Education's "Creating a Safe and Connected School Climate" (www.scind.edu/safe_schools/Docs_PDFs/Creating%20Safe%20Schools.pdf)

Accessed 9/24/12 from www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/tt_school_climate.pdf

American School Climate Survey (2.5)

1. I feel safe at my school.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. An adult in my family (or someone that is taking care of me) visits my school often.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. I enjoy learning at my school.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. Students at my school fight a lot.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. I will continue my education at a community college or university.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. Students at my school trust the teachers.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. Teachers are able to stop someone from being a bully.				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Accessed 9/24/12 from <http://schoolclimatesurvey.com/surveys.html>

Goals of Climate/Culture Assessment

Assess where we are right now:

- Surveys
- Focus groups

Maintain strengths:

- Bring positive practices into awareness
- Sustain focus

Goals of Climate/Culture Assessment

Cont.

Address areas that could be improved:

- Adult relations with each other
- Adult relations with students
- Student relations with each other
- Student relations with adults

What Can Be Done?

According to Blum (2005), three characteristics help students feel connected to school:

- High academic standards with strong teacher support
- A positive and respectful teacher/student environment
- A physically and emotionally safe school environment

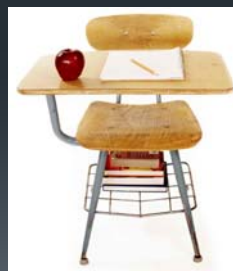
The three “Rs”

Old School

- Reading
- Writing
- Arithmetic

New School

- Rigor
- Relevance
- Relationship



Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Students

- Focus on academic achievement
- Involve families in meaningful ways
- Develop links to the community
- Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff

Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Students

Cont.

- Discuss safety issues openly
- Treat students with equal respect
- Create ways for students to share their concerns
- Help children feel safe expressing their feelings

Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Students

Cont.

- Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.
- Offer extended day programs for children.
- Promote good citizenship and character.

Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Students

Cont.

- Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.
- Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace.

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Create a School Climate that Supports Diversity

- Make expectations clear.
- Monitor the environment and document all incidents.
- Identify student and parent concerns.
- Train staff to prevent and address harassment.
- Develop curriculum and teaching methods.
- Create student activity and mediation programs.
- Appoint a compliance coordinator.

Mix It Up At Lunch Day



www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/get-started

Teaching Tolerance

- Understanding the Influence of Race
- The Common Beliefs Survey
- Primer on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- The School Survey
- Case-Based Course Modules

www.tolerance.org/tdsi



S.P.I.R.I.T.

- To encourage open, candid sharing of ideas.
- To maintain some direction and *focus* of discussions.
- To verify and document accurate input.
- To facilitate comfortable involvement of all participants.
- To assess the level of commitment to ideas.



Bottom Line



Remember the Power of Teachers

“As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.”

“I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

—Haim Ginott

Contact

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Boosting Success for 21st Century Learners Webinar Series
Friday, October 26, 2012
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Understanding the Needs of Sexual Minority and Gender Non-Conforming Youth

- The needs of sexual minority and non-conforming youth in our schools
- Creating policies and school environments that reduce bullying and harassment of students
- Effective programs in creating climates of tolerance and acceptance

Presenters

Lynne Muller, Race to the Top Student Services Specialist, Maryland State Department of Education

Nora Cartland, Senior Educational Equity Specialist, The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center



Boosting Success for 21st Century Learners: Equitable Practices for High Achievement



SAVE THE DATE!
Tuesday, May 7, 2013
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.



New Location

The Conference Center
at the Maritime Institute
692 Maritime Boulevard
Linthicum Heights, MD 21090



For more information, visit our new website at:

www.maec.org

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Mid-Atlantic Equity Center