

Wise Ways

The school culture promotes and supports the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral skill development and engagement of students. (CL10)

Evidence Review:

Having a school vision for a learning environment that is emotionally safe and conducive to learning is the focus which keeps the work targeted. It is the “touchstone from which all other actions flow. It is the yardstick for questions and a reference point for conversations” Lambert, 2003). A clear vision keeps schools from making decisions which are inconsistent with what has been identified as necessary for an optimum learning environment.

A safe and orderly environment conducive to learning has been addressed as critical to academic achievement. Ron Edmonds referred to the need for a “safe and orderly atmosphere conducive to learning”. Daniel Levine and Lawrence Lezotte, in their work on effective schools called for “a productive climate and culture” (Marzano, 2003).

In 2007, The National School Climate Center (NSCC), The Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE), The National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) at Education Commission of the States (ECS) published a white paper, *The School Climate Challenge* in which they make the case that research has found that a positive school climate promotes student achievement and positive youth development. A positive school climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling emotionally and physically safe. A school climate that is positive, caring, supportive, respectful of all learners, with high expectations for all students to learn, affects students motivation to learn.

Marzano (2003) believes that a safe and orderly learning environment is critical to ensuring effective schools, and if schools do not pay attention to this factor they risk undermining all other efforts of school improvement. He outlines action steps that help achieve a safe and orderly environment. The focus is primarily on establishing rules and procedures with appropriate consequences for violations, and establishing a program that teaches self-discipline and responsibility to all students. While this is critically important, other aspects of the school environment are also important to school achievement. Four of these aspects are: a physical environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning; a social environment that promotes communication and interaction; an affective environment that promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem; and an academic environment that promotes learning and self-fulfillment (Best Practice Brief: School Climate and Learning, University-Community Partnerships @Michigan State University, 2004). These broader factors promote collaboration, positive relationships, and a sense of community which have a positive impact on student learning.

References and Sources:

Lambert, Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement, 2003

Marzano, What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action, 2003

The School Climate Challenge, National School Climate Center (NSCC), 2007

Best Practice Brief: School Climate and Learning, University –Community Partnerships @Michigan State University, 2004

Example:

A short-term longitudinal study of urban middle school students revealed that students’ perception of their school environment impacted their perceptions the following year which in turn impacted engagement and academic achievement. This study specifically looked at the impact that perceptions of the school environment had on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. “*Behavioral engagement* refers to the actions and practices that students direct toward school and learning; it includes positive conduct (e.g., attending class and completing schoolwork), involvement in learning and academic tasks (e.g., effort and concentration), and participation in extracurricular activities (Finn, 1993; Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995). *Emotional engagement* represents a student’s affective reactions and sense of identification with school (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). *Cognitive engagement* refers to a

student's self-regulated and strategic approach to learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). These three components are dynamically interrelated within individuals and are not isolated processes."

Findings from the study related to engagement included:

1. Students were more likely to have a positive identification with school and participate in their tasks when teachers offered positive and improvement-based praise and emphasized effort while avoiding pressuring students for correct answers or high grades.
2. Competitive learning environments decreased school participation, undermined the development of a sense of school belonging, and diminished the value students placed on school.
3. In order to become engaged with learning, students who are competent but either alienated from school or less intrinsically motivated may need more autonomy support in the form of more interesting and relevant activities and decision-making opportunities.
4. Students who are passive or anxious about exercising autonomy or attempting novel tasks may need more structured scaffolding of tasks, more guidance, and more explicit instruction in effective strategies to become fully engaged with classroom learning.
5. Students reported higher levels of school identification and use of self-regulatory strategies when they were encouraged to interact and discuss ideas with each other in class.
6. When teachers create a caring and socially supportive environment, students are more likely to participate in school and bond with school.

In addition, there was empirical support for their hypotheses that perceptions of school environment would impact behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in school, which would in turn influence students' academic achievement. In this study, the emotional component was particularly influential on students' academic achievement.

Source: Wang & Holcombe (2010). *Adolescents' perceptions of school environment, engagement, and academic achievement in middle school.*

References and Other Resources:

- Finn J. D. (1993). *School engagement and students at risk*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Finn J. D., Pannozzo G. M., Voelkl K. E. (1995). *Disruptive and inattentive-withdrawn behavior and achievement among fourth graders*. *Elementary School Journal*, 95, 421–454.
- Fredricks J. A., Blumenfeld P. C., Paris A. H. (2004). *School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence*. *Review of Educational Research*, 74, 59–109.
- Skinner E. A., Belmont M. J. (1993). *Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effect of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85, 571–581.

Evidence Review:

Numerous studies have shown the positive impact of school-wide approaches on student behavior. Components of these approaches have included changes in structure, organization, and practices. Recommendations for implementing a school-wide approach to improve student behavior include:

- Address school-wide behavior issues through a school improvement team;
- Systematically assess the "hot spots" in a school where problem behaviors tend to occur;
- Develop and implement strategies to overcome behavior problems in these areas;
- Monitor implementation and outcomes using an efficient method of data collection and allow ample time for the program to work; and
- If warranted, adopt a packaged intervention program that fits well with identified behavior problem(s) and the school context.

Source- IES Practice Guide for Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

Example:

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports is an example of a school-wide approach focused on establishing a positive social culture and the behavioral supports needed for all children. Core elements include:

| Prevention Tier | Core Elements |
|-----------------|---|
| Primary | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioral Expectations Defined• Behavioral Expectations Taught• Acknowledgement system for appropriate behavior• Continuum of consequences for problem behavior• Continuous collection and use of data for decision-making |
| Secondary | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universal screening• Progress monitoring for at risk students• System for increasing structure and predictability• System for increasing contingent adult feedback• System for linking academic and behavioral performance• System for increasing home/school communication• Collection and use of data for decision-making |
| Tertiary | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Functional Behavioral Assessment• Team-based comprehensive assessment• Linking of academic and behavior supports• Individualized intervention based on assessment information focusing on (a) prevention of problem contexts, (b) instruction on functionally equivalent skills, and instruction on desired performance skills, (c) strategies for placing problem behavior on extinction, (d) strategies for enhancing contingency reward of desired behavior, and (e) use of negative or safety consequences if needed.• Collection and use of data for decision-making |

PBIS table modified by Illinois State Board of Education

These elements are “integrated within organizational systems in which teams, working with administrators and behavior specialists, provide the training, policy support and organizational supports needed for (a) initial implementation, (b) active application, and (c) sustained use of the core elements” (Sugai & Horner, in press).

Source: www.pbis.org

Evidence Review:

Research has demonstrated that successful teachers in high poverty schools and turnaround organizations not only have the necessary technical skills and content knowledge but have the following distinguishing competencies: a relentless focus on learning; ability to affect the perceptions, thinking, and actions of others; interpersonal understanding; ability to work with others; the ability to solve problems; a belief in the learning potential of all students; the ability to keep one’s emotions under control; self-confidence; and flexibility.

Source- Public Impact: School Turnaround Teachers: Competencies for Success; For the Chicago Public Education Fund, 2008

Evidence Review:

Teachers who are supportive (i.e., show care and concern for their students' well being and learning) and emotionally well regulated are able to provide students with a safe and caring learning environment that is conducive to students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development. When teachers exhibit negative affect and have poor relationships with their students, feelings of alienation and disengagement are likely to occur. When students experience these negative feelings and disengage, they are at greater risk of developing antisocial behaviors, delinquency, and academic failure (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Teachers often report greater stress when they have disruptive students in their classroom (Yoon, 2002) and tend to express negative emotions in response to student misbehavior (Carson & Templin, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta et al., 2003; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). "Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that kindergarten teachers' reports of negative affect in relation to a student were meaningful predictors of student social and academic outcomes through at least fourth grade." However, students who have supportive relationships with their teachers tend to feel safe and connected which provides the necessary social supports that promote social and emotional development and academic success.

Source- The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Academic Outcomes

References and Other Resources:

- Carson, R. L., & Templin, T. J. (2007). *Emotion regulation and teacher burnout: Who says that the management of emotional expression doesn't matter?* Paper presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Convention, Chicago, IL.
- Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). Early teacher-child relationships and trajectory of school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development*, 72(625-638).
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). Relationships between teachers and children. In W. M. Reynolds & G. E. Miller (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of psychology* (Vol.7). New York: Wiley.
- Sutton, R. E., & Wheatley, K. E. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 15, 327-358.
- Yoon, J. S. (2002). Teacher characteristics as predictors of teacher-student relationships: Stress, negative affect, and self-efficacy. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 30, 485-493.

Example:

In a study by Hughes, Cavell, and Willson (2001), the impact of teacher-student relationships on peer preference of aggressive students was examined. The study revealed that teacher support uniquely predicted peer preference within the aggressive students. "This suggests that peer perception of teacher support had a buffering effect on peers' social preference of aggressive students and that students take cues from their teacher in determining whether a peer is likable or not. This finding has implications for intervention strategies for improving the social status of rejected and aggressive students. Interventions that directly target the teacher-student relationship by promoting SEC may enable teachers to offer support to students despite their troubling behavior and may make a difference in student social status among peers contributing to their feeling of connectedness with the school community."

Source- The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Academic Outcomes

References and Other Resources:

- Hughes, J. N., Cavell, T. A., & Willson, V. (2001). Further support for the developmental significance of the quality of the teacher-student relationship. *Journal of School Psychology*, 39, 289-301.

Evidence Review:

Teachers who promote students' feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness, have students with higher levels of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. Students who have feelings of competence believe that they can determine their success, can understand what it takes to do well, and that they can in fact succeed. Feelings of competence have been associated with both behavioral and

emotional engagement in elementary and middle schools (Connell et al., 1994; Rudolph et al., 2001; Skinner et al., 1990). Studies have also shown that when teachers create respectful and socially supportive environments, press students for understanding and support autonomy, students are more likely to use learning strategies and have higher behavioral engagement and affect (Stipek, 2002; Turner, Meyer, Cox, Logan, DiCintio, & Thomas, 1998)

Source- School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence

References and Other Resources:

- Connell, J.P., Spencer, M.B., & Aber, J.L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in African-American youth: Context, self, action, and outcomes in school. *Child Development*, 65, 493-506.
- Rudolph, K.D., Lambert, S.F., Clark, A.G., & Kurlakowsky, K.D. (2001). Negotiating the transition to middle school: The role of self-regulatory processes. *Child Development*, 72, 929-946.
- Skinner, E. A., Wellborn, J.G., & Connell, J.P. (1990). What it takes to do well in school and whether I've got it: The role of perceived control in children's engagement and school achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82, 22-32.
- Stipek, D. (2002). Good instruction is motivating. In A. Wigfield & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Development of achievement motivation*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Turner, J.C., Meyer, D.K., Cox, K.E., Logan, C., DiCintio, M., & Thomas, C.T. (1998). Creating contexts for involvement in mathematics. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 730-745.

Examples:

A study by "Blumenfeld and Meece (1998) found that students in science classes in Grades 4-6 who were assigned complex hands-on tasks reported higher cognitive engagement and motivation to learn when teachers provided instructional support and pressed students for understanding." Other studies also demonstrated that authentic and challenging tasks are associated with higher behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement. Helme and Clarke (2001) found when students work with peers on novel tasks that have personal meaning, cognitive engagement is more likely to occur. "In two separate studies, suburban elementary school students whose teachers offered more choices—about which literacy tasks to perform and when and where to perform them—worked more strategically and persisted longer in the face of difficulty, thus manifesting two aspects of cognitive engagement (Turner, 1995; Perry, 1998)."

Source- School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence

References and Other Resources:

- Blumenfeld, P.C., & Meece, J.L. (1998). Task factors, teacher behavior, and students' involvement and use of learning strategies in science. *Elementary School Journal*, 88, 235-250.
- Helme, S., & Clarke, D. (2001). Identifying cognitive engagement in the mathematics classroom. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, 13, 133-153.
- Perry, N. (1998). Young children's self-regulated learning and contexts that support it. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 715-729.
- Turner, J.C. (1995). The influence of classroom contexts on young children's motivation for literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, 410-441.

Evidence Review:

Responding appropriately to students' incorrect responses can have a significant impact on students' relatedness and feelings of competence. Some useful teacher behaviors include:

- Emphasizing what was right
- Allowing students time to seek help from peers
- Restating or rephrasing the question
- Giving hints or cues
- Providing the answer and asking the student to say it in his own words or providing another example of the answer
- Respecting the student's option to pass

Source- Classroom Management that Works, Research-Based Strategies for Every Teacher, Marzano, et.al, 2003

Reference and Other Resource:

Johnston, Peter H. (2004). Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning. Stenhouse Publishers.

Evidence Review:

There is evidence that most children can learn to become more socially and emotionally competent. "Integrating social, emotional, ethical and cognitive learning can dramatically enhance student engagement (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005)". Teachers can teach social and emotional competencies by using existing curriculum, such as language arts, social studies, and history as a springboard and taking advantage of everyday situations that can be used as teachable moments.

Source- *Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being*, Jonathan Cohen

References and Other Resources:

Billig, S. H., Root, S., & Jesse, D. (2005). The relationship between the quality indicators of service-learning and student outcomes: Testing professional wisdom.

In S. Root, J. Callahan, & S. H. Billig (Eds.), *Improving service-learning practice: Research on models to enhance impacts* (pp. 97–118). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Evidence Review:

The Illinois State Board of Education, in accordance with Section 15(a) of Public Act 93-0495, incorporated social and emotional development standards as part of the Illinois Learning Standards. The Illinois SEL Standards (http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm) address the following competencies: self awareness and self management skills; social awareness and interpersonal skills; and decision-making skills and responsible behaviors. The IL SEL Standards describe the social and emotional learning content and skills for students in grades K - 12. Each standard includes five benchmark levels that describe what students should know and be able to do in early elementary (grades K - 3), late elementary (grades 4 - 5), middle/junior high (grades 6-8), early high school (grades 9-10), and late high school (grades 11-12). Teachers can address the SEL Standards by embedding SEL skill instruction into other subject areas and/or by choosing to purchase an evidence-based SEL program.

Source- Illinois State Board of Education (www.isbe.net)

Evidence Review:

The *Leadership Team* maintains a school culture that is friendly, supportive, and focused on children's learning. The *Leadership Team* provides training and guidance for non-certified and support staff so they understand the school's purpose and their role in it, greet visitors cordially, and interact positively with students.

Source: Academic Development Institute, *Effective Teaming*