



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

Positive School Climate

Webinar Study Guide

May 2012

1. CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING: Research has shown that when districts and schools promote the necessary c_____ for I_____ (i.e., a positive school climate and the development of academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral competencies) **and** address barriers to learning and teaching such as: bullying and disengagement, the following positive outcomes are more likely to occur:

- mental wellness;
- the prevention of behavioral health issues;
- school connectedness;
- reduction in s_____ absenteeism;
- reduction in suspensions;
- adoption, implementation and institutionalization of new practices; and
- i_____ academic outcomes.

And when these practices are implemented through a coordinated and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports that is fully integrated into the C_____ and I_____ and G_____ Systems through the Statewide System of Support Continuous Improvement Process, outcomes improve and are more likely to sustain over time.

2. SCHOOL CLIMATE: According to the National School Climate Council, "School climate refers to the gu_____ and c_____ of school life. It is based on patterns of school I_____ experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices and organizational structures." Safe, caring, participatory and responsive I_____ environments are elements of a positive s_____ climate.

School c _____ can be organized into the following areas of focus: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment.

- Safety encompasses r _____ and n _____; physical safety; and social-emotional safety;
- Relationships include respect for d _____; school connectedness/engagement; social support from adults; social support from other students; and l _____;
- Teaching and Learning often consists of social, emotional, ethical and civic learning; support for learning; and p _____ relationships);
- Institutional Environment typically involves the ph _____ surroundings.

A. **SAFETY:** Students' sense of s _____ in schools impacts student learning and healthy development. Many students, however, do not feel safe in s _____ due to the violence and verbal bullying that they may experience on a regular basis.

To improve safety issues, including but not limited to bullying, district and schools can implement a variety of s _____ through a multi-tiered system framework. Universal programming could include activities such as teaching and modeling social and emotional competencies, defining and promoting positive behavior and addressing m _____ through c _____ measures.

One such activity that teaches and models social and emotional competencies is the implementation of Restorative Justice Measures (RJM). RJM allow students to be e _____, to create their own safe environment, resolve conflicts, hold each other a _____, and assist each other by repairing harm and sustaining peaceable schools through a peer jury.

Schools can also improve safety issues by attending to the physical environment through the promotion of n _____ surveillance,

limited access in and out of buildings, and reinforcement of ownership through signs and maintenance. In addition, schools can work with first responders in their community, to review and revise school e _____ and crisis r _____ plans to better protect students and staff during crisis situations.

A number of the findings from Early Warning, Timely Response indicate strong support for discipline policies that endorse p _____ behavior management. For example, the Report states that, “A growing number of schools are discovering that the most effective way to reduce suspensions, expulsions, o _____ r _____, and other similar actions – strategies that do not result in making schools safer – is to emphasize a proactive approach to discipline” through a m _____ - t _____ system framework.

Effective schools establish h _____ behavioral expectations, provide support for socially a _____ behavior and highlight sanctions against aggressive behavior. The Report also states that best practices include the development and consistent enforcement of rules that are c _____, broad-based, and f _____. Rules should be developed collaboratively by r _____ of the total school community, communicated clearly and consistently enforced.

Early Warning, Timely Response is also clear about the response to inappropriate behaviors. Responses must match the offense, take into account student differences and be applied in a nond _____ manner. If a negative correction is used, it is c _____ with positive strategies for teaching socially appropriate behaviors.

- B. **RELATIONSHIPS:** When students perceive that adults and friends in the school c _____ about their learning and about them as individuals, there is a p _____ correlation with adolescent health and academic outcomes, including school att _____. This important aspect of relationships is referred to as school

c _____.

School connectedness is also a p _____ factor against a variety of issues including violence and drug use behaviors. Adults in school buildings can improve school connectedness through the multi-tiered system framework by:

- establishing high and realistic exp _____ that are communicated regularly and consistently reinforced;
- providing opportunities for students and families to participate in me _____ ways;
- dedicating time, interest, attention and emotional support to students; and
- encouraging p _____ relationships and allowing for personalized learning using a variety of strategies such as cooperative learning activities that foster peer support.

C. **TEACHING & LEARNING:** Positive school climates that promote cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust improve the environments for l _____. Research also shows that academic achievement i _____ with student classroom participation. Teacher-student interactions impact students' engagement in the classroom. Strategies teachers can utilize to improve the learning environment and student engagement include:

- attending to the students' social and emotional well-being through direct skill instruction and modeling SEL c _____;
- utilizing personal student data which encompass each student's learning style to inform teaching practices and meet the i _____ and c _____ needs of the students in his/her classroom; and
- providing students with opportunities to apply classroom lessons to real life situations (e.g., authentic projects that embrace co _____ learning with a civic mission).

D. **INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT:** The institutional environment often refers to the school building and the area s _____ it, and conditions such as temperature, noise, lighting and air quality. The physical environment can p _____ or n _____ impact student and teacher att _____ as well as student ach _____.

Several studies have shown that substandard facilities negatively impact student achievement. Other conditions that negatively impact student achievement included graffiti and n _____ external environments. One study found temperature, heating and air qu _____ as the most important individual environmental elements on student achievement.

Other conditions of the physical environment, such as the size of the school, placement of d _____, and displays of student work also impact the school c _____. Large anonymous schools that cannot focus on its' members and in turn emphasize compliance tend to c _____ the fostering of a caring and supportive school. To address this issue, large schools might look for opportunities to form smaller c _____ of l _____ in each grade and classroom. The placement of desks can also influence learning. Although desks organized in rows better promote task completion, desks organized in a "horseshoe" formation where students can see each other and the teacher, can create greater p _____. Displaying student work has also positively impacted school climate.

3. **ASSESSMENT:** Surveys on school climate and learning conditions are designed to measure int _____, yet ess _____, aspects of a school's learning and teaching environment.

They address the gestalt of a school by asking specific stakeholders about their per _____ of issues such as t _____ between students and teachers; school-parent communication; the physical and emotional safety of the

facility; the level of s_____ that teachers feel is available and present in the working environment; and how instructional staff is included in learning and decision-making processes. More information on the administration of the school climate surveys can be found at www.isbe.net

4. LINKS: Thank you for taking the time to listen to this webinar on Positive School Climate. We encourage you to learn more about School Climate and available r_____ by visiting the ISBE website and linking to the Learning Supports w_____ page.

