

Creating a Positive School Climate

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Think back to a time and place when you felt not only good, but fully accepted. What did it look like? Who were the people surrounding you? What was the event? Use a word to describe the overall climate involved.

"School climate may be one of the most important ingredients of a successful instructional program. Without a climate that creates a harmonious and well functioning school, a high degree of academic achievement is difficult, if not downright impossible to attain."
Hoyle, English & Steffy (1985)

Research suggests that although new teachers find their professional development helpful, they are more likely to stay in the profession when they are satisfied with their principal's leadership and the school climate.
(Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2006)

Research also suggests a connection between school climate and the extent to which parents and families are involved in their children's education.
(Comer & Haynes, 1992; Epstein & Dauber, 1993)

The Ohio School Climate Guidelines

- Schools, parents, and communities together bolster academic achievement.
- Integrate students' social and emotional needs into the district school improvement framework.
- Evaluate the learning environment and ensure ongoing progress.
- Maintain caring, engaging well-managed classrooms.
- Deal with threats to safety.
- Teach social / emotional skills.
- Involve parents / families to maximize learning.
- Empower students with responsible roles.
- High quality food service and physical activity.

Schools, parents, and communities together bolster academic achievement.

Epstein (1999), says teachers need to increase their understanding and respect for student and family diversity. Letting parents know they are valued and respecting their time constraints and familiar obligations are also key factors.

Center of Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (1994), reports that parents are more likely to be involved if they receive information about class activities, their child's progress, and how to work with their kids at home.

Involve Parents / Families to Maximize Learning

- Regular, meaningful 2-way communication.
- Parenting classes
- "Parents for Lunch" days
- Encourage parents to foster learning at home.
- Involve parents in school planning.
- Positive social activities
- Honor parent strengths
- Assist parents with social service / community contacts as needed

Integrate students' social and emotional needs into the district school improvement framework.

- Understand and commit to addressing the need for a formal plan to address school culture and climate.
- Staffing practices and professional development.
- Modeling
- Support counseling / guidance practices

North Carolina Partnership in Character Education Eight Step Process to Create Effective School Climate.

- Collect baseline data regarding moral indicators.
- Build a consensus for improving the moral climate.
- Appoint committee or team with leadership abilities.
- Conduct a formal pre-assessment of school's moral character.
- Identify improvement priorities.
- Organize a task force to implement action plans.
- Coordinate the work of the task force.
- Evaluate results.

Six Elements of Positive Moral Culture in Schools (Lickona, 1992, p.325)

- Moral & academic leadership from the principal.
- School-wide discipline plan that models, promotes, & upholds the school's values in all school environments.
- A school-wide sense of community.
- Student government that involves students and gives them ownership.
- Moral atmosphere of mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation.
- Evaluating the importance of morality by spending school time on moral concerns.

Principles of Necessary Staff Conduct in Creating Moral Leadership (Wynn & Ryan, 1993; p.188)

- Commitment or dedication
- Knowledge of subject matter
- A liking of children
- Sense of humor
- Being a good role model
- Having a set of principles
- Committed to philosophical goals of the school
- Ability to work cooperatively
- Good communication skills
- Intelligence and imagination

Evaluate the learning environment and ensure ongoing progress

- Review data regarding attendance, grades, rate of graduation, student surveys, discipline reports, safety programs, nutrition, and health care.
- Plan for adjustments as data indicates.

Maintain caring, engaging, well-managed classrooms

- Professional development
- Best practices regarding coaching and constructive feedback of student progress.

Deal with threats to safety

- Crisis planning
- Effective discipline policies
- Teach social / emotional skills
- Staff development

Empower students with responsible roles

- Student government
- Student involvement in class rules
- Student “duties”

High quality food service and physical activity

- Nutrition services / diet
- Organized sports
- Time to get up and move