



Welcome to Today's Webinar!

Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools



The Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center



- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students.
- Provides training and support to states, including 11 grantees funded under the Safe and Supportive Schools Program and other state administrators; administrators of districts and schools; teachers; support staff at schools; communities and families; and students.
- Goal is to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive environments.

*The content of this presentation was prepared under a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students to the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This presentation does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the U.S. Department of Education, nor do they imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.



Safe and Supportive Schools Website



<http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Safe and Supportive Schools website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Training & Technical Assistance, Events, Topics & Research, States & Grantees, News, and About. Below the menu is a main content area with several sections: a Springboard sidebar with links for Roles (School/District Administrators, Teachers, School Support Staff, State Administrators, Community & Family) and Topics (Engagement, Environment, Safety, School Climate Measurement Program Implementation); a central featured article titled "Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses" with a photo of three girls; a "Voices from the Field" section with a "Take Our Poll" graphic and the question "What is the primary method your community uses to select safe and supportive school programs?"; a "South Carolina" section about the School Climate Initiative (SCSCI); and a "News Clips" section dated September 07, 2012, about community partnerships.

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Polling Question #1



Which of the following best describes your current role?

- State Education Personnel
- District Administrator
- School Administrator
- Teacher or School Support Staff
- Community or Family Representative
- Student
- Researcher
- Other

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Polling Question #2



Which of the following reflects your **MOST** pressing issue?

- Student behavior
- Faculty morale and turn over
- Poor academic performance
- Fragmented social supports
- All of the above

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Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools

David Osher, Ph.D., American Institutes for Research



Agenda



- 1 Introduction to school climate and its relationship to turnaround schools
- 2 Impact of school climate improvement efforts on student outcomes
- 3 Measuring school climate
- 4 Making the case for the importance of school climate and its measurement in turnaround schools

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Introduction to School Climate and Its Relationship to Turnaround Schools



What Is School Climate?

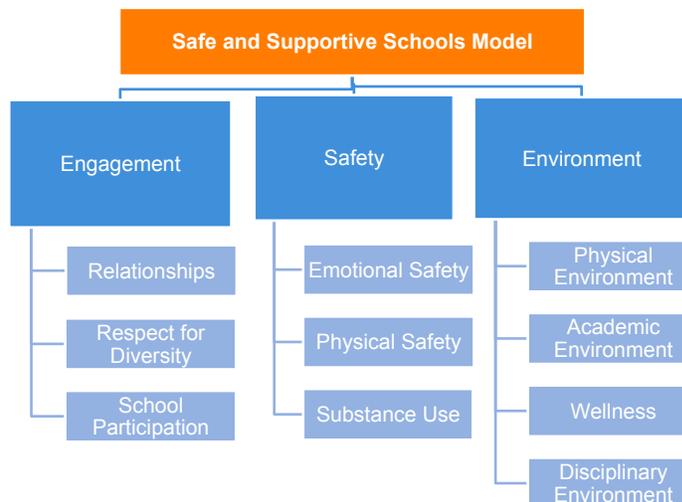


- **School climate describes school conditions that influence student learning. According to the Safe and Supportive Schools Model, positive school climate involves:**
 - **Engagement.** Strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools, and strong connections between schools and the broader community.
 - **Safety.** Schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use.
 - **Environment.** Appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy.

Citations ▪ 1-8
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Safe and Supportive Schools Model of School Climate



Citation ▪ 8
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Conditions for Learning: Aspects of School Climate that are Proximally Related to Teaching & Learning



Students are safe.

Physically safe
Emotionally and socially safe
Treated fairly and equitably
School is safe and orderly

Students are supported.

Meaningful connection to adults
Strong bonds to school
Positive peer relationships
Effective and available support

Students are challenged.

High expectations
Strong personal motivation & engagement
School is connected to life goals
Rigorous academic opportunities

Students are socially capable.

Emotionally intelligent and culturally competent
Responsible and persistent
Avoid Risky Behaviors
Cooperative team players
Academic Mindsets

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Illustrative Standard of Excellence for a Safe and Respectful School from a Student's Perspective



- Students feel physically safe in their classes, in the hallways and bathrooms, and outside around the school.
- They feel emotionally safe because students treat each other with respect, get along well together, and look out for each other.

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School Climate Is Critically Important



- **Strengthening school climate and conditions for learning can help districts, schools, and teachers meet key goals, including:**
 - Boosting student achievement and closing achievement gaps
 - Increasing high school graduation
 - Decreasing teacher turnover and increasing teacher satisfaction
 - Turning around low-performing schools

Citations ▪ 1,
16-39
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Negative School Climate Can Harm Students



- **On the flip side, negative school climate actually harms students and raises liability issues for schools and districts.**
 - Negative school climate is linked to poor attendance, decreased student achievement and graduation rates.
 - Negative school climate can contribute to or exacerbate violence, bullying, and even suicide.

Citations ▪ 32,
40-50
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Negative School Climate Is a Common Problem



- **Unfortunately, evidence of poor school climate is widespread. According to the latest available national data:**
 - Twenty-eight percent of students ages 12-18 were bullied at school.
 - Thirty-four percent of teachers said student misbehavior interfered with their teaching.
 - Students received out-of-school suspensions lasting five days or more at least 584,000 times. This translates to at least 19 million hours of missed school and instructional time.

Citations ▪ 10,
32, 51-54
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School Climate and Its Relationship to Turnaround Schools



- **School climate and conditions for learning function as leading indicators for turnaround schools.**
- **School climate improvements can support school turnaround efforts:**
 - Build capacity to sustain change
 - Sustain student and faculty readiness for change
 - Provide information for monitoring
 - School change
 - Scale up
 - Provide data to populate, school and district dashboards

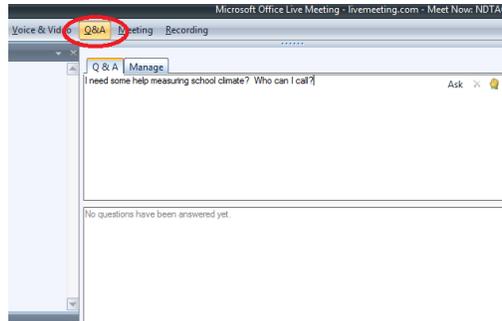
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Questions?



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Impact of School Climate on Student Outcomes



Student Experiences Which Contribute to a Healthy School Climate and Academic Achievement



Protection

- Connection
- Safety
- Positive Relationships With Adults And Peers
- Caring Interactions
- Academic Challenges
- Academic Support
- Academic Engagement
- Positive Role Modeling
- Social Emotional Learning
- Positive Behavioral Supports
- Consistent, restorative discipline
- Access to Needed Services And Supports

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Student Experiences Which Contribute to Poor School Climate and Low Academic Achievement



Risk

- Lack of connection
- Lack of safety
- Teasing, bullying, gangs
- Negative relationships with adults and peers
- Uncaring interactions
- Low expectations
- Academic disengagement
- Academic frustration
- Poor role models
- School-driven Mobility
- Reactive punitive approaches to discipline
- Lack of access to necessary services

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Polling Question #3



Does your school/district exhibit...

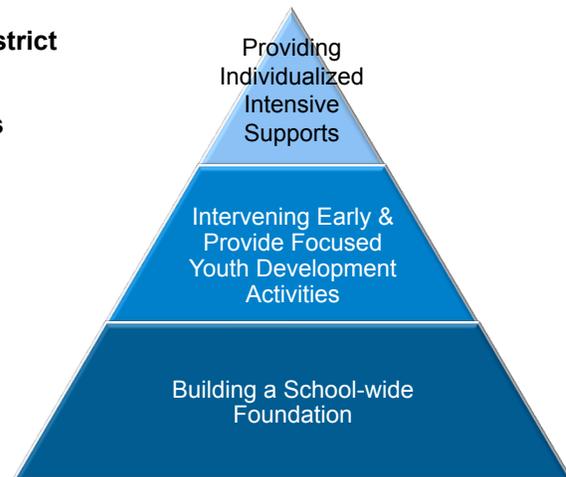
- Many protective factors, few risk factors
- Some protective factors, some risk factors
- Many risk factors, few protective factors



School Climate Improvements Efforts



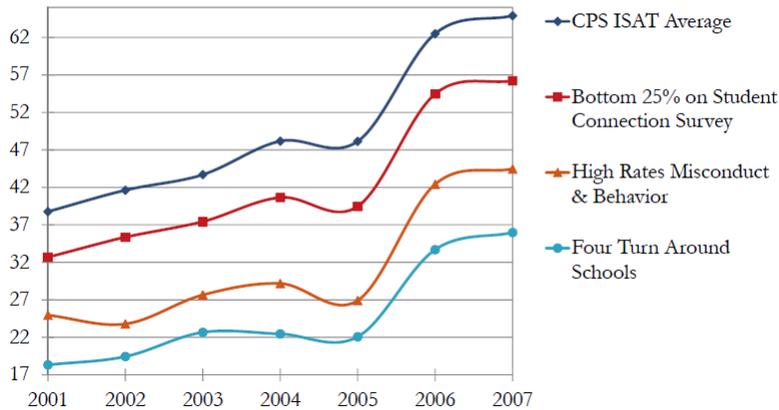
- **Range from State, district and school levels**
- **Range of approaches**



Chicago: Public Health Approach to Address Trauma in Schools



2001 to 2007 ISAT Scores for Selected Elementary Schools



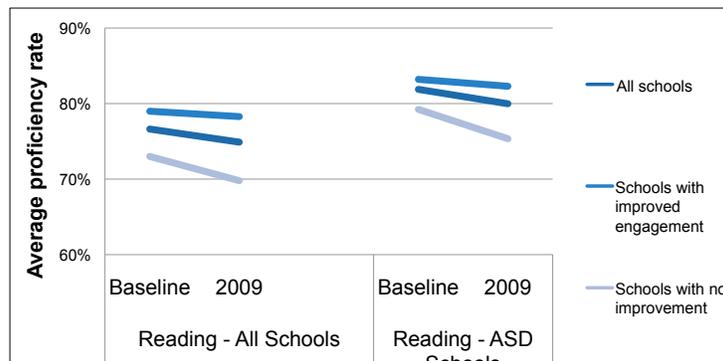
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Alaska: ICE Effort



- There were statistically significant associations between aspects of student-reported school climate and changes in achievement over time.



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Cleveland: Three Tiered Public Health Model



- **9.1% increase in Graduation Rate over 2 year period (Ohio graduation rates are reported one year later than other state data)**
- **6% increase in students' perception of Safety over 2 year period**
- **6% decrease in students' perception of Support over 2 year period**
- **2% increase in students' perceptions of Social Emotional Learning capacity over 2 year period**
- **Strong co-relation between measures of safety, challenge, and SEL capacities and predicted Ohio Achievement Assessment scores**

Citation ▪ 71
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Impact of Social and Emotional Learning on Academic Achievement and Other Student Outcomes



- **Meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students conducted.**
- **Compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement.**

Citation ▪ 10
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Impact of Positive Behavior Supports



- Reduction in number of serious disciplinary issues
- Improvements in academic achievement
- Enhanced perception of organizational health & safety
- Improved school climate
- Reductions in teacher reporting of bullying behavior

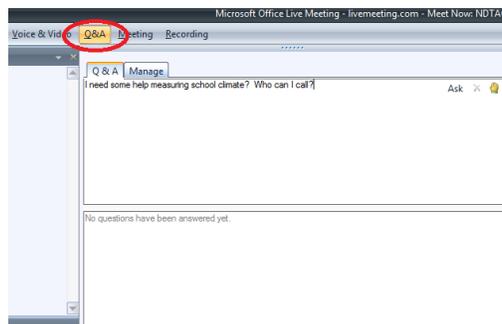
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Measuring School Climate



Measuring School Climate



- In order to improve school climate, we must first be able to measure school climate!
- School climate is multi-faceted – incident counts, suspension counts, attendance rates and statewide Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results do not tell the whole story.
- Many existing state-level surveys only measure some facets of climate.
- If existing measures of climate do not meet the following goals, it may be in need of additional investment and improvement.

Measuring School Climate (continued)



- Measures of school climate should:
 - Encompass multiple aspects of school climate
 - Be able to be processed quickly enough to share before the end of the school year
 - Be collected through valid and reliable instruments with good psychometrics
 - Be collected from multiple respondents
 - Be collected so that subgroups can be examined
 - Be collected using multiple instruments, such as
 - Incident data
 - Attendance data
 - YRBS
 - School climate surveys
 - Include measures that are understood to have a direct impact on academics
 - Be actionable and practical to administer

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Example of an Actionable School Climate Framework



▪ Engagement

- **Relationships:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students and teachers about whether or not their relationships with students and teachers are caring.
 - **How one intervenes:** Ensure teachers know students' names and interests and that each student is connected with and supported by a caring adult.
- **Respect for Diversity:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask parents whether or not they feel the school welcomes families that are similar to them; ask students whether they have experienced disrespect from adults due to their race, ethnicity, or culture.
 - **How one intervenes:** Identify and address discipline disparities.
- **School Participation:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students whether they participate in extracurricular activities.
 - **How one intervenes:** Ensure all students are invited and can participate in extracurricular activities.

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Example of an Actionable School Climate Framework (continued)



■ Safety

- **Social and Emotional Safety:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students how often they were made fun of, called names, or insulted at school.
 - **How one intervenes:** Employ Social and Emotional Learning Curricula that includes a focus on community building and empathy.
- **Physical Safety:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students how safe they feel traveling between home and school.
 - **How one intervenes:** Work with community groups and public agencies to create safe pathways to school.
- **Substance Use:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students whether they have used a variety of substances.
 - **How one intervenes:** Employ evidenced based substance abuse prevention curricula.

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Example of an Actionable School Climate Framework (continued)



■ Environment

- **Physical Environment:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students and staff whether the lavatories are safe and clean.
 - **How one intervenes:** Identify why they are not clean, and work with facilities to create a clean environment.
- **Academic Environment:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students whether teachers provide feedback on their assignments that helps them improve their work and whether teachers think all students can do challenging work.
 - **How one intervenes:** Provide Professional Development to teachers on classroom management and student engagement.
- **Wellness:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students if they eat salty snack food at school.
 - **How one intervenes:** Work with students and the appropriate administrators to find and make available attractive and healthy snack food.
- **Disciplinary Environment:**
 - **How Measured:** Ask students if students at the school are comfortable sharing ideas about rules and policies.
 - **How one intervenes:** Develop opportunities for student voice in the development of class and school norms.

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As a Leading Indicator, Measuring School Climate Can Facilitate School and District Turnaround



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Making the Case for School Climate and Its Measurement



Perspective on Making the Case



- Focus on problem solving, not on blaming.
- In order to create sustainable changes in school climate, you must get buy-in from various stakeholder groups. How do you convince groups to buy in?
 - Provide stakeholders with the message of why school climate is so vital to student outcomes and school turnaround.
 - Provide stakeholders with a framework for collaboration in which there is 1) a clear plan of action to improve climate, and 2) their voices will be heard during the planning and implementation processes.

Approach When Making the Case



- Allow input from the intended audience on the best mode of communication.
- Use non-technical language whenever possible.
- Provide concise, accurate information – brief word documents or power points.

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Messages to LEAs and School Boards



- Better climate and conditions for learning →
 - Improved learning and higher test scores!
 - Higher graduation rates, more satisfied teachers, less drop outs, lower turnover rates, and improved school safety
 - Helps support turnaround school efforts: sustains, builds capacity, allows for monitoring, and scaling up
- Better climate is cost-effective as well as cost beneficial.
- Why is measuring climate and conditions for learning is necessary?
 - Data serve as leading indicators.
 - Data can identify needs and inform future interventions.
 - Data can document improvements and successes.
 - Data can identify subgroups who experience school climate as poor.
 - Data can identify areas where students, staff, and parents view climate differently.

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Messages to LEAs and School Boards (continued)



- Beginning the discussion with this group – modes of communication
 - Face to face meetings are best – presentation at conferences, board meetings or one on one meetings.
 - Providing opportunities to discuss results with this group is important.
 - E-mails or phone calls are much less effective.

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Messages to School Administrators and Teachers



- Administrators and teachers can play an active role in improving school climate.
- Better climate → improved discipline and learning, reduced stress, better test scores.
- Why is measuring climate necessary?
 - What gets measured gets done! Measuring climate is necessary to identify issues and improve school climate.
 - Measuring climate to identify issues can help improve conditions for learning and teaching.
 - Existing measures are incomplete.
 - Measuring climate creates opportunities to discuss climate issues.
 - It supports school turnaround efforts: sustains, builds capacity, allows for monitoring, and scaling up

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Messages to School Administrators and Teachers



- Modes of Communication
 - Buy-in from administrators is key for buy-in at school level. Administrators can then champion this effort to teachers in many ways.
 - Face to face meetings whenever possible – staff meetings or one on one meetings with principals or other administration.
 - E-mails or school message boards can get out message on the importance of climate.
 - Professional development on improving climate is critical.
 - Provide support to school planning meetings (e.g., AYP meetings).

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Messages to Families



- Better climate → safer school, improved learning, improved health, less risky behavior, better social-emotional skills – in other words, a better, safer school and a better, happier, safer child.
- Families can play an active role in improving climate; school climate is linked to home environment and families can advocate for improved school climate.
- Family surveys provide a way for parents to give feedback on school climate and areas needing improvement.

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Messages to Families



- Modes of Communication
 - School website
 - Parent-teacher conferences
 - Back to school night
 - School newsletters
 - PTA/PTO meetings
 - Community-based presentations
 - Social (online) media – Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, YouTube Channel, Podcasts, etc.

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Polling Question #4



If you anticipate pushback, from whom do you expect the most?

- LEAs and school boards
- School administrators
- Teachers
- Parents
- More than one of the above



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Responding to Pushback



- Potential areas of pushback for measuring climate/climate surveys:
 - Cost
 - Privacy concerns
 - Impact on classroom time
 - Measures of school climate and safety already exist
 - Seems like one more test and one more type of accountability

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Responding to Pushback (continued)



- **Cost concerns**
 - The results of the survey will help determine the most efficient ways to allocate future resources and determine which programs are working, or are needed, so it saves \$\$ in the long run.
 - There are several surveys available on the Safe and Supportive Schools website (<http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov>) that are publically available or available through the survey developer – some of which are free, many others of which are affordable.

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Responding to Pushback (continued)



■ Privacy concerns

- Data that are collected will be secure and students will not be asked for information that could allow them to be identified.
- Completed paper surveys will be collected in classrooms by students or a single person at school responsible for distributing and processing surveys – teachers and school administrators won't see completed surveys.
- Online surveys can ensure similar security.
- Hard copies of the surveys will be destroyed after processing.
- Data will be reported at the school level, not at the individual level.
- School-level data will not be reported for subgroups with X or fewer students.

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Responding to Pushback (continued)



■ Impact on classroom time

- Surveys should not take more than a single class period or single faculty meeting to complete.
- Some take less than 20 minutes to complete.

■ Measures of school climate already exist

- As we've seen, existing measures of school climate may be inadequate for several reasons – validity, coverage of climate, etc.

■ Seems like one more test

- It is not a test. It is an opportunity to hear student, teacher, and family voices.
- This is where it is important to stress the link between climate, outcomes and school turnaround.
- Provides **context** for school academic performance and demonstrates focus points where schools can improve performance through improving climate.

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First Steps of Collaboration



- Once momentum to collaborate with stakeholders is established, how do you start creating an improvement plan?
 - Create climate improvement team led by an administrator, including teachers, social workers/psychologists, district staff, family leaders and community partners/ providers.
 - Assign a school climate coach.
 - Adopt a comprehensive vision for the collaborative.
 - Write a “brief” to clarify the vision.
 - Start a process for translating the vision into policy.
 - Develop a strategic plan.
 - Move the strategic plan to implementation.

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Take Aways



- **For all:**
 - Research demonstrates a strong link between school climate and conditions for learning and both academic and developmental student outcomes.
 - It is important that we have strong measures of climate both to identify needs and sustain support.
 - Systematically measure school climate via valid and reliable surveys.
 - Review existing resources (don't reinvent the wheel).
 - Use survey data for planning, monitoring, and outcome evaluation.
 - Communicate the importance of school climate and its measurement in a manner that addresses stakeholder levels of awareness.
- **For States:**
 - Support policies and procedures that encourage the appropriate use and selection of school climate surveys.
 - Include school climate in school and district “report cards.”
- **For districts:**
 - Communicate importance of school climate to board and staff.
 - Implement efforts to protect groups at risk of victimization.
 - Facilitate interdisciplinary teaming among teachers.
 - Ensure climate measures include academic challenge and engagement.
 - Support the inclusion of disaggregated school data in school improvement planning.

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Take Aways (continued)



■ For schools:

- Prevent physical violence, bullying, and emotional abuse through universal preventative approaches.
- Enhance relationships between staff and students.
- Build relational trust between all members of the school community.
- Employ positive approaches to discipline.
- Encourage family engagement.

■ For families:

- Get updates on what is happening at school and in your child's classroom.
- Maintain consistent contact with your child's teachers.
- Hold school accountable for supporting a positive school climate.
- Reinforce academic, social, and emotional lessons at home.

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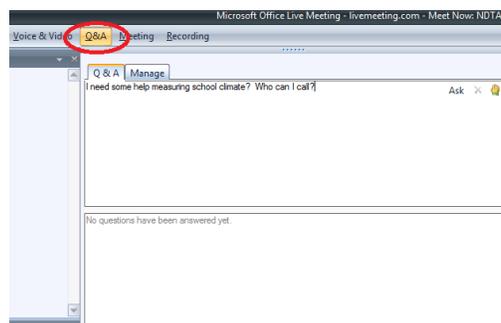


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Questions?



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