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School Climate and Pro-social Educational Improvement: Essential Goals and Processes that Support Student Success for All

National School Climate Council — May 05, 2015 Teachers College Record, Date Published: May 05, 2015 <http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 17954, Date Accessed: 6/5/2015 1:22:04 PM

There is growing federal and state support for school climate improvement and pro-social education. The National School Climate Council has developed a consensus statement about the foundational importance of intentional pro-social instruction and school climate improvement efforts. In addition, this consensus statement outlines a core set of research-based systemic, instructional and relational goals as well as processes that underscore, characterize and shape both effective school climate improvement and pro-social instructional efforts. Research, policy, practice and teacher education implications are outlined.

What Is School Climate? High-quality school climate is advantageous for all students and may be particularly beneficial for at-risk students.

Leadership Compass » Vol. 5, No. 1, Fall 2007 by Alexandra Loukas

School environments vary greatly. Whereas some schools feel friendly, inviting, and supportive, others feel exclusionary, unwelcoming, and even unsafe. The feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school's environment are referred to as school climate. Although it is difficult to provide a concise definition for school climate, most researchers agree that it is a multidimensional construct that includes physical, social, and academic dimensions. The physical dimension includes:

- Appearance of the school building and its classrooms;
- School size and ratio of students to teachers in the classroom;
- Order and organization of classrooms in the school;
- Availability of resources; and
- Safety and comfort.

The social dimension includes:

- Quality of interpersonal relationships between and among students, teachers, and staff;
- Equitable and fair treatment of students by teachers and staff;
- Degree of competition and social comparison between students; and
- Degree to which students, teachers, and staff contribute to decision-making at the school.

The academic dimension includes:

- Quality of instruction;
- Teacher expectations for student achievement; and
- Monitoring student progress and promptly reporting results to students and parents.

School Climate and Learning

BEST PRACTICE BRIEFS are a product of UniversityCommunity Partnerships @ Michigan State University, connecting university resources to the community. BRIEFS are reviewed by participating faculty, Partnerships staff, and an advisory group of potential users. Responsibility is assumed by Betty Tableman, Editor, at 517-432-7138, or e-mail: tableman@msu.edu.

As school administrators struggle with reform to improve students' academic performance, their concerns must encompass more than instructional change. This BRIEF describes school culture and school climate—two factors of a school's environment that can either impede or support learning—and focuses primarily on school climate and its relationship to learning. It also provides information on assessment instruments for measuring school climate.