



Indicator Explanation



DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Culture	Solicit and act upon stakeholder input	4B.1 The School Improvement team annually releases to the school community a report of its analysis of the required Hawai'i school climate survey, including concrete actions it plans in response to the analysis.

A school's culture shift requires improvements in school climate as perceived by all stakeholders within the school community. Leadership teams must identify and administer an annual climate survey to gauge the perspectives of staff, students, and parents. Teams must further develop the school's vision for positive climate, a logic model to guide the improvement process, data collection and analysis plans, and communication strategies for sharing survey results and corresponding actions taken to improve the schools' climate.

Successfully turning around schools requires members of the school community to be intensely focused on student learning, work together to shift the school's culture to incorporate higher academic expectations for all students, and make significant and concerted efforts to fulfill these expectations (The Center on School Turnaround, 2017; 2018; Herman et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010). The entire school must embrace these high expectations, which in turn contribute to creating a positive school climate that embraces improvement and academic success (The Center on School Turnaround, 2017; 2018). School climate reform is increasingly being viewed as a worthwhile and valuable data-driven school improvement strategy that promotes safer and more supportive schools (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013), and policy-makers are devoting increased attention to the role of school climate in student learning and achievement (Weissbourd, Bouffard, & Jones, 2013). In fact, ESSA now requires states to measure non-academic factors such as school climate as part of how they gauge school success (DeWitt, 2016). The school community must gather stakeholder input to assess perceptions about the school's climate and the turnaround initiative in order to evaluate the improvement process and make changes as necessary (The Center on School Turnaround, 2017; Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011). The Leadership, or Collaborative Success team must administer a school climate survey annually to all stakeholders and share results with the school community, including discussions of concrete actions the school is taking to address the survey's results.

The Importance of School Climate

Thapa et al. (2013) cite the National School Climate Council's description of positive school climate:

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction from, learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment. (p. 358)



Research shows that school climate is important to address within school improvement (Marzano, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & Dipaola, 2006), and “positive school and classroom climates mitigate the negative effect of poor SES background on academic achievement” (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Bennishty, 2017, p. 453). Sustained positive climate is associated with effective youth risk prevention and health promotion efforts, youth development and social and emotional learning (Devaney & Berg, 2016), positive academic achievement (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006) student behavior (Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014), increased graduation rates, and better rates of teacher retention (Thapa et al., 2013). School climate also contributes to teacher outcomes such as burnout, cynicism, and retention (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Leadership within the school community is paramount for creating a positive school climate that can enhance the likelihood of substantial school improvement (Bryk, 2010), and assessing school climate regularly is a key task for leadership teams (Redding et al., 2011).

Developing an Action Plan to Address School Climate Survey Results, and Sharing Results with the School Community
According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE),

By assessing the perceptions of school climate, educators and education agencies can identify key issues in need of reform. Once needs are identified, data from school climate assessments can be used to set goals and priorities and choose programmatic interventions. Data also can identify areas where students, staff, and parents view climate in similar or dissimilar ways. (NCSSLE, n.d.(a))

Climate survey data should be used in conjunction with other indicators such as discipline incidence reports to get a comprehensive picture of the school’s climate and determine appropriate interventions, and school leaders should conduct focus groups or interviews to follow up on areas of concern identified by the survey (e.g., bullying, discipline data, etc.) (NCSSLE, 2016). Once climate data are collected, school leaders must plan and implement climate improvement initiatives based on results. Leadership teams may wish to consider the following questions when considering climate improvements:

- What interventions or practices are we already implementing that can support school climate work?
- What systems, policies, and practices need to be adjusted to successfully make sustainable school climate improvements?
- Are there initiatives at other schools from which we can learn?
- What supports at the district and school levels do we have available? What additional supports will we need to be successful?
- What professional development is needed, and what do we already have in place that we can build upon? How can we embed the professional development on an ongoing basis?
- What is a realistic timeline and what are realistic goals for the school climate improvement process in our school? (NCSSLE, n.d.(b), pp. 3–4)

Leadership teams should consider these questions as they create a vision and logic model to address school climate, a plan for data collection and analysis, and a communication plan (NCSSLE, 2016). Best practices include:

- Developing a vision that describes what is meant by school climate;
- Developing a logic model (or theory of action) to guide climate improvement, including the resources to be used (inputs), and the policies and practices to be implemented (outputs) to realize intended impacts (outcomes);
- Planning for data collection and analysis by determining the data to be collected and how it will be analyzed (e.g., broken down by stakeholder group, or student subgroups such as English Learners), including possible focus groups to be used to follow up on survey results of concern;
- Developing a communications plan that indicates how climate survey data and school climate efforts will be shared with members of the school community as well as how their input will be obtained about the efforts. (NCSSLE, 2016, pp. 4–5)



Sharing results of the annual climate survey with school personnel and families is a necessary first step of the communications plan. Results can be shared in the form of a summary of findings that is disseminated to stakeholders in a user-friendly format as described below (NCSSLE, 2017):

Toward the end of your data collection process, prepare a document that summarizes your school climate findings across data sources. The summary should provide an overview of the various topic areas of school climate that [were] assessed, school-level scores on measured topic areas, and district-level data if available....the summary report can document change in school climate within the school, if available...Reports should be easy to interpret and accessible to a wide audience of school, community, and family stakeholders, be actionable, and make data results meaningful (e.g., by providing data comparisons). (p. 101)

The strategic communications plan may also address how findings on improvement efforts will be further communicated through additional communication channels such as electronic mailing lists, websites, and social media outreach that specifically focus on school climate (NCSSLE, 2016; 2017).

See: <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement> for examples of climate surveys that have been reliably tested and established validity, along with a free platform to help schools collect, analyze and report school climate data.

References

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