

Building Positive School Culture in Your School: **“School Climate Improvement Process”**

(adapted from Center for Social/Emotional Education)

STAGE 1: PLANNING

- Develop a committee
- Identify personnel
- Identify necessary funding
- Spread the word – involve all stakeholders

STAGE 2: EVALUATION

- Ask some hard questions (“Development & Alignment” – “Analyzing aspects of our school culture”)
- Develop common definitions
- Identify what is already in place

STAGE 3: UNDERSTANDING & ACTION-PLANNING

- Refer to the research
- Identify best practices
- Conduct site-visits
- Prioritize/identify target areas
- Discuss programmatic changes or approaches you want to bring in
- Action-plan
- Start small

STAGE 4: IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop a short/long-term plan
- Identify necessary resources (personnel/funding)
- Allow enough time
- Share success stories

STAGE 5: RE-EVALUATION

- Determine how you are going to assess progress
- Develop varied/consistent methods of assessment
- Use the data to drive action-planning

Building Positive School Culture in Your School: “Development & Alignment”

Essential questions:

Do we have solid beliefs? Is the reality aligned with our beliefs? How can we bring everything into alignment?

<u>School Beliefs</u>	<u>Present Reality</u>	<u>Future Reality</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -what does the paperwork say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mission -vision -expectations -beliefs -core values -do these exist? -are we happy with them? -do they need to be re-visited? -do they cover all essential aspects of our school? (instruction, leadership, professional development etc...) -where are these documents? -who created them? -who has access to them? -have they ever been re-visited or updated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -is the mission/vision a reality? -how is the mission/vision operationalized? -what areas are not aligned with the school beliefs? -are some aspects of the school beliefs more visible than others? -whose priorities does the present reality represent? -who controls the present reality? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -who should identify what this should look like? -what are the priorities/goals for the school? -what actions need to be taken to make this a reality? -can these actions be sustained? -what personnel needs to be involved? -do changes need to be made in policies? -is funding necessary? -what is the short/long-term plan?

Building Positive School Culture in Your School:
“Analyzing aspects of our school culture”

Essential questions:

What do each of these look like?

What do we want these to look like?

	PRESENT REALITY	FUTURE REALITY
Relationships		
Communication		
Teaching & learning practices		
Leadership practices		
Organizational structures		
Environment		
Norms, values & expectations		

Building Positive School Culture in Your School:

“Questions to consider”

RELATIONSHIPS

- Do people greet one another?
- Do people smile?
- Do adults share resources, supplies, ideas?
- Is there time in the schedule for common planning? If so, do staff use it?
- What does your school do to engage parents?
- Does your school partner with other organizations or other local schools?
- Do teachers really know their students and families?
- Do teachers in different parts of the building know one another?
- Are there opportunities to get to know one another?

COMMUNICATION

- How do adults speak to one another? (respectful, disrespectful, listen)
- How do students speak to one another?
- How is the phone answered?
- How are expectations for staff & students communicated and followed through on?
- Are staff members given opportunities to share ideas/opinions about school-wide practices?
- Are deadlines given out in a timely/reasonable manner?
- Do people respond to e-mail or phone messages in a timely manner?
- What is the preferred mode of communication?
- How is information solicited of teachers?

TEACHING & LEARNING PRACTICES

- Are students in tracks?
- How are students grouped?
- How is information delivered?
- How are classrooms set up? (where does the teacher stand/sit?; are desks in rows?)
- What materials are used? (textbooks, newspapers, technology, arts)
- Are students expected to work independently?
- Are students given opportunities to work in groups? If so, how is this facilitated?

- Are staff encouraged to pursue further studies or seek our professional development opportunities?

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

- How are decisions made & communicated? (top-down, shared)
- Who makes decisions?
- Who is the “face of the school”?
- Is the mission clearly communicated and spoken about frequently?
- What is the hiring/firing procedure?
- What is the teacher evaluation procedure?
- Are policies and procedures communicated and followed-through on?
- What does your organizational chart look like? (top heavy?)
- How are staff & students recognized?
- Does the strategic plan include all elements of the actual school program?
- Do funding decisions reflect school priorities?
- How REALLY has the power?

ENVIRONMENT

- Is your school clean? (common spaces? classrooms? bathrooms?)
- How often do these spaces get cleaned?
- Does the school community share responsibility for keeping areas clean?
- Does your school recycle or use other green elements?
- What does your building feel like when you walk in? (inviting, chaotic)
- What is the noise level in different areas of the school?

NORMS, VALUES & EXPECTATIONS

- How are these communicated? (role-modeling, written communications)
- Do all persons follow them? If not, are there any consequences?
- Who sets them?
- Are they different for students and staff?
- Do people have the opportunity to discuss them, define them, tweak them?
- Are they consistent in all areas of the school?
- Are they reinforced?

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