



**National School
Climate Center**

*Creating a Climate
for Learning*

nsc.csee.net

Measuring and Improving School Climate: *nsc.csee.net*

A Strategy that Promotes Students Achievement –

**Accountability Systems That Support Learning and Whole School
Improvement**

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**OFFICE OF SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS
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School Climate

Definition*: School Climate



School climate refers to character and quality of school life.

It is based on patterns of people's experience of school life and reflects*:

- norms, goals, values,
- interpersonal relationships,
- teaching, learning and
- leadership practices, and
- organizational structures.

* National School Climate Council (see Appendix A)



What Does a Positive School Climate Look Like?

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing 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 and satisfaction from learning.

Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment*.

* National School Climate Council (see Appendix A)



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School Climate: Key Dimensions



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- 1) Safety:** Rules & norms; Physical; Social-emotional
- 2) Relationships:** Respect for diversity; Social support - Adults; Social support - Students
- 3) Teaching and learning:** Support for learning; Social and civic learning; Professional development; Leadership
- 4) Environmental:** School Connectedness/Engagement; Physical surroundings



School Climate Research



I. Academic Achievement :

Positive and sustained school climate is strongly correlated with and to some extent, predictive of high quality teaching and student academic achievement

II. Risk Prevention and Health Promotion:

Effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts are positively correlated with safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate settings.

III. Individual Experience :

A positive school climate affect student's self-esteem and self-concept in positive ways

IV. Teacher Retention:

Positive school climate is associated with greater teacher retention

For a summary of empirical school climate research as well as access to the *School Climate Research Data Base*, see:
<http://nsc.csee.net/research/>



Measuring school climate



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❖ Options:

- Focus groups
- Surveys: comprehensive or single focus
- Observational methods
- Interviews
- “Town hall” discussions
- Study circles
- Participatory action research (with students)

❖ Suggested method of assessing school climate: Scientifically developed and comprehensive measures:

- Reliable and valid
- Recognizing student, parent and school personnel “voice”
- Assessing all of the dimensions that color and shape the norms, goals and values that shape how safe we feel, relationships and the process of teaching and learning



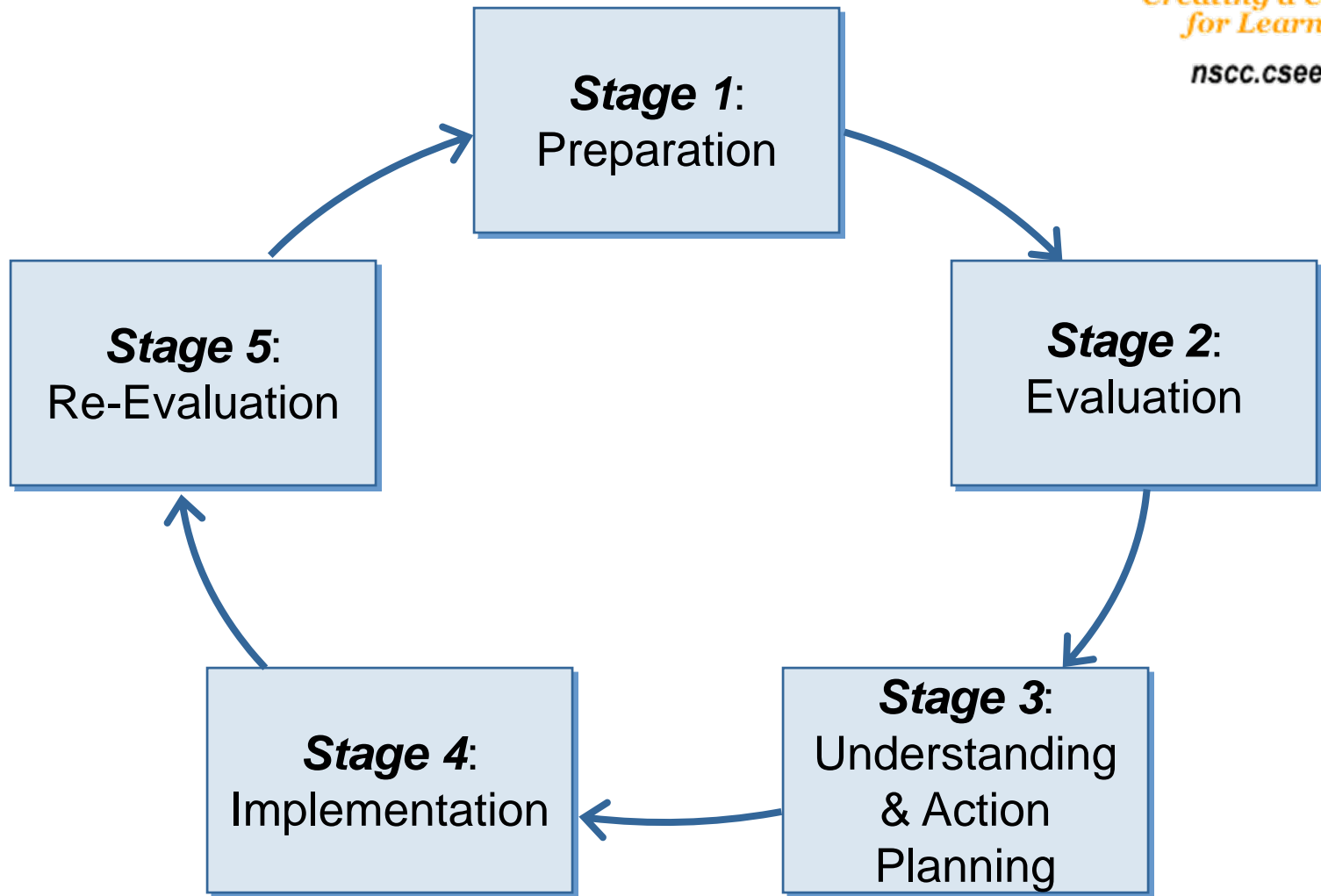
School Climate Improvement Process



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The stages and process of school climate improvement

- ❖ **Common barriers and challenges**
- ❖ **Tasks and responsibilities**
- ❖ **Tools and resources**
- ❖ **Indicators for success: Appreciating the process as well as outcomes**





Benefits of measuring and improving school climate

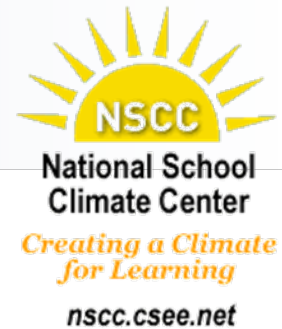
A strategy to further:

- ❖ High quality teaching, student learning and achievement
- ❖ High quality educational management and leadership: Coordinated, transparent and comprehensive efforts
- ❖ Safe and civil schools
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Authentic learning communities and support substantive school improvement efforts
- ❖ Recognizing the essential social, emotional, ethical and civic as well as academic dimensions of school life and learning: the foundation for positive youth development, learning and engaged citizenry





Suggested responsibilities:



❖ Educational practitioners:

- *Teachers*: To understand & model practices that promote safety, “connectedness”, engaged teaching and learning in the classroom.
- *Principals*: To foster community wide processes that support transparent, collaborative learning and implementation efforts that support positive and sustained school climate: Developing instructional, systemic, crisis preparedness related goals, methods and measurement processes.
- *Superintendents*: To foster school system-wide and larger district-community processes that support transparent, collaborative learning and implementation efforts that support positive and sustained school climate: Developing instructional, systemic, crisis preparedness, and policy/practice alignment related goals, methods and measurement processes.