School Climate **IMPROVEMENT** | Resource Package

Reference Manual
on Making School Climate Improvements.

2023 Edition

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Engagement • Safety • Environment

Disclaimer

This *Reference Manual* was designed and written under the U.S. Department of Education (Department) Contract Numbers EDESE12O0035 and 91990021A0020 by the American Institutes for Research, the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). Cindy Savage served as the contracting officer's representative (COR) for the NCSSLE technical assistance center for this edition.

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2023 Edition

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Conditions for Positive School Climate

Most young people today spend a large portion of their daily activities in a school setting. When students learn in positive environments that are safe, supportive, and engaging, they can participate more fully in the classroom and develop skills that will help them be successful in school and in life.[1,2] The relationship between school climate and student learning extends across elementary and secondary education,[3] as well as school types (e.g., size, location, and levels of income/socioeconomic status).[4]

> School climate improvements are not about getting it "done" in the short term but about improving school climate and conditions for learning to improve student outcomes in the long term.

A positive school climate buttresses other academic and student support interventions, including those that address the needs of students who are struggling and those who are vulnerable or at risk.[5] Research provides clear evidence that a positive school climate is linked with positive student outcomes, including the following:

■ Increased attendance, academic performance, graduation rates, and reduced dropout rates[6,7]

■ Reduced disruptive behavior, improved relationships, and increased prosocial behaviors[8]

School climate influences not only student experiences but also other members of the school community, including teachers and staff. Positive school climate improves teacher satisfaction and reduces levels of educator stress and burnout.[9]

School climate includes factors that serve as conditions for learning and promote physical and emotional safety, connection and support, and engagement. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Safe and Supportive Schools Model includes three overlapping domains that influence school climate:

■ **Engagement:** Strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools and strong connections between schools and the broader community.

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[1] Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(2), 425–469. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669821

[2] Ripski, M. B., & Gregory, A. (2009). Unfair, unsafe, and unwelcome: Do high school students' perceptions of unfairness, hostility, and victimization in school predict engagement and achievement? *Journal of School Violence, 8*(4), 355–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220903132755

[3] Osher, D., Kendziora, K., & Chinen, M. (2008). *Student connection research: Final narrative report to the Spencer Foundation*. American Institutes for Research. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Spencer_final_report_3_31_08_0.pdf

[4] Shindler, J., Jones, A., Williams, A. D., Taylor, C., & Cardenas, H. (2016). The school climate-student achievement connection: If we want achievement gains, we need to begin by improving the climate. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development, 1*(1), 9–16. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1158154.pdf

[5] Ripski & Gregory (2009).

[6] Osher et al. (2008).

[7] Stewart, E. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 4*0(2), 179–204. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124507304167

[8] Ibid.

[9] Osher, D., Dwyer, K., & Jimerson, S. R. (2006). Safe, supportive, and effective schools: Promoting school success to reduce school violence. In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of school violence and school safety: From research to practice* (pp. 51–72). Erlbaum. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292710221_Safe_supportive_and_effective_schools_Promoting_school_success_to_reduce_school_violence

- **Safety:** Schools and school-related activities in which students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and controlled-substance use.
- **Environment:** Appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear and fair disciplinary policy.

Figure 1. Domain and Topic Areas of EDSCLS

Domain: Engagement Topics	Domain: Safety Topics	Domain: Environment Topics
Cultural and Linguistic Competence	Emotional Safety	Physical Environment
	Physical Safety	Instructional Environment
Relationships	Bullying/Cyberbullying	Physical Health
	Substance Abuse	Mental Health
School Participation	Emergency Readiness Management	Discipline
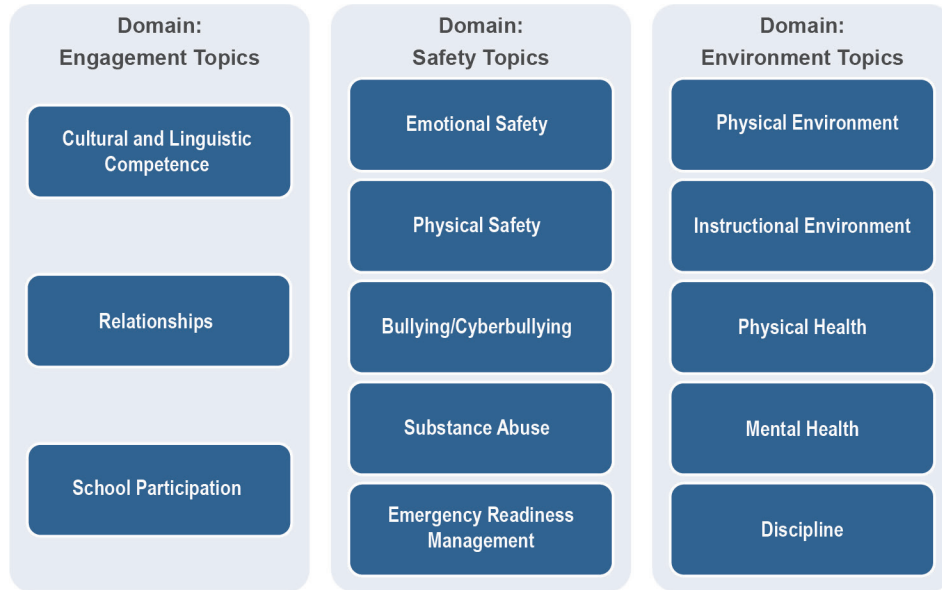
Research shows that a positive school climate is linked with student academic success, prosocial behaviors, reduced likelihood to participate in disruptive behavior,[10,11] increased graduation and attendance rates, and reduced dropout rates. So, school climate improvement benefits all students. When schools make an intentional effort to improve and sustain a positive climate, students are more likely to engage in school and develop positive relationships; more likely to feel safe, nurtured, and welcome; and less likely to exhibit problem behavior in and out of school. In addition, a positive school climate buttresses other academic and student support interventions, including those that address the needs of struggling students and students who are vulnerable or at risk.[12]

Reference Manual on School Climate

Whether you work in a state educational agency (SEA), district, charter authorizer, charter management organization (CMO)/education management organization (EMO), or school, this *Reference Manual* is for you to initiate or enhance your school climate efforts so that stakeholders feel engaged, feel safe, and belong. The *Reference Manual* is designed for individuals or teams working to support school climate improvements at the district or school level. Your school may already have efforts underway to improve the school climate for your students and staff but looking

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[10] Reaves, S., McMahon, S. D., Duffy, S. N., & Ruiz, L. (2018). The test of time: A meta-analytic review of the relation between school climate and problem behavior. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 39,* 100–108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.01.006

[11] Grayson, J. L., & Alvarez, H. K. (2008). School climate factors relating to teacher burnout: A mediator model. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(5), 1349–1363. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.06.005

[12] U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Guiding principles: A resource guide for improving school climate and discipline.* http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf

for tools or resources for systematic change. This *Reference Manual* is based on the latest research and lessons learned from states, districts, and schools that improved school climate.

The School Climate Improvement Resource Package

This *Reference Manual* is part of a larger set of web-based tools and resources called the School Climate Improvement Resource Package (Resource Package), developed by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) through the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). Whether you are new to school climate improvements or have been implementing the effort for years, the Resource Package allows you to take a step back to assess what you are doing, how you are doing it, and what you have left to do, in a comprehensive manner. To support these efforts, the Resource Package includes the following:

- The *School Climate Improvement Reference Manual* (this guide) provides a comprehensive list of goals, strategies, outputs, and resources that correspond to five activity sets for improving school climate.

- The *Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements* provides a summary of this *Reference Manual,* including the key strategies for getting started on your school climate efforts, tips on what it looks like when the strategies are well executed, and guidance on what to avoid.

- *School Climate Improvement Action Guides* are customized for each stakeholder group— district leaders, school leaders, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, families, students, and community partners—and provide action steps on how each stakeholder group can support school climate improvements, tips on what it looks like when the action steps are implemented effectively, and guidance on what to avoid.

- The *Data Interpretation Guide* provides descriptions of and approaches for using and interpreting school climate survey data.

- *Data Interpretation Topical Discussion Guides* assist in using and interpreting data results for specific school climate topic areas overall and provide information on how to use these data to target interventions (including in a multitiered system of supports).

- A *Data Analysis Worksheet* provides key questions that U.S. Department of Education School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) users can use to guide analysis of their data.

- *Online Modules* provide users with an opportunity to learn and practice skills.

- *Self-Assessment Tools* help identify which resources would be helpful to your district or school and give pointers as you work on school climate improvements.

The EDSCLS is a suite of four surveys in a web-based administration and reporting platform developed by ED's National Center for Education Statistics. EDSCLS provides states, districts, charter authorizers, CMOs/EMOs, and schools nationwide with student, instructional and noninstructional staff, and parent/caregiver surveys on a web-based platform that allows for the collection and reporting of school climate data. However, all parts of the Resource Package are designed to support users of any valid and reliable school climate survey(s), not just those using EDSCLS.

The web-based Resource Package presents manageable, action-oriented, and evidence-based resources to help educators create a positive school climate. While progressing through the current *Reference Manual,* you can track your progress along the school climate improvement process by using the Self-Assessment Tools. These tools provide customized feedback that guide you to resources you can immediately implement. You can maneuver through the Resource Package by using the hyperlinks throughout. For more information on the entire Resource Package, visit https://. safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about.

Organization of This *Reference Manual* on School Climate

Although you can read the manual from front to back, it is structured to allow you to focus on those activity sets, action steps, or objectives that you need the most help on or that serve as the best starting points for your efforts given where you are with your school climate improvement process. For a shorter and more compact information, you may use the *Quick Guide*.

The reference manual on school climate is organized by five activity sets, action steps, and objectives (see Figure 2). It provides guidance for activities (described in more detail later), as well as concrete strategies, and resources to improve school climate. Resources include self-assessment tools, self-paced online modules that include practicing key skills, research, and other products (e.g., webinars, planning tools, and interpretation guides).

Figure 2. Components of the *Reference Manual*
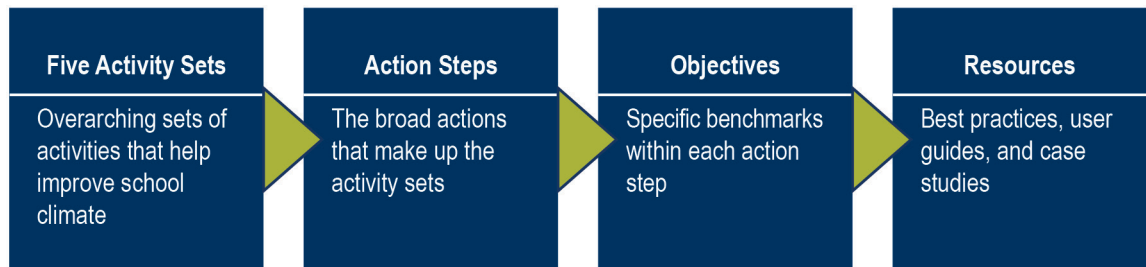
Five Activity Sets	Action Steps	Objectives	Resources
Overarching sets of activities that help improve school climate	The broad actions that make up the activity sets	Specific benchmarks within each action step	Best practices, user guides, and case studies

The *Reference Manual* identifies five overarching sets of activities (Figure 3) for improving school climate, with the goal of improving student outcomes. Although each activity set has its own action steps, specific objectives, and corresponding strategies and resources to help you achieve them, they are interconnected and build on one another to create a cohesive and systematic process. We note where those connections occur to help you connect your work. It is common for districts, CMOs/EMOs, and schools to implement strategies across and within activity sets at any given time. We now invite you to review the information about each activity set to initiate or enhance school climate improvements in your community.

Figure 3. Five Activity Sets for Improving School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements. Planning is important because you need to develop an infrastructure to implement and sustain school climate improvements, which is important to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of school climate improvement efforts. It also is important to obtain and maintain buy-in and engagement of key leaders and members of the school community because it allows you to be purposeful in how you engage members of your school community.

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements. The second activity set focuses on communications with all members of your school community. Communication includes sharing information and building collaborative relationships with those who contribute to improving school climate or are directly or indirectly influenced by these efforts. Stakeholders include administrators, teachers, students, district/CMO/EMO and school staff and volunteers, parents/caregivers, board members, and community members. It takes special care to include those members of the school community who may be hard to reach or who have historically felt marginalized or left out of school climate improvement efforts.

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data. Effective data collection includes a series of steps to ensure quality, responsiveness, and relevance. For example, it is important to analyze and report the data in ways that maximize the ability of all members of the school community to understand the results and make meaning of findings for further action.

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions. The prior activity sets (planning, stakeholder engagement, and data collection) aim to prepare you for the review of existing activities or gaps and the selection and adoption of strategies, programming, policies, and initiatives needed to strengthen your school climate.

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements. The fifth set includes monitoring how well your school is engaging in school climate improvement processes; assessing the extent to which your efforts are yielding benefits for your school, educators, and students; and capturing how well your school is achieving its goals for the diversity of subpopulations
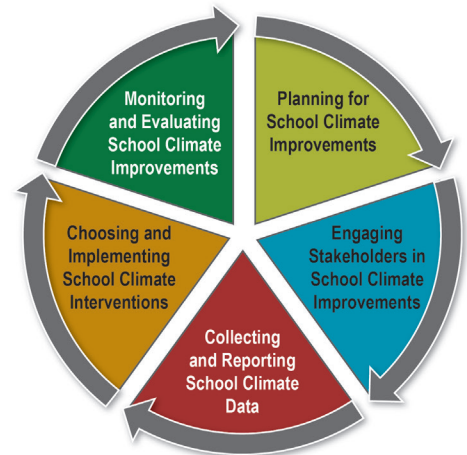
that you serve. In addition, the results from this activity set will inform the planning activities (Activity Set 1) for your next cycle of school climate implementation efforts.

Strategies and Resources

We offer multiple strategies to help you achieve the objectives presented throughout this *Reference Manual*. Some strategies are more comprehensive and long-lasting; others are discrete activities that facilitate processes but are not always necessary. **You do not need to participate in all of the strategies provided to achieve the specific objectives, nor are the strategies presented as an exhaustive list.** The strategies referenced provide you with a starting place to begin working toward the objective.

This icon appears next to strategies that are specific to districts, charter authorizers, or CMOs/EMOs that are working on making school climate improvements.

This icon appears next to school climate improvement strategies that are specific to schools, both traditional and charter.

In addition to the School Climate Improvement Resource Package resources listed earlier, this guide includes links to free informational resources that supplement the material presented here, plus case studies that showcase the application of a theory or concept to real situations.

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

This set of activities lays the groundwork for improving school climate and involves obtaining crucial buy-in from key leaders and stakeholders. In addition, this set of activities provides guidance on how to prepare for the activities found within the other activity sets. Even if you have already implemented activities to improve school climate, the planning activities in this set help you consider what is working—and what is not—and for whom. In addition, this activity set includes strategies for developing an infrastructure that will help you sustain the work for the future. New charter schools have the unique opportunity and challenge of developing and implementing school climate initiatives from scratch or relatively early in the life of schools. This makes the early planning activities all the more important to achieving fidelity and long-term effectiveness.

For district or CMO/EMO staff, it is important to work collaboratively with schools and to assess readiness to determine the amount and type of support needed to plan and engage in school climate improvement efforts.

Activity Set 1 consists of three action steps:

- Step 1.1: Develop a plan for making school climate improvements.
- Step 1.2: Plan for school climate improvement sustainability.
- Step 1.3: Develop infrastructure and a plan for evaluating school climate.

Many of the objectives overlap, so you may be completing objectives across action steps within activity sets concurrently.

Action Step 1.1: Develop a Plan for Making School Climate Improvements

The first planning action step includes seven objectives. These objectives are intended to build readiness to engage in school climate activities within a school system. School climate efforts are more successful when stakeholders are engaged and ready to participate in the process, the state, district, charter authorizer, CMO/EMO, or school has built the capacity to support or engage in school climate activities, and data are used to inform and guide the planning process.

Objectives include the following:

- 1.1.1: Engage key leaders in making school climate improvements.
- 1.1.2: Form a core planning team using a multitiered framework.
- 1.1.3. Develop and communicate a shared understanding of "improving school climate."
- 1.1.4: Assess organizational capacity for undertaking a school climate initiative.
- 1.1.5: Review data and current interventions being implemented at multiple tiers.

- 1.1.6: Identify already administered school-based surveys, including and beyond school climate.
- 1.1.7: Articulate vision, goals, objectives, action steps, and guidelines for the proposed effort at multiple tiers.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.1: Engage Key Leaders in Making School Climate Improvements

Purpose of Engaging Key Leaders

Key leaders are important. They guide the direction of the district, CMO/EMO, or school; identify priorities; and direct resources to those priorities. Engage these leaders to identify their perceptions of needs; elicit and address their questions and concerns; gain authorization; and, when necessary, create a sense of importance or urgency and identify specific roles and supports they may be able to provide in your school climate efforts. For example, if the focus is at the school level, district leaders should be engaged in the process in a supporting role, rather than a leadership role.

Strategies for Engaging Key Leaders

It is important to understand the priorities and needs of key leaders. Initiate communications with leaders and key staff about their goals for schools and students, the importance of school climate toward achieving these goals, how school climate improvements fit into their other initiatives, and the human and institutional resources needed or available. A critical theme in these communications should include anticipated barriers to engaging a diversity of stakeholders and how to overcome these barriers. For example, champions can be crucial resources for engaging hard-to-reach caregivers, but they also need to be effectively engaged. So, key leaders can elevate resources for champions.[13]

d Districts and CMOs/EMOs should determine different levels of supports that may be needed at each campus depending on the unique needs of each school.

Related Resources for Engaging Key Leaders

- *School Climate Improvement Online Module 1: Understanding the Importance of School Climate and Engaging School Leadership in Its Improvement* (NCSSLE): This online module provides activities to practice engaging leadership in school climate improvements.
- *Coming Back to Climate: How Principals Use School Climate Data to Lead Improvement* (Aspen Institute Education & Society Program, 2020): This toolkit for principals draws upon experience from school leaders on how to use school climate data to drive equitable outcomes and strengthen leadership routines. This resource also provides practical guidance for understanding the experiences of youth and addressing challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[13] These discussions connect to *Objective 1.1.3* and *Objective 1.1.5.*

- *Engaging School Administrators: A Guide for Safe Schools/Healthy Students Project Directors* (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This guide presents strategies to gain the support of principals and superintendents for Safe Schools and Healthy Students grantees but can be applied to any school climate improvement initiative.

Related Resource From the Field

- *Climate Connection Toolkit* (California Department of Education): This toolkit includes no- and low-cost practical, hands-on activities to engage staff, students, and other school community members in school climate initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.2: Form a Core Planning Team Using a Multitiered Framework

Purpose of Forming a Core Team

Your core planning team will lead the school climate improvement effort. The team's goal is to facilitate the process of establishing and launching the initiative, build commitment from stakeholders, and model what will be expected from schools. The core planning team helps establish the school climate vision and mission and prioritizes evidence-based strategies using a multitiered framework. In addition, the team provides oversight to the district or school to ensure that strategies are being implemented with fidelity and makes any necessary midcourse corrections.

Strategies for Forming a Core Planning Team

a. Prior to the initiative taking off, identify your stakeholders and stakeholder groups and understand their concerns to determine why school climate improvement is important for every member of your school community. See Activity Set 2 for more information about who your stakeholders may be and how to collaborate with them on your school climate improvement efforts.

b. Recruit individuals with skills that are essential to the success of the initiative (e.g., relationship/networking, communication, conflict resolution skills, and "big-picture" thinkers and doers).

c. Include instructional and noninstructional staff, youth, families, and community members who understand the relationship of school climate to academic outcomes.

SELECTING A CORE PLANNING TEAM

d Led by district-level staff and composed of school administrators and teachers from a diverse range of schools, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, governing board members, community members, and students, if possible.

S Led by teachers and composed of a school administrator, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, community members, and district staff and students, if possible.

d. Ensure that the team includes diverse stakeholders who represent the groups in the school community, paying close attention to those whose voices may not always be heard or represented.

e. For team members who are not educators—such as youth, families, and community members—build their knowledge base so they are well prepared to engage as key partners in discussions and planning related to school climate.

f. Coordinate with other teams, programs, or offices already in place (e.g., school improvement team or school discipline committee) to ensure that this is not a stand-alone team. For example, have members from these other teams become members of the new team to build on related efforts and avoid starting from nothing. Connect to *Objective 1.1.4.*

g. Identify clear expectations of the roles and responsibilities of the core planning team members, making certain that there are overlapping responsibilities. This approach ensures that members are well positioned to assume the duties of anyone who might leave the team, which promotes sustainability.

h. Focus on the district's school climate priorities and facilitate school-level teams to participate in the improvement efforts.

Related Resources for Forming a Core Planning Team

■ Stakeholder *Roles* in Building and Maintaining Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE): These resources outline the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the school climate improvement process. Having a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities can help you create a well-rounded and representative core team.

■ *Safe, Supportive and Successful Schools Step by Step* (American Institutes for Research® [AIR®]): This book, particularly Chapter 1, describes the early steps for starting school climate change planning, including building a team and defining the roles of team members.

■ *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies From the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System* (The Council of State Governments Justice Center): This resource can help you determine which offices, community groups, and individuals would be helpful to include on your planning team to build relationships and use discipline practices in a way that reduces suspensions and escalation of discipline into the court system.

Related Resources From the Field

■ *Innovation Spotlight (S3)*: The Arizona Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) initiative, in partnership with the University of Arizona's College of Education, provides implementation and program support to leadership core teams (principals, certified staff members, parents, students, and community partners), which analyze survey data to inform decision making, increasing engagement and fidelity.

■ *Rio Rancho Public Schools Equity Council:* Rio Rancho Public Schools in New Mexico use an equity council, comprising diverse stakeholders, to inform the district of equity issues and provide them with recommendations accordingly. If your school or school district has an

equity council, team, or cohort involved in this work, consider integrating them into your core planning team to involve the voices and concerns of marginalized communities.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.3: Develop and Communicate a Shared Understanding of "Improving School Climate"

Purpose of Starting With a Shared Understanding

An important first step for the core planning team is to develop a shared understanding or definition of what school climate means in your school or district. The development of this definition will draw upon research and stakeholder feedback to identify the dimensions of school climate (the topic areas of *school climate*) that are important and relevant to your context and goals and will guide your improvement efforts. Through this process, the core planning team also will build knowledge and coherence, setting the foundation for communicating with others and actualizing a successful school climate improvement plan.

Strategies for Developing and Communicating a Shared Understanding

a. Create a brief resource to guide schools in communicating with diverse stakeholders about school climate.

b. Synthesize the research and knowledge that will be shared and the structures and processes that the district will put in place to help individual schools participate in school climate improvements.

Related Resources for Developing and Communicating a Shared Understanding

■ *School Climate Literature Summary* (The Aspen Institute, 2021): This summary of literature defines school climate, identifies its impact and covers its core elements. It also provides strategies for effective measurement and use of data. It can be used to develop an *initial* understanding of school climate and some of its associated interventions.

■ *A Review of School Climate Research* (Thapa et al., 2013): This older but highly respected article provides a comprehensive review of school climate research, synthesized from literature and studies beginning in the early 1980s. It focuses on safety, relationships, teaching and learning, institutional environment, and the school improvement process and can be used by educators, school staff, and other important stakeholders to *deepen* and *contextualize* their understanding of school climate and its associated interventions.

■ *Creating Equitable School Climates* (Ross et al., 2020): This research article calls for a more inclusive definition of school climate—one that takes race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and geography into account. It highlights state and district work integrating equity into school climate improvement efforts in Connecticut, Minnesota, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

■ *Planning and Sustaining COVID-19 Recovery* (NCSSLE): This webpage provides a variety of resources that schools can use to address challenges brought on by the pandemic. It includes research reports, webinars, blog posts, and evidence-informed strategies for

Conditions for Positive School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

supporting positive school climate during COVID-19 and can be used by educators and school staff to understand and adapt to the pandemic's impact on school climate.

■ *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar contains research-based evidence that school climate is connected to student outcomes, ways to integrate school climate into schools, strategies to communicate the importance of school climate to stakeholders, and the importance of quality school climate surveys.

■ *National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments*: NCSSLE comprises school climate experts who are able to answer questions related to your school climate efforts.

■ **d** *Creating Conditions for Student Success: A Policymakers' School Climate Playbook* (National School Climate Center): This guide includes strategies that district policymakers and education leaders can use to help ensure that district and school policies are supportive of a positive school climate.

Related Resources From the Field

■ *Safe and Supportive Schools* (California Department of Education): This webpage provides an overview of the California Department of Education's S3 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It includes background on the school climate index, as well as a link with more detailed information on index methodology via school climate report cards. Core planning teams can use this resource to better understand school climate work in action and draw from lessons learned by California grantees.

■ *School Climate & Academic Performance Across California High Schools* (S3): This fact sheet highlights a study of more than 700 California high schools that demonstrated the positive relationship between positive school climate and academic performance in schools. This study can support efforts to create buy-in among stakeholders that school climate improvement is a valuable endeavor.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.4: Assess Organizational Capacity for Undertaking a School Climate Initiative

Purpose of Assessing Organizational Capacity

Beginning the improvement efforts can be time and labor intensive (especially given staff members' competing demands for time and potentially different attitudes about the importance of school climate efforts), but it has the potential to produce substantial results for students and teachers. Therefore, it is key for the core planning team to first assess organizational capacity—including any potential partners—to undertake the school climate effort. Effective assessment of organizational capacity includes understanding the motivational readiness and resources available or needed at the district, school, and individual levels. Capacity includes the motivation of key participants (e.g., leader commitment to allocate staff to task); general capacity (e.g., the capacity to collect and analyze data); and school climate–specific capacity (e.g., budget allocated to address identified needs).

Strategies for Identifying Needed Organizational Capacity

a. Identify and determine all key individuals, departments, or agencies and their expected roles or contributions.

b. Identify systems to help coordinate future meetings across offices to help support and sustain school climate improvements.

c. Coordinate with your budget office as well as your contracts office to determine additional fiscal channels to support this work.

d For districts, CMOs/EMOs, or multischool initiatives, it is important to identify the department or office that will oversee the school climate improvements. This approach will help clarify roles, responsibilities, and the administrative and fiscal channels needed to develop and sustain these efforts. A next step should include determining how the lead office or department will work with other offices to support and sustain the school climate initiative because it is critical that these efforts are connected and supported across multiple district or school initiatives. (See *Objective 1.2.2*)

Related Resources for Assessing Organizational Capacity

■ *School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment and Action Planner* (NCSSLE): This readiness assessment tool is a short survey designed to help school leaders and leadership teams identify strengths and needs in order to guide school climate improvement efforts.

■ *Validating the Organizational Climate Measure* (Journal of Organizational Behavior): The Organizational Climate Measure is used to evaluate a school's organizational climate and effectiveness by looking at managerial practices, productivity, and innovation. The measure provides information to help determine a school's readiness for change. See pages 405–407.

■ *Willing, Able → Ready: Basics and Policy Implications of Readiness as a Key Component for Implementation of Evidence-Based Interventions* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief defines organizational readiness and three components that comprise readiness: motivation of personnel, general organizational capacities, and intervention-specific capacities.

■ *Organizational/Partnership Functioning & Change Readiness: 24 Assessment Tools* (National Child Welfare Workforce Institute): This summary document, developed by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Research Institute and National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, lists a variety of readiness measures that are linked to summaries to help you determine which measures fit your school's needs and setting.

■ *Stages of Concern | Concerns-Based Adoption Model* (AIR): The Stages of Concern is one of three components in a Concerns-Based Adoption Model that supports effective implementation of a new program or innovation. This tool specifically focuses on understanding and responding to the concerns of key stakeholders who are charged with implementing a program or innovation.

■ *TCU Organizational Readiness for Change Scale* (Texas Christian University [TCU] Institute for Behavioral Research): The Organizational Readiness for Change scale has two scales,

one for counseling staff and the other for directors and supervisors. The scale focuses on needs, resources, staff qualities, and organizational climate.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.5: Review Data and Current Interventions Being Implemented at Multiple Tiers

Purpose of Reviewing Data and Current Interventions

Data are key to building commitment, engaging stakeholders, and recognizing your progress. Review your existing activities, their implementation, and outcomes to give you a foundational understanding of whether existing efforts are being implemented as planned and the extent to which you are currently achieving your intended outcomes. It also helps assess whether these efforts are fragmented or aligned to ensure that different levels of student needs are met.

> **What Is a Multitiered Approach?**
> A multitiered approach recognizes that students need varying levels of support to be engaged and successful. At its core, a multitiered approach employs universal (Tier 1) strategies that support all students with an environment that is safe, supportive, and engaging. Tier 1 strategies include, for example, inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices, social and emotional learning curricula, and schoolwide expectations and norms. More targeted interventions, including small-group services (Tier 2) and more intensive individual interventions (Tier 3), are employed for students needing additional support.

Strategies for Reviewing Current Interventions

a. To build on your organizational capacity for improving school climate, develop an inventory of current school climate interventions and practices (e.g., evidence- or research-based programs, practices, approaches, and policies) and ongoing processes (e.g., data collection and analysis). The inventory should include the population or subpopulations of students or stakeholders these programs, services, and policies serve or target. Be sure to document whether relevant policies and programming are in actual use and to what degree by trained staff (versus just existing on paper). Your district, CMO/EMO, or school may already have multiple initiatives that address various aspects of school climate (e.g., positive behavioral interventions and supports [PBIS], multi-tiered systems of supports, school discipline policies, social and emotional learning).

b. Describe the objectives of current interventions, breadth of implementation, and any information on implementation quality and outcomes for the full population and subpopulations of students.

c. Review any available data that exists on the interventions and initiatives that are currently implemented.

d. **d** Crosswalk current interventions to determine the degree of their alignment and identify gaps in relation to the needs of your district, CMO/EMO, or school.

Related Resources for Reviewing Data and Current Interventions

- *Civil Rights Data Collection* (CRDC; ED Office for Civil Rights): Public schools and school districts are required to respond to the CRDC to report data on key education and civil rights issues in our nation's public schools.

- *Safe Supportive Schools/EDSCLS Model* (NCSSLE): This framework highlights the components of school climate and how the use of assessment and data can demonstrate a school's strengths, needs, and progress.

- *Resource Mapping Tool* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This tool helps users identify and understand how current programs and initiatives are supporting the goals of their school or district and to identify where gaps are.

- *The PBIS Website* (Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center): This website provides information about what a multitiered system of supports can look like within the school, family, and community.

Related Resource From the Field

- Iowa—Continuum Mapping Tools (S3): The *Learning Supports—Guide for Continuum Mapping* describes how continuum mapping helps schools and districts view the myriad learning supports available to students (e.g., activities, programs, initiatives, and services) and identify which students should receive those supports. The guide also contains a continuum mapping tool to help schools and districts discuss what learning supports are available to students, align those supports with goals, simplify duplications, and identify gaps in supports.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.6: Identify Already Administered School-Based Surveys, Including and Beyond School Climate

Purpose of Identifying Already Administered Surveys

The staff and students in your district, CMO/EMO, or school(s) are likely taking multiple surveys per year across a variety of topics for multiple reasons (e.g., educator assessments, research, or the monitoring or evaluation of current programs). Identifying surveys that are already being implemented within the district or school will eliminate duplication or undue burden on schools, staff, and students and highlight opportunities for alignment between school climate and other related initiatives. When there is continuity in surveys that are already being administered, you will be able to monitor trends across time.

d At the district, charter authorizer, or CMO/EMO level, it also is important to consider which entity will collect, store, and analyze data. Similarly, it is important to consider if the same data will be collected across the district/CMO/EMO or if schools will be able to select their own data sources.

Strategies for Identifying Already Administered Surveys

a. Review our guidance in *Objective 1.1.5* for reviewing data and current interventions being implemented at multiple tiers.

b. Review information about the survey data (e.g., sources, strengths, and gaps in current data, how often the data are collected, response rates, and populations covered).

c. Evaluate the success of past survey administrations and whether data were and are being used effectively.

d. Evaluate how comprehensive and useful current survey data are in relation to your definition of school climate. Engaging multiple stakeholders (e.g., teachers, support staff, administrators) in this conversation will be useful for your core planning team.

e. Determine whether to eliminate or modify current surveys if possible and appropriate or whether additional survey instruments are needed depending on any gaps identified. These decisions may include balancing a variety of factors, including comparability with local, state, and national data; and maintaining data trends, and timing of data collection to allow for effective decision making.

f. **d** A key decision point from your review of survey data available will be to determine whether all schools in the district or CMO/EMO will collect the same data from the same sources and who will collect those data (district or school).

Related Resources for Identifying Already Administered Surveys

■ *Survey Development* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar focuses on the development of school climate surveys and measures. Content includes how to choose a survey, survey items, item testing, and survey format.

■ *School Climate Survey Compendium* (NCSSLE): This compendium allows school or district staff members to inventory currently used valid and reliable surveys, assessments, and scales of school climate to help consider what they can use to fill in gaps. This list, maintained by NCSSLE, assists educators with their efforts to identify and assess the conditions for learning.

■ *Project Prevent Webinar—What You Need to Know: Participation in the School Climate Survey* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents information about the EDSCLS, including what it measures, how to access and administer the survey, and how to use the results. Even if you do not choose to use this survey, it provides helpful guidelines when choosing and administering the survey(s) or items you would like to use.

■ *U.S. Department of Education School Climate Surveys* (NCSSLE): This free web-based administration platform includes a suite of school climate surveys for middle and high school students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and parents/caregivers. The platform processes data and provides user-friendly reports. Education agencies administering the survey can store the data locally on their own data systems.

OBJECTIVE 1.1.7: Articulate Vision, Goals, Objectives, Action Steps, and Guidelines for the Proposed Effort at Multiple Tiers

Purpose of Articulating Vision, Goals, and Guidelines

Building upon the previous steps—synthesizing the research and developing a shared vision— the core planning team can begin to articulate the purpose and goals that will drive school climate improvement. Articulating a clear vision, purpose, and goals lays the foundation for building action steps and selecting programs and strategies for implementation. In addition, a clear vision and goals provides a common language for communication and engagement with stakeholders. Throughout this process, it is important to obtain stakeholder input as you refine your vision, goals, and objectives.

d District/CMO/EMO core planning teams should decide how schools should use the vision and mission statements and provide guidance and parameters for adaptation and alignment with existing efforts.

Strategies for Articulating and Communicating Your Vision, Goals, and Guidelines

a. Convene the core planning team to develop the overarching vision, goals, and guidelines for the initiative, starting with a review of the research collected on school climate and the shared understanding developed in *Objective 1.1.3.* Ensure that you and your core planning team have incorporated stakeholder input.

b. Your vision statement should use clear and concise language that is easy to communicate with others and can serve as the basis for a concrete plan. Identify the target audience, proposed activities, and desired outcomes.

c. Plan how you will share your vision. Keep in mind that different audiences may require different communication mechanisms or platforms to maximize engagement and ensure that stakeholders feel safe and supported to share their input. Therefore, it is key to obtain and integrate input from all members of your school community, including students (see *Objective 2.1.2*).

d. Plan events, material dissemination, and talking points to build engagement and buy-in, as well as create continued opportunities to obtain input from the community.

e. As needed, develop guidelines and communication about how the district/CMO/EMO intends to support schools in developing school climate initiatives, including the types of tools, resources, and processes the district/CMO/EMO intends to use.

Related Resources for Articulating Vision, Goals, and Guidelines

■ *Training and Technical Assistance Services* (NCSSLE webpage): This webpage connects you to technical assistance specialists and key resources available through NCSSLE. The center provides state, district, school administrators, teachers, school support staff, communities, families, and other stakeholders with culturally and linguistically competent, customized, technical assistance and training in the areas of assessment of conditions for learning, as well as in the implementation of evidence-based programmatic interventions.

The center also provides webinars, conferences, learning events, training modules, and other products and tools.

■ *Comprehensive Improvement Planning for Schools and Districts* (Kentucky Department of Education): This improvement plan includes implementation tools for stakeholders, key element templates for schools and districts, and goal-building templates to identify objectives and strategies relevant to the school improvement process.

Example From the Field

Early in its planning, Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools (IS3) focused on two critical aspects: securing buy-in from students, staff, and the community (those affected by school climate) and setting up the necessary infrastructure for data collection. They implemented communication efforts to publicize the launch of their work and announced which schools were selected to participate after being awarded through an application process. Strategically acknowledging entities involved in project planning, helped spread the word and get the schools and public interested in and excited about the work. Iowa's publicity included the development of a video featuring its U.S. senator, governor, and the Iowa Department of Education (DOE) director.

Iowa's measurement system and reporting systems were not originally built to accommodate every school in the state. To sustain the IS3 annual process for schools, the data and reporting structures had to develop a data collection and reporting/portal system aligned with Iowa DOE databases. Each IS3 project school had a core leadership team, composed of administration, teachers, parents, and community members, to promote school-level ownership and decision making for the initiative. This team was responsible for implementing a continuous improvement process (CIP). The CIP included six steps: (1) determining an area of focus, (2) describing the story behind the data, (3) selecting a strategy, (4) detailing the action steps, (5) ensuring adults are doing what they need to do, and (6) knowing if it has made a difference. The core leadership team developed an IS3 Overview document and frequently asked questions sheets for use by grant teams and partner schools, as well as detailed job descriptions for school climate consultants and data analysts, broken down by percentage time by activity.

Action Step 1.2: Plan for School Climate Improvement Sustainability

As you build out your school climate improvement activities, consider sustainability and be intentional about the structures and supports that will enable these efforts to become integrated into everyday practice. If your efforts continue and thrive within your institution beyond the initial implementation period and regardless of changes in leadership, staffing, and funding you have achieved it. This action step will help you think strategically about initiating sustainability efforts and continuing them in the future.

Action Step 1.2 has a single objective:

■ 1.2.1: Align relevant school climate and multitiered system of supports policies and practices with other important initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 1.2.1: Align Relevant School Climate and Multitiered System of Supports Policies and Practices With Other Important Initiatives

Purpose of Aligning the Effort With Other Initiatives

To institutionalize school climate efforts, it is important to align school climate and multitiered systems of support with other important initiatives and make them part of your school improvement plans. Rather than thinking of school climate policies and practices as "one more thing" that school leaders and educators must do, you should ensure that school climate practices are seen as a critical ingredient to effective instruction and are treated as an ongoing effort that is integrated into school and classroom policies and practices. *Objective 1.1.5* intended to help you identify the interventions and practices specific to school climate that were already being implemented. This objective will help you align your school climate efforts work with other important initiatives within the school. Other initiatives may be in such areas as staff and student attendance, dropout prevention, educator effectiveness, and college- and career-ready standards. Your efforts to support school climate improvement should be integrated into and coherent with your efforts to promote multitiered systems of support. To make the effort sustainable, consider how to incorporate school climate into your school improvement plans.

Strategies for Aligning the Effort With Other Initiatives

a. Develop a work plan that outlines responsibilities, with primary and alternate staff designated for each task. Part of this plan should be to outline the existing resources available or needed to ensure continuous funding streams so that staffing and supports are not disrupted. For example, cross-training multiple groups of staff and other stakeholders can support the delivery of essential activities and strategies.

b. Based on the data reviews that your core planning team has conducted (see Action Step 1.1) and the vision and goals identified, your core planning team should be ready to develop a list of behavioral expectations and standards for all members of the school community.

c. Look at your existing improvement plans and other initiatives to determine how to make your school climate efforts coherent with what else is happening and how to make school climate a foundational piece of school improvement efforts.

d. Embed your school climate improvement plans into district plans to help institutionalize and leverage resources (e.g., district policy, staff, funding stream).

e. Embed school climate priorities (e.g., student social and emotional skills and conditions for learning) within academic instruction to increase commitment from school staff and faculty. Stakeholder input will be essential for sustaining your efforts. For example, educator

Conditions for
Positive School
Climate

**Activity Set 1:
Planning for
School Climate
Improvements**

Activity Set 2:
Engaging
Stakeholders in
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 3:
Collecting and
Reporting School
Climate Data

Activity Set 4:
Choosing and
Implementing
School Climate
Interventions

Activity Set 5:
Monitoring and
Evaluating Overall
School Climate
Improvements

evaluations and corresponding feedback may incorporate school climate and multitiered policies and practices.

Related Resources for Aligning the Effort With Other Initiatives

- *2012 Grantee TA Symposium: Merging School Climate in Pursuit of Academic Excellence* (S3): These presentations and worksheets provide strategies for sustaining school climate and culture improvement and incorporating changes into long-term organizational and fiscal plans.

- *Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional Practices that Integrate Equity-Centered Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning* (AIR, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, and Harmony/Inspire): This resource provides guidance for incorporating social and emotional learning into academic instruction.

- *Avoid Simple Solutions and Quick Fixes: Lessons Learned From a Comprehensive District Approach to Improving Conditions for Learning* (AIR): This paper describes the lessons learned by Cleveland Metropolitan School District when it incorporated Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) in its elementary schools to support social and emotional learning and describes how the district used data collected to assess success and make improvements.

Action Step 1.3: Develop Infrastructure and a Plan for Evaluating School Climate

The first two action steps in Activity Set 1 focus on a core school climate leadership team's engagement to examine current practices and needs to improve school climate to begin to develop structures for institutionalizing efforts. The third action step of planning is specific to school climate data. Composed of seven objectives, Action Step 1.3 can help you facilitate the development of an infrastructure to assess school climate.

- 1.3.1: Use a logic model and indicators.
- 1.3.2: Identify, adapt, or develop school climate surveys.
- 1.3.3: Select other types of school climate data.
- 1.3.4: Develop selection criteria for school surveys (if applicable).
- 1.3.5: Develop a plan for sharing findings from school climate data.
- 1.3.6: Develop or upgrade technology infrastructure.
- 1.3.7: Develop contracts and find partners if needed (e.g., local universities).

OBJECTIVE 1.3.1: Use a Logic Model and Indicators

Purpose of Using a Logic Model

In Action Step 1.1, we guided you to review the research on school climate that is intended to inform your logic model. Generally, a logic model specifies the inputs (e.g., resources, staff, and funding

streams), targets (e.g., your aim), outputs (e.g., the activities and engagement practices that promote school climate), and outcomes (e.g., the desired short- and long-term results if you have the right target and appropriate intervention) associated with your school climate improvement efforts. You might consider it a list of "if-then" statements that lays out a clear view of expectations as you plan for your school climate improvement efforts. If you have not developed a logic model yet, please see our resources below.

d   A district/CMO/EMO logic model is different from one that outlines the processes for a school because the district/CMO/EMO will focus on cross-office connections, support structures for schools, or district/CMO/EMO-wide outcomes.

Strategies for Using a Logic Model

a. Use your logic model to communicate about and review your progress on school climate efforts in regularly scheduled meetings with the core planning team and staff trainings.

b. Revisit your logic model for an assessment of progress you make and make adjustments to your plans as needed for continuous improvement.

c. [If federally funded] Align the model with required Government Performance and Results Act indicators.

Related Resources for Developing and Using a Logic Model

- *Project Prevent: Logic Model Development Process* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar was designed to support Project Prevent grantees with creating logic models. It provides guidance and examples of how to create a detailed logic model to guide school climate improvement.

- *Logic Model Toolkit: A Resource for Current and Prospective Grantees of Charter School Programs* (NCSRC): This toolkit can help schools develop logic models, align project activities and goals with available resources, and display their project clearly. It also can help schools know how to use their logic models to guide, monitor, and report on project implementation.

- *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide* (W.K. Kellogg Foundation): This guide presents the underlying principles of logic models and how to use them as a tool to plan, implement, and disseminate a program and its activities.

- *Understanding Action Research* (Center for Collaborative Action Research): This resource presents the definition, theory, and model for action research that can support your school climate change process.

Related Resource From the Field

- Tennessee—*Safe and Supportive Schools Logic Model* (S3): This sample logic model from the Tennessee Center for Safe and Supportive Schools at Vanderbilt University includes the inputs, outputs, and desired impact at each stage and level of intervention.

OBJECTIVE 1.3.2: Identify, Adapt, or Develop School Climate Surveys

Identification of School Climate Surveys

School climate surveys are a primary data source to assess how students, staff, families, and community members perceive the climate of the school. *Objective 1.1.6* guided you in a review of existing survey data you are collecting to identify data gaps you might need to enhance. This objective aims to guide you through identifying, adapting, and developing surveys that will help you achieve your outcomes outlined in the logic model. When selecting or developing survey tools, it is important to identify surveys that will yield useful data that can further inform improvement and maintenance of positive school climate. This includes selecting or developing tools that have items or scales that align with your expected outcomes. It also is important to select survey tools that are designed for your specific population or context (e.g., developmentally or culturally appropriate) and are compatible with the human and material resources you will need for administration. (See *Objective 1.3.5* for a discussion of school climate assessment infrastructure.)

See Activity Set 3 for a full discussion on the collection and analysis of school climate data.

> There are many valid and reliable school climate surveys currently used across schools and school districts in the United States. The Department of Education School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) were developed based on strong theoretical and empirical research and piloted across the country, to test the validity and reliability of the individual items and the resulting scales. The web-based platform contains a suite of school climate surveys for students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and families, as well as survey administration and data reporting functions. These surveys and guides are free for any state, district, or school to use and will perform many of the functions outlined in this *Reference Manual* for you. For example, it contains scale scores and provides data reports for you in a timely manner. For more information about the EDSCLS, go to *https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls*.

Strategies for Identifying School Climate Surveys

a. Determine which domains and topic areas (constructs) of school climate will be measured. The activities we outlined in *Objective 1.1.6* should guide you in this process.

b. Use valid and reliable school climate scales (you may, with permission, borrow from previously validated surveys). See the NCSSLE *School Climate Survey Compendium* to review validated school climate surveys. Decide whether to use the EDSCLS, use another valid and reliable school climate survey, or develop your own.

c. Review the language of the surveys to make sure they are age-appropriate, accessible, and practical. For example, if developing a new survey or modifying a scale from an existing survey, it will be critical to allow adequate time (up to a year) to conduct a pilot test. The time for pilot testing will help you establish reliability and validity of the items and constructs for your population. Decide whether to administer the survey to all students or a sample of students; for staff surveys, decide whether to administer the survey to all staff or only teaching staff. For more information, see *Objective 3.1.1.*

d. Determine how often data collection should occur for each survey. The timing of data collection should aim to minimize the burden on your school staff who might be responsible

for other testing and data collection activities. For example, a calendar of assessments, testing, and data collection of school climate surveys may visually display overlapping time frames. Also consider the timeline for analyses and dissemination so that the information informs decision making. For example, annual school climate surveys generally take place in the spring so that respondents have an opportunity to experience the school environment prior to taking the survey, and results are available in time to inform planning for the next school year. You also may want to collect some data more frequently and/or earlier in the school year to help you monitor whether school climate improvement efforts are moving your school in the right direction. However, keep in mind that even in successful interventions, change may not happen quickly. In addition, administering the same surveys to the same participants repeatedly within a school year may lead to survey fatigue and compromise data quality. Consider these details as part of your data collection and management plan.

e. Ensure that you sample adequate numbers of participants from all subgroups, if you are collecting data from a subsample. For more information, see *Objective 3.1.2.*

Related Resources for Identifying School Climate Surveys

■ *School Climate Measurement* (NCSSLE webpage): This webpage provides many relevant resources, including a compendium of school climate surveys and a webinar on assessment, sampling, and survey administration.

■ *School Climate Survey Compendium* (NCSSLE): This compendium allows school or district staff members to inventory currently used valid and reliable surveys, assessments, and scales of school climate to help consider what they can use to fill in gaps. This list, maintained by NCSSLE, assists educators with their efforts to identify and assess the conditions for learning.

■ *Project Prevent Webinar—What You Need to Know: Participation in the School Climate Survey* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents information about the EDSCLS, including what it measures, how to access and administer the survey, and how to use the results. Even if you do not choose to use this survey, it provides helpful guidelines when choosing and administering the survey(s) or items you would like to use.

■ *U.S. Department of Education School Climate Surveys* (NCSSLE): This free web-based administration platform includes a suite of school climate surveys for middle and high school students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and parents/caregivers. The platform processes data and provides user-friendly reports. Education agencies administering the survey can store the data locally on their own data systems.

■ *Survey Development* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar focuses on the development of school climate surveys and measures. Content includes how to choose a survey, survey items, item testing, and survey format.

OBJECTIVE 1.3.3: Select Other Types of School Climate Data

Purpose of Selecting Other Types of Data

Surveys provide a wealth of information on how students, staff, and families perceive school climate. On the other hand, other data can provide additional insights that surveys may not be able to capture or can help you better understand survey findings for decision making. At times when large-scale survey data collection is not feasible because of concerns such as budgetary constraints, timing of data needed, or district policies, using other data sources can be key to decision making. For example, student and staff attendance rates can provide powerful information regarding engagement—a reflection of school climate—and can help with decisions about resource allocation. Reviewing administrative records of behavioral incidents and how they were addressed may help the monitoring of disciplinary practices and additional supports needed within a school (e.g., professional development for staff). Focus groups with students and parents can help deepen your understanding of why stakeholders perceive the school's climate the way they do (see *Objective 3.1.5*). Students are key stakeholders in improving your school climate, and their voices can provide meaningful information needed for the short- or long-term outcomes you hope to achieve.

Strategies for Selecting Other Types of Data

a. Use your logic model to guide your team's planning of data collection activities needed to assess your progress and outcomes on school climate improvements.

b. Consider how additional data aligns with the survey data as well as whether the data will help you see whether the school improvement efforts are responsive to needs.

Related Resource for Selecting Other Types of Data

■ *Understanding Student Discipline Practices in Charter Schools: A Research Agenda* (Center for Reinventing Public Education): This report describes the kinds of methods and data that will allow for useful sector comparisons, as well as other things you can learn from and about charter schools on the topic of discipline in schools.

Related Resource From the Field

■ *Innovation Spotlights: Youth Engagement in Michigan* (S3): This article shares how Michigan S3 partnered with the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to facilitate a 2-day institute (Student Engagement in School Reform), during which six high school teams of youth and school staff, along with Neutral Zone advisors and youth, conducted team-building exercises and small-group work to capture the student voice.

OBJECTIVE 1.3.4: Develop Selection Criteria for Schools (If Applicable)

Purpose of Developing Criteria for Selecting Schools

S If you are a single school, you will not have to worry about the first objective within this action step (1.3.1) because the strategies within that objective focus on selecting schools.

Strategies for Developing Criteria for Selecting Schools

a. Determine whether your efforts will involve all schools in your district or CMO/EMO or a subset of schools based on level (e.g., middle schools), other characteristics, and/or their interest in participation.

b. Determine the selection criteria for the schools, which could include criteria for identifying select schools or allowing schools to apply. Identify the team that will select the schools or review applications and provide a training session to ensure the consistent rating of applications.

c. *If the district or CMO/EMO is selecting schools,* state the criteria for selection (e.g., schools with greatest need) and communicate the expectations to stakeholders. Be clear about any resource constraints (e.g., restrictions in the number of schools that can participate).

d. *If a district or CMO/EMO is allowing schools to apply,* develop an application that allows schools to demonstrate their readiness to participate in school climate improvements. Schools might demonstrate their readiness in a number of ways: (a) the capacity to collect, analyze, and interpret school climate data; (b) identified strengths and areas for improvement; (c) justifications for participation; and (d) team structures and activities that can support school climate efforts.

e. Use the same criteria to select all schools. For those schools that apply, use a rubric to evaluate each applicant impartially.

Related Resources for Developing Criteria for Selecting Schools

■ *List of Safe and Supportive Schools Participating Districts in California* (S3): This website by the California Department of Education offers information on how the state selected its 58 districts for its S3 initiative.

■ *School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment and Action Planner* (NCSSLE): This readiness assessment tool is a short survey designed to help school leaders and leadership teams identify strengths and needs in order to guide school climate improvement efforts.

■ *Willing, Able → Ready: Basics and Policy Implications of Readiness as a   Key Component for Implementation of Evidence-Based Interventions* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief defines organizational readiness and three components that comprise readiness: motivation of personnel, general organizational capacities, and intervention-specific capacities.

OBJECTIVE 1.3.5: Develop a Plan for Sharing Findings From School Climate Data

Purpose of Planning to Share Data Findings

Sharing information about your data collection and findings with your school community is a key part of your continuous improvement efforts and sustaining your progress. This objective lays out a plan for communicating your findings and engaging your stakeholders in sharing your findings.

d If you are a district or CMO/EMO, you might report out the data only for each school, or you might choose to include the district/CMO/EMO averages along with the school's results to provide a comparison point. If you are using the EDSCLS platform to collect school climate survey data, you can use the benchmarked "performance" levels generated by the platform to help facilitate the meaning of your scale scores. See the *Data Interpretation Guide* for more information on the benchmarked data.

Strategies for Planning to Disseminate Findings

a. Ensure that the plan for communicating data findings aligns with—or is included within—the overarching communication plan for the school climate effort.

b. Plan the timelines for the release of various types of data findings (e.g., survey data are typically ready for release sooner than are the most recent school year's administrative data, which often are not ready until the following fall). For example, if data collection occurs across multiple data sources, your reporting may be released more frequently than once per year.

c. Engage stakeholders from segments of the community who are difficult to reach (such as those who work extended hours, do not have internet access, or do not speak English) to help devise effective communication strategies for those populations.

d. Ensure that data are communicated in a manner that helps stakeholders understand the data and know how to use their data for improvement efforts. For example, you might consider hosting data workshops, in which teams from multiple schools come together to examine and interpret their school climate data in a systematic and structured co-interpretation process.

e. Employ social marketing strategies to maximize the reach and effectiveness of your data communication efforts.

Related Resources for Planning to Share Data

- *Reporting and Dissemination* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar describes ways to align results with outcome data and properly disseminate that data to the appropriate audiences in the appropriate medium. Data can then be used to drive the selection of new interventions that will meet the needs of the school.

- *Creating Champions for Sustainability Through Social Marketing and Communications* (ICF International): This resource provides strategies for how to communicate data to various audiences to gain continued buy-in from stakeholders on school climate improvements.

Conditions for Positive School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

OBJECTIVE 1.3.6: Develop or Upgrade Technology Infrastructure

Purpose of Developing or Upgrading Technology Infrastructure

Consider developing or upgrading your technology infrastructure to support school climate improvement efforts. This infrastructure includes the school website; portals for staff, parents, and students; email lists; and other forms of electronic communication. For example, you may need to develop or update information systems and staff portals to support implementation of surveys, processing of data, and dissemination of results. (*Note:* The EDSCLS platform and other commercially available platforms include survey implementation, data processing, and reporting results for you.) In addition, you may want to update your electronic mailing lists, phone numbers, social media, and websites to facilitate communication of your school climate improvements.

You may want to determine the district/CMO/EMO's data collection capacity and whether its current data collection mechanisms can be modified or adapted to incorporate schools' climate data.

Strategies for Developing or Upgrading Technology Infrastructure

a. Consult with your own information technology (IT) staff because individual infrastructure configurations may be unique to each district and school.

b. Ensure that the technology infrastructure addresses both data collection needs (e.g., how the data will be collected, where the data will be securely housed, and how they will be analyzed) and data communications needs (e.g., how stakeholders will receive information about the initiative, the data system, and the results).

c. Pilot test any new systems that are developed and solicit end-user feedback on their experience interfacing with and using the new system.

d. Ensure that the capacity of the infrastructure will support the communication and dissemination strategies you chose in *Objective 1.3.5.*

e. Determine the level of support that you can provide to your schools when school climate data are consistently collected across the district/CMO/EMO/charter authorizer/state (e.g., surveys) versus data that may be school specific (e.g., schools may document behavioral referrals differently across the district/CMO/EMO).

OBJECTIVE 1.3.7: Develop Contracts and Find Partners If Needed (e.g., Local Universities)

Purpose of Developing Contracts and Finding Partners If Needed

At times, your district, CMO/EMO, or school may need support from other partners or contractors to assist you with your school climate improvements. The results from *Objective 1.1.4* will help you determine those aspects of your school climate improvement process that may be best suited for partnering with outside organizations (e.g., universities or community organizations) or for outsourcing to contractors. Develop processes and practices to recruit and select community-based partners and follow your district's standard processes and requirements for finding a contractor.

S For individual schools, you may want to connect with other schools also participating in school climate improvements to leverage resources.

District-Level Strategies for Developing Contracts and Finding Partners

a. Work with your education agency contracts office to initiate a request for proposal (RFP) process to obtain proposals from vendors that will meet the needs of your district or school context. Your RFP should be issued prior to, or concurrently with, the identification of schools to participate in school climate improvements, allowing enough time for the selected contractor to prepare for working with the participating schools.

b. Review how the services of the external organization match your vision and mission and will fulfill an identified gap.

c. Develop partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding with the selected partner.

d. Depending on the activities you outsource, determine how participating schools will interact with the contractor and the level of support each school will receive.

Related Resource for Developing Contracts and Finding Partners

■ *Choosing an Education Contractor: A Guide to Assessing Financial and Organizational Capacity* (The Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, AIR): This guide helps you determine what to look for, key questions to ask, where to find information about an organization, and red flags when determining the financial viability and organizational capacity of an education contractor you may want to partner with.

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 1 provided guidance on how to develop plans to roll out your school climate efforts. Activity Set 2 provides guidance on how to implement those plans and engage stakeholders—district or CMO/EMO leaders, governing board members, school leaders, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, students, families, and community partners—in improving school climate.

This activity set has two action steps:

- Step 2.1: Engage stakeholders to roll out initiative.
- Step 2.2: Evaluate and refine engagement efforts with stakeholders and continue planning for improvement and sustainability.

When stakeholders understand the value of your efforts and feel as if they matter in the school climate improvement process, they are more likely to fully participate in school climate practices, trust the data collection process (Activity Set 3), and implement the selected interventions (Activity Set 4) with fidelity. Throughout the objectives within this activity set, collaborate with stakeholders to build a shared understanding and vision for this work and set clear expectations for the process. This includes making decisions with and communicating with stakeholders about their role in the improvement process, including how and when they will participate, how their input will be incorporated, and how information will be shared. For stakeholders who are not educators—such as students, families, and community members—it is essential to build up their knowledge base about what school climate improvements are and how they work, so that they can engage in this process in an informed and effective way.

When engaging with stakeholders, emphasize that school climate improvements are a continuous process, not a one-off initiative. Reinforce that these efforts involve the development of practices and routines to ensure that school climate practices are implemented over the long run. This process is more effective when stakeholders receive necessary training and support (e.g., professional development), communication strategies maximize access to information, and school climate efforts are connected with other efforts the stakeholders are involved in (such as PBIS, trauma-sensitive approaches, efforts to reduce racial disparities, and social and emotional learning).

Action Step 2.1: Engage Stakeholders to Roll Out Initiative

This action step provides strategies to ensure that all members of your school community are invested and engaged in the school climate improvement efforts. A crucial part of engagement involves obtaining and incorporating stakeholder input—school climate efforts are something done with them, not to them.

The objectives for Action Step 2.1 are as follows:

- 2.1.1: Develop messaging to stakeholders on school climate improvement efforts.
- 2.1.2: Develop school-level climate team(s).
- 2.1.3: Conduct orientation activities for all school personnel.
- 2.1.4: Conduct orientation activities for students.
- 2.1.5: Conduct orientation activities for family and community stakeholders.
- 2.1.6: Form family–school partnerships.

While you engage your stakeholders (as defined in Figure 4), make sure to leverage the work accomplished during Activity Set 1. Specifically, pay attention to your communication and dissemination plans to inform your stakeholders about the efforts, as well as your theory of action to engage them in the identified school climate practices.

Figure 4. Who Are Your Stakeholders?

STAKEHOLDERS DEFINED

Stakeholders are those individuals who have a stake in the school. These are the individuals who you want support from to provide a positive school experience for your students. As such, most people have a stake in schools—and are thus stakeholders—but have a different role to play in schools. For example, you have staff who have a direct responsibility in creating the conditions necessary for students to learn and thrive, and you have business leaders who have a stake in the development of a well-prepared workforce.

District level	School level	Community partners
• District superintendent, other administrators, staff, school boards. *CMO/EMO* • Charter operators, executive director/CEOs, other administrators, staff, charter authorizers.	• Principal, other administrators. • Instructional staff. • Noninstructional staff (counselors; administrative, custodial, food service staff; school bus drivers; others). • Students. • Families (parents/guardians).	• Youth service groups. • Mental health organizations. • Other community-based organizations. • Foundations. • Community members.

For districts or CMOs/EMOs, work with participating schools to determine the outreach and engagement strategies needed to create a consistent message to stakeholders.

For districts or CMOs/EMOs with only a subgroup of schools participating, disseminate information about the school climate efforts to all schools in the district/CMO/EMO to inform them of the work being done and offer potential strategies for other schools to implement similar efforts.

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Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

OBJECTIVE 2.1.1: Develop Messaging to Stakeholders on School Climate Improvement Efforts

Purpose of Developing Messaging to Schools

To successfully improve school climate, there must be a shared understanding among all stakeholders in your school community about the dimensions of and effective practices in improving school climate. Developing effective messaging to stakeholders sets the stage for the remaining goals and strategies within this activity set.

After you identify your stakeholder groups, craft messaging that targets each stakeholder group. The messaging should include what school climate is, why it is important for them, what will be done during the improvement process, and how their input will be used in the process. The messaging also should emphasize that activities to improve school climate are not fixed in one point in time; they are something that you will put into practice on an ongoing basis. It is not about getting "done" but about improving school climate and conditions for teaching and learning to improve positive outcomes.

As you develop your messaging, partner with diverse stakeholders—including district or CMO/EMO leaders, charter authorizers, governing board members, school leaders, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, students, families, or community partners—to ensure that you are reaching your entire community.

Identify stakeholders who will actively participate in the process, as well as those stakeholders who might be more difficult to engage. For each stakeholder you are communicating with, provide a consistent message across your district or school(s) to ensure that stakeholders have a clearer understanding of the importance of the efforts as well as their role in the process.

Strategies for Developing Messaging to Schools

a. Revisit the communications plans you developed in Activity Set 1.

b. Develop communication materials that you can send to stakeholders about the importance of school climate and upcoming events and orientation sessions about the improvement efforts and employ social marketing strategies to maximize the effectiveness of your communication efforts. This can include developing a website, e-mail lists, and a social media presence focused on school climate.

c. Make connections to school climate in various outlets, including sections in newsletters, announcements on the school's website and any existing parent portal, standing agenda items on staff meetings, parent–teacher association (PTA) meetings, and morning announcements.

d. It is important for districts and CMOs/EMOs providing orientation activities to their schools to specify their own role and differentiate it from the role that schools will take in implementing the effort. They also should invite schools to ask what they need to be successful and what supports they would like.

Related Resources for Developing Messaging to Schools

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 2: Engaging Staff, Students, and Families in School Climate Issues* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity that allows you to practice engaging a variety of stakeholders.

■ *Creating Champions for Sustainability Through Social Marketing and Communications* (ICF International): This resource provides strategies for how to communicate data to various audiences to gain continued buy-in from stakeholders for the school climate improvements.

■ *Creating Conditions for Student Success: A Policymakers' School Climate Playbook* (National School Climate Center): This playbook, geared toward policymakers, provides evidence-based and state policy–aligned recommendations to improve school climate. Recommendation 3 provides innovative examples of engaging stakeholders to identify community and student needs and inform the school climate improvement process across several states.

■ *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar includes strategies for communicating the importance of school climate to stakeholders.

■ *Ohio Local Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: A Guide for District and School Leaders* (Ohio Department of Education, 2019): This toolkit guides district and school leaders to build meaningful and sustainable engagement and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including families of students with disabilities, families of English learners and migratory students, guardians of students in foster care, and families and students in rural communities. Section 3 dives into effective engagement tools for building a vision and strategy for stakeholder engagement, planning and organizing, and developing a locally tailored plan.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.2: Develop School-Level Climate Team(s)

Purpose of Developing School-Level Climate Team(s)

School-level climate teams can lead and manage the initiative within schools. A team can comprise school leadership, student support personnel, teaching staff representatives, school climate specialists/coaches, students, families, and out-of-school time professionals. Depending on the size and human resources of the school, the school climate team may be embedded within other existing teams (e.g., school leadership team, data support team, or discipline team), or it may be a new team developed specifically for this initiative. Regardless of the makeup of the team, the school climate team should align with and collaborate with other teams leading other initiatives within the

> ### WHEN TO DEVELOP SCHOOL-LEVEL TEAMS
>
> **S** Individual schools that are leading the initiative may have already created a core planning team as part of Activity Set 1.
>
> **d** Those schools participating in districtwide initiatives may find that forming a local school-level climate team is more efficient during this set of activities.

school. (See *Objective 1.2.2* to guide your efforts in identifying other initiatives and teams to connect with.)

d **Strategies for Developing School-Level Climate Team(s)**

a. Select a school climate leadership team that has a diverse skill set (e.g., identify one or more individuals representing these five key assets: knowledge, perspective, technical skills, personal skills, and legitimacy) and represents the diversity of the school community.

b. Select a team member with deep institutional knowledge of your district, CMO/EMO, or school.

c. Use an existing school team or establish a new team, depending on the current organizational structure.

d. Be explicit in your expectations and activities that are required of the school climate team (e.g., make sure your team is aware of potential activities, which may include hiring).

e. Actively engage a diversity of student and family voices in your school climate team.

f. Districts and CMOs/EMOs with multiple participating schools can identify and assign school climate coaches to specific schools to provide individualized support. Ideally, if possible, should stay with their assigned school(s) throughout all stages of the effort.

g. See *Objective 1.1.2* for additional strategies on forming a school-based team.

Related Resources for Developing School-Level Climate Team(s)

■ *School Based Climate Teams: Part 1 and Part 2* (NCSSLE webinars): These webinars present how to build school-based climate teams. Part 1 focuses on the management and design of multitiered internal structures and processes that positively impact student achievement, such as referrals, triage, support systems, interventions, and routine review of student progress. Part 2 focuses on how to enhance, strengthen, and sustain your school climate team's efforts.

■ *School Climate Improvement Roles* (NCSSLE): This webpage provides role-specific guidance and resources for state administrators, school/district administrators, teachers, school support staff, families, and communities.

■ *Safe, Supportive and Successful Schools Step by Step* (AIR): This book, particularly Chapter 1, describes the early steps for starting school climate change planning, including building a team and defining roles of team members.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.3: Conduct Orientation Activities for All School Personnel

Purpose of Conducting Orientation Activities for All School Personnel

Orientation activities offer you a chance to engage school personnel in the importance of school climate and what you are doing to make improvements. To accomplish this task, extend the work you conducted to complete *Objective 2.1.2.* In these orientation sessions, you and your school

climate leadership team will disseminate information about the importance of school climate, invite interest and support for the effort, explain expectations, and begin formulating key relationships. Be sure to include all school personnel, not just instructional staff, because all school staff contribute to the climate of the school. Furthermore, your efforts are enhanced when all staff are "speaking the same language" and share the same expectations about supporting a positive climate.

Strategies for Conducting Orientation Activities for All School Personnel

a. Build interest and motivation by explaining how school climate improvement efforts relate to the school's goals and priorities. (For example, you may decide to share evidence for how improving school climate boosts student achievement, reduces student behavioral issues, and benefits the most vulnerable students.)

b. Explain the background of the efforts, how leadership estimated readiness to launch it, and how it fits into other administrative or programmatic efforts.

c. Be explicit about how all school staff contribute to the process, explaining how administrative staff, cafeteria workers, security guards, school bus drivers, and others fit into activities to improve school climate.

d. Define roles and responsibilities for activities moving forward and connect the activities to anticipated outcomes. (See *Objective 1.3.1* to guide this discussion.)

e. Encourage teacher and staff voices throughout the process.

f. Have leadership, school climate coaches, and others from the school present the orientation event to their fellow staff members.

g. Employ social marketing techniques to encourage participation.

h. Provide evaluations of the orientation session to get feedback on the process.

i. Districts/CMOs/EMOs can conduct a separate orientation for district leadership and coaches.

Related Resource for Conducting Orientation Activities for All School Personnel

■ *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents research-based evidence that school climate is connected to student outcomes, how to integrate school climate into schools, strategies to communicate the importance of school climate to stakeholders, and the importance of quality school climate surveys. It can provide a helpful overview of school climate improvement when orienting school personnel.

Related Resources From the Field

■ *S3 Coordinator Quick Start Guide*: This guide describes objectives and outcomes for the California S3 Program, the duties of each member of the school climate team, and general project management guidance.

■ *Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses* (NCSSLE): This training includes a series of presentations and related online training modules for creating a safe and respectful environment on school buses. Included in the training is an

overview of safe and supportive school environments, a survey-based summary of school bus driver needs, a training module series on preventing and addressing bullying on the bus, and an action plan to incorporate training at your school.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.4: Conduct Orientation Activities for Students

Purpose of Conducting Orientation Activities for Students

Your leadership team can use orientation activities to explain the concept and importance of school climate and invite students to be part of positive change.

Explain explicitly what their role will be in the effort and potential results through participation. Examples of ways that students can actively participate in the process include reviewing students' perceptions of the climate in their school, as reported by survey data, and designing and administering additional surveys to fellow students.

Ensure that students have a voice throughout the school climate improvement process (e.g., student representation on leadership team, student council, and student focus groups). Involve a variety of types of students (not just top-performing students) to get a diversity of perspectives on school climate.

Provide students with multiple avenues to participate in developing and supporting school climate improvement

> **Engage a Variety of Students**
> It is important to engage a variety of students in your efforts. Schools often select high-performing students to speak on behalf of the student body and engage in school-level activities. However, school climate affects all students, and those who are not high performing often have the best grasp of student concerns. Likewise, students from vulnerable subpopulations—. such as those with disabilities, English learners, or who are different in some way—can be the most affected by the quality of their school climate.

activities. This will help establish trust with students, allowing for continued engagement in climate improvement activities. In addition, when students feel that they have a say and that their concerns are heard and acted upon, they will be more invested in the process and respond to surveys seriously.

Strategies for Conducting Orientation Activities for Students

a. Develop student understanding about how a positive school climate affects learning and the overall school experience. Provide time to let students process how other students and adults could perceive the climate differently than they do, and the importance of everyone experiencing a positive school climate.

b. Include students in developing and presenting the orientation session(s); use the presentation as an opportunity to model the behaviors you want to promote.

c. Provide concrete explanations that are meaningful and relevant to students.

d. Allow plenty of time for questions and answers and invite feedback; assure students that their concerns and suggestions matter and will be considered.

e. Engage students in helping define expectations for student behavior; propose that students in older grades help analyze school climate data or design additional data collection(s).

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f.   Assist students in developing strategies for dissemination to their peers.

g.   Provide evaluations of the orientation session to give feedback on the process.

Related Resources for Conducting Orientation Activities for Students

- *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents research-based evidence that school climate is connected to student outcomes. Sharing with students can help them understand its impact on their academic achievement.

- *Enhancing Peer-to-Peer Relationships to Strengthen School Climate* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents the role that positive peer-to-peer relationships play in school climate and effective practices for how adults can model and nurture healthy and respectful relationships among students on campus.

- *Student Fishbowl Activity*: This student activity is useful for facilitating a discussion about school climate and overall school experiences.

- *Developing and Sustaining a Youth Advisory Council* (Building Bridges Initiative): This tip sheet outlines student roles and responsibilities, the value to students and the school climate improvement effort, and how to start and sustain a youth advisory council.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Youth Engagement in California*: This example from California demonstrates how a fishbowl activity can successfully engage students in school climate improvement efforts.

- *Youth Engagement in Michigan*: This example from Michigan describes how a 3-day institute with student teams can kick-start students' understanding of school climate and the role they can play in improving it. It also functioned to establish youth leadership teams.

- *Opportunities for Meaningful Participation in School* (S3): This fact sheet contains a literature review on the relationship between meaningful participation in school, student wellness, and school climate. The review is supported by California's own study of meaningful participation in its schools and its impact on students.

- *Elevate Student Voice* (S3): This framework helps educators think about how well student voice is included in school improvement efforts.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.5: Conduct Orientation Activities for Family and Community Stakeholders

Purpose of Conducting Orientation Activities for Family and Community Stakeholders

Conduct orientation activities with families, family organizations (e.g., parent–teacher organization [PTO] or PTA), youth service organizations, mental health agencies, and other community stakeholders. It is important to reach out to a diversity of families, not just those already engaged with the school. Students who are struggling or have some vulnerability receive a greater-than-average benefit from a good school climate and are disproportionately harmed by a poor

school climate.[14] In addition, it can be difficult for families who work nontraditional hours or who are not fluent in English to engage with the school unless there are deliberate efforts to accommodate them.

In these orientation sessions, you and your leadership team can articulate how school climate relates to student outcomes and how family and community investment in activities to improve school climate can increase the chances for success. In addition, explain the importance of family and community engagement in promoting a positive school climate and the benefits of participation. In these sessions, provide family and community members with opportunities to become involved in the school as well as co-create structures that will allow family and community member voice within the school.

> **A Word on Family Engagement**
> View family engagement as a process of building bridges, opening two-way communication channels, and empowering families as valued partners in school climate improvement efforts. This approach will be far more effective than simply informing families about your efforts and seeking their approval. See *Objective 2.1.6* for more information on family–school partnerships.

Strategies for Conducting Orientation Activities for Family and Community Stakeholders

a. Create or enhance communication with all families about the importance of school climate; describe related activities the district or school is conducting (including encouraging families to complete school climate surveys); and provide options for engaging in the effort (including contact information).

b. Develop a strategy to bring representative family and community stakeholders to the orientation session(s) and make personal contact to extend invitations; ensure that you reach out beyond PTO/PTA families to become engaged.

c. Use a multitiered approach to family engagement.

d. Make sure orientation sessions are available at a variety of times to accommodate different family work schedules and offer them in the language(s) used in the community.

e. Invite all family and community members to participate. Use active outreach through trusted messengers.

f. Use a variety of formats to engage families and community members and provide them with materials and information, such as recorded webinars, discussion boards, emails, and school newsletters.

g. Create systems and structures with families and community members that will provide them with more voice and input in the school climate process on an ongoing basis (e.g., town hall meetings in neighborhood schools).

h. Provide evaluations of the orientation session(s) so that family and community stakeholders can provide feedback on the process to the leadership team.

i. Provide ongoing training and capacity building to help families and community members know how to get their voices heard in the school climate improvement process.

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[14] See this working paper on best practices in education for students who have experienced trauma and/or adversity.

Related Resources for Conducting Orientation Activities With Family and Community Stakeholders

- *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents research-based evidence that school climate is connected to student outcomes, examples of how to integrate school climate into schools, strategies to communicate the importance of school climate to stakeholders, and the importance of quality school climate surveys.

- *Moving Beyond Open House: Building Meaningful Relationships Between Parents/Families and Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar discusses parent and family engagement, how students and schools benefit from their engagement, and strategies that schools can use to encourage higher levels of engagement.

- *Parent Engagement Resources* (Michigan Department of Education): This webpage offers tips, effective practices, guidance, templates, activities, and parent survey instruments to assist in a comprehensive parent engagement initiative.

- *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships* (SEDL/AIR): This framework presents the added benefit and value of family–school partnerships, suggested goals and outcomes, three case studies, and recommendations for schools seeking to increase family engagement.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Let's Talk!* (Tuscaloosa City Schools): Tuscaloosa City Schools in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, uses an always-on stakeholder communication and feedback channel to gather parent, guardian, employee, and student concerns and inform improvements. This is an excellent example of a system that can reach a wide range of stakeholders and employ community voice on an ongoing basis.

- *Stapleton Elementary Chosen as a Blue Ribbon School* (Stapleton Public Schools, 2016): Stapleton Elementary in Stapleton, Nebraska, persistently ranked as one of the lowest achieving schools in the state. After gathering parents' feedback and engaging them and other community members in a school improvement process, the school was chosen as a national Blue Ribbon member. Sharing this example with stakeholders can highlight the importance of their input and potentially increase their investment and participation in your school's efforts.

OBJECTIVE 2.1.6: Form Family–School Partnerships

Purpose of Effectively Forming Family–School Partnerships

Families often are underutilized but yet are critical stakeholders in school climate improvements and the development of a multitiered system of supports. Creating meaningful, bidirectional, and culturally competent and respectful relationships between families and schools allows for many types of family involvement, contributes to improved school climate, and improves student academic and developmental outcomes. Partnerships between families and schools can evolve, grow,

and develop across time as you regularly evaluate your efforts and adapt efforts based on your evaluations. Your integration of family partnerships into schools should be a systematic and organized effort focused on student outcomes, with the goal of improving school climate.

Strategies for Effectively Forming Family–School Partnerships

a. **d** Engage district/CMO/EMO and school leaders in improving family–school partnerships, especially districts/CMOs/EMOs, to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

b. Create an action team for partnerships within your school climate team, consisting of teachers, family members, other school staff, and students (at the high school level), to specifically focus on family engagement. (See *Objective 1.1.2.*)

c. Collect information from families, teachers, and staff about preferred methods of communicating with one another, as well as preferred methods of involvement.

d. Evaluate areas of strength and challenge in the family–school partnership as the school climate efforts progress.

e. Provide a variety of ways that families can participate in supporting their children and their children's school (see Joyce Epstein's *Six Types of Parental Involvement* for examples and ideas).

f. Develop universal, selective, and targeted approaches that schools can use to reach out to families.

g. **d** Districts/CMOs/EMOs can ensure that families are aware of school climate improvements; align district/CMO/EMO family–school partnership programs and policies with school climate efforts; provide guidance to schools and families for program development; and celebrate and document progress and outcomes.

Related Resources for Utilizing Effective Strategies for Forming Family–School Partnerships

■ *What We've Learned About Creating Safe, Equitable, And Engaging Schools* (Ricker & Osher, 2022): This blog discusses the importance of fostering relationships; understanding students' culture, identity, and emotions; and collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and staff to engage students and enhance their learning.

■ *Community and Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works* (Coalition for Community Schools): This document shares recommendations from school principals on how to engage communities and families.

■ *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement* (Academic Development Institute and the Center on Innovation & Improvement): This handbook discusses family and community engagement and how it supports student success, using data to support engagement and social and emotional learning; creating a community school; engaging families in learning; working with families to promote cultural and linguistic competence; creating a school/family/community partnership; engaging family and community stakeholders in different types of schools (e.g., high school, charter, rural); and implementing suggested practices.

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- *Family and Community Engagement* (U.S. Department of Education): This website provides multiple resources; toolkits; programs; and guidance for schools, parents and families, and communities.

- *Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education* (National Education Association): This document discusses an inclusive model of parental engagement, school–family–community partnerships, to include parents, extended family members, and caregivers working in collaboration with business leaders and community groups in goal-oriented activities linked to improved student achievement and school success. It presents specific strategies to engage families and communities in education and examples of successful parent–family–community partnerships.

- *Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement* (The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [REL]): This resource, developed in partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, identifies several components that, when effectively addressed, provide schools with the foundation and building blocks needed to create and maintain safe schools.

- *Closing the Gap: Cultural Perspectives on Family-Driven Care* (National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health): This paper describes "family-driven care" from four cultural perspectives: Asian, Black, First Nations, and Latino families living in the United States. Different perspectives highlight the role and importance of incorporating "family culture" as defined by the family in the process of outreaching, engaging, and involving families in care.

Action Step 2.2: Evaluate and Refine Engagement Efforts With Stakeholders and Continue Planning for Improvement and Sustainability

Action Step 2.2 has one objective:

- 2.2.1: Review stakeholder engagement and the established communication infrastructure for sustainability.

OBJECTIVE 2.2.1: Review Stakeholder Engagement and the Established Communication Infrastructure for Sustainability

Purpose of Reviewing Stakeholder Engagement and the Established Communication Infrastructure for Sustainability

When you review your stakeholder engagement, reflect on some key questions about the level of engagement with the process thus far. Possible questions are as follows:

- How receptive were various stakeholders during orientation activities? What level of buy-in and collaboration have you gained from stakeholders?

- Do they have a clear vision of the school climate improvements?

- How have you incorporated their feedback into your current plans?

- How can you improve your stakeholder engagement and continue to build trust?

- Are some subgroups of stakeholders more engaged than others? How can you step up efforts with those less engaged?

- Have you identified individuals within each stakeholder group who are school climate "champions" that you can count on in your sustainability efforts?

Questions like these will help guide how you reflect on this set of activities, review accomplishments thus far in the process, and refine your efforts going forward. A large part of stakeholder engagement is composed of your communication infrastructure. Thus, take stock of which communication strategies (e.g., school portals, blog posts, website updates, or newsletters) appear to be the most effective at disseminating information about school climate.

d Districts/CMOs/EMOs in which only a sample of schools participate can start preparing for later scaling up efforts by disseminating information about the initiative to their entire district/CMO/EMO. Districts also can provide a forum for disseminating any lessons learned that other schools can use to improve their school climate.

Strategies for Reviewing Stakeholder Engagement and the Established Communication Infrastructure for Sustainability

a. Review the attendance records of your orientation sessions across orientation groups; if representative members of stakeholder subgroups are not attending, decide to refine or step up engagement efforts.

b. Identify potential school climate "champions" within each stakeholder group.

c. Review evaluations of your orientation session(s).

d. Conduct informal focus groups with a variety of stakeholders to determine their level of buy-in to the school climate improvement process.

e. Conduct informal surveys with a variety of stakeholders to determine if certain communication strategies are particularly effective.

f. Ensure the infrastructure allows for sustained stakeholder voice and input, deepening trusting relationships amongst stakeholders where they feel heard and that they belong.

Related Resources for Reviewing Stakeholder Engagement and the Established Communication Infrastructure for Sustainability

- *Building Sustainable Programs: The Resource Guide* (Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health): This resource outlines the process of creating sustainable programs that support adolescent health and well-being, including how to measure success, promote community support and integration, build a leadership team, create strategic partnerships, and secure financial backing. Each step is broken down into objectives, importance, action, and worksheets.

- *Creating Champions for Sustainability Through Social Marketing and Communications* (ICF International): This resource provides strategies for how to communicate data to

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Improvements

various audiences to gain continued buy-in from stakeholders for the school climate improvement process.

■ *Creating Identity-Safe Schools and Classrooms* (Learning Policy Institute): This report provides strategies that practitioners can use to create identity-affirming and psychologically safe learning environments and school communities. It centers on building trust and interpersonal connections and can inform stakeholder engagement, particularly how to engage with stakeholders who might feel marginalized by their identity in a safe and identity-affirming way.

District or State Example of Engaging Stakeholders

Michigan

Michigan kicked off its school climate work in June 2011 at what was to become their biannual "Create the Change" S3 conference for school staff. Topics included a grant overview; coaches and Michigan Department of Education state staff coordinator roles; and information on data-driven decision making, coordinated school health, and school action planning. To orient students, an annual 2-day summer Student Engagement Institute was launched in 2013. At this event, students were trained on how to establish and manage Youth Advisory Councils in their buildings. Three cohorts participated in these trainings during three summers and then received ongoing on-site coaching and technical assistance.

Family and community partnerships were developed and promoted in Michigan through the distribution of school newsletters; public relations materials; and parent postcards, a resource used to build parent–school relationships, especially for parents of students struggling academically. Traditionally, contacts to homes are made to report poor performance or behavior. However, this postcard was used to share positive news, invite the parents to conferences, or share an improvement. Also, Michigan used a parent engagement consultant to conduct parent focus groups. Information gathered from those sessions was used to plan more responsive approaches to engaging families. Numerous professional development opportunities events also were offered on parent engagement. In addition, conferences and workshops were offered for parents, including the *Talk Early & Talk Often Parent Connection Conference* (statewide) offered in March 2013 and April 2015, as well as individual workshops at the school sites.

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

> **Note:** Some sites may use the EDSCLS, which includes automated features for collecting and reporting data. Regardless of whether your site is using the EDSCLS or another school climate survey, you can refer to the *Data Interpretation Guide* to supplement the information presented in this chapter.

Activity Sets 1 and 2 provided objectives and strategies that helped you determine the types of school climate data to collect, develop your data collection infrastructure, and engage stakeholders about school climate improvements, among a host of other activities. In this set of activities, you will leverage the planning and engagement work in Activity Set 3.

Collecting and reporting on your school climate data for the first time can provide a baseline—or initial assessment—for climate-related characteristics in your state, district, charter authorizer, CMO/EMO, or school. This baseline can help you understand how the population and subpopulations perceive school climate, identify what aspects of climate you want to focus on and for whom, and determine how to effectively improve the climate in your school(s). By subsequently collecting these data multiple times throughout your efforts, you can assess how much progress you are making toward improving school climate.

You may want to administer the survey(s) multiple times during the year (no more than three) to use the data for continuous improvement. Administer surveys during the same month(s) each year (e.g., in April of each school year) so that you have consistent data across time. This approach will help you determine if climate-related interventions are working and for whom, if you need to modify current interventions, or if you need to select new interventions.

This activity set has four action steps: (a) collect data, (b) analyze data, (c) disseminate findings, and (d) evaluate and refine data collection and reporting protocols and continue planning for improvement and sustainability. The main objectives of this set of activities are to assess the current state of your school climate, understand potential differences in perceptions of school climate, and provide opportunities for your stakeholders to understand the data collected. Multiple pieces of data help you assess and report on your school climate (e.g., focus groups and interviews plus school administrative data such as student and staff attendance, behavior incidents, suspensions and expulsions, and student achievement). You also may want to consider data on mental health and mental health supports, along with social and emotional competencies. By collecting multiple pieces of data, you can inform other efforts related to school climate, such as bullying prevention, PBIS, restorative practices, trauma-informed care, and social and emotional learning.
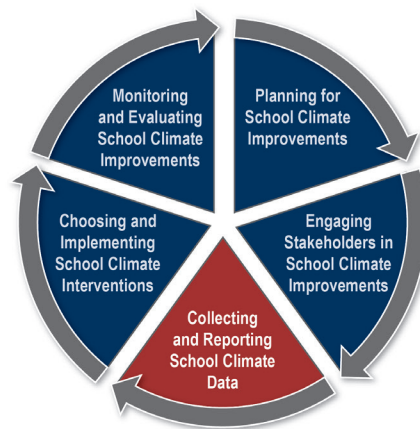
Action Step 3.1: Collect Data

This action step has five objectives:

- 3.1.1: Develop an administrative protocol for data collection.
- 3.1.2: Communicate data collection expectations to stakeholders.
- 3.1.3: Confirm the reliability of scales and revise the instrument(s) as necessary.
- 3.1.4: Collect and review other school-level data related to school climate.
- 3.1.5: Conduct focus groups and interviews with students, staff, and/or families.

See *Objective 3.1.5* for a discussion on sampling, including decisions on whether you will survey all students or just a subsample, and the extent to which you can include students with certain disabilities in responding to the surveys. If you decide to collect and analyze climate survey data and use other data sources (see *Objective 1.3.3*), you can compare results across multiple data sources. This approach can provide a more accurate and complete picture of your school climate. In addition, multiple data sources allow you to gather unique information that might not be revealed if you use only one data source. For example, focus group and interview data can deepen your understanding of school climate survey results, provide rich information about school climate, and give stakeholders an opportunity to voice concerns as well as discuss areas that they want to keep improving and growing as a school community.

> To support users in interpreting data, the EDSCLS provides benchmarked scale scores. The EDSCLS generates graphs that show where scores fall within three performance levels (least favorable, favorable, and most favorable). This enables you to easily make comparisons across topic and domain.

OBJECTIVE 3.1.1: Develop an Administrative Protocol for Data Collection

Purpose of Developing an Administrative Protocol for Data Collection

Before you collect your school climate data, revisit the administration plan developed through *Objective 1.3.4.* This step will help you develop your administration protocol or the directions and expectations you provide to those who are administering the survey. Administration instructions and protocols provide directions to those administering surveys by standardizing the administration procedure, thus promoting systematic data collection. For example, determine the time frame that respondents will have to complete the survey (i.e., the survey administration window).

If your site is using the EDSCLS, administration protocols are provided to you as part of the EDSCLS package of materials. Specifically, the EDSCLS provides you with a *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)* that contains instructions for IT staff to download the platform to the host server, an administration guide, instructions for administration of the school-based student survey, frequently asked questions and answers, a confidentiality pledge for survey proctors, an example proctor script for in-school student surveys, and consent forms for multiple types of parental consent. If you are not using the EDSCLS, the user guide can still provide resources (such as scripts and draft consent forms) than you can adapt to your efforts.

If you plan to collect more in-depth information through focus groups or interviews, protocols should be developed for these data collection efforts. These protocols should be as detailed as possible and should promote consistency across interviewers. See *Objective 3.1.5* for more information. For all types of data collection involving students, refer to your district's research office to ensure that your plans align with policies related to informed consent from parents/guardians.

Strategies for Developing an Administrative Protocol for Data Collection

a. Review the survey administration materials thoroughly prior to disseminating them to the appropriate school-level staff.

b. Identify any areas where you need to supplement the administration manual with procedures that are specific to your school (e.g., how the administration day will be organized, how support staff such as bus drivers will complete the survey, or how you will accommodate those students with disabilities who need support to be able to read the questions or log their responses).

c. Determine whether teachers will administer surveys to their own students and how you will provide accommodations for students with disabilities. If teachers administer surveys to their own students, it is important that the teacher not be able to view individual student responses.

d. Implement professional development sessions on the survey administration protocol to disseminate and clarify instructions.

e. If you are using the EDSCLS platform or other platform, be sure your IT staff download and read the IT instructions from the platform as soon as possible but at least 1 week before the administration window opens.

f. Determine an appropriate time frame for survey administration. If administering an online survey, plan for a 2- to 3-week survey administration window.

g. Ensure that appropriate training is provided as needed to school-level staff and that they know how to access the survey for themselves, plus help students log into the survey, handle students' questions, and maintain confidentiality.

h. Implement plans designed earlier in the school climate improvement process to meet minimum response rate targets for all respondent groups. (See *Objective 1.3.5.*)

i. If you are using the EDSCLS, determine whether you want to use the EDSCLS option to link student survey data to administrative records by keeping track of the assignment of student login credentials. If you opt to do this, determine how you want to keep track of these access code assignments and determine which administrative data you want to link to your survey data (e.g., free or reduced-price lunch status, disability status, English learner status, or incident and achievement data). Note that you will need to use the appropriate assent language to exercise this option. (See examples in the *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys [EDSCLS]*.)

j. If you are not using the EDSCLS, determine how you will keep track of the assignment of student login credentials.

k.   Make sure that families who do not speak English or who have limited internet access have access to the survey and are aware of it.

l.   Assign someone to monitor response rates from families and send out reminders to families to complete the survey. As part of this process, monitor responses for subgroups of families and engage in targeted outreach as needed to ensure that all kinds of families are well represented in your survey results.

Related Resources for Developing an Administrative Protocol for Data Collection

■   *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)* (NCSSLE): This user's manual provides guidance to education agencies in how to download and use the EDSCLS web platform to administer the surveys and collect data.

■   *Project Prevent Webinar: What You Need to Know: Participation in the School Climate Survey* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents information about EDSCLS, including what it measures, how to access and administer the survey, and how to use the results. Even if you choose to not use this survey, it provides helpful guidelines when choosing and administering the survey(s) or items you will use.

■   *Survey Management* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar covers important components of survey management for school climate projects. Topics include connecting items with research questions, effective practices for administering surveys, how results can guide future interventions, data issues, and getting schools and stakeholders to invest in the process.

■   *Survey Administration* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar focuses on effective practices when administering school climate surveys, including how to administer surveys to a variety of populations, modes of administration, and logistics (i.e., timeline for prepping, administering, analyzing, and reporting data). Additionally, it addresses important differences when administering to students, school staff, and families.

■   *Safe, Supportive and Successful Schools Step by Step* (AIR): This book, particularly Chapter 1, describes the early steps for starting school climate change planning, including setting up processes for data collection.

OBJECTIVE 3.1.2: Communicate Data Collection Expectations to Stakeholders

Purpose of Communicating Data Collection Expectations to Stakeholders

It is important to target communication on the purpose and procedures of data collection. These communication strategies should start as soon as you have confirmed the types of data you will be collecting and when you will collect the data. Increase communication with stakeholders as the survey completion window approaches, and while it is open. Be sure your communication materials inform stakeholders why the survey is important and why their participation is needed and valued. By being strategic about your messaging prior to and during data collection, you are more likely to obtain buy-in from stakeholders, as well as achieve a higher response rate from survey respondents. Remember to provide translated communication materials for members

of your school community (e.g., students, families, and noninstructional staff) who are English learners or do not speak or read English so that they also are informed.

Strategies for Communicating Data Collection Expectations to Stakeholders

a. Disseminate information to students through school or classroom announcements, newsletters, student portals, and flyers prior to the survey administration.

b. Have students introduce the importance of the surveys to their families to increase buy-in and participation.

c. Disseminate a targeted advanced notice with information on the survey to families, using a variety of channels. See *Objective 2.1.2* for more information on effective outreach to families.

d. Disseminate advanced reminders prior to survey administration to instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and families through online platforms (e.g., school or district/ CMO/EMO website, portal, social media, electronic mailing lists, and direct emails) and school newsletters.

e. Disseminate information to parents through other forms of family engagement strategies (e.g., open houses, PTO/PTA meetings, back-to-school nights, report card pickup).

f. Provide reminders to complete surveys within the given time frame to instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and families through as many communication vehicles as possible (e.g., email, school portals, announcements, or posters).

Related Resources for Communicating Data Collection Expectations to Stakeholders

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides, Section 3* (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support data collection, analysis, and reporting.

■ *Survey Management* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar covers important components of survey management for school climate projects. Topics include connecting items with research questions, effective practices for administering surveys, how results can guide future interventions, data issues, and getting schools and stakeholders to invest in the process.

■ *Survey Administration* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar focuses on effective practices when administering school climate surveys, including how to administer surveys to a variety of populations, modes of administration, and logistics (i.e., timeline for prepping, administering, analyzing, and reporting data).

■ *Increasing Staff and Family Survey Response Rates* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar provides effective practices and strategies for engaging school staff and families in school climate improvement initiatives and increasing survey response rates, particularly for engaging families and staff, especially those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

■ *S3 Posters*: These posters show how schools provided climate survey information and encouraged responses for participants who worked for Maryland S3 grantees.

■ *S3 Brochure*: This brochure shows another way that schools provided climate survey information and encouraged responses for participants who worked for Maryland S3 grantees.

OBJECTIVE 3.1.3: Confirm the Reliability of Scales and Revise Instrument(s) as Necessary

Purpose of Confirming the Reliability of Scales and Revising Instrument(s) as Necessary

EDSCLS has already been tested for its psychometric properties, including reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the degree to which participants consistently respond to items within a scale of a survey. Validity refers to the degree to which the survey item measures what it is intended to measure. For example, emotional safety, one of the five scales of EDCLS under its safety domain, has a list of items that are grouped together because they are tested to measure the emotional safety topic reliably and with validity within and across subgroups of students. Therefore, the use of this scale increases our confidence with what students report.

If you choose to use another set of instruments that are not part of the EDSCLS, refer to the _NCSSLE School Climate Survey Compendium_ for information on other valid and reliable school climate assessment tools that are available. If you decide to construct your own surveys, be sure to consult with a partner organization that is experienced in school climate assessment to ensure that the measures you create are valid and reliable.

Related Resources for Confirming the Reliability of Scales and Revising Instrument(s) as Necessary

If you are interested in more information on reliability of scales, please see the following:

- _Evaluating the Reliability of Surveys and Assessments_ (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents ways to determine whether the survey items actually measure the underlying concepts they are intended to measure. Topics include the purpose and characteristics of reliability and its analysis, as well as common methods of reliability analysis for various types of data.
- _Survey Development_ (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar focuses on the development of school climate surveys/measures. It includes strategies to assess reliability and revise surveys and measures accordingly.

OBJECTIVE 3.1.4: Collect and Review Other School-Level Data Related to School Climate

Purpose of Collecting and Reviewing Other School-Level Data Related to School Climate

Although surveys provide broad, quantifiable, and confidential information about how people perceive and experience school climate, other data can help you build an even more complete picture of your district or school environment. To fully assess the climate of your district, CMO/EMO, or school, it is useful to supplement your survey data with data from other sources, such as administrative data (e.g., incidents, attendance, academic outcomes and discipline). (See _Objective 1.3.3_ for further explanation of these data sources.) It is likely that some or all of these administrative data are already being collected in your district, CMO/EMO, or school. For example, you could compare student perceptions of safety in the survey data with the rate of violent incidents or with student attendance data.

When there is agreement among data sources, the conclusions you can draw are stronger. If there is little or no agreement among data sources, there could be multiple reasons why—whether it be inconsistent data collection procedures, a survey sample that differs from the population reflected in the other source(s) of information, behavioral or inaccurate instruments, or diverse viewpoints or perspectives. For example, teachers do not always complete behavioral incident reports consistently. If data do not align into a coherent picture, do not force an explanation; instead, determine why inconsistencies exist and help stakeholders understand how and where perceptions vary.

Strategies for Collecting and Reviewing Other School-Level Data Related to School Climate

a. Learn about the timeliness and completeness of any data sources you opt to use.

b. If feasible, obtain the current school year's administrative data so they correspond to the timing of survey data.

c. Include data on positive student behavior if it has been collected in a systematic way and is reliable (e.g., student social and emotional skills, awards, volunteering efforts, and prosocial behaviors).

d. Cross-tabulate school-level school climate survey data, school-level incident or disciplinary data, and school-level academic performance measures to identify the relationships between and among different variables.

e. *Be very cautious about drawing conclusions based on data from small sample sizes* because they may not be valid. When looking at data based on small samples (e.g., perhaps the school has few English learners, or few students have been expelled), try to gather additional information that will help corroborate any conclusions you may draw.

f. If you plan to link student-level survey data to administrative data, you can analyze the relationship among school climate perceptions, incident or disciplinary data, and achievement to better understand the relationship between and among how students perceive their school and their achievement, prosocial behaviors, and risky behaviors.

g. Be sure you have the data infrastructure to both de-identify and still connect multiple data sources at the student level. (See *Objective 1.3.6.*)

Related Resources for Collecting and Reviewing Other School-Level Data Related to School Climate

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 3: Putting Your Data in Context* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice putting your school climate data in context.

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 4: Integrating Different Data Sources to Understand School Climate* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice integrating different data sources to understand your school climate.

■ *Data Interpretation Guide* (NCSSLE): This guide provides descriptions of, and recommendations for, using and interpreting various school climate survey data, including benchmarked scale scores and levels produced by the EDSCLS platform.

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides, Section 3* (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support data collection, analysis, and reporting.

■ **d** *Understanding Student Discipline Practices in Charter Schools: A Research Agenda* (Center for Reinventing Public Education): This report describes the kinds of methods and data that will allow for useful sector comparisons, as well as other things you can learn from and about charter schools on the topic of discipline in schools.

OBJECTIVE 3.1.5: Conduct Focus Groups and Interviews With Students, Staff, and/or Families

Purpose of Conducting Focus Groups and Interviews With Students, Staff, and/or Families

Survey data and administrative data provide quantitative information that help you understand your current school climate and assess your ongoing efforts. Focus groups and interviews with students, staff, or families provide context for survey data and allow you to investigate perceptions of school climate and the outcomes of your school climate efforts more closely. For example, if your school's scores on a particular scale or topic area are lower than you would like, or a subgroup of students have a different opinion than the others, focus groups can help you investigate why.

d Similarly, if a handful of schools in your district are making large gains in a particular topic area, interviewing the leadership in those schools can help you determine how they are achieving that success.

Be deliberate in your sampling approach for focus groups. You may want to draw a representative sample (randomly select participants) and/or select certain subpopulations to deepen your understanding of the data and help the school plan how to address

> You may elect to wait and formulate focus group questions and sampling decisions after completing your initial data analysis (Action Step 3.2).

issues. For example, you may notice a pattern in your results that shows that students within subpopulations feel less safe at school compared to others, or that families/parents/caregivers from certain subpopulations do not feel welcome at the school. You can then use interviews and focus groups to learn more about why and determine how the school can better meet the needs of all students. Districts, CMOs/EMOs, and schools need to consider who will participate in the focus groups and interviews, ensuring that participants represent as many subgroups of the population as possible (e.g., varied levels of engagement and academic performance; race/ethnicity; English learners; and students identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or another diverse gender identity [LGBTQ+]).

Be careful to construct the groups so that participants feel that they can speak freely. For example, students who have a poor academic performance or are unpopular may feel self-conscious speaking up in front of other students who are viewed as very successful or well liked at school. Students or parents/caregivers who are English learners may feel self-conscious about speaking English or may be reluctant to talk about feelings of marginalization in front of other students who are native English speakers.

It is important to consider who will conduct the focus groups. It is important that the focus group participants feel comfortable speaking freely with the focus group facilitators. In addition, focus group facilitation requires skill, so the facilitators should have experience in conducting focus groups. Depending on your participants, you also may need interpreters, and you should provide flexible accommodation to ensure good participation (e.g., being considerate of parent/caregiver work schedules). If you do not have the capacity to collect and analyze focus group and interview data, consider partnering with an outside organization that has experience with this type of data collection. (See *Objective 1.3.7.*)

Districts and CMOs/EMOs should consider whether they want to conduct focus groups and interviews across the district/CMO/EMO or at the school level.

Related Resources for Conducting Focus Groups and Interviews With Students, Staff, or Families

■ *Conducting Focus Groups to Develop a Comprehensive School Portrait* (National Institute for Urban School Improvement): This guide highlights how a focus group can be used to provide continuous outcome feedback. Covered in this resource is how a focus group is defined, created, and used as an evaluation tool.

■ *Early Course Feedback: Focus Groups* (Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation at Carnegie Mellon University): This guide provides direction for collecting data with focus groups that can be adapted for precollege students.

Related Resource From the Field

■ *Measuring School Climate: A Toolkit for Districts and Schools*: This toolkit from the Colorado Education Initiative provides tips for creating and using a focus group.

Action Step 3.2: Analyze Data

After you collect your school climate data (surveys, administrative data, behavioral incident data, focus groups and interviews, and other related data), you will analyze them. If you use the EDSCLS site, your survey data are analyzed for you as part of the web-based platform. You can retrieve results through the results section of the administrator dashboard. (See the *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys [EDSCLS].*) Other survey administration platforms may have similar features, and you should work with the platform provider during the survey setup process to determine how your data will be displayed.

This action step has two objectives:

■ 3.2.1: Analyze your survey data.

■ 3.2.2: Generate an index score for each school (optional).

■ 3.2.3: Compare data to other schools, the district/CMO/EMO, or state and national data (if available).

OBJECTIVE 3.2.1: Analyze Your Survey Data

Purpose of Analyzing Your Survey Data

After each data collection, the EDSCLS platform provides you with benchmarked scale scores for each domain and topic area (as shown in Figure 5) for each applicable respondent group (i.e., students, instructional staff, and noninstructional staff). In addition, the EDSCLS platform provides you with item-level results for each item on the survey and each respondent group. Other platforms will typically present similar information, and you should work with the platform provider during the planning stage to determine what data will be available to you and how it will be displayed.

Figure 5. Domain and Topic Areas of EDSCLS

Domain: Engagement Topics	Domain: Safety Topics	Domain: Environment Topics
Cultural and Linguistic Competence	Emotional Safety	Physical Environment
	Physical Safety	Instructional Environment
Relationships	Bullying/Cyberbullying	Physical Health
	Substance Abuse	Mental Health
School Participation	Emergency Readiness Management	Discipline
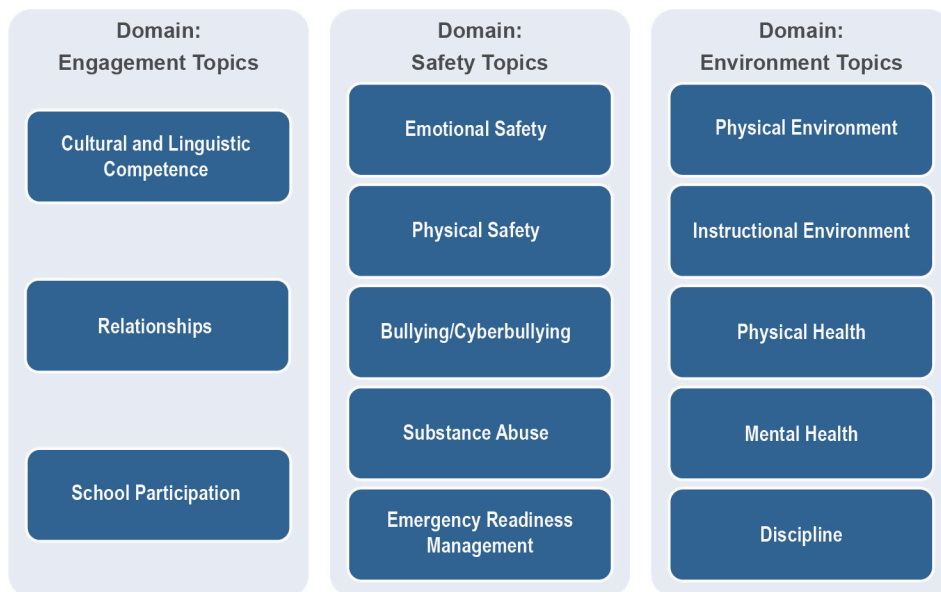
If you decided to survey more than one respondent group (e.g., students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and families), comparing their perceptions can be valuable because members of each group are able to see different things and may respond differently to the same factors. For example, if students, staff, and families generally report similar perceptions about an area of school climate, this alignment suggests consistency in how the groups perceive the climate. However, if you identify discrepancies among respondent groups, you may want to collect deeper qualitative information to understand the differences between stakeholders. (See *Objective 3.1.5.*) Identifying differences among stakeholders allows you to target interventions specific to each group, ensuring that everyone has the supports to experience a positive school climate.

It also is important to analyze data by respondent characteristics to determine if there are different perceptions of school climate within a respondent group. Respondent characteristics can include demographic characteristics of students, staff, or families (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) and other characteristics of students, staff, or families (e.g., race/ethnicity or gender) and other characteristics, such as students' grade level, free or reduced-price lunch status, English learner status, or teachers' years of experience. Analyzing data by respondent characteristics helps you identify the needs,

challenges, and successes that are specific to groups of respondents. This approach also will help inform the selection of interventions, determine if you need to target or differentiate supports to different groups, and provide insight into what you are doing well. Although the EDSCLS platform produces data by basic respondent characteristics (see *Data Interpretation Guide*), you can link your student data set to school administrative records, which can be disaggregated, sometimes using additional student characteristics (e.g., grade point average). (See *Objective 3.1.1.*)

Strategies for Analyzing Data

a. If you are not using the EDSCLS, create scale scores for your school climate scales. If the instrument you are using has preestablished scales, use those to calculate scores.

b. If the instrument you are using does not have preestablished scales, psychometric analysis (such as factor analysis or item response theory) often is used to produce survey scale scores, but other approaches can be used. If you do not have access to a statistician in house, consider consulting with an evaluation partner to determine how to create your scales.

c. If you are not using the EDSCLS, create item-level results for your topic areas of school climate. Item-level results often are presented as item distributions (i.e., the percentage of respondents who selected each response option) as well as the mean or average response value of each item.

d. If you are using the EDSCLS, use your benchmarked scale scores to prioritize the school climate topic areas that you want to focus on. (See the *Data Interpretation Guide* for more information on using benchmarked scale scores overall and by respondent characteristics.)

e. Use the item-level results to focus on the school climate topic areas that may be more immediately actionable for schools. (See the *Data Interpretation Guide* for more information on using item-level data.)

f. Compare scale scores and item-level results from previous data collection efforts to determine growth long term, including benchmarked scale scores and the "performance" levels in which they fall.[15]

g. Compare the "performance" levels in which benchmarked scale scores fall across students, instructional staff, and noninstructional staff. You also can compare scale scores within domains for respondent subgroups.

h. Compare mean topic area values and item-level results on each topic area across students, staff, and families.

i. It is possible to link student EDSCLS data to existing administrative records by keeping track of the access codes (logon IDs) that students are assigned. (See the *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys [EDSCLS]* for more information.) If you plan to do this:

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[15] Because any EDSCLS scale scores produced by platforms lower than virtual machine 3.0 were not calibrated for benchmarking, the scale scores they produced, called "legacy" scores, cannot be compared with the new benchmarked scale scores. If you want to preserve a trend line, you can convert your older legacy scores from prior years to benchmarked scale scores and then compare across years. You will find further information at https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls/benchmarks.

Conditions for
Positive School
Climate

Activity Set 1:
Planning for
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 2:
Engaging
Stakeholders in
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 3:
Collecting and
Reporting School
Climate Data

Activity Set 4:
Choosing and
Implementing
School Climate
Interventions

Activity Set 5:
Monitoring and
Evaluating Overall
School Climate
Improvements

- Determine which respondent characteristics you want to (or are able to) analyze. The EDSCLS platform will suppress findings from any respondent group or subgroup with fewer than 10 people to prevent indirect disclosure of a respondent's identity. (See the *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys [EDSCLS]* for more information.) If you are using another platform, ensure that data will be suppressed for small subgroups when results are presented.
- Ensure you have the correct demographic data from administrative records matched with the survey data. (See *Objective 1.3.6.*)

j. Analyze domains or topic areas of school climate by respondent groups or subgroup characteristics within a set of respondents. If the subgroups of interest are too small to report, consider collecting in-depth information from these groups through one-on-one interviews or focus groups.

k. If possible, rank or graph data to provide easy visuals for identifying needs and gaps.

l. Use additional resources to help analyze and interpret the data. For example, use the *Data Interpretation Guide* and *Topical Discussion Guides* in the *Resource Package* to help you interpret and use your data to improve specific school climate topic areas overall and help you implement a multitiered system of supports.

Related Resources for Analyzing Your Data

- *Data Interpretation Guide* (NCSSLE): This guide provides descriptions of and recommendations for using and interpreting various school climate survey data.
- *EDSCLS Data Analysis Worksheet* (NCSSLE): This worksheet provides key questions that EDSCLS users can use to guide analysis of their data.
- *Data Interpretation Topical Discussion Guides* (NCSSLE): These guides provide information to assist with using and interpreting data results for specific school climate topic areas overall and by a multitiered system of supports as applicable.
- *School Climate Improvement Online Module 4: Integrating Different Data Sources to Understand School Climate* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice integrating different data sources to understand your school climate.
- *Analysis of Survey Data* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar contains effective practices for data analysis, creating school climate scores, and presenting data.
- *Introduction to EDSCLS Benchmarked Scale Scores* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar introduces EDSCLS users to the benchmarked scale scores that the EDSCLS VM 3.0 and later versions produce. The webinar helps users understand how to use and interpret the three benchmark "performance" levels.

OBJECTIVE 3.2.2: Generate an Index Score for Each School (Optional)

Purpose of Generating an Index Score for Each School

If you are hosting the EDSCLS, you can choose to export the raw data set from the platform (see the *Technical and Administration User Guide for the ED School Climate Surveys [EDSCLS]*) and use it, along with other school climate indicators, to generate school-level climate ratings for

each participating school, often called a "school climate index" score. Creating a school climate index score gives you directly comparable and actionable metrics that cut across schools, enabling you to monitor and track changes in school climate at the building level. In addition, it can serve as an aid to school staff and families as they see change in their school's score across time. The development of a school climate index will vary depending on the number and type of data sources that you want to include in the metric and how you want to integrate them within the index score. (See *Objective 1.3.5.*)

After you select a school climate survey and any other data sources that will help you assess your school's climate, you might consider the option to develop a school climate index. A school climate index is a single number or score that can be derived from a formula (a) you develop based on only school climate survey data or (b) that aggregates or combines multiple types of school-based data. In either case, it can help you obtain an overall picture of climate for an individual school and help see how schools compare within a district/CMO/EMO and, if statewide, across the state. For support in creating a school climate index, consider consulting with a statistician or psychometrician or partnering with a local university or research organization with expertise in this area.

Depending on your district/CMO/EMO or school context, you might want to weigh certain factors more heavily in your formula so that they carry more weight in the overall index. At the district, CMO/EMO, or school level, this approach will provide a measure typically calculated by the district, CMO/EMO, charter authorizer, or state to assess progress in your improvement efforts that is comparable across years and individual schools.

Strategies for Developing a School Climate Index

a. Determine how you want to develop your school climate index by reviewing the resources that follow, consulting with experts, or looking at examples that other organizations have used.

b. When developing your school climate index, consider inclusion of both positive measures (e.g., the percentage of students reporting that they like school and student social and emotional skills) and those things that may be concerns (e.g., truancy, infractions, substance use).

c. Your school climate index should ideally include data that all schools are required to collect so that it is an inclusive indicator of how well your district is doing.

d. Consider whether you want to include school-level demographics (e.g., size, level, characteristics of the student population) within your index.

e. Determining your school climate index and which indicator will determine the index should include a community discussion with voices from students, staff, and family members.

> **Note, if you are using the EDSCLS:** Instead of creating a school climate index formula, you may want to use the benchmarked "performance" levels generated by the platform to help facilitate the meaning of your scale scores. See the *Data Interpretation Guide* for more information on the benchmarked data.

Related Resources for Developing a School Climate Index

- *Analysis of Survey Data* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar discusses effective practices for data analysis, creating school climate scores, and presenting data.

- *School Safety Score Considerations: Construction, Quality, Utility* (S3): This presentation demonstrates how to develop a school climate score by considering policy, data, score content, score formula, and presentation.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Safe and Supportive Schools* (California Department of Education): This webpage provides an overview of the California Department of Education's S3 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It includes background on the school climate index, as well as a link with more detailed information on index methodology via school climate report cards.

- *Development of Pennsylvania Department of Education School Climate Index Summary*: This document explains the process that the state used to create an index based on school climate data that could be used to synthesize information and facilitate comparisons across schools.

OBJECTIVE 3.2.3: Compare Data to Other Schools, the District/CMO/EMO, or State and National Data, If Available

Purpose of Comparing Data to Other Schools, the District/CMO/EMO, or State and National Data, If Available

Without a comparison point, it may be difficult to interpret school climate scores. If state data are available, districts/CMOs/EMOs and schools can compare their school climate results against those data. Likewise, data can be compared across districts or CMOs/EMOs and schools, if available. The addition of benchmarking to the EDSCLS platform also provides a way to compare scale score levels across districts/CMOs/EMOs and schools.

d Districts/CMOs/EMOs can help schools understand their data by giving them information about school climate evaluation results from other schools (including from other schools that are similar in their characteristics).

Strategies for Comparing Data to Other Schools, the District/CMO/EMO, or State and National Data, If Available

a. Determine what data are available for comparison purposes for each respondent group.

b. Compare your school-level data (e.g., benchmarked scale scores) against available district/CMO/EMO, state, or national data.

c. Compare your school-level data (e.g., benchmarked scale scores) to data from other schools of similar size, urbanicity, and demographic makeup, if information is available.

d. Compare district/CMO/EMO-level data (e.g., benchmarked scale scores) against available state or national data.

Related Resources for Comparing Data to Other Schools, the District/CMO/EMO, or State and National Data, If Available

- *School Climate Improvement Online Module 4: Integrating Different Data Sources to Understand School Climate* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice integrating different data sources to understand your school climate.

- *School Climate Improvement Online Module 5: Sharing School Climate Data With Stakeholders* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice sharing your school climate data.

Related Resource From the Field

- Wisconsin—*Statement of Need Data Worksheet*: This worksheet helps you compare data to other data sets, specifically the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Action Step 3.3: Disseminate Findings

Following your data analysis, it is an effective practice to disseminate the findings to your stakeholders. This process involves developing user-friendly reports that stakeholders can use to review the findings from the school climate data collection and analysis.

These reports allow members of the school community to make informed choices when selecting interventions and improving their school climate efforts. Because you may be delivering the reports to multiple stakeholders, the language you use should be easily understood by all groups and address the interests of each group. In addition, you may want to target reports for those groups that are not accustomed to reading and comprehending reports about data findings, compared with more technical reports for those stakeholders who are more data savvy.

This action step provides two objectives that help you disseminate your data:

- 3.3.1: Involve stakeholders in data review and planning for dissemination of findings.
- 3.3.2: Prepare a summary of findings from data analyses and disseminate in a user-friendly format.

OBJECTIVE 3.3.1: Involve Stakeholders in Data Review and Planning for Dissemination of Findings

Purpose of Involving Stakeholders in Data Review and Planning for Dissemination of Findings

Members of the school community and other stakeholders can play a key role in helping you review summary findings and determine key priorities from your school climate data. This is particularly true for charter school governing boards responsible for approving annual school budget allocations in a data-driven manner. Involving them in the review process leverages support across audiences, facilitates understanding of the data, and helps you determine how to share the information. When stakeholders can dig into the data, they are more likely to understand how the data fit into their

work and trust the results from the data. It also helps provide needed context for the data because individuals with lived experience can help make meaning of the results. In addition, if stakeholders know that the choice of interventions will be based at least in part on their review of the data, it will enhance their buy-in to the interventions and their implementation. (See Activity Set 4.) Stakeholders also can aid in disseminating the findings to other entities, such as the public, other education agencies, and specific members of stakeholder groups.

Strategies for Involving Stakeholders in Data Review and Planning for Dissemination of Findings

a. Engage in "leveling" to help ensure that all stakeholders involved in the data review and planning are well prepared in advance, such as helping them understand what particular scores mean.

b. Plan meetings that balance enough structure for stakeholders to review results but enough flexibility to consider stakeholder input.

c. Present data to stakeholders using graphs or other visual products. Consider the needs of different audiences when preparing a dissemination plan.

d. Support their understanding of the data and the relationships between multiple data sources. Allow time for them to help make meaning of the data.

e. Allow sufficient time and supports for participants to review the materials before decisions are made.

f. Allow sufficient time for participants to understand the relationship between multiple data sources.

g. Help members of your school community review the data reports and determine key takeaways from the data (e.g., what the school is doing well and what the school needs to do to improve).

h. Provide opportunities for participants to help determine priorities.

i. Set goals for improving data points; use specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (SMART) goals (see the Resources section that follows).

Related Resources for Involving Stakeholders in Data Review and Planning for Dissemination of Findings

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 5: Sharing School Climate Data With Stakeholders* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice sharing your school climate data.

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides, Section 3* (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support data collection, analysis, and reporting.

■ *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement in Turnaround Schools* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents research-based evidence that school climate is connected to student outcomes, how to integrate school climate into schools, strategies to communicate the importance of school climate to stakeholders, and the importance of quality school climate surveys.

Conditions for
Positive School
Climate

Activity Set 1:
Planning for
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 2:
Engaging
Stakeholders in
School Climate
Improvements

**Activity Set 3:
Collecting and
Reporting School
Climate Data**

Activity Set 4:
Choosing and
Implementing
School Climate
Interventions

Activity Set 5:
Monitoring and
Evaluating Overall
School Climate
Improvements

- *SMART Objectives* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): This source provide a framework for strategizing next steps for programs after looking at data from school climate survey(s).

- *Reporting and Dissemination* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar addresses reporting and disseminating school climate data. It contains various topics, including consideration of audience, content of message, interpreting the data (including cautions), connecting survey and outcome (achievement) data, connecting survey results with interventions, and choosing and implementing appropriate intervention(s).

- *Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education* (Institute of Education Sciences [IES]): This guide provides a framework, tools, and vocabulary needed to support data-informed conversations and action in education. It walks users through five key steps in using data for decision making and strategic action: setting the stage, examining data, understanding the findings, developing an action plan, and monitoring progress and measuring success.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Strengthening School Culture in Simulated Workplaces: New Resources to Support Leaders' Program Improvement Efforts*: REL Appalachia partnered with the Calhoun-Gilmer Career Center to develop a workshop series for school teams interested in using school culture survey data to identify and plan for program improvements. The workshops guide administrators, educators, and students in reviewing and interpreting their own school culture survey results to identify possible areas for improvement and plan to strengthen aspects of their school culture. The workshop materials include three components: a facilitator's handbook, scripted slides, and a participant workbook, which can be found here, along with a recorded webinar introducing the materials.

- *Decisions in Motion: Iowa S3 Toolkits for Improving School Climate*: These toolkits are designed for schools that want to get moving right away to improve school climate. They cover a range of topics—from discipline to improving relationships—and can help schools and districts use data to develop a plan and create clear expectations. Each toolkit provides a sample plan and a step-by-step process of creating that plan to support your efforts to improve the climate in your school.

OBJECTIVE 3.3.2: Prepare a Summary of Findings From Data Analyses and Disseminate in a User-Friendly Format

Purpose of Preparing a Summary of Findings From Data Analyses and Disseminating in a User-Friendly Format

Prepare a document summarizing your school climate findings across data sources. The summary should provide an overview of the various topic areas of school climate that you assessed, school-level scores on measured topic areas, and district- or CMO/EMO-level data, if available. Depending on the level of detail in your report, you also may want to include item-level data. It is important to highlight key findings identified by your data or your stakeholders. Finally, the summary report can document change in school climate within a school and among schools across time, 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). Along with documenting results externally, it may be helpful to create an internal methodological report that contains basic information about data collection methods (e.g., how long was the survey administration window, what time of the year did you administer the survey) and unit-level completion rates.

You may want to prepare a draft or initial summary for purposes of stakeholder engagement (as discussed earlier in *Objective 3.3.1*); then work with stakeholders to finalize the summary.

Strategies for Preparing a Summary of Findings From Data Analyses and Disseminating in a User-Friendly Format

   a. Include details about all data sources, including survey data and other data (e.g., administrative data and focus group data).

   b. Make findings easily accessible in a timely manner (e.g., before the start of the school year).

   c. Provide both web-based and printed formats and provide the information in the language(s) spoken in your school community.

   d. Tailor reports to highlight points of importance to specific stakeholder groups.

   e. Highlight successes and reasons why continued support of the initiative is important.

   f. Include results by respondent groups and by respondent characteristics, as possible.

   g. Use communication strategies that are effective for your region or audience (e.g., organize "office hours" or translate to diverse languages, if needed). Use strategies identified in *Objective 1.3.5.*

Related Resources for Preparing a Summary of Findings From Data Analyses and Disseminating in a User-Friendly Format

   ■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 5: Sharing School Climate Data With Stakeholders* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to practice sharing your school climate data.

   ■ *Reporting and Dissemination* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar addresses reporting and disseminating school climate data. It contains various topics, including consideration of audience, content of message, delivery (e.g., hard copy media, online, or electronic mailing lists), interpreting the data (including cautions), connecting survey and outcome (achievement) data, connecting survey results with interventions, and choosing and implementing appropriate intervention(s).

Action Step 3.4: Evaluate and Refine Data Collection and Reporting Protocols and Continue Planning for Improvement and Sustainability

At the end of each activity set, reflect on, assess, and refine your efforts with an eye toward institutionalizing good practices. At the end of Activity Set 3, it will be useful to evaluate and refine

the procedures that you used to collect, analyze, and report data as well as the strategies you used to engage stakeholders and disseminate findings. In addition, reflect on the type(s) of data you collected, think about your future data and analysis needs and determine if there are any gaps between the data you will have and the data you need to improve your school climate efforts.

This action step provides one objective to help you evaluate and refine data collection and reporting protocols for sustainability:

- 3.4.1: Review data collection efforts and data infrastructure for sustainability.

OBJECTIVE 3.4.1: Review Data Collection Efforts and Data Infrastructure for Sustainability

Purpose of Reviewing Data Collection Efforts and Data Infrastructure for Sustainability

When you review your data collection, analysis, and dissemination processes, review the data you collected to ensure they were high quality. In addition, review your administration procedures to ensure the data were collected consistently throughout your district, CMO/EMO, or school. Specifically, reflect on the following questions:

- Were you able to collect data systematically across your district, CMO/EMO, or school?
- Were you able to provide all stakeholders (students, staff, and families) with an opportunity to take the survey?
- Did stakeholders understand the importance of the effort, thus providing thoughtful and accurate responses?
- How were your response rates across respondent groups and by subgroups?
- How involved were stakeholders in reviewing and disseminating data?
- Did they trust the metrics reports?
- Will they use the results to select appropriate interventions to improve school climate?
- Finally, are you using other appropriate school climate data sources that provide value-added information when used in conjunction with the EDSCLS?

Strategies for Reviewing Data Collection Efforts and Data Infrastructure for Sustainability

a. Review any feedback you received from students, staff, or parents/caregivers during the survey administration that highlights areas of possible improvement in your survey planning procedures.

b. Review the types of data and data sources you used to determine if you are collecting the appropriate data to answer your questions.

c. Review your response rates to determine if additional outreach is needed to ensure stakeholder voices are heard during the school climate process.

d. Look at your item distributions to make sure they are variable (i.e., if almost everyone in your population answers "yes" or "strongly agree" to a survey item, the lack of variability in the responses indicates that the item may not be useful).

e. Assess your unit-level response rate (i.e., the percentage of eligible respondents who complete the survey) and develop a plan to improve it if the response rate is lower than desired.

f. Review your collaboration with stakeholders to determine if they understand the data and how to use the data to select interventions in Activity Set 4.

Related Resource for Reviewing Data Collection Efforts and Data Infrastructure for Sustainability

■ *2012 Grantee TA Symposium: Merging School Climate in Pursuit of Academic Excellence* (S3)—see presentations and resources listed under "Sustainability" and "Sustaining Innovations": These presentations and worksheets provide strategies on how to sustain school climate and culture improvement and how to incorporate changes into long-term organization and fiscal plans.

District and State Examples of Collecting and Reporting Data

Pike Township, Indiana

The goals of the U.S. Department of Education's Project Prevent grant program, awarded in 2014, include increasing students' engagement with their schools, as measured with school climate survey data. Many Project Prevent grantee school districts, such as the Metropolitan School District of Pike Township in Indianapolis, Indiana, chose to administer the EDSCLS to track their student engagement during the 5-year grant. In doing so, Pike Township could rely on the EDSCLS platform to perform many of the steps for collecting and reporting data outlined in this activity. Pike Township began administering the EDSCLS to students in its participating schools in the first year of their Project Prevent grant. Repeating the survey in the second year and beyond, Pike Township is assured of a reliable trend line in student engagement data across time that accurately represents how students perceive the multiple aspects of engagement, such as the cultural and linguistic competency of their schools, their relationship with peers and adults in the school, and participation in school activities. Pike Township has chosen to implement Second Step, an evidence-based program that addresses student engagement, along with a multitiered system of support called positive behaviors and supports.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has made a concerted effort to assist schools with improving school climate in K–12 schools. Specifically, the state has curated resources that align with a team-driven process that addresses school climate as a component of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and overall school improvement. In addition to general resources on school climate, a school climate survey, and a school climate leadership initiative, the state has provided resources to support a five-stage school climate improvement process (SCIP) to support school communities in analyzing and

addressing school climate needs using research-based approaches. When it comes to using data, the state advises school communities to look beyond test scores and discipline data, including these additional data sources:

- Attendance data
- Academic data
- Student Assistance Program data
- PA Youth Survey results
- Results from an annual school climate survey, administered to students, staff, and families

California

California Safe and Supportive Schools worked in partnership with WestEd to perform its data collection, which included a series of surveys, administrative data, and qualitative information from stakeholder focus groups. A comprehensive [website](#) describes the data system. To communicate data collection expectations, California created a brief titled *Assessing School Climate*, which thoroughly describes the district priorities the surveys aim to address, the tools being used, and what information each tool was designed to collect. To assist schools in understanding, analyzing, and disseminating data, California also developed a collection of resources, including a guidebook *Making Sense of School Climate*, the *Workbook for Improving School Climate*, and a series of *What Works Briefs*.

To get input from those affected by school climate, California conducted focus groups with staff and students. Each fall of the S3 grant, student listening circles were conducted. A student listening circle is a special type of focus group involving eight to 10 students who respond to five or six questions determined based on data from their school's California Healthy Kids Survey, with school staff and other concerned adults sitting outside the circle, listening but not speaking. Each spring evaluation site visit included a review of action items determined during the student listening circle activity. These circle activities used data to increase youth voice, promote adult–youth connections, and use student input to drive school improvement. Site visits each spring, conducted by regional technical assistance specialists, included a focus group with the S3 school climate team.

Conditions for Positive School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

After you understand your school climate strengths and needs through data collection, analysis, and review, you are ready to select, plan for, and implement school climate interventions that target needs identified in your data.

Here, in Activity Set 4, you use a data-driven approach to choosing and refining school climate interventions. It also is important to leverage the work in Activity Set 2 because interventions are more likely to be implemented as intended when members of the school community are involved in the process of selecting and implementing interventions.

This activity set has two action steps: (a) choose, plan for, and implement interventions and (b) evaluate and refine the choice of interventions and implementation strategies and continue planning for improvement and sustainability. In addition, strategies within this activity set help you begin thinking about how you will evaluate and sustain the selected interventions during an extended period. Doing this helps you consider the systems, structures, and practices that make school climate efforts an institutionalized practice in your district, CMO/EMO, or school.

Action Step 4.1: Choose, Plan for, and Implement Interventions

It is likely that you already are implementing initiatives and interventions that address school climate. However, they are not always targeted to your specific needs (i.e., not informed by your school climate data), implemented with fidelity (i.e., not implemented as they were intended to be used), or connected or aligned with one another (i.e., not addressing all needs or not duplicating efforts). In addition, when community and school populations change, or when new conditions or issues emerge, existing interventions may no longer be as appropriate or effective as they once were.

The purpose of this action step is to review your school climate data and identify the school climate interventions that will best fit your needs. Revisit the interventions already underway in your school(s) to determine whether you want to continue, modify, remove, or replace. Use your school climate data, your mission and vision, and your short- and long-term goals to guide your decisions.

The nine objectives within this action step help you carefully select, plan for, implement, and evaluate school climate interventions:

- 4.1.1: Review current interventions that address school climate at multiple tiers.
- 4.1.2: Review summary of results of data analysis to inform the selection of interventions from a multitiered perspective.

- 4.1.3: Assess whether current interventions are addressing your identified needs and goals at multiple tiers.
- 4.1.4: Assess readiness to implement interventions and specific innovations that support a multitiered approach.
- 4.1.5: Select, modify, or discontinue interventions based on needs, priorities, and goals.
- 4.1.6: Participate in a thoughtful planning process for implementing the selected interventions.
- 4.1.7: Implement interventions, ensuring fidelity of implementation or appropriate adaptation.
- 4.1.8: Use data to monitor the fidelity of implementation of interventions.
- 4.1.9: Continue school climate messaging to districts/CMOs/EMOs and schools at different levels of implementation.

The suggested strategies provide guidance for reviewing and selecting interventions based on the needs identified in your data and implementing those interventions with fidelity.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.1: Review Current Interventions That Address School Climate at Multiple Tiers

Purpose of Reviewing Current Interventions at Multiple Tiers

Review your current climate-related interventions to help you understand what you currently implement and for whom, how the interventions relate to each other, and how well they are implemented across and within subgroups. This review also can tell you where you have gaps or duplication in programming and where you have programming "on paper" but are not providing it as intended. In addition, you can review your current interventions based on the data collected during Activity Set 3.

> Use the strategies found in *Objective 1.1.5:* Review data and current interventions being implemented at multiple tiers, prior to tackling the objectives within this action step, because some strategies appear in both places.

As you review your climate-related interventions, confirm that you offer interventions through a multitiered approach, providing supports to all students and other members of the school community. This approach will ensure that current interventions provide a foundation of universal supports to all students (Tier 1), extra support for those who need more assistance (Tier 2), and intensive and targeted supports for those who most need them (Tier 3). Also make sure that your interventions align with the needs, goals, and values from subgroups. These strategies will help you make good decisions about programming. (See *Objective 4.1.5.*)

Strategies for Reviewing Current Interventions at Multiple Tiers

a. Refer to the current list of climate-related interventions previously identified (see *Objective 1.1.5*) to understand what is being implemented and the extent to which they are implemented as designed, their goodness of fit with the current student population (including subgroups) and school context, as well as their impacts, if known.

b. Review the research base behind the climate-related interventions you currently implement. Use resources, such as those from the What Works Clearinghouse developed and maintained by IES to provide up-to-date evidence on education programs, products, practices, and policies.

c. Develop a matrix that lists the current climate-related interventions and the needs and goals each intervention addresses. This approach helps determine if there are duplicative efforts, as well as how the interventions align to comprehensively support the topic areas of school climate. (You can use this framework when working on *Objective 4.1.3.*)

d. Consider coherence when reviewing interventions. How does this intervention align with, add on, or duplicate the other activities in my school/classroom? You might consider external coherence as well: How does this intervention relate to other school-level or community-wide priorities and goals? For example, a new school safety initiative should align with a community youth violence prevention initiative.

Related Resources for Reviewing Current Interventions at Multiple Tiers

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 6: Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to help think through how to choose an intervention.

■ *Student Engagement* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar presents specific methods for assessing existing programs for opportunities for students to engage in more meaningful ways in school, as well as ways of increasing those opportunities.

■ *Resource Mapping Tool* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This tool helps identify existing programs and the tiers they serve (universal versus targeted needs) in your school, district, and community that address the priority need or issue you identified in your review of quantitative and qualitative data.

■ *Implementation Stages Planning* (National Implementation Research Network): This implementation and planning tool helps you assess, plan, and track implementation activities to improve the success and fidelity of your school's or district's selected EBPs.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.2: Review Summary of Results of Data Analysis to Inform the Selection of Interventions From a Multitiered Perspective

Purpose of Reviewing Summary of Results of Data Analysis to Inform the Selection of Interventions From a Multitiered Perspective

In Activity Set 3, you may have developed data reports to disseminate to your stakeholders. During that process, you began to review your data to determine your areas of strength and need, helping you identify school climate priorities and goals. The strategies within this objective help you review results to select interventions to meet identified needs at multiple tiers of support, including how to review multiple types of data (e.g., survey data, focus groups, school administrative data, and incident data) to inform the climate-related interventions you select. Multiple pieces of data can

help you identify the effectiveness of current and previous interventions. Quantitative data (from surveys and administrative data sources) can help you identify what needs to improve (e.g., which topic areas), whereas qualitative data (from focus groups) can help inform why those needs exist and, potentially, ways to improve those identified needs.

In addition, review your results by respondent characteristics. This step helps determine whether you have appropriate interventions in place to address the needs of all members of your school community or only certain groups. Analyzing data by respondent group and subgroups also helps you with strategies in the next objective. (See *Objective 4.1.3.*) For example, students who are English learners may perceive the instructional environment as less supportive than other groups of students. In this case, you might target certain interventions to your English learners to increase instructional environment supports.

Strategies for Reviewing Summary of Results of Data Analysis to Inform the Selection of Interventions From a Multitiered Perspective

a. Review multiple types of data (e.g., survey data, focus groups, school administrative data, and incident data) to determine what your needs are and why they might exist, as well as to identify potential solutions you can implement. Review data by respondent characteristics and for stakeholder subgroups, as available.

b. Connect your data to the list of interventions that your school already has (see *Objective 4.2.1*). For example, if you have data on bullying, and programming intended to address or prevent bullying, you should link those pieces of information. This kind of cross-walking will help your assessment of the extent to which your current interventions are meeting the needs of your school population (including subgroups).

c. Identify your primary areas of strength and areas of need at multiple tiers. This approach helps you assess what current interventions may be working well that you may choose to continue, as well as areas of need for which you will want to implement interventions. (Review the *Data Interpretation Guide* referenced in Activity Set 3 for recommendations on examining data in relation to universal and targeted needs.)

d. Identify what future shifts in the data you want to see as evidence that interventions are having an impact on documented needs at multiple tiers.

e. Set goals for improving data points (if you haven't already under *Objective 1.1.7*). Use SMART goals.

Related Resources for Reviewing Summary of Results of Data Analysis to Inform the Selection of Interventions From a Multitiered Perspective

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 6: Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to help think through how to choose an intervention.

■ *Using Data to Identify Programmatic Interventions* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar discusses strategies for connecting your data to interventions, including how to use school climate data to identify needs, how to identify types of programmatic interventions that

can address these needs, and how to select programmatic interventions that can be implemented effectively within a school or district.

- *Data-Based Decision Making* (National PBIS Center): These presentation slides can inform how you use data to develop decisions, design problem statements, determine what data sources you need, and define solutions.

- *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This brief provides a framework for identifying key pieces of information you should know to select EBPs. It includes information on identifying EBPs, determining readiness to implement, tracking outcomes, and monitoring fidelity. In the appendix, key questions are summarized in a discussion guide, along with worksheets and resources to help you select an EBP that meets your needs.

- *Evidence-Based Module Series* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This self-paced learning module series provides guidance on selecting, preparing for, and implementing EBPs in school settings.

- *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs for Schools Settings* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This module presents strategies and tools for identifying and selecting evidence-based programs for school settings.

Related Resource From the Field

- *Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools Strategy Guide: Quality Rubric* (S3): This tool rates programs and curricula based on a review of multiple national registries of EBPs.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.3: Assess Whether Current Interventions Are Addressing Your Identified Needs and Goals at Multiple Tiers

Purpose of Assessing Whether Current Interventions Are Addressing Needs at Multiple Tiers

Through *Objective 4.1.1,* you assessed the degree to which your current climate-related interventions met the needs of your students and other stakeholders from a multitiered perspective, and through *Objective 4.1.2,* you reviewed your school climate data from a multitiered perspective to identify priorities and goals. In the current objective, you combine those efforts to assess whether current climate-related interventions address your needs, as identified by the data at multiple tiers of support. Even if your current climate-related interventions intend to address identified needs, implementation does not automatically translate into effectiveness. During this process, you can identify whether multiple climate-related interventions meet the same needs, or if there are any gaps between current interventions and needs. In addition, this process helps identify those interventions that you want to continue, modify, replace, or add. Furthermore, by examining how well educators implement current interventions, you identify what you and your staff do really well—expertise that can be leveraged to implement new or adapted interventions. You also might identify the coherence between current interventions and the rest of what is happening in the classroom; characteristics of both educators and interventions may be simultaneously driving implementation success.

Strategies for Assessing Whether Current Interventions Are Addressing Needs at Multiple Tiers

a. Map intended goals and outcomes of the school climate efforts with current climate-related interventions at multiple tiers.

b. Develop a matrix that maps the intended goals and outcomes and achievements of current climate-related interventions by the identified strengths and needs at multiple tiers. (See *Objective 4.1.2.*)

c. Identify gaps between goals, needs, strengths, and current interventions at multiple tiers using the matrix map of intended outcomes of interventions.

d. Identify interventions that are working as intended at multiple tiers (e.g., examine fidelity-tool or checklist and school climate data). (See *Objective 4.1.8.*)

e. Determine why current climate-related interventions may not be working as intended at multiple tiers (e.g., Were implementation resources sufficient? Was training provided? Were interventions implemented with fidelity? Are the interventions a good fit for the socio-cultural characteristics of the students?). This can be done by collecting additional data about implementation (e.g., teacher focus groups or teacher logs about their levels of implementation and supports, school or classroom observations, or resource check).

f. Identify interventions that are redundant across goals and needs at multiple tiers.

g. Identify those interventions you want to continue, modify, or replace at multiple tiers.

h. Identify interventions that should be discontinued ("de-implemented"). It can be difficult for educators to let go of interventions, and you may need to work with the school community to help people understand why de-implementation is the right choice—for example, perhaps there is a more effective option, or it is taking up time and resources that could be better spent elsewhere, or your data show that it is simply not providing sufficient benefits.

Related Resources for assessing Whether Current Interventions Are Addressing Needs at Multiple Tiers

■ *Using Data to Identify Programmatic Interventions* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar discusses strategies for connecting your data to interventions, including how to use school climate data to identify needs, how to identify types of programmatic interventions that can address these needs, and how to select programmatic interventions that can be implemented effectively within a school or district.

■ *Implementation Stages Planning* (National Implementation Research Network): This implementation and planning tool helps you assess, plan, and track implementation activities to improve the success and fidelity of your school's or district's selected EBPs.

Related Resources From the Field

■ *Guide for Continuum Mapping*: This guide describes how continuum mapping helps schools or districts view the myriad learning supports that are available to students (e.g., activities, programs, initiatives, and services) and identify which students receive those supports.

- *Statement of Need Data Worksheet*: This tool helps you determine what your school needs by comparing data to other data sets, such as the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, using this worksheet.

- *Decisions in Motion: Iowa S3 Toolkits for Improving School Climate*: These toolkits are designed for schools that want to get moving right away to improve school climate. They cover a range of topics—from discipline to improving relationships—and can help schools and districts use data to develop a plan and create clear expectations. Each toolkit provides a sample plan and a step-by-step process of creating that plan to support your efforts to improve the climate in your school.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.4: Assess Readiness to Implement Interventions and Specific Innovations That Support a Multitiered Approach

Purpose of Assessing Readiness to Implement Interventions and Specific Innovations That Support a Multitiered Approach

An organizational capacity assessment determines district, CMO/EMO, and school implementation abilities (e.g., resources, human capital). A needs and resources assessment identifies the structures, practices, and materials you need to promote or more fully implement your theory of action. Based on that information, you can then assess general readiness to continue and sustain those efforts and innovations you need to implement to support a multitiered approach. For example, are you ready and able to invest the necessary resources such as time, materials, and training to support school climate efforts over the long haul? Are you aware of the differentiated supports that are needed for all students (Tier 1); those interventions needed for students who need further assistance (Tier 2); and the intensive, individualized interventions for those students who need more targeted support (Tier 3)? By ensuring that you have the capacity and readiness to implement and support needed interventions, you will be more likely to implement them with fidelity.

Organizational capacity includes creating or expanding the structures within your district or school to determine how various interventions are working together to support not only universal approaches but also those for Tiers 2 and 3: Are existing interventions an extension of your universal approaches rather than disconnected interventions? Furthermore, your organizational capacity includes the motivation and belief structure of those who are implementing the interventions, as well as those who are receiving them. Do your students, staff, and families believe that the interventions are needed and useful? Is anyone being left behind? Because the successful implementation of interventions you select depends on your readiness and capacity, the strategies for this objective may be accomplished in tandem with those for *Objective 4.1.5,* which follows.

Strategies for Documenting Needs and Assessing Readiness to Implement Interventions and Specific Innovations That Support a Multitiered Approach

a. Develop and administer a needs and resources/assets assessment.

b. Conduct focus groups with students, staff, and families that ask about needs and assets. Focus group protocols should attempt to garner information about their motivation to

Conditions for
Positive School
Climate

Activity Set 1:
Planning for
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 2:
Engaging
Stakeholders in
School Climate
Improvements

Activity Set 3:
Collecting and
Reporting School
Climate Data

**Activity Set 4:
Choosing and
Implementing
School Climate
Interventions**

Activity Set 5:
Monitoring and
Evaluating Overall
School Climate
Improvements

participate in the efforts and their perceptions about the general organizational capacity (e.g., climate, culture, leadership, and resources) to engage in the efforts.

c. Document the strengths that support a positive school climate as shown in your data to assess what you do well in implementing interventions. Analyze why you implement specific interventions well (e.g., examine fidelity tool/checklist data).

d. Consider the characteristics of educators, the intervention, and the school's supportive environment.

e. Identify available resources (e.g., time, materials, and training) and additional resources that could be secured or reallocated to meet needs at multiple tiers.

f. Assign individuals to reach out to potential external partners in your school climate efforts (e.g., universities, colleges, or community-based organizations) as well as other resources to support implementation.

g. Conduct a readiness assessment to evaluate general and innovation specific readiness for the implementation of multitiered interventions (see Willing, Able→Ready brief in the Related Resources section). Determine if your students, staff, and families have the motivation to engage in the climate-related interventions.

Related Resources Documenting Needs and Assessing Readiness to Implement Interventions and Specific Innovations That Support a Multitiered Approach

■ *Sample Safe and Supportive Schools LEA Needs Assessment Template* (S3): This template connects data from teachers/staff, students, and parents to domains, interventions, and communication by creating a space that summarizes what data they have and may need.

■ *Willing, Able→Ready: Basics and Policy Implications of Readiness as a Key Component for Implementation of Evidence-Based Interventions* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief defines organizational readiness and the three components readiness: motivation of people in the organization, organizational capacities (general functioning), and intervention-specific capacities (conditions that support a specific intervention).

■ *Implementing New Programs: The Impact of Current Practice* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar helps you identify supports and barriers in your current practices, policies, and programs that would affect the success of a new program; steps to create more stable organizational structure; and tasks that will help incorporate new strategies into existing practices.

■ *Stages of Concern | Concerns-Based Adoption Model* (AIR): The Stages of Concern is a one of three components in a Concerns-Based Adoption model that supports effective implementation of a new program or innovation. This tool specifically focuses on understanding and responding to the concerns of key stakeholders who are charged with implementing a program or innovation.

■ *ImpleMap: Exploring the Implementation Landscape* (National Implementation Research Network): This planning tool facilitates the evaluation of the capacity of your school or district to actively implement programs and helps you clarify what you want to achieve with

your intervention and identify which EBPs to use, who will support implementation and how to select and train those individuals, and how you will make the intervention happen.

- *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This brief provides a framework for identifying key pieces of information you should know to select EBPs. It includes information on identifying EBPs, determining readiness to implement, tracking outcomes, and monitoring fidelity. In the appendix, key questions are summarized in a discussion guide, along with worksheets and resources to help you select an EBP that meets your needs.

- *Preparing to Implement Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This module provides strategies and tools for getting ready to implement EBPs in schools.

- *Implementing Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This interactive, self-paced learning module presents strategies and tools for implementing, evaluating, supporting, and sustaining EBPs in schools.

- *Implementation Webinar Series* (NCSSLE): This webinar series includes four webinars covering implementation topics, including how to use data to identify programmatic interventions, strategies for program implementation, the impact of current practices on new programs, and how to use evidence-based registries to select programs.

- *Implementation* (NCSSLE webpage): This webpage provides definitions, resources, and systematic recommendations for implementation.

- *Key Takeaways: Environments Filled With Safety and Belonging* (SoLD Design Principles): This resource outlines guiding principles for equitable whole child design to ensure learning environments are safe, trauma informed, and healing oriented, as well as inclusive and culturally responsive. In tandem with the above, these steps can be incorporated to ensure everyone is considered throughout the implementation process.

Related Resources From the Field

- *TCU Organizational Readiness for Change Scale* (TCU Institute for Behavioral Research): The Organizational Readiness for Change scale has two scales, one for counseling staff and the other for directors and supervisors. The scale focuses on needs, resources, staff qualities, and organizational climate.

- *Sample S3 Local Education Agency Needs Assessment Template*: This tool helps you connect data from school teachers and staff, students, and parents to domains, interventions, and communication by creating a space that summarizes what data you have, data you may need, what needs the data suggest there are, and how much those data are being used to choose and evaluate programs, as well as communicate needs to the district.

- *Team Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) SCHOOL Readiness Checklist* (PBIS): This checklist can be used by schools to determine implementation readiness through identifying district commitment, school team commitment, and access to data.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.5: Select, Modify, or Discontinue Interventions Based on Needs, Priorities, and Goals

Purpose of Selecting, Modifying, or Discontinuing Interventions Based on Data

The strategies within this objective are enhanced when combined with the strategies in *Objective 4.1.3,* in which you aligned current climate-related interventions with the issues revealed by your data and goals identified by your efforts. Carefully review this work to identify (a) those climate-related interventions that have a demonstrated evidence base for improving your priority areas, (b) which evidence-based interventions you are currently using that are aligned with your school's needs and population but are not being implemented with fidelity, and (c) the interventions that need to be modified, replaced, or discontinued to fit your particular needs. If the concern is implementation fidelity, the decision to continue this intervention would require understanding and addressing barriers to implementation, whereas determining to keep the interventions that need to be modified would require discussing, documenting, implementing, and evaluating necessary adaptations to the intervention. Though it can be difficult for educators, sometimes it also is necessary to change interventions entirely if another model is more coherent, efficient, and related to goals.

You can review registries of EBPs to understand the array of options and compare similar types of programs. There are many considerations when selecting interventions, including aspects of "contextual fit" such as need, precision, evidence base, efficiency, skills/competencies, cultural relevance, resources, and administrative and organizational support. Other aspects that contribute to a contextual fit include the match between the strategies, procedures, or elements of an intervention with the values, needs, skills, and resources available in a setting. If the evidence base does not fit the needs, you should review promising interventions with clear rationales as to why they may be effective in addressing the identified needs. It also is important that the selected intervention is coherent with your other programming and compatible with the human and material resources that are available (or could feasibly be made available).

Strategies for Selecting, Modifying, or Discontinuing Interventions Based on Data

a. Use all available data to select interventions based on needs, priorities, and goals.

b. Engage all members of your school community in the selection process to support buy-in, aligns to cultural values, and meets their school climate goals. It is especially important to engage key subpopulations to ensure that your programmatic choices resonate with their needs and concerns. See Objective 2 for more information on stakeholder engagement.

c. Review evidence-based registries to identify those interventions that research has shown to be effective with your population of students. Potential registries include the What Works Clearinghouse from ED; youth.gov from the U.S. government; the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Blueprints for Healthy Development from the University of Colorado–Boulder Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence; the Model Programs Guide from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention;

and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Guide for elementary, middle, and high school social and emotional learning programs.

d. Consider multiple aspects of the interventions being selected to determine fit, such as how well the core components are defined, what skills and competencies are required of people implementing the intervention, how culturally and linguistically relevant the intervention is for your school community, and what resources are required to implement it effectively (e.g., training, including coverage for substitute teachers, coaching, and materials).

e. Narrow the list of interventions to a few options and conduct a more detailed analysis of contextual fit for each with your school community.

f. Contact developers of potential interventions to determine if you have the organizational capacity (logistics and resources) to implement them with fidelity. (Use readiness documents developed earlier in *Objective 4.1.4* to help in determining organizational capacity.)

g. Reach out to districts, CMOs/EMOs, or schools that are implementing an intervention you are considering so that you can learn about their successes and challenges with implementation.

h. Determine if potential interventions are feasible based on information gathered from developers and ideally experiences settings similar to yours.

i. Coordinate, as much as possible, with interventions that you already implement well and that have a positive effect on your school climate.

j. Select interventions using their definition of school climate (topic areas), school climate data (identified needs), and school climate goals to coordinate and integrate efforts, as appropriate (e.g., use the review of current programs and potential interventions).

k. Enhance implementation of interventions already implemented well (as evidenced through data analysis) and meet the goals of the school climate improvements.

l. Modify implementation of interventions that meet the goals but may not be implemented effectively (as evidenced through data collection). Be careful to not assume interventions will work better when modifying implementation; use evidence from prior studies or the school's monitoring to ensure effectiveness of any changes made.

m. Remove interventions that are currently implemented but do not meet identified needs or align with school climate goals.

n. Implement new interventions if current interventions are not meeting all identified needs, ensuring fit and readiness of the new interventions.

o. For sites that implement interventions across several schools in a district or CMO/EMO, analyze the interventions to determine commonalities and differences to help you differentiate your supports.

p. Ensure that your selected body of interventions is coherent, and that, as a group, they do not leave gaps, duplicate efforts, or overwhelm staff.

Related Resources for Selecting, Modifying, or Discontinuing Interventions Based on Data

■ *School Climate Improvement Online Module 6: Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions* (NCSSLE): This online module provides an activity to help think through how to choose an intervention.

■ *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This brief provides guidance on how to review and select EBPs. The guidance includes where to look for EBPs, the types of questions you need to answer to select programs, and how to monitor the implementation of programs.

■ *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs for Schools Settings* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This module presents strategies and tools for identifying and selecting EBPs for school settings.

■ *Using Data to Identify Programmatic Interventions* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar discusses strategies for connecting your data to interventions, including how to use school climate data to identify needs, how to identify types of programmatic interventions that can address these needs, and how to select programmatic interventions that can be implemented effectively within a school or district.

■ *The Importance of Contextual Fit When Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief provides information regarding the importance of contextual fit for intervention implementation. The brief includes core elements that you can use to determine whether there is contextual fit for interventions in your school(s) and guide practice and policy.

■ *Unpacking the Complexities of De-implementing Inappropriate Health Interventions* (Implementation Science): This research article published through *Implementation Science* highlights the importance of and complexities around de-implementing ineffective and inappropriate health interventions. Though it speaks to health care and public health interventions specifically, the larger points around strategies for de-implementation, outcomes, and unintended consequences can apply to education interventions as well.

■ *The Hexagon—An Exploration Process* (The National Implementation Research Network): This research-based tool helps you identify contextual fit by exploring your school(s) or district context. The tool enables you to examine six factors relating to an intervention you are considering: need, fit, resources, evidence, readiness, and capacity.

Topic-Specific Resources

■ *Bullying Prevention* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar covers practical strategies focused on how improved school climate reduces bullying and provides initial training in recognizing, responding to, and preventing bullying, as well as how to assess for risk of bullying.

■ *Violence Prevention* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar covers practical direction on how to develop, manage, implement, and sustain a violence prevention strategy. Important to violence prevention is the interplay between positive school climate and strong relationships with and among students.

- *Substance Abuse Prevention* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar covers current effective practices for designing and managing a substance abuse prevention intervention that can be used to adjust current strategies and policies and improve school climate and student academic outcomes.

- *What Works Briefs* (California Safe and Supportive Schools): This webpage includes a list of briefs addressing a variety of school climate topics that include suggested strategies districts, schools, and families can implement based on the latest research.

- *A Discussion on Adapting Program and Implementation Strategies During a Pandemic and Beyond* (National Implementation Research Network): This podcast covers implementation and adaptation of evidence-based programs and practices during the pandemic, given the changes in education and society.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Decisions in Motion: Iowa S3 Toolkits for Improving School Climate*: These toolkits are designed for schools that want to get moving right away to improve school climate. They cover a range of topics—from discipline to improving relationships—and can help schools and districts use data to develop a plan and create clear expectations. Each toolkit provides a sample plan and a step-by-step process of creating that plan to support your efforts to improve the climate in your school.

- *S3 Strategy Guide: Quality Rubric*: This guide provides direction on how to use a rubric to score the degree of quality of your programs and strategies.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.6: Participate in a Thoughtful Planning Process for Implementing the Selected Interventions

Purpose of Thoughtful Planning for Implementing Selected Interventions

After you have identified those climate-related interventions that you want to implement or strengthen in your school(s), engage key stakeholders in a thoughtful planning process. The planning process should consider the readiness to implement the intervention and ensure that staff members have the necessary time, resources, and professional development to implement the selected interventions. When you provide these types of supports, staff members know that school climate is a priority and take the implementation of the intervention more seriously. Furthermore, these supports provide staff the development of the skills needed to effectively implement the intervention(s) with fidelity. Along with collaborating with key stakeholders, collaborate with the intervention developers and with other districts or schools implementing the same interventions. Engage with these collaborators about the necessary logistics and supports to implement the interventions.

Furthermore, your school-level climate team (developed through *Objective 2.1.3*) is essential to successful program implementation because it handles oversight in programming. The team should meet on a regular basis to address implementation challenges and concerns. These meetings should include the development of agendas and follow-up activities that define action steps to ensure continued progress toward successful implementation.

Strategies for Thoughtful Planning for Implementing Selected Interventions

a. Plan for time, space, equipment, technology, and materials to roll out the climate-related intervention(s) effectively during a sustained period.

b. Train all staff (not just teachers) on the intervention(s) and develop a sustainability plan to train staff hired later. Embed training materials in staff orientation packets.

c. Diversify the training plan for those who have expertise versus those who are new to the intervention(s) selected.

d. In the early stages of implementation, have coaches meet regularly and frequently with school leadership and other stakeholders involved in implementation. Ensure adequate time and support for these meetings to occur.

e. Determine how you will provide opportunities for coaching and feedback to educators to ensure consistent and continued implementation of the intervention over time, leading to increased fidelity.

f. Develop professional learning communities for those schools with similar needs and identified interventions.

Related Resources for Thoughtful Planning for Implementing Selected Interventions

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides*, Section 4 (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support the selection and implementation of interventions.

■ *Safe, Supportive and Successful Schools Step by Step* (AIR): This guide provides easy-to-follow steps for educators wanting to know more about how to implement a three-tiered approach to student support. Strategies presented address social, ethical, and emotional change for all students; early interventions for some students that exhibit minor behavioral issues; and intensive interventions for the few students in the school who have significant emotional or behavioral issues.

■ *Effective Planning Strategies for Program Implementation* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar addresses the components of an effective program implementation. Specifically, it discusses what data, policies, and systems you need for successful implementation and sustainability and how to adjust current or develop new policies and systems to support the effort.

■ *Implementation Stages Planning* (National Implementation Research Network): This implementation and planning tool helps you assess, plan, and track implementation activities to improve the success and fidelity of your school's or district's selected EBPs.

Related Resource From the Field

■ *Effective Planning Strategies for Program Implementation* (NCSSLE): These webinar sessions from Michigan, West Virginia, and Iowa S3 grantees provide effective strategies for planning to implement selected interventions. They draw on schools' experiences adjusting or developing new policies and systems and engaging staff to ensure effective and sustainable implementation.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.7: Implement Interventions, Ensuring Fidelity of Implementation or Appropriate Adaptation

Purpose of Implementing Interventions With Fidelity or Appropriate Adaptation

After you have selected your school climate interventions and developed your implementation plan, it is time to implement your intervention(s). From the start, take steps to ensure that your staff implements the interventions with fidelity. For example, you can provide feedback loops for your staff members to verify that they are implementing the core components of interventions as designed. You also might create check-in points with your staff to see how well implementation is going and determine if they are receiving the necessary training and support to implement the interventions in ways that meet the needs of all students. If staff members report concerns about fidelity criteria that do not seem to fit your school environment, be prepared to discuss adaptations to the intervention. Because staff members will vary in their ability to implement interventions across multiple tiers, the training and support they need also will vary. By differentiating your supports to various staff (e.g., creating master teachers or teacher leaders who can lead efforts), you will maximize the effectiveness of the intervention and eliminate barriers to implementation.

Strategies for Implementing Interventions With Fidelity or Appropriate Adaptation

a. Continually provide coaching, monitoring, and communities of practice to ensure progress.

b. Consult with developers to determine levels of support and tools needed to assess fidelity of implementation.

c. Use tools to monitor implementation across stakeholders (e.g., How are staff and students responding to the intervention? Does the intervention work for all intended beneficiaries, or just some?).

d. As appropriate, involve students, families, and other community stakeholders in implementation plan.

e. Provide educators, families, and community members with support and feedback as they implement interventions (e.g., through observations, feedback loops, peer mentoring, and coaching).

f. Provide educators with job-embedded professional learning and ensure that they have access to ongoing professional development and support (e.g., educators participate in school climate professional learning communities and have access to coaching).

g. Provide time during meetings for staff to bring up their school climate concerns.

h. Create opportunities for teacher leaders and master teachers to become experts in the practice and support other educators or create peer learning opportunities to provide one another feedback and support.

i. Build a component for monitoring fidelity into the initial RFP for participating schools and ask how they would continuously monitor for improvement or adapt specific interventions to better fit their school environment.

- *Integrating Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports and Ensuring Fidelity of EBPs* (NCSSLE webinar): This webinar is focused on integrating EBPs within a multitiered system of supports, collecting data and information to understand if EBPs are being implemented as intended and using that information to inform future practice.

- *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This brief provides a framework for identifying key pieces of information you should know to select EBPs. It includes information on identifying EBPs, determining readiness to implement, tracking outcomes, and monitoring fidelity. In the appendix, key questions are summarized in a discussion guide, along with worksheets and resources to help you select an EBP that meets your needs.

- *Implementing Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This interactive, self-paced learning module presents strategies and tools for implementing, evaluating, supporting, and sustaining EBPs in schools.

- *Program Fidelity and Adaptation: Meeting Local Needs Without Compromising Program Effectiveness* (What Works, Wisconsin—Research to Practice Series): This practice brief covers strategies for maintaining fidelity during program adaptation and adapting programs to your school's needs.

- *Monitoring Fidelity of Implementation* (Center on Innovation and Improvement): This handbook outlines research-based action principles behind the implementation of interventions with fidelity.

- *Fidelity Monitoring Tip Sheet* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family and Youth Services Bureau): This tip sheet contains useful information about what an EBP is and why monitoring the fidelity of it is important.

- *Making Adaptations Tip Sheet* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family and Youth Services Bureau): This tip sheet contains useful information about how to decide when to make adaptations to certain EBPs, as well as how to plan and implement the adaptation.

Related Resources From the Field

- *Innovation Spotlights: Addressing Fidelity of Implementation in Arizona* (S3): This brief discusses the guiding principles of the Arizona S3 initiative, which provides services and programming to 26 high schools in 14 districts aimed at creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments. A core part of the initiative involves using data to implement appropriate programming and measuring the fidelity of implemented programs.

- *Innovation Spotlights: Addressing Fidelity of Implementation in Louisiana* (S3): This brief shares information about Louisiana's Positive Approaches for Safe and Supportive Schools program, which offers a foundation to implement integrated and comprehensive prevention programs in 43 high schools across the state. The team developed a fidelity checklist through a web-based platform that teachers and other staff who are implementing the interventions and curriculum using a multitiered approach could easily complete.

Conditions for Positive School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

OBJECTIVE 4.1.8: Use Data to Monitor the Fidelity of Implementation of Interventions

Purpose of Using Data to Monitor the Fidelity of Implementation of Interventions

Along with using data to assess your school climate needs, you can use data to monitor the fidelity of implementation or how well the climate-related interventions are being implemented. You also can use the fidelity data to identify successes and challenges with implementation, including documenting which core components of the intervention are being implemented consistently, the use of materials, and the success of training and support. Furthermore, fidelity data help you improve your school climate interventions by understanding if the interventions are working for all students or subgroups of students. Fidelity data also help identify those staff members who need increased support with tiered approaches. Finally, use the data to determine how implementation fidelity relates to student outcomes.

Strategies for Using Data to Monitor the Fidelity of Implementation of Interventions

a. If available, use the fidelity tool/checklist prepared by the developer of your selected intervention(s). Determine if adaptations need to be made to these fidelity tools for your school community. If a developer's fidelity tool/checklist is not available, design your own tool/checklist.

b. Refine and target support strategies identified earlier through *Objective 4.1.7* based on fidelity data.

c. Institute regular meetings with the school-level climate team and key stakeholders to discuss implementation and fidelity data.

d. Determine if further adaptations need to be made to interventions based on the fidelity data (e.g., any needs for increased training or coaching for staff, changes in how interventions are integrated into the school day).

Related Resources for Using Data to Monitor the Fidelity of Implementation of Interventions

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides, Section 5* (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support the monitoring and evaluation of school climate improvements.

■ *Laying the Foundation: A Discussion on Moving Fidelity of Implementation From Compliance to Capacity Building* (NCSSLE, S3 training): This presentation provides an overview of the definition of fidelity, the challenges of maintaining implementation fidelity, and the strategies to overcome those challenges.

■ *Fidelity Tools* (National Center on Intensive Intervention at AIR): The tools listed on this page can be used to assess and support fidelity of data-based individualization implementation at the student, school, and intervention levels.

Related Resource From the Field

■ *Innovation Spotlights on Implementing With Fidelity* (S3): These short briefs describe how two states, Arizona and Louisiana, supported schools in implementing EBPs with fidelity.

OBJECTIVE 4.1.9: Continue School Climate Messaging to Districts/CMOs/EMOs and Schools at Different Levels of Implementation

Purpose of Continuing Messaging to Districts/CMOs/EMOs and Schools at Different Levels of Implementation

Throughout the implementation process, continue stakeholder communications about the progress made on school climate improvements. This messaging can include your fidelity data, which will inform your stakeholders on the progress made to date, as well as where you could use additional support from stakeholders. Also be sure to convey how programming fits into the larger goals of school climate improvement (rather than looking at individual interventions out of context). Continuing your communications to all stakeholders is critical to maintaining buy-in to the process, as well as promoting the sustainability of your school climate efforts.

Strategies for Continuing Messaging to Districts/CMOs/EMOs and Schools at Different Levels of Implementation

a. Engage key stakeholders in districts and schools throughout the intervention selection, planning, and implementation process.

b. Use the communication strategies you developed through *Objective 2.1.1* continue your messaging efforts during the implementation process.

c. Hold regular stakeholder meetings to discuss current efforts and interventions for students and other stakeholders and to disseminate and discuss fidelity data. Receive input from stakeholders about how to sustain practices or improve implementation (e.g., If school climate data have not moved in a positive direction, is this caused, at least in part, by poor fidelity of implementation?).

d. Modify your message based on the level of implementation in your schools (e.g., messaging for schools just starting to train staff versus those partially implementing versus those who have fully implemented an intervention).

Related Resources for Continuing Messaging to Districts/CMOs/EMOs and Schools at Different Levels of Implementation

■ *School Climate Improvement Action Guides, Section 5* (NCSSLE): Each guide includes a section on how a stakeholder can support the monitoring and evaluation of school climate improvements.

■ *The Importance of Quality Implementation for Research, Practice, and Policy* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief presents the core components, specific steps, and supports necessary to achieve quality implementation of EBPs.

Action Step 4.2: Evaluate and Refine the Choice of Interventions and Implementation Strategies and Continue Planning for Improvement and Sustainability

This action step has two objectives:

- 4.2.1: Plan how to assess implementation with fidelity across time (e.g., during a 5-year period).

- 4.2.2: Include questions about knowledge and experience with school climate and student support in job descriptions, interview protocols, and evaluations.

At the end of Activity Set 4, it will be useful to evaluate the implementation of your chosen school climate interventions and the support you provide to educators and staff to implement those interventions. Here, you will be considering all of your school climate interventions holistically. Evaluating your efforts in choosing and implementing interventions will help you not only get better with each cycle of implementation but also sustain the structures and processes you are creating. It is important for you to constantly reflect on your implementation efforts to determine what is working well, what is not working well, why this may be the case, and how to improve. It also provides opportunities to better understand who interventions are working for and under what conditions. Although much of this work is embedded throughout this activity set, it is important to stop periodically and take stock of how the intervention(s) are being implemented and how multiple school climate interventions are working in concert with one another, and with other initiatives, to support a positive school climate.

OBJECTIVE 4.2.1: Plan How to Assess Implementation With Fidelity Across Time (e.g., During a 5-Year Period)

Purpose of Planning How to Assess Implementation With Fidelity Across Time

Throughout this activity set, the objectives contain strategies to identify interventions that meet school climate needs and goals, as well as monitor the fidelity of implementation of your chosen school climate interventions. Assessing fidelity is particularly important when you first implement the intervention, then monitoring the implementation across time supports sustainability, ensures the interventions have their intended effect, and allows for adjustments to as needed for successful implementation. As you make decisions about changing individual interventions along the way, there may be carryover effects on other interventions. Given the limited time available during the school day and for professional development, it is important to step back and ensure that the allocation of time and resources makes sense. For example, you do not want educators spending a large portion of their time on an effort that plays only a minor role in your overall school climate improvement plan.

As your needs change, also expect that how you implement the intervention will change too; thus, it is important to document and report on how implementation evolves. Determine cost-effective ways to continuously monitor implementation, such as combining implementation monitoring with other initiatives (e.g., educator effectiveness).

Strategies for Planning How to Assess Implementation With Fidelity

a. Determine a set of core outcomes and core components of the program that you can assess with fidelity across time.

b. Establish biannual markers to assess sustainability; if that is not possible, establish markers at least annually.

c. Determine cost-effective structures that can be used to monitor fidelity. For example, embedding school climate metrics within your school improvement plans or data that you collect for accountability systems.

d. When selecting variables to incorporate in your sustainability plan, you can apply *Fixsen's model*, which recommends assessing whether you are (a) implementing tasks brilliantly, (b) making everyone more effective than they would ordinarily be, and (c) providing feedback so you can implement effectively.

Related Resources for Planning How to Assess Implementation With Fidelity

■ *Using Evidence-Based Constructs to Assess Extent of Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This brief provides constructs on how to manage your implementation of interventions. By applying the constructs within this brief, you create a plan for monitoring your implementation using data and comparing your intervention to the brief's suggested time frame for each component of implementation.

■ *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature* (National Implementation Research Network): This research paper synthesizes literature on implementation to create a framework for implementation that includes clear stages with suggested timelines, a focus on readiness for change, and an eye toward sustainability and fidelity in implementation.

■ *Core Intervention Components: Identifying and Operationalizing What Makes Programs Work* (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services): This research brief contains information that will help you better understand what "core components" are and how to identify, operationalize, and implement them.

■ *Implementation Support Practitioner Profile: Guiding Principles and Core Competencies for Implementation Practice* (National Implementation Research Network): This implementation guide lays out key principles and competencies that practitioners and communities need to successfully implement interventions and improve related outcomes. Key principles include empathy, curiosity, equity-driven implementation, and cross-disciplinary approaches to create and sustain change.

■ *Selecting Evidence-Based Programs* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): The brief provides guidance on how to review and select EBPs. This guidance includes where to look for EBPs, the types of questions you need to answer to select programs, and how to monitor the implementation of programs.

■ *Implementing Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings Module* (National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention): This interactive,

self-paced learning module presents strategies and tools for implementing, evaluating, supporting, and sustaining EBPs in schools.

OBJECTIVE 4.2.2: Include Questions About Knowledge and Experience With School Climate and Student Support in Job Descriptions, Interview Protocols, and Evaluations

Purpose of Incorporating Effort in Personnel Materials

Make school climate a priority for all new staff members. To accomplish this, embed school climate and student support principles within the hiring process of district and school personnel. For example, place school climate roles and responsibilities within job descriptions, letting potential applicants know that promoting a positive school and classroom climate and differentiating supports for all students is a priority within the school or district. In addition, have applicants respond to questions about conditions for learning and addressing the whole child during their interviews, gauging their knowledge of and interest in school climate and student support as important components of education. Having applicants respond to questions within the interview protocol will help districts and schools gauge how well an applicant will "fit" in a culture of positive school climate.

Strategies for Incorporating Effort in Personnel Materials

a. Conceptualize the school climate effort not as linked to specific individuals or jobs but as attitudes, skills, and processes that students, staff, and other stakeholders will benefit from in the long term.

b. Incorporate school climate and student support priorities within job descriptions, as appropriate.

c. Incorporate questions on school climate and student support practices during job interviews, as appropriate.

d. Include consideration of applicants' knowledge or beliefs about the importance of school climate and student support in the hiring process.

Related Resources for Incorporating Effort in Personnel Materials

■ *Recruitment, Selection, & Hiring for Disadvantaged Schools* (GTL Center): This toolkit provides strategies and resources on recruitment, hiring, and the placement of educators through an equity lens.

■ *Coming Back to Climate: Hiring Interview Questions* (Aspen Institute): These interview questions provide recruiters with useful pointers to gauge potential candidates' understanding of data analysis and safe, equity-focused learning environments.

District or State Example of Implementing Programmatic Interventions Activity Set

Kansas

The Kansas S3 Initiative first identified 10 priority areas for schools to focus on in their school climate improvement efforts. These included academic achievement/school attendance, substance abuse prevention and intervention, bullying/violence prevention/conflict resolution, truancy/dropout prevention, and mental health/emotional support, to name a few.

Kansas then prepared a list of EBPs available for implementation and the level of intervention for each, as aligned with the multitiered system of supports model, mapped onto its priority areas. This approach allowed for a broad focus, knowing that not all local education agencies would identify the same climate needs, and ensured as much as possible that they were choosing strategies that were proven effective.

Kansas S3 used survey data collected each spring and its most recent administrative data to inform schools' selection and implementation of interventions and approaches. Schools were required to develop action plans and implement strategies that impacted all students in the school (universal), as well as students who were either at risk (selected) or students who were at high risk (indicated). For more information, see http://www.kansasmtss.org/.

To ensure that interventions were in fact meeting the needs demonstrated by the data, Kansas S3 provided ongoing (at least quarterly) technical assistance regarding program implementation, helped school teams complete fidelity-of-implementation checklists, and monitored schools' progress toward fulfilling their action plans and goals.

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

The previous four activity sets to improve school climate provide objectives and strategies to continuously monitor and evaluate your progress on your efforts—what is going well and what needs to be modified. Activity Set 5 presents objectives and strategies specific to evaluating your efforts after you complete almost an entire cycle of school climate improvements (one cycle is approximately one year).

This activity set has two action steps: (a) evaluate the school climate improvement process and (b) refine the overall effort and continue planning for improvement and sustainability.

The strategies within this activity set help you determine the impact that your planning, stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, and intervention implementation has had on your schools' climate and student outcomes. The evaluation results help inform the next cycle of school climate improvements by helping you understand how well your chosen climate-related interventions were implemented, as well as the impact of those interventions on your expected outcomes. Evaluation results can guide you to determine whether interventions should be continued, modified, or adapted in the next cycle of school climate improvements, as well as if you need to continue or modify the infrastructure you developed to sustain your efforts.

Through *Objective 1.3.1*, you developed your logic model or theory of action, which described the interventions, actions, and strategies (i.e., processes) you planned to implement that would lead to your desired result (i.e., outcomes). When conducting an evaluation of your efforts, it is important to evaluate the processes and the outcomes. You want to make sure that your district/school/CMO is using the right interventions and approaches, implementing them well enough for them to be beneficial, and seeing results (including for subpopulations of interest).
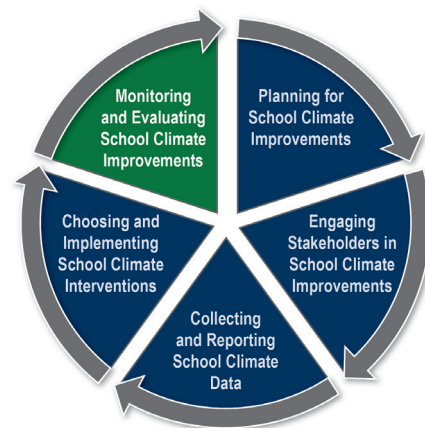
Action Step 5.1: Evaluate the School Climate Improvement Process

This action step has four objectives:

- 5.1.1: Develop a plan to evaluate the overall school climate effort.
- 5.1.2: Conduct a process evaluation to review the effectiveness of various elements of the school climate process.
- 5.1.3: Conduct an outcomes evaluation to determine the global effects and those for subpopulations.
- 5.1.4: Prepare an annual end-of-year process and outcome report.

The four objectives within this action step provide strategies you can use to evaluate the overall effort, including evaluating the processes you implemented and expected outcomes. Also included are strategies that can help you prepare an annual end-of-year report that is digestible to various stakeholders. The end-of-year report should provide enough information to guide you through your school climate improvements moving forward. These evaluations help you examine whether the changes you implemented occurred in an equitable way across stakeholder groups (e.g., students, families, and staff) and by subpopulation (e.g., race/ethnicity or English learner), as well as whether the school climate efforts produced similar effects for each group.

OBJECTIVE 5.1.1: Develop a Plan to Evaluate the Overall School Climate Effort

Purpose of Developing a Plan to Evaluate the Overall School Climate Efforts

Prior to conducting any evaluation, it is important to plan your evaluation efforts to determine the data you have and the data you need to collect. The evaluation should be guided by your theory of action that describes what you planned to do and the anticipated outcomes, as well as the evaluation plan developed during Activity Set 1. You collected much of the data (but not all) that you will use in your evaluation during Activity Set 3 and Activity Set 4.

Your evaluation has three important parts: evaluating the processes, evaluating the outcomes, and using the evaluation results for continuous improvement. First, the process evaluation assesses the various elements of your school climate improvements, including how well you implemented the interventions and how well you involved stakeholders in the process. To conduct the process evaluation, you can use the data collected through *Objective 4.1.8.* Review the types of questions you want answered by your process evaluation to determine the data you will use.

Second, the outcome evaluation assesses the effects of your school climate efforts. That is, did the changes you made in your school(s) have an impact on your anticipated outcome(s)? To conduct the outcome evaluation, you can use the data collected through Activity Set 3. However, depending on when you collected data, you may want to collect additional data to determine the effects. Review questions you want answered by the outcomes evaluation to determine if your current data address them or if you will need to collect additional data.

Third, you can use the process and outcomes evaluations to inform a cycle of continuous improvement, beginning with your next cycle of implementation. The process evaluation will help you determine which interventions and policies were implemented successfully and which ones need to be modified, adapted, removed, or added. The outcomes evaluation helps you determine the progress that you have made and if there are subgroups who are benefiting more or less than others.

Strategies for Developing a Plan to Evaluate the Overall School Climate Efforts

    a. Review the plan you developed during Activity Set 1 on how you evaluate your overall school climate effort, including process data (data that assess how well you implement interventions and strategies of your school climate efforts) and outcome data (data

that assess the final result of your efforts; for example, through survey data, behavioral incidents, attendance, and student social and emotional skills).

b. Prior to conducting your evaluation, allow sufficient time for intervention(s) to take root and achieve fidelity. This time will vary depending on the intervention, how well it is matched to identified needs, and how well it is implemented.

c. For some interventions, you may not see measurable effects within the first few years of implementation. (See implementation materials from developers of specific interventions you are using as well as Activity Set 4 for details on tools to measure fidelity.)

d. Secure an external evaluator to assess the overall school climate efforts (use strategies in *Objective 1.3.7* to help you find an external evaluator). Consider using informal feedback in the evaluation but base final decisions on high-quality empirical evidence rather than anecdotal evidence.

e. Integrate an implementation monitoring method into your ongoing process evaluation to sustain efforts (use strategies in *Objective 4.1.8*. Include this information as part of the development of your data infrastructure.

f. Establish and maintain ongoing outcomes evaluation (use strategies in Activity Set 3). This should be part of the development of your data infrastructure.

g. Collect qualitative data (e.g., focus groups and interviews) systematically and with rigor (i.e., rather than simply "anecdotal data"). (See *Objective 3.1.5* to help you determine strategies to collect high-quality qualitative data.)

h. Develop a dissemination plan to communicate the evaluation results to stakeholders. Dissemination plans can include the stated goals and outcomes of the efforts and whether and how they have been achieved to date. (See Action Step 3.3.)

Related Resources for Developing a Plan to Evaluate the Overall School Climate Efforts

■ *Program Evaluation Resources* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): This evaluation resources list helps you evaluate the success of your interventions. Resources such as manuals, trainings, websites, and professional organizations are listed on this website to assist you with evaluating your interventions.

■ *Program Evaluation Toolkit* (REL, 2022): This toolkit provides a step-by-step process for conducting your own evaluation to assess implementation and outcomes of local, state, and federal programs in a variety of education settings.

OBJECTIVE 5.1.2: Conduct a Process Evaluation to Review the Effectiveness of Various Elements of the School Climate Process

Purpose of Conducting a Process Evaluation to Review the Effectiveness of Various Elements of the School Climate Efforts

Objective 5.1.1 included strategies to help you develop a plan to conduct your process evaluation. The goal of a process evaluation is to determine the degree to which your school(s) or district actually implemented the interventions. *Objective 4.1.8* provided strategies on how to assess

intervention processes, including implementation fidelity. The strategies used for *Objective 4.1.8* also can be used during the process evaluation.

Components of the process evaluation may include the extent to which (a) educators were trained and otherwise prepared and supported to deliver the intervention; (b) the interventions were coherent with one another, other programming, and how schools/classrooms functioned; (c) the interventions were feasible given the human and material resources available; (d) the interventions were appropriate given the needs and characteristics of the student population; (e) the interventions were implemented as planned (and any intended or unintended changes in delivery); and (f) end users (e.g., educators, students) perceived the interventions as appropriate and beneficial.

Strategies for Conducting a Process Evaluation to Review the Effectiveness of Various Elements of the School Climate Efforts

    a. Decide on the unit of analysis—state, region, county, district, CMO/EMO, or school.

    b. Use tools provided by the developer of the intervention to assess implementation fidelity, if available.

    c. Collect additional data to monitor fidelity, if needed (e.g., if the intervention provides only a dosage measure, you also may want to focus on quality of implementation and how well stakeholder groups received the intervention).

    d. Conduct focus groups or interviews to obtain a more nuanced understanding about stakeholder perceptions of the school climate efforts, particularly to understand experiences of stakeholders with various characteristics.

    e. Collect process data (qualitative data) on the implementation of procedures, such as those used for school climate survey data collection, data analyses, reporting and dissemination, and stakeholder engagement, as well as the actual implementation of interventions and corresponding professional development and coaching activities.

    f. Continuously collect data before and after interventions to help adjust interventions and identify the need for new ones and allow you to assess the depth of support for and understanding of how to create safe and supportive school and classroom environments.

    g. Analyze the data collected to evaluate your processes. Data analysis procedures will depend on the type of data you collect. Consult with either the program designer or your external consultant on how to analyze the data.

Related Resources for Conducting a Process Evaluation to Review the Effectiveness of Various Elements of the School Climate Efforts

- *Providing Feedback to Improve the Initiative from the Community Tool Box* (Work Group for Community Health and Development): This toolbox provides theory and methodology behind getting feedback and how to use it to improve initiatives.

- *Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education* (IES): This five-step facilitation guide helps you use collected data to support decision making and strategic action. The five steps cover what to do before, during, and after data collection; provide guiding questions and activities, and help you use the data to shape conversation about next steps in implementation.

Conditions for Positive School Climate

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting School Climate Data

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating Overall School Climate Improvements

■ _Program Evaluation Toolkit_ (REL, 2022): Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the toolkit provide guidance on the types of data you should collect, best collection methods, and approaches to analysis for conducting your own evaluation.

Related Resources From the Field

■ _West Virginia Safe and Supportive (S3) Schools Project: Year 2 Implementation Evaluation Report_ (West Virginia Department of Education): The West Virginia Department of Education implemented school climate improvement activities under the S3 grant. This Year 2 evaluation report includes methods for measuring fidelity and the effectiveness of interventions.

■ _MDS3 School Visit Log_: This visit log provides a framework for tracking school visits by specialists, such as when they visited, who they visited, and what services they provided and toward what program or strategy. This information will later allow you to determine where the most energy and resources were put and compare it with the amount of success of the various programs so that you can make changes for the future.

■ _Systems Coaching_: These excerpts provide an example of what data to collect and how to use the data when looking at how much time was spent with coaching and with whom.

OBJECTIVE 5.1.3: Conduct an Outcomes Evaluation to Determine the Global Effects and Those for Subpopulations

Purpose of Conducting an Outcomes Evaluation to Determine the Global Effects and Those for Subpopulations

In _Objective 5.1.1,_ you developed a plan to conduct your outcome evaluation. The goal of your outcome evaluation is to determine the extent to which your school climate improvement efforts are producing the intended results. The outcome evaluation should include leading indicators (measures that can show whether you are moving in the right direction) as well as impact data on the areas of interest. The strategies used for Activity Set 3 also can be applied to an outcome evaluation.

Strategies for Conducting an Outcomes Evaluation to Determine the Global Effects and Those for Subpopulations

a. Decide on the unit of analysis—state, district, CMO/EMO, or school.

b. Use the data gathered in Activity Set 3 to inform your evaluation, overall and by respondent characteristics.

c. Collect any additional data needed as identified through _Objective 5.1.1._

d. As needed, conduct focus groups and interviews to obtain a more nuanced understanding about stakeholder perceptions of school climate outcomes, particularly to understand differences by respondent characteristics. See _Objective 3.1.5_ in Activity Set 3 for more information about conducting focus groups.

e. Continuously collect data before and after interventions to help adjust interventions, identify the need for new ones, and allow you to assess the depth of support for and understanding of how to create safe and supportive school and classroom environments.

f.   Analyze the data collected to evaluate your progress toward achieving outcomes overall and for subpopulations of interest. Data analysis procedures will depend on the type of data you collected and the types of questions you want answered. Consult with either district research staff or external consultants on how to analyze the data.

g.   Reassess your efforts to improve school climate for your students by subgroup based on the evaluation, recognizing that it may take more than a year to see effects.

Related Resources for Conducting an Outcomes Evaluation to Determine the Global Effects and Those for Subpopulations

■   *ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation* (Ericae): This clearinghouse provides tutorials, FAQs, abstracts, journals, websites, and other resources concerning assessment and evaluation. It can help you determine best practices and collect and analyze data for your own outcome evaluation.

■   *Conducting Focus Groups to Develop a Comprehensive School Portrait* (National Institute for Urban School Improvement): This tool provides guidance for conducting an effective focus group and using the results. It can help you collect additional data to inform a deeper understanding of stakeholder perceptions of school climate interventions and outcomes.

Related Resource From the Field

■   *Innovation Spotlights: Youth Engagement in California* (NCSSLE): This article contains information about one of the focus areas of the California S3 initiative, which was to promote youth development among participating high school students. In partnership with WestEd, the California Department of Education conducted "Listening to Students," or student fishbowl circles, at each of the 58 S3 high schools in fall 2011, during which students and school staff engaged in meaningful dialogue about school climate data.

OBJECTIVE 5.1.4: Prepare an Annual End-of-Year Process and Outcome Report

Purpose of Preparing an Annual End-of-Year Process and Outcome Report

After you conduct your process and outcome evaluations, you can prepare an end-of-year performance report to demonstrate progress toward your shared goals for school climate and toward improving student outcomes. The end-of-year report also can help you monitor change across years after your school climate efforts have been implemented for multiple years. This report can be used for internal purposes; to disseminate to your stakeholders; or to demonstrate your effectiveness to the state, district, or funders (or potential funders). Depending on what you need the report for, you may not need to develop a full report as long as you are able to share and discuss the key data results from the process and outcome evaluations. You may need to create different versions of the report in different formats to ensure that it is accessible to the audiences you are trying to reach. It is important to reflect on why you are developing these reports, who they are targeted at, and how you will use them before you begin to write them.

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Activity Set 3:
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Activity Set 4:
Choosing and
Implementing
School Climate
Interventions

**Activity Set 5:
Monitoring and
Evaluating Overall
School Climate
Improvements**

Strategies for Preparing an Annual End-of-Year Process and Outcome Report

a. **d** Include background information (e.g., overarching school climate improvement efforts; theory of action; interventions examined and chosen to be implemented; implementation fidelity; and, for districts/CMOs/EMOs, the number of schools and how they were selected).

b. Discuss the key indicators of progress and success based on your theory of action and on stakeholder input.

c. Incorporate results from the school climate surveys (overall and by respondent characteristics), as well as your process and outcome evaluation.

d. Include an analysis of change across multiple years, if available.

e. Include Government Performance and Results Act measures in the annual report if required by the funding source.

f. Include a summary of plans for sustainability of the initiative.

g. Develop a report that allows stakeholders and the core planning team to determine the extent to which school climate improvement efforts are in place and working as intended, and the extent to which you are seeing improvements in leading your indicators and outcomes.

h. Conduct meetings that allow stakeholders to review the year-end report and provide input into the strategies that you will implement in the next cycle, using the process and outcome data.

Related Resource for Preparing an Annual End-of-Year Process and Outcome Report

■ *Communicating Information to Funders for Support and Accountability* (Community Tool Box, Center for Community Health and Development): This tool provides the reasoning behind sharing your data with key audiences as well as a checklist, supportive tools, and presentation slides to support your efforts to garner buy-in from funders.

Action Step 5.2: Refine the Overall Effort and Continue Planning for Improvement and Sustainability

This action step has a single objective:

■ 5.2.1: Strengthen school climate efforts and sustain infrastructure.

At the end of each activity set, reflect on, assess, and refine your efforts with an eye toward institutionalizing good practice. It is important for you to reflect on the types of data that you are collecting and ensure that the data you collect help you and your stakeholders constantly improve and refine your efforts. In addition, as you complete your cycle of school climate improvements, it also is important to reflect on the overall structures and processes implemented to improve your school climate.

OBJECTIVE 5.2.1: Strengthen School Climate Efforts and Sustain Infrastructure

Purpose of Strengthening School Climate Efforts and Sustaining Infrastructure

Prior to starting each school climate cycle, it is important to reflect on what you have done and strengthen those areas that have worked well. This step will help you institutionalize and routinize the school climate efforts that are working well and strengthen those programs or practices that need further attention. By taking the time for this review, you ensure that the basic organizational structures, policies, and staff needed for the effort are in place and functioning and that the effort thrives independent of the individuals currently overseeing it. Many of these strategies should be continued when you begin again with the next cycle (Activity Set 1).

Strategies for Strengthening School Climate Effort Characteristics and Sustaining Infrastructure

a. Ensure that you align the effort with the needs of the district or school.

b. Confirm the compatibility of the effort with current SEA goals and priorities.

c. Build and maintain relationships among key stakeholders and ensure stakeholder ownership.

d. Continue to identify strategies to engage more stakeholders in the process, particularly those who are typically underrepresented.

e. Review and augment administrative and fiscal structures and formal inter- and intraorganizational relationships developed throughout the effort.

f. Confirm resources or identify new ones to sustain and strengthen the effort, including funding; human, physical, technological, and information sources; staff and volunteers; training capability; and marketing and communications resources.

g. Review administrative policies and procedures that support the effort and determine if they need to be revised in areas such as conducting needs assessments, implementing EBPs, and monitoring and evaluating program performance.

h. Incorporate staff training, technical assistance, and continuing education into ongoing operations.

i. Integrate the initiative into manuals, procedures, trainings, and regulations.

j. Consult with experts to review efforts to date and provide recommendations to continue efforts.

k. Ensure survival of the effort through annual budget and grant cycles.

Related Resources for Strengthening Effort Characteristics and Sustaining Infrastructure

- *2012 Grantee TA Symposium: Merging School Climate in Pursuit of Academic Excellence* (NCSSLE, S3 Training)—see presentations and resources listed under "Sustainability" and "Sustaining Innovations": These presentations and worksheets provide strategies on how to sustain school climate and culture improvement and how to incorporate changes into long-term organization and fiscal plans.

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- Sustainability Materials From NCSSLE S3 TA Training, September 17–18, 2013:
  - *State Work Teams Process*: This resource provides information to help you break down the process of sustainability into obtainable goals and provides a roadmap for prioritizing and creating a sustainable positive school climate.
  - *Annotated State Sustainability Tool*: This resource is an annotated version of the State Sustainability Assessment Tool template to assist you with completing the blank version.
  - *Local Sustainability Assessment Tool*: This assessment, similar to the State Sustainability Assessment Tool, will help you identify your strengths and needs at the local level.
  - *Annotated Local Sustainability Assessment Tool*: This resource is an annotated version of the Local Sustainability Assessment Tool template to assist you with completing the blank version.

District or State Example of Monitoring and Evaluating School Climate Improvements Activity Set

Maryland

The MDS3 Initiative sought to better understand the impact of schoolwide prevention efforts in high schools and factors influencing program implementation fidelity and the outcomes of those programs. Specifically, MDS3 evaluated the integration of the universal, schoolwide PBIS model with other evidence-based selective and indicated prevention programs (i.e., EBPs) with 52 high schools.

Maryland's evaluation met the gold standard for research design—a randomized controlled trial. The 31 schools that received supports (i.e., EBPs) to improve school climate were selected randomly and were statistically no different from the comparison schools that did not receive the intervention. The intervention schools received training, coaching, and the necessary resources to implement a continuum of EBPs and integrate them with PBIS. The 27 comparison high schools received no interventions and were monitored using the same MDS3 school climate measures collected for the intervention schools (i.e., referrals, suspensions, attendance, and academic records furnished through the *Maryland Report Card* and the *MDS3 Survey System Reporting Model* plus data from the MDS3 School Climate Survey from students, parents, and staff).

Rollout of the core features of PBIS was measured by a set of research-based implementation tools administered by outside observers: the Implementation Phases Inventory, the School-wide Evaluation Tool, and the Individual Student Systems Evaluation Tool. The research team also explored whether baseline rates of bullying and other school-level indicators of disorder were affected by the adoption of the multitiered PBIS framework.

Analyses showed that schools with higher initial rates of bullying generally implemented PBIS with greater fidelity. These analyses suggest that schools with increased bullying may be particularly motivated to adopt PBIS. However, other baseline indicators of school disorder were generally not associated with PBIS implementation and thus do not appear to be barriers to adoption.

For more information, see the following articles:

- Bradshaw, C. P., Pas, E. T., Debnam, K. J., & Lindstrom Johnson, S. (2015). A focus on implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in high schools: Associations with bullying and other indicators of school disorder. *School Psychology Review, 44*(4), 480–498.

- Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., Debnam, K. J., & Lindstrom Johnson, S. (2014). Measuring school climate: A focus on safety, engagement, and the environment. *Journal of School Health, 84,* 593–604.

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction planned from the beginning of its school climate initiative to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of strategies to reduce high suspension rates and improve the school climate in 55 high schools.

Wisconsin's evaluation used data from annual online surveys of high school students as well as school-level data on suspensions, behavioral incidents, and the fidelity of program implementation. Student surveys included measures of perceived school climate; experience of violence, bullying, and harassment; personal alcohol and drug use; commitment to school work; perceived safety; and perceived school rules enforcement. Implementation data came from school consultants and annual school reports. Data on school-level suspensions, graduation rates, and standardized test scores came from department reporting systems. Using statistical analyses, Wisconsin evaluators compared participating schools with nonparticipating schools of like size. Their evaluation examined factors such as exclusionary discipline, alcohol and other drug use, bullying and the perception of a safe school environment, and academic performance.

During the 4 years studied, the biggest change was in suspension rates, which schools reduced from an average of 25 percent of students to 11 percent. Students also reported improvements in the areas of violence, alcohol and drug use, bullying and harassment, and general perception of safety.

Analysis of the effectiveness of various approaches to intervention proved challenging because no fixed set of interventions was implemented consistently and with fidelity in multiple schools. However, analyses found that schools participating in PBIS had improved attendance rates and increases in student reports of violence, bullying, and harassment, noting that these results may be influenced by the heavy emphasis on PBIS in Milwaukee schools, where student perceptions of violence also were high. The total number of programs implemented was associated with less reduction in suspension rates but improved perceptions of safety and fair discipline. The use of EBPs improved high school graduation and suspension/expulsion rates. Structured programs had positive results on attendance rates; suspensions; and student academic commitment, perceived discipline, and climate. Individual programs were associated with positive effects on attendance, academics, discipline, and climate.