EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD FOR TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES:
THE SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

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SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT:
PAST AND CURRENT EFFORTS

- ❖ School climate: An educational tradition
- ❖ A data-driven, continuous school improvement strategy that recognizes the "voice" of the whole school community
- ❖ Recognizing the social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual aspects of learning and school life
- ❖ Supporting the "whole village" to support the whole child

A WORKING DEFINITION

"School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures."

-National School Climate Council, 2007

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH: HELPFUL AND LESS HELPFUL "DRIVERS" OF CHANGE*

Unhelpful *Primary* Drivers:

1) Accountability systems that use data as a "hammer" rather than a "flashlight"

2) Primary focus on the individual teacher and/or administrator

3) Technology

4) Specific "evidence-based" programs

5) "One-Time" programs

Helpful *Primary* Drivers

1) Fostering the intrinsic motivation of students, parents and school personnel: "igniting" the process

2) Engaging students & educators in a continuous process of social-emotional & civic as well as intellectual learning

3) Inspiring team work and a collaborative problem solving process

4) Affecting the whole community

* Bryk, et. al. 2002 & 2010; Fullan, 2011; Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010; Tucker 2011.

"…so, on what page of the guide can I find this stuff?"

1. How do we move from **speaking** about school climate to **doing** school climate?
2. How do we **measure** school climate?
3. How do we **link** our measurements to the **school climate improvement process?**

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Traditional Approach to Change

Research

Policy

Practice

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE CENTER
Educating Minds and Hearts, because the 3 Rs Are Not Enough

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School Climate Improvement Efforts rely on these drivers:

1. Inclusion
   Who's invited to the table?
2. Infusion
   How do we get inside the DNA of our building?
3. Deep Dives & Risk Taking
   Where has "window dressing" ever gotten us?
   "Best" Practices to "Next" Practices.
4. No Fault frameworks and a culture of trust
   How do we address the "non-discussables"?
5. Honor and promote student voice.
   How can we "get out of the way"?

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Essential Questions

➢*How safe, supported and engaged do your students feel?*

➢*How do you know?*

*Response to these two questions will begin the measurement/assessment process.*

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Dimensions	Major Indicators
Safety	
1 Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence; clearly communicated rules about verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.
2 Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.
3 Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.
Teaching and Learning	
4 Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenge; and individual attention.
5 Social and Civic Learning	Support for the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.
Interpersonal Relationships	
6 Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school—student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.
7 Social Support—Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students' success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students' problems.
8 Social Support—Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including: friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.
Institutional Environment	
9 School Connectedness/Engagement	Positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.
10 Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.
Staff Only	
11 Leadership	Administration that creates and communicates a clear vision, and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.
12 Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.

Five-Stage School Climate Improvement Process
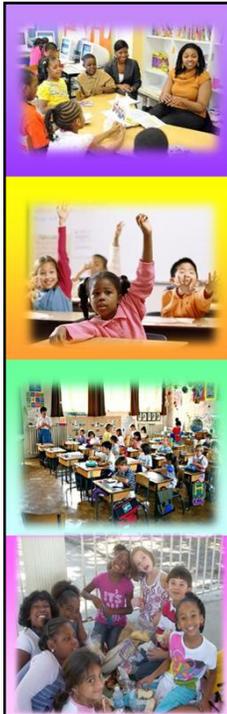
What is a logical "game plan"?
1. Preparation

Forming a representative SC improvement leadership <u>team</u> and establishing ground rules collaboratively.

Skills Assessment & "Assigning the Proper Positions"
✓Building support and fostering a shared vision (or "Buy In") for the school climate improvement process.
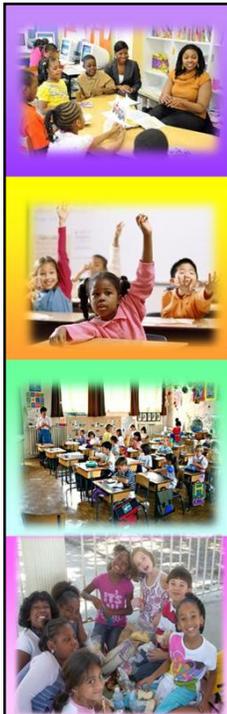***Practice & Drills***
✓Establishing a "no fault" framework and promoting a culture of trust.
Ongoing Conditioning ("Stay Hungry")
✓Ensuring your team has adequate resources to support the process.
Pep Rally
✓Celebrating successes and building on past efforts.

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2. Evaluation

- Systematically evaluating the school's strengths, needs and weaknesses with any number of school climate (and other potential) measurement tools.
- Developing plans to share evaluation findings with the school community.

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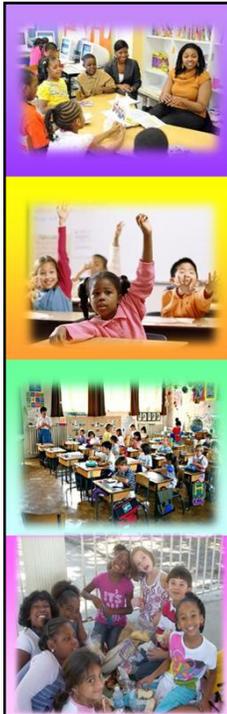
3. Understanding the findings and developing an action plan.

Analyze your findings and give them context that is pertinent to your reality..

Many forms of data that you already have.

■
- attendance
- discipline referrals
- graduation rates
- teacher retention
- parental involvement

Students as "action researchers".

Digging into the findings to understand areas of consensus and discrepancy in order to promote learning and engagement.

Prioritizing Goals.

Researching best practices and evidence-based instructional and systemic programs and efforts.

Developing an action plan.

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4. Implementing the Action Plan

✓ **Walking The Walk**
Coordinating evidence-based pedagogic and systemic efforts designed to (a) promote students' social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual competencies; and (b) improve the school climate by working toward a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school community.

✓ **Square Dancing**
The instructional and/or school-wide efforts are instituted with fidelity, monitored and there is an ongoing attempt to learn from successes and challenges.

✓ **Waltzing & Dancing With the Stars**
Considering and supporting how educators can align quality academic based service learning efforts with engaging school climate improvement efforts: they support one another in powerful ways!

✓ **The "Dance of Life"**
The adults who teach and learn with students work to further their own social, emotional and civic learning.

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5. Reevaluation and Development of the Next Phase

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first
time."

— **T.S. Eliot**, *Four Quartets*

✓ **Reevaluating the school's strengths and challenges.**
✓ **Discovering what has changed and how.**
✓ **Discovering what has most helped and hindered to further the school climate improvement process.**
✓ **Revising plans to improve the school climate.**

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Let us keep learning together

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