



NEWSLETTER

School Climate Improvement: An Important Process

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE CENTER (NSCC) OUTLINES HOW SCHOOL CLIMATE REFORM IS AN EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGY THAT SUPPORTS K-12 STUDENTS, SCHOOL PERSONNEL, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, AND EVEN COMMUNITY MEMBERS LEARNING AND WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE PROSOCIAL EDUCATION AND EVEN SAFER, MORE SUPPORTIVE, ENGAGING, HELPFULLY CHALLENGING, AND HARMONIOUS SCHOOLS. EDUCATORS HAVE BEEN ATTUNED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE OR THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF SCHOOL LIFE FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS.



School Climate Reform

The U.S. Department of Education, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Institute for Educational Sciences, President Obama's Federal Bully Prevention Partnership, the US Departments of Justice and Education's School Discipline Consensus project, a growing number of State Departments of Education, and foreign educational ministries are supporting and/or endorsing school climate renewal as a strategy to increase student learning and achievement, enhance school connectedness, reduce high school dropout rates, prevent bullying and other forms of violence and enhance teacher retention rates.

Practically, what does the "school climate improvement process" mean? The National School Climate Council has defined the school improvement process as an intentional, strategic, collaborative, transparent, and coordinated effort to strengthen school learning environments. Democratically informed decision-making constitutes an essential foundation for the school climate improvement process. And, it is a process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

1. The decision-making process is collaborative, democratic, and involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied roles and perspectives (e.g., teacher, nurse, social worker,

administrator, bus drivers, secretaries, maintenance staff as well as nontraditional student leaders and disempowered parents).

2. Psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., survey) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data are used to drive action planning, intervention practices, and program implementation to continuously improve dimensions of school climate. Data are collected regularly to evaluate progress and continue to inform the improvement process.
3. Improvement goals are tailored to the unique needs of the students and broader school community. These goals are integrated into overall school reform/renewal efforts thereby leveraging school strengths while facilitating the sustainability of the improvement process over time.
4. Capacity building among school personnel promotes adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to promote collective efficacy and staff skills in providing whole child education.
5. Curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions are based on scientific research and grounded in cognitive, social, and ecological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength- and risk-based practices and programs that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy

student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning.

6. The improvement process strengthens (a) policies and procedures related to learning environments, and (b) operational infrastructure to facilitate data collection, effective planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability.

These processes powerfully support the first cluster of effective strategies that the National Dropout Prevention Center and Network suggests shape helpful, evidence-based efforts to prevent student dropout rates: Systemic Renewal; School-Community Collaboration; and Safe Learning Environments. But school climate reform also shapes and helps to coordinate all of the strategies that we know help students to feel safe, supported and connected to schools.

The National School Climate Center is devoted to providing scientifically sound assessment strategies, practice guidelines and tools, professional development and technical assistance, and policy guidelines, an annual summer institute, as well as recognizing, supporting and certifying emerging and established school leaders who are invested in mobilizing the "whole village" to support America's K-12 students and their school communities.

— Jonathan Cohen, PhD
Guest Editor

A Brief on the School Climate Research

by Amrit Thapa and Megan Ice

Educational reformers have long recognized that the distinctive culture of a school affects the life and learning of its students (Perry, 1908; Dewey, 1916). The observation that school-specific processes accounted significantly for variation in student achievement and industrial/organization research led to the systematic empirical study of school climate. (Anderson, 1982). Since then, the research in school climate has been expanding systematically, with empirical evidence being documented on various aspects of school climate in several languages in countries worldwide (for a summary, see Benbenisty & Astor, 2005 in English; Cohen et al., 2009 in English; Debarbieux, 1996 in French; and Del Rey, Ortega & Feria, 2009 in Spanish). The research on school climate overlaps with several fields, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical safety; positive youth development;

mental health; healthy relationships; school connectedness and dropout prevention; academic achievement; social, emotional, and civic learning; teacher retention; and effective school reform. In general, there are four or five essential areas of school climate: Safety, Relationships, Teaching and Learning, Institutional Environment, and the School Improvement Process (Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey & Higgins-D'Alessandro, in press).

The rising interest and attention in school climate improvement efforts in recent years is due to the following three factors (Thapa et al., in press). First, there is a growing body of empirical research that supports that norms, expectations, and belief systems shape individual experience and learning and influence all levels of relationships. Second, there is an increasing awareness that school climate reform is an effective, data-driven and evidence-based way to support bullying and violence prevention efforts, leading to local, state, and federal interest in school climate reform. Third, the tremendous attention research-based prosocial educational efforts have received in recent years has contributed to the rising interest in school climate improvement efforts (for list of interventions in prosocial education, see Brown, Corrigan, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012). However, the current school climate research findings are limited by inconsistencies among definitions, models, and experimental methodologies. There is not a national or international consensus about how to define "school climate," a "positive and sustained school climate," the "school climate process," or the dimensions that need to be regularly measured in school climate research and improvement efforts. This has continued to stymie school climate measurement, research, and improvement efforts.

School climate matters. Sustained positive school climate is associated with positive child and youth development, effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts, student learning and academic achievement,

increased student graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, and teacher retention. Literature on school climate from different parts of the world documents positive school climate having a powerful influence on the motivation to learn, mitigating the negative impact of the socioeconomic context on academic success, contributing to less aggression, violence and sexual harassment, and acting as a protective factor for the learning and positive life development of young people (for reviews see, Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa, et al., in press). The Institute for Educational Sciences and the What Works Clearinghouse suggest that there is "moderate" support for school climate improvement efforts as a dropout prevention strategy (Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008). Furthermore, studies have shown that quality of the school climate contributes to academic outcomes as well as the personal development and well-being of pupils (OECD, 2009).

The evolving field of school climate research calls for rigorous and empirically sound research that focuses on how both interventions and climate affect socio-moral, emotional, civic, and cognitive development of students and the instruction and learning of teachers. Through understanding these processes better, research can support schools successfully implementing interventions that have been shown to promote these positive outcomes. These findings need to be translated into smarter educational policies to improve schools and to enhance the quality of lives of our students.

We are invested in supporting school climate process and outcome studies. Please do let us know about research that you may be involved with and/or how we can support your efforts.

Dr. Thapa is Research Director at NSCC and Megan Ice is Research Associate, athapa@schoolclimate.org

(References for this article are found on page 4 of the Newsletter.)



National
Dropout Prevention
Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

The *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* is published quarterly by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Your comments are always welcome. Please address mail to:

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Network Notes

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Jonathan Cohen, PhD, is the co-founder and President of the National School Climate Center. He is also Adjunct Professor



in Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University and a practicing clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst.

Dr. Cohen has worked with K-12 students, educators, and parents since 1973. He consults to schools, districts, State Departments of Education, President Obama's Federal Bully Prevention Partnership, and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on social, emotional, and civic learning; bully prevention; student leadership; and mental health-related and school climate improvement efforts. He is the author of many papers and award-winning books including *Educating Minds and Hearts: Social Emotional Learning and the Passage Into Adolescence* (1999) and *Caring*

Classrooms/Intelligent Schools: The Social Emotional Education of Young Children (2001) as well as *Making Your School Safe: Strategies to Protect Children and Promote Learning* (2007).

NDPC/N Staff Changes

■ The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network has named Dr. Howard (Sandy) Addis as its new Associate Director, effective May 2013. Dr.



Addis brings unique leadership skills and expertise to the Center and the Network, having served in the field of education for nearly 40 years. We welcome Dr. Addis to NDPC/N!

Two NDPC/N staff members have assumed new positions. Mr. John Gailer is now Assistant Director for Programs and Outreach and Ms. Cairen Withington is now Assistant Director for Research, Evaluation, and Public Relations.

Mark Your Calendar! November 3-6, 2013, Atlanta, GA

■ The 2013 NDPN conference will celebrate 25 years of bringing the best in professional development and cutting edge dropout prevention resources to participants. NDPN, Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Regional Educational Service Agencies, and Communities In Schools of Georgia will present a dynamic professional learning opportunity for school board members, superintendents, educator teams, counselors, administrators, educators, and anyone working with youth. Over 100 different sessions, including a special school board and leadership track, will be offered.

Keynote speakers include Bill Bennett, author, political theorist, radio host, and former U.S. Secretary of Education and Bill Milliken, founder and Vice Chairman of Communities In Schools. Usher's New Look Foundation will host a student panel and a special leadership track will be led by Karen Pittman, author, former director of President Clinton's Crime Prevention Council and member of the executive team of the International Youth Foundation, and co-founder and CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment.

Proposals to present are being accepted now, and registration for attendance and exhibitor applications will begin in June. Visit www.dropout-prevention.org/conferences for more information.

NDPN Board Officers Elected

■ The National Dropout Prevention Network welcomes new Board leaders elected at the February 2013 Network Board Meeting.



Dr. Eurmon Hervey, Jr., Executive Vice President of Edward Waters College, Jacksonville, FL, is the newly elected NDPN Chair.



Mr. Raymond J. McNulty, Chief Learning Officer at Penn Foster, Scranton, PA, is NDPN Vice Chair.



Mr. Bob Collins, Chief Academic Officer for Mango Learning and President of CareerTech-Education Associates, Jersey City, NJ, is now NDPN Recording Secretary.

Solutions to the Dropout Crisis

■ Our featured guest for the June 18 *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* radio program will be Dr. Ann Kulze, MD. "Dr. Ann," a physician, best-selling author, and motivational speaker, will be discussing nutrition and good health, and its impact on student success. Take a break from your summer activities to link to www.dropout-prevention.org/webcast at 3:30 PM on June 18 to listen and call in to this interesting program.

The Network and the Board appreciates the service of all Board members, and especially these new officers.

Program Profile

The Albert Gallatin Area School District

by Richard Cardillo

NSCC is honored to collaborate on districtwide school climate improvement efforts with the Albert Gallatin Area School District in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The Albert Gallatin Area School District is located in the southwestern portion of Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and includes six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one senior high school.

Both district and school leaders had decided to take a coordinated and integrated approach to all school climate improvement reform. Therefore, we first partnered in administering the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) to all students, staff, and parents from the district. Further supports included all staff professional development trainings from NSCC's Director of Education, Richard Cardillo. After extensive and collaborative preplanning and strategic evaluation of the particular needs of the schools, the first two trainings covered the following:

- School Climate 101- How to prepare for long-term and sustained school climate improvement efforts.

- Methods of measuring and reporting on school climate.
- Implementing NSCC's 5-Stage School Climate Improvement Model to transform our school community.
- Teaching with the particular needs of our students in mind.
- Equity issues in our school and the reality of power and privilege concerns.
- How do I infuse school climate improvement efforts into all my classes?
- Best practices of classroom management.
- Differentiated instruction to accommodate all students' learning styles.
- Collaborating as a school for maximum change and effectiveness
- Hands-on practice preparing lessons and protocols to foster school climate improvement.
- Promoting student voice and student engagement
- Harnessing the leadership of students in real and tangible ways.
- Identifying methods to engender more inclusion of student voice in the school community
- Enabling our students to become "action-researchers"
- Promoting an Upstander Alliance at our school.

Both NSCC and the Albert Gallatin Area School District are committed to making this work as sustainable and coordinated as possible; therefore, we are also introducing supports from our BullyBust/Upstander Alliance resources. BullyBust is NSCC's communitywide bully prevention awareness campaign designed to help students and adults "stand up" to bullying and become part of the solution to end harmful verbal harassment, teasing, and violence in our nation's schools.

As a complement to our School Climate Resource Center (SCRC) supports, the school is now sharing all materials and best practices from their work on a shared documents page available to all in the district.

—Richard Cardillo
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Program Profile

Creating a Community of Upstanders in Howard County, Maryland

by Daisy Lopez

As communities, schools, and classrooms across the nation strive to create supportive environments to develop productive and healthy adults, an epidemic competes for attention. With affirmation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that bullying is a public health problem, communities are now grappling with ways to encourage others to stand against bullying and to do so in a meaningful and safe way that will have long-term positive implications.

Research conducted by the National School Climate Center (NSCC) underscores the importance of this mission. A growing body of research and a common finding from the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) assessment shows students consistently rate this area of safety as troublesome and in need of supportive services. For students, this unfortunate trend results in an unwillingness to attend school for fear of bullying, low self-esteem, poor school performance, and an overall feeling of disconnect from the school community. In response to these findings, a substantial part of our work is dedicated to building and expanding partnerships with schools, districts, and State Departments of Education to address the social and emotional aspects of bullying behavior.

One such partnership, branded as One-Howard-County, was launched in 2012 in response to the increasing rate of teen suicides and cyberbullying incidents in Howard County, Maryland. Utilizing free Upstander Alliance resources to empower countywide awareness, One-Howard-County is mobilizing youth and adults to reduce the dangers of social technology and inspiring others through education, awareness, and action. Howard County School Board Member, Brian Meshkin and his wife, Catherine, began this initiative with the support of numer-

ous partners such as Choose Civility Initiative by the local library, National School Climate Center, Yahoo!, the City of Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety, ASCD, and others. The BullyBust campaign was launched by NSCC in 2008 to provide critical free resources and tools to help students and adults work collaboratively to prevent harmful teasing, harassment, violence, and exclusion in schools.

By doing so, they promote positive communities of Upstanders—people who stand strong against bullying and act in a safe way to prevent negative situations from occurring.

Brian Meshkin truly embodies the Upstander mission. His comprehensive vision unifies all members of the community. He states, “One person can make a difference and stop cyberbullying. That’s what this is all about. Our community has seen the tragic consequences that can result—let us all commit to prevent such tragedies from ever happening again. Cyberbullying by youth and adults alike is destructive to our community, and we must do more to educate and inspire.”

Students from the Howard County Association of Student Councils (HCASC) are leading their own outreach efforts to steer other students from the dangers of the digital world. The shared vision for the program and its future is evident by the ownership of student-driven projects such as designing a One-Howard-County t-shirt noting #Upstander across the front. A sophomore recently named Howard County Youth Volunteer of the Year, Athena Khan, summarized how this effort is impacting teens across the county. She says, “Bullying is an issue that we find important and extremely relevant to students across the county. Having witnessed, discouraged, and



reported instances of cyberbullying, I realize the importance of public awareness of cyberbullying in both adults and youth.” Her statement is a reminder that bullying incidents have the power to negatively impact the entire community, but, on the upside, one person choosing Upstander action over bystander behavior also has the power to shift negativity into positivity.

The community has also joined and committed to the effort with PTA members hosting digital safety workshops for parents, family nights devoted to educating adults and youth about responsible usage of new technologies, and visits to county schools reminding students of the supportive resources available.

The growth of the digital age is a constant reminder of the need to be vigilant and proactive in supportive measures to prevent bullying and cyberbullying. With a push to build Upstander Alliances of youth and adult leaders in every high school across Howard County, their district is truly leading the way in this effort. The One-Howard-County team is proud of the success made thus far, and we look forward to a larger community of students and adults joining us to elevate awareness and model positive Upstander behavior.

—Daisy Lopez, Marketing and School Support Manager
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Book Review

Handbook of Prosocial Education (2012). P. M. Brown, M. W. Corrigan, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (Eds.). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. [ISBN: 978-1-4422-1119-3]

The *Handbook of Prosocial Education* is an important, timely, and wonderful two volume series of chapters about education that is focused on the social, emotional, ethical, civic and/or moral as well as intellectual or academic aspects of learning and teaching. It is well known that schools that are safe, supportive, and engaging powerfully enhance a student's inclination to stay "connected" and not dropout. And, in an overlapping manner, it is well known that instructional efforts that support K-12 students developing social, emotional, and civic skills, knowledge and dispositions—by definition!—provide the foundation for life as well as school success. This *Handbook* honors and details the range of schoolwide as well as instructional efforts that support these two essential education goals that provide a foundation for successful dropout prevention efforts.

This *Handbook* not only includes summary chapters about the range of schoolwide reform efforts that are explicitly focused on social, emotional, and civic learning (e.g., Bully Prevention efforts, Character Education, Civics Education, Mindfulness Education, Moral Education, Multicultural Education, Service-Learning, Social Emotional Learning) but also a series of wonderful case studies by "frontline" practitioners as well as many of the groundbreaking leaders in these overlapping fields, like Superintendent Shelley Berman and Dr. James Comer. There is also a chapter about school climate and culture (that I wrote) that details how school climate reform efforts recognize and support a range of prosocial systematic efforts (e.g., school-home-community partnerships; engaging youth to be co-learners and co-leaders in the improvement process) as well as instructional efforts.

In addition to a wealth of information and knowledge about practice, this *Handbook* also includes terrific research and policy updates, summaries, and suggestions for the field. I highly recommend it!

—Jonathan Cohen, Guest Editor
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Also Recommended:

School Climate Practice Briefs

The NSCC *School Climate Practice Briefs—Practices for Implementation and Sustainability*—present the latest in research and best practice for effective school climate reform from leading experts. The 11 issues selected to be included in this set of *Practice Briefs* are based on NSCC's decade-long work with the entire academic community—teachers, staff, school-based mental health professionals, students, and parents—to improve a climate for learning. <http://www.schoolclimate.org/publications/practice-briefs.php>

Resources

National School Climate Center (NSCC)

NSCC's goal is to promote positive and sustained school climate—a safe, supportive environment that nurtures social and emotional, ethical, and academic skills. www.schoolclimate.org/

Center for Character & Citizenship

The Center engages in research, education, and advocacy to foster the development of character, democratic citizenship, and civil society. www.characterandcitizenship.org

School Climate Resource Center (SCRC)

An interactive and data-driven multimedia web resource, the SCRC helps the entire school learn and work together to support effective school climate reform by providing school staff with indispensable information, research-based guidelines, practical tools, comprehensive learning modules, and an interactive social network. scrc.schoolclimate.org/

School Climate Webcast

Terry Pickeral was the *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* guest on January 10, 2012, talking about school climate. Listen to the webcast and discover even more resources! That program is archived on our Web site, at www.dropoutprevention.org

Events

June 17-19, 2013 St. Louis, MO
19th Annual National Character Education Conference

<https://www.characterplus.org/page.asp?page=425>

July 9-11, 2013 New York City
Summer Institute 2013

National School Climate Center
www.schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php

November 3-6, 2013 Atlanta, GA
25th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference
Pathways to the Promise
www.dropoutprevention.org

Discipline, School Climate, and Graduation Rates—Policy Implications

by Tamara Wolf, Terry Pickeral, & Daniel Bellizio

Schools have a vested interest in keeping students in the classroom; however, historically it was common practice for schools to adhere to punitive methods of discipline, characterized by expulsions and suspensions, regardless of the extent of the misbehavior. These extended absences from the classroom undoubtedly hinder students' abilities to thrive within a classroom setting, impacting not only their academic success but civic, career, moral, and social development. Research indicates that students with higher absentee rates are more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, and have increased run-ins with the juvenile justice system. In light of this paradox, states and school districts have been forced to reevaluate their position regarding disciplinary procedures.

With a belief that the classroom is the best environment within which students can learn, an alternative school of thought emerged, focusing on the needs of the victims and offenders as well as the involved community. Restorative discipline, as it is termed, rather than simply punishing the offender, seeks to help all persons involved and focuses on promoting healthy and supportive relationships.

The concept of restorative discipline within a school setting continues to be a topic of debate as state lawmakers and school district leaders have been forced to deal with the reality of the negative impact bullying has on the learning environment. Forty-nine (49) states and the District of

Columbia have passed "anti-bullying" legislation, and while there appears to be a shift from the more traditional punitive-based model of discipline, states that have passed legislation incorporating an alternative method of discipline are still in the minority.

One state to embrace a model of restorative discipline is Maine. Maine's anti-bullying legislation ((Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. Tit. 20-A, §6554(2) (A)), relies on "alternative discipline" to correct and address the root causes of a student's specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class or school. Furthermore, restorative school practices are devised to repair the harm done to relationships and persons from the student's misbehavior. In accordance with the legislation, "alternative discipline" includes, but is not limited to:

1. Meeting with the student and the student's parents;
2. Reflective activities, such as requiring the student to write an essay about the student's misbehavior;
3. Mediation when there is mutual conflict between peers, rather than one-way negative behavior, and when both parties freely choose to meet;
4. Counseling;
5. Anger management;
6. Health counseling or intervention;
7. Mental health counseling;
8. Participation in skill-building and resolution activities, such as social-emotional cognitive skills building, resolution circles, and restorative conferencing;
9. Community service; and
10. In-school detention or suspension, which may take place during lunchtime, after school, or on weekends.

As a nation, we seek to increase student graduation rates, which are intrinsically related to school attendance and in turn to our approach

towards discipline. As such, these alternative methods of discipline should be considered, and not only in response to "bullying" behavior, but as a response to general misconduct. Further, there will be implications on school climate depending upon the disciplinary model adopted. For those states and school districts subscribing to a punitive model, the school climate will be perceived as authoritarian, nonengaging, and inequitable. For those implementing a restorative discipline system, the school climate will be viewed as engaging, supportive, and democratic.

Whilst the passing of appropriate legislation and/or adopting comprehensive school policies are positive moves towards improving graduation rates and overall school climate, this alone is not enough. Administrators, teachers, and faculty need at least a modest degree of professional development training in order to implement a meaningful school-based discipline system. Unfortunately, we often see schoolwide budgets being decreased, which begs the question: Where will states find the funds in order to implement such a system?

Schoolwide funding alongside professional development are key variables in this equation. However, the issue of funding is rarely addressed in a meaningful way. If our true goal is to increase graduation rates, then the issues of professional development and schoolwide funding necessarily must take center stage, together with our approach towards discipline.

The National School Climate Center maintains an up-to-date state-by-state school climate and bully prevention database, outlining the key components of the applicable statewide legislation, such as discipline models and support funding, amongst other items. This database is located at: www.schoolclimate.org/climate/database.php.

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NEWSLETTER

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Viewpoint

*The ancient redwood trees of
Northern California,
Huge as they are,
Have very shallow root systems.
Yet they cannot be blown over
by the strongest wind.
The secret of their stability is
The interweaving of each tree's
roots with
Those that stand by it.
Thus, a vast network of support
is formed
Just beneath the surface.
In the wildest storms,
These trees hold each other up.*

(Anonymous)

Like the redwood trees, schools and communities that succeed with at-risk students have created and nurtured strong, steady, supple, and interconnected roots. These schools have woven together multiple stakeholders who care about all students—including those at risk for school dropout or pushout. Their commitment creates school climates that are welcoming and inclusive, safe

for taking positive risks, engaged in terms of learning and service, democratic, and equitable.

Learning and equitable academic achievement take place when students feel they are part of a caring learning community that welcomes them, recognizes their uniqueness, and nurtures them as engaged members of the school. This is true for all students, but it is especially critical for those at high risk for school failure and dropping out. And research supports the positive impact of school climate on risks related to dropping out of school—including substance abuse, attendance, bullying, academic failure, violence, and disengagement from school.

We also know that leadership matters, and it can take many different forms—from district to building, from administrators to classrooms and parents, from teachers to students. Relationships matter too, including those that occur daily in school, and they retain their power over decades.

Reducing dropout rates requires rethinking a range of policies and

practices related to school climate, including a shift in our approach to discipline—from punitive and exclusionary to educational and restorative.

Programs and curricula that are isolated and disconnected are minimally effective, but when they are integrated into school climate efforts, at-risk students thrive. And finally, a positive school climate depends on student engagement, which requires students' voices.

We have many of the tools required to fulfill our educational mission—to nurture and equip new generations of parents, citizens, and leaders. Perhaps the missing link is to place students and student-adult relationships (rather than high-stakes testing and Zero Tolerance policies) back at the center of schools. School climate is one important way to restart this kind of commitment.

—Linda Brion-Meisels
Professor, Lesley University

—Steven Brion-Meisels,
Senior Consultant, NSCC