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Pulse

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WHAT DOES SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

As PTA members and leaders in our school communities, we know how important a school's climate is to children and their success. A big part of fostering a positive school climate is addressing social emotional learning for students. Here is an inspiring story about how one urban middle school changed their school climate and improved outcomes for students using a whole school approach to social emotional learning.

Principal Michael Essien, one of the guest speakers at our 2019 Legislation Conference, gave attendees a glimpse of how this was done at MLK Middle School in San Francisco. With an ethnically diverse population and nearly 80 percent of its students classified as socio-economically disadvantaged, the school had serious behavior and academic issues.

School leadership made changes that put student needs at the center of decision making.

Conflict Management: The school developed new training for teachers to address aggressive behavior caused by trauma in students. This included handling conflict, identifying student trigger points and de-escalation training. With these skills, teachers were better equipped to understand a child's behavior and intervene before things got out of hand.

Keeping Kids in Class: Rather than sending students out of class, teachers called an administrator or counselor to come into the class to help the student get re-focused on the lesson, called "Push In" instead of "Pull Out."

PAX Good Behavior Game: Students learned how to work together as a team and regulate their own behavior. Kids decided what they should not be doing, such as pushing another student or being out of their seat. They set their own classroom and school rules and helping create the environment they want to be in.

Changing the school's approach from "doing *to* children" to "doing *with* children" has dramatically improved the school climate at MLK Middle School and along with it, decreased the number of suspensions and increased academic achievement.

For more a more in-depth look at the turnaround at this school, read [this article from Ed100](#) or listen to [this interview with Principal Essien](#) by past California State President Carol Kocivar.



PROMOTING A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

California State PTA partnered with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and eight other California civil rights and

education organizations in the release of the [California LGBTQ Youth Report](#), detailing the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in California.

Despite state laws protecting LGBTQ students, research found that only 32 percent of LGBTQ youth in California always feel safe in the classroom and half of those surveyed had been teased or bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

PTA has long believed that every child deserves to go to school excited to learn in a safe and nurturing environment, without the fear of bullying, violence or discrimination. What can your school do to promote a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment?

Here are a few suggestions from the Welcoming Schools checklist, downloadable at www.welcomingschools.org.

- Do books in your school reflect your students' lives? Do they feature single parent families, adoptive or foster families, two-mom or two-dad families, grandparent-headed families, multiracial or multiethnic families?
- Do classroom and hallway images show diverse family structures, people of different races, gender expressions, ethnicities and abilities? Do the displays encourage respect for all people?
- Do teachers and staff interrupt mean teasing or put-downs about a child's identity or their family?
- When someone walks into your school, can they tell that all students and their families are welcome?
- Have you held events recognizing and celebrating family diversity that welcome all children and their families to your school community?

Lastly, do teachers, staff members and other adults know how to respond to anti-LGBTQ comments? Download this great [printable resource](#) that teaches you how to respond when you hear comments such as, "That's so gay."

Learn more and view more resources at www.capta.org/lgbtqia.



PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM SEX TRAFFICKING

Youth sex trafficking is a growing problem and is happening in cities all across California. The average age of entry into the sex trade is 12-14 years old. Tweens and teens are most vulnerable to the tactics used by human traffickers and exploiters. Foster youth are at higher risk for sex trafficking because of their need for love, affirmation and protection.

Traffickers recruit their victims in or around many middle and high schools. They also target other locations where youth tend to congregate, such as parks, transit stops, malls, shelters and group homes. Traffickers use social media and gaming sites to recruit unsuspecting youth. Predators can learn about our kids through their social feeds then manipulate them through fake profiles.

Human trafficking education is now a required component of the health education framework for California public schools and must be provided at least once in middle and once in high school. But it is equally important to discuss this issue at home.

What can parents do?

- Have conversations with your child(ren) about internet safety and "stranger danger"
- Know the signs of sex trafficking. Traffickers often pose as friends or boyfriends and groom their victims. Read more and [download an informative flier](#)
- Know your child's friends and whereabouts. There are many safety apps available for download that allow parents to keep track of their child(ren)

Learn more at www.capta.org/child-trafficking.

