



“I never thought anyone at school noticed if I was there or not, but one day I got asked why I was absent from class and it made me feel like someone cared about me.”



“We decided as a staff to make it a practice of greeting all students when they walked into the classroom, and notice something about each of them.”



“My son was being bullied and it turned into a fight. The principal brought us parents, our children and their class together. We talked until we got to the root of the problem. Teachers received training to look out for students experiencing troubles at home and bullying behavior, and how to use suspension or expulsion as a last resort.”



## STATE PRIORITY AREA: ENGAGEMENT

### School Climate

School climate means factors, both inside and outside the classroom, that impact student success. This includes student health, safety and discipline as well as how connected all students feel to their school.

Every child is entitled to a safe and peaceful environment that promotes learning. All students should feel respected, included, socially and emotionally cared for, and expected to succeed. Teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, students and community members must work together to create such environments on all campuses.

#### Some ways schools can measure school climate include assessing:

- Student, parent, teacher and school staff surveys.
- Student suspension and expulsion rates.
- Student attendance rates.
- Evaluations of programs and services.
- The availability of school nurses to support student health.
- The ratio of mental health counselors and behavioral support staff to students.
- Opportunities to engage teachers, staff, parents and students in “learning community conversations” that generate ideas and solutions for improving school climate.

#### Learn more – get engaged!

- California Department of Education webpage on positive school climate: [www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ss/se/schoolclimate.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ss/se/schoolclimate.asp)
- Healthy Kids Survey from WestEd: [chks.wested.org/resources/LCAP\\_Cal\\_SCHLS.pdf](http://chks.wested.org/resources/LCAP_Cal_SCHLS.pdf)
- California School-Based Health Alliance: [www.schoolhealthcenters.org/](http://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/)
- California Endowment webpage on school climate: [www.healthhappenshere.com/lcff\\_school\\_climate](http://www.healthhappenshere.com/lcff_school_climate)
- California State PTA: [www.capta.org/lcff](http://www.capta.org/lcff)
- Also, be sure to check out your local school district’s website.

## Key Questions to Ask About School Climate

- 1. How do we assess student needs and measure school climate on our campus?** Do we participate in statewide surveys such as the California Healthy Kids Survey, the California School Climate Survey or the California School Parent Survey that measure school climate? Do we regularly identify opportunities for staff training? Are we making sure surveys on campus-wide issues and concerns are given to families in their home languages and in multiple formats?
- 2. In what ways do parents, teachers, students, school staff and community members work together to create a safe, respectful and inclusive campus?** Do we have an anti-bullying policy or program? Are mental health services and counselors available for all students? Is there a school-based health center or other access to health services? What additional programs and services are provided to serve vulnerable children?
- 3. Does our school have a clear, written procedure to resolve concerns or problems?** Do we have a conflict resolution program? Have school rates for suspensions and expulsions decreased? Are teachers and staff trained in alternatives to school discipline such as a campus-wide restorative justice program that addresses the issues, needs and obligations of all students?
- 4. How do we engage and support all parents and families in the school community?** Are school leaders, teachers and staff trained to identify potential student needs, facilitating communication and reaching out to families in all neighborhoods? Do we provide school activities and events at low or no cost for students and their families?
- 5. Are local schools a “hub” of community life?** Do we have partnerships with local agencies and community organizations to support student success? Are school facilities open year-round for broad community use? Do children have a welcoming and safe space before and after school?