

Creating a Safe & Connected School Climate

Creating a culture and climate of safety is essential to the prevention of violence on campus. How can a school, its teachers, administrators and students work toward implementing cultures of connection and safety?

Research has determined that there are no fewer than 11 major components and task for creating a safe and connected school climate:

1. Assess the school's emotional climate.
2. Emphasize the importance of listening in schools.
3. Take a strong but caring stance against the code of silence.
4. Work actively to change the perception that talking to an adult about a student contemplating violence is considered "snitching".
5. Find ways to stop bullying.
6. Empower students by involving them in planning, creating and sustaining a school culture of safety and respect.
7. Ensure that every student feels that he or she has a trusting relationship with at least one adult at school.
8. Create mechanisms for developing and sustaining safe school climates.
9. Be aware of physical environments and their effects on creating comfort zones.
10. Emphasize an integrated systems model.
11. All climates of safety ultimately are "local".

Schools that have succeeded in creating safe school climates have done so because of their recognition that such climates of safety actually "raise the bar" on sound educational expectations, which in turn, keep students engaged and learning at high levels. Such schools achieve their aims by realizing that safe school climates are not overnight.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL: SCHOOL CLIMATE

How does your school rate?

For quick assessment of your school climate, read the statements below and rate your school on a 4-point scale (4= strongly agree; 3= agree; 2= disagree; 1= strongly disagree).

1. Our school has comparatively few discipline problems.
2. Vandalism is not a problem in our school.
3. Attendance is good at this school.
4. Our student and staff morale is high.
5. Our student achievement is high.
6. Students feel a sense of ownership and pride in this school.
7. Our staff and students trust, care about and respect one another a great deal.
8. Our school's social groups, or cliques, communicate well with one another and work together for the benefit of the school.
9. Our students and staff frequently participate in problem-solving and school-improvement activities.
10. The threat in our school is low (i.e. people do not have to worry about being treated disrespectfully, becoming failures or being physically harmed).

A score above 30 indicates a very positive school climate; 26-30, a positive climate; 20-25, a negative climate; and under 20, a climate in severe need of attention.

For more information call :

Student Support Services:

(619) 691-5564

Acknowledgements to Campus Safety Journal for articles used in this pamphlet.

Plan Prepare Practice

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SUHSD Board Policy #2224

Creating a Safe Environment

"Maximizing School Achievement"

Plan Prepare Practice



"Creating a safe environment for students and staff to enhance learning"

Today's youth need choices. They need places to go where they can feel productive and safe, where someone cares about them. Young people need to be believed that they have a future.

Site Safety Committee

- Every site has an active Site Safety Committee that meets monthly on site safety issues.
- Committees consist of staff, students, parents, community members and the site's SRO (School Resource Officer)
- Committees are chaired by the Assistant Principal in charge of safety, or selected chairperson.
- Committees will participate in the site audit and revision of Comprehensive Site Safety Plans which will take place each Spring.

School Connectedness Counts

When you were in school, did you feel included and respected? Did you feel your opinions were considered fairly by teachers, staff and other students? Did you "connect" with school, with an activity like a favorite class, or a teacher who helped you develop a skill or hobby?

Research shows that as strong attachment to school can result in reduced use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. When youth report high levels of connectedness to their schools, studies say they report less frequent use of illegal substances.

Planning

- Each school has a Comprehensive Site Safety Plan which acts as a blueprint for prevention, preparation and planning to maintain a safe environment at every site, especially in the event of a crisis or emergency.
- The Comprehensive Site Safety Plan is reviewed each Spring. The plan is updated and revised annually, including participation by staff, students and parents in a Site Security Audit, a self-review process.
- Site news letters update parents on the site's safety activities, topics and issues discussed at the monthly safety meetings.



Preparing

Four Disaster Response Procedures:

- Drop, Cover & Hold
- Evacuation Routs & Assembly Area
- Hit the Deck
- Lock Down

Information and Notification:

Violence, accidents and natural disasters do not have a ZIP code. These events can occur any time and any place. Schools are still the safest place for your child

- Violent acts on campus: for information contact your school's office, Student Support Services and listen to the local TV or radio stations.
- Transportation Problems: contact your school's office, Student Support Services or Transportation.
- Natural disaster: contact school office, Student Support Services and listen to local TV or radio stations.

Homes need to develop an emergency plan to assure safety and smooth reunification of family members.

Reunification of parents/guardians with students:

- Sites will annually establish and notify parents/guardians about procedures for reunification of parents & students.
- Letters that describe the system and procedures for picking up your students in case of a school emergency or natural disaster are sent home each Fall.
- Parent reunification points will be broadcast over the local radio and TV stations.
- Do no plan to park in the school parking lot as it may interfere with getting emergency vehicles into the school site. Walk to school to pick up students when possible.

Practicing

Drills:

Sites are mandated by law to conduct a set number of drills throughout the school year. Sweetwater schools conduct the following drills each semester:

- Fire & Evacuation Drills
- Earthquake Drills
- Lock Down Drills

Many sites conduct drills in collaboration with the police and fire departments.

In Service & Workshops:

School administrators review the details of the site emergency plans and procedures with all staff at the beginning of the school year. Drills on evacuations, "drop, cover, and hold", "hit the deck" and lock-down drills are practiced each semester.

Special safety topics are presented every month during site staff meetings. Workshops and training sessions are made available to all staff on many safety issues, such as:

- Violence Reduction
- Anti-Bullying
- Crisis Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training
- Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) Training

