

School Climate



The school climate reflects the tone and the school community's commitment to fostering a sense of connectedness, belonging, and safety. It entails promoting a supportive academic and physical environment where respectful, trusting, caring and inclusive relationships flourish among all stakeholders.

“School climate is a holistic concept which encompasses four domains: safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment. Improvement across these domains positively impacts student academic outcomes, and the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community.”

(AISNSW, 2017, p.1)

Impact

Research increasingly demonstrates a strong link between the school atmosphere and improved mental and emotional wellbeing in students. This includes boosts in self-esteem, conflict resolution abilities, motivation for academic success, and the inclination towards altruism and positive social behaviour (Cross & Lester, 2020).

As the school environment improves, negative behaviours like bullying tend to decrease. A positive school environment, where students feel safe, respected, and supported, emerges as the most significant factor in predicting student satisfaction with their school experience, closely followed by positive teacher-student relationships (Wang et al., 2020; Cross & Lester, 2020). Additionally, a positive climate positively impacts school attendance, teacher retention, and helps reduce incidents of bullying.

Practices

- Foster a sense of belonging by nurturing friendships among students. Engage students in decision-making through activities that value their input and give them freedom. Establish school-wide structures and rules that promote support and unity. Provide tailored support for individual needs. Use teaching methods that encourage student involvement and build connections among classmates. ([AERO](#))
- Runions & Cross (2022) emphasise the importance of boosting the skills of all staff members by fostering a supportive atmosphere and culture at school. This includes promoting a vision that prioritises connectedness and safety for every student, staff member, and family in the school community. Ensuring secure physical and online environments for students is crucial in preventing risks like bullying. It is vital to establish safe and welcoming spaces where both students and staff feel free to express their identities without facing discrimination or fear.

Resources

This paper, [Boosting School Belonging: Practical Strategies to Help Adolescents Feel Like They Belong at School](#) (Allen & Kern 2020), explores the interconnection of school belonging with academic performance and wellbeing. It provides practical strategies to build connections among the various stakeholders in the school community.

[The National School Climate Centre](#) provides school-specific research and resources including, case studies, webinars, and measures in support of the development of positive school climates.

The research brief, [School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches](#) created by The Pennsylvania State University with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation explores the intersection of positive school climate and social and emotional learning.

The [Centre on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#) provides information, resources, and research to support schools in improving their overall climate, promoting positive behaviour and reducing disruptive behaviours.

This book, [Pathways to Belonging](#) (Allen & Boyle 2018), presents extensive research that emphasises the importance of prioritising school belonging in all aspects of education. It highlights the positive impact on student outcomes serving as a protective factor.