School Connectedness

Educator demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between school connectedness and school climate and the role they play in creating a positive learning and teaching environment.

Key Method

The educator researches and investigates the components necessary to establish a positive school environment through the development of a campus-wide connected community.

Method Components

One factor that has a significant impact on school success and reduction in risk-taking behaviors, including involvement in bullying behaviors, is school connectedness. In other words, the more students feel connected to school staff, the less likely they are to engage in risk-taking behavior, including bullying.

Seven Factors of School Connectedness

There are seven factors associated with school connectedness; i.e. the feeling students have that they are a part of their school community:

1. A sense of belonging
2. Liking school
3. A good circle of friends
4. Engagement in academic programs
5. Discipline that is fair and effective
6. Participation in extracurricular activities
7. Supportive and caring school staff.

Of these seven factors, educators have the most direct control over the last one—being supportive and caring. By being supportive and caring adults in our schools and communities, educators can make a significant difference in students’ lives and behavior.

Researchers and practitioners have consistently found that students’ ability to form strong, close bonds with school personnel is associated with higher academic achievement, better social-emotional functioning, and less involvement in delinquent behaviors.

It’s important to start talking about how educators can improve school climate and school connectedness when considering the implementation of strategies that can reduce bullying, sexual harassment, and other forms of peer victimization in our schools.

Suggestions for establishing a positive school culture and a sense of school connectedness
Become familiar with the role of each of the nine Educational Support Professional (ESP) career families, using the NEA ESP perspectives.

Watch the video “A Day Without an ESP”.

Become familiar with the “Aspects of School Climate” by reading “What is School Climate” in the NEA research brief entitled Importance of School Climate.

Identify areas of concern with your school’s climate from your perspective.

Read “How is School Climate Measured” in the NEA research brief entitled Importance of School Climate.

Identify areas of concern with your school’s climate from the students’ perspective.

Read “What is School Improve Climate” in the NEA research brief entitled Importance of School Climate.

Supporting Research


http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/15584_Bully_Free_Research_Brief-4pg.pdf


http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/Bullying_Prevention_Strategies_in_Schools_Ken_Rigby.pdf


Resources

NEA Bully Free School Summit Book

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bTq9Y8wujhCk5QpLgrfPUcQEW9nFT7YS/view?usp=sharing

Step-by-Step Help sheet for GLSEN tool

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ogSMDLdVqtq5Nw9WFasQrieExlJFR4kn/view?usp=sharing

Recognizing the first signs of Bullying


Step-by-Step Helpsheet for GLSEN tool

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ogSMDLdVqtq5Nw9WFasQrieExlJFR4kn/view?usp=sharing

How to be an Advocate for Bullied Students


National School Climate Center

http://www.schoolclimate.org

National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments’ School Climate Survey Compendium

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a “passing” for Parts 1 and 3 (Overview Questions & Reflection) and a “Proficient” evaluation for each artifact in Part 2 (Work Examples / Artifacts).

Part 1. Overview Questions

400 - 500 words

What background information is important to know to understand the context of your school? Consider things such as population, demographics, and any relevant cultural information, and special considerations regarding student characteristics. Be mindful not to reveal anything confidential.

After reading the nine perspectives, seek out three individuals of differing perspectives in your school and discuss with them how they see their role in helping to create a positive school environment. In outline form, document the five different responses, providing at least three different ideas from each participant.

- **Passing:** Response includes all requested parts of the question. Writing is clear and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

Please Note: For artifacts the preferred file format is PDF

To earn this micro-credentials please submit the following **three** artifacts as evidence of your learning. Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

**Artifact 1: Aspects of School Climate, Part 1**

100 - 200 words

Using the “[Aspects of School Climate](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf)” chart rate your school for each of the following categories on a scale of 1–5 (1 is a low rating and 5 is high) and provide evidence.

- Relationships
- Respect for diversity
- School participation
- Emotional safety
- Physical safety
- Substance use
- Physical environment
- Academic environment
- Wellness
Disciplinary environment

Make a copy of the survey in Google Doc format HERE or Download and print a PDF HERE.

Artifact 2: School Climate Survey

200 - 300 words

After reviewing “How School Climate is Measured” section in the NEA Bully Free School Climate Summit Book in the resource section above, administer a climate survey to your students, then evaluate their responses. High school level students could use the GLSEN tool.

Provide a link or document that includes the questions asked in the survey. Submit a reflection about the process of creating this survey with your audience in mind. You may include information about age, grades, and/or language and reading levels of those taking the survey and how each question relates to a category of climate.

Artifact 3: Submit Three Completed Student Surveys

Artifact 4: Analysis

250 - 350 words

Compare and contrast your perceptions of the school with those of the students. Utilize and give examples from the survey responses. Respond to the following:

- What is similar in your and your students’ perspectives?
- What is different in your and your students’ perspectives?
- What are some current school policies and initiatives that might have contributed to these survey results?

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Reflection

400 - 500 words

Reflect on your investigation of school connectedness. Describe 5 changes that can be made on your campus to help promote a more positive school climate. Be specific in your rationale, connecting it to the research and the survey results and/or analysis.
How did your students' perspectives change your thinking about your current school culture?

- **Passing:** Reflection shows evidence of shifts in thinking due to students’ perspectives and cites specific examples from student surveys.