

A-26: Information on climate and culture-Cindy Bader

Anti-bullying week: <http://www.actionwork.com/antibullyingweek/>

## Building Community

Work to build a community. A community of people is united pulling toward common goals. Too often schools are cliques and subgroups - both adults and kids - vying to move up a hierarchical ladder. People need to see and experience the commonality of the school community. We see this coming together at times around tragedy or sports teams but it needs a more uniform presence.

### Discipline

### Culture/Climate

Happens after the fact	Focus on prevention
Accepts status quo	Assumes growth and change
Concerns perpetrator and target	Concerns everyone (bystanders)
A few people expected to solve the problems	Shared responsibility by entire community
Criminal model	Educational model
Event specific/case either open or closed Reporting for severe cases	Ongoing process of common growth Reporting for low level cases

## What is School Culture?

School culture is a model or a mindset by which actions are taken in the district, building or classroom. This model of action is based on the past experiences within the district. Thus, new employees or new students become indoctrinated into the culture, learning "how we do things around here." This is the nature of any culture and explains why it is so pervasive, yet hard to see. It just seems like the right way to do things.

Any school's culture can be observed in at least three contexts 1) the design and maintenance of physical spaces, 2) the values expressed (either intentionally or unintentionally) by the adults at school and 3) the beliefs that are taken for granted about human nature.

It is difficult to say any part of the school's culture is good or bad but some elements can contribute to or reinforce antisocial behavior. For example, cramped physical spaces with too many students are ideally designed for bullying behavior. The target can't escape and the bullier can go unnoticed.

Teachers who turn their back on antisocial behavior or simply stay in their rooms while trouble is outside the door express - probably unintentionally - a value about how students should be treated in this school.

### What is School Climate?

Although there is not a consensus on the meaning of school climate many definitions focus on the "feel" of school and the human/social atmosphere. There are four components commonly discussed in regard to climate: 1) physical environment, 2) social environment, 3) affective environment and 4) academic environment.

Like culture, climate can influence or may actually be the root cause of antisocial behavior, like bullying. Each of the four components below can either hinder or help. Problems that can foster bullying are...

- o A physical environment that is overcrowded, certain places hidden from view and congregating areas poorly supervised.
- o A social environment where interaction is limited, students self-segregate, harassment and other forms of dominance are ignored.
- o An affective environment where students are subject to favoritism, most feedback is negative or punitive, and families are excluded from the school community.
- o An academic environment where expectations are low, learning styles are not taken into consideration and a sense of community is not part of the learning process.

These components of climate are interconnected. Social interactions are either enhanced or inhibited by environment. The affective environment helps the academic environment because students and families feel more a part of the school.

## Ten Essential Dimensions of School Climate

DIMENSION	MAJOR INDICATORS
<b>Safety</b>	
Physical	Crisis plan; clearly communicated rules; clear and consistent violation response; people in the school feel physically safe; attitudes about

	violence.
Social — Emotional	Rules and norms related to verbal abuse; harassment and teasing; clearly communicated rules; clear and consistent response for violations; attitudes about and responses to verbal and emotional bullying; conflict resolution taught in school; belief in school rules.
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	
Quality of Instruction	High expectations for student achievement; all learning styles honored; help provided when needed; learning linked to "real life"; engaging materials; use of praise/reward; opportunities for participation; varied teaching methods.
Social, Emotional, and Ethical Skills and Education	Feel social, emotional, and ethical — as well as academic — learning is important; teachers are invested in helping students develop these skills; social, emotional, and ethical skills are explicitly and implicitly taught.
Professional Development	Standards and measures used to support learning and continuous improvement; professional development systematic and ongoing; data-driven decision making linked to learning; school systems evaluated; teachers feel that this is relevant and helpful.
Leadership	Compelling and clearly communicated vision; administrative accessibility and support.
<b>Relationships</b>	
Respect for Diversity	Positive adult-adult relationships between/among teachers, administrators, and staff; positive adult-student relationships; positive student-student relationships; shared decision-making; common planning opportunities; diversity valued; student participation in learning and discipline.
School Community & Collaboration	Students/adults feel and demonstrate sense of community in the school. Mutual support and ongoing

	communication; school-community involvement; parent participation in school decision-making; shared parent-teacher norms <i>vis-à-vis</i> learning and behavior.
Morale	Students are engaged learners; staff are enthusiastic about their work; students connected to one or more adults; students/staff feel good about school.
<b>Environment</b>	
Environmental Adequacy	Cleanliness and order of facilities; adequate space, materials, and time.