

**The Impact of Classroom Management  
Professional Development  
on School Climate in SIG Schools**

**How To Meet The SIG Grant  
School Climate Indicator**

**For more information on School Discipline Solutions:  
[www.EducationCompany.com](http://www.EducationCompany.com)**



School climate is based upon a pattern of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

### Understanding the Concept of School Climate

When we think of climate in regards to weather, we usually define it as the generally prevailing set of environmental conditions in an area or a region. Similarly, the National School Climate Center (2013) defines school climate as the overall quality and character of school life. More specifically, it is based upon a pattern of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. School climate is often assessed by the use of written questionnaires with quantifiable results that are interpreted by experts in the field, but it may be informally assessed by simply observing the attitudes and behaviors of everyone in the school building.

In the midst of these observations; however, each and every administrator must remember that school climate is not simply a catchy phrase or a gimmick – it has a tangible effect on academic achievement. Research suggests that there are powerful social and emotional factors found within a school's climate that influence students' ability to attend to learning, their ability to direct their learning, and their engagement in learning activities (Oshar et al. 2008). A healthy school climate also promotes a sense of belonging among the students, which in turn enriches their educational experience and compels them to strive towards greater gains in

their achievement. There is also a steadily expanding body of literature that suggests that how students experience the school environment in regards to its climate directly affects their academic performance. The premise that having rewarding experiences in school incites an increase in academic achievement (Kendziora, Osher, & Chinen, 2008) should not be taken lightly; conversely, it should serve as the primary motivator for administrators to first acknowledge the importance of a healthy and productive school climate, analyze the climate within their own schools and immediately seek to enhance it, starting with the following questions:

Do the students, parents, and school personnel members appear to feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe? Do they appear to be engaged in their respective duties and respected as they would be in any other democratic society? Are the teachers able to teach in an environment that is virtually devoid of ongoing disruptions? Are the students aware of their teachers' expectations in regards to their behavior? Are parents invested in their child's educational experience, as demonstrated by consistent participation and unrelenting accessibility? Answering these questions among others and working towards improvements when those answers are less than satisfactory helps to create, cultivate, and sustain a positive school climate that is conducive to learning for all students in each and every classroom.

**It is safe to assume that the continuous enhancement of school climate is important to every administrator across the country, but those who lead SIG-funded schools are uniquely obligated to ensure that this is a priority as they seek to improve academic achievement through school reform.**



### **School Climate Determines the Success of the School Improvement Grant (SIG)**

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act allocated an additional \$3 billion for School Improvement Grants for schools that receive Title I funding, but this significant supplement was accompanied by a requirement to implement one of four different school improvement models (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a), two of which are discussed below:

Transformation- Within this model, the school is required to take the necessary steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness and increase learning time.

Turnaround – Within this model, the school is required to fully implement a comprehensive approach to improve student outcomes and develop strategies that provide increased learning times.

Inarguably, bolstering effectiveness among both teachers and school leaders, increasing learning time, and improving student outcomes will be vital courses of action in the efforts to dramatically improve the school climate. These courses of action contribute towards a safe and orderly climate, a characteristic that is often shared by schools that show consistent gains in the





Establishing and preserving a healthy school climate relies upon the efforts to build positive relationships among students and between students and staff, and providing social, emotional, and behavioral supports that foster a safe, clean, collaborative, and productive environment in which students can learn.

students' academic achievement (Redding, 2006) and these consistent gains are the driving force behind the federal government's decision to award the school improvement grants. However, we cannot fail to emphasize the importance of another critical element of a positive school climate – healthy relationships.

Establishing and preserving a healthy school climate relies upon the efforts to build positive relationships among students and between students and staff, and providing social, emotional, and behavioral supports that foster a safe, clean, collaborative, and productive environment in which students can learn (Center on Educational Policy, 2012). It is equally important that relationships between parents and school personnel are carefully cultivated in order for parents to become the teachers' primary allies. School improvement is synonymous with relationship improvement if all parties involved plan to collaborate to reach the shared goal of improving the students' academic achievement.

### The Effect of Professional Development on School Climate and Culture

The Education Company is a professional development service provider that works with public, private, and charter schools in the K12 sector to help school administrators find and implement successful solutions to the most pressing discipline problems within their schools. If school climate is defined as the overall quality and character of school life, one might argue that it is simply imperative that administrators alleviate the prevailing discipline problems in order to positively impact students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life. This is accomplished by delivering on-site professional development training to school administrators, teachers, support staff and parents in a manner that is specifically tailored to meet the school's particular needs.

How can students, parents, and school personnel members feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe if the school is replete with discipline issues? How can anyone be engaged in their respective duties if they are continuously plagued by negative distractions? How can teachers teach in an environment that is virtually devoid of ongoing disruptions if the environment is devoid of a method to systematically reduce and eliminate infractions? How can students be aware of their teachers' expectations if the teachers themselves have not clearly established those expectations? How can parents truly invest in their child's education if their child is being educated in an environment occupied by students with a blatant disregard for school policy?

Administrators and teachers most often cited improvements in school climate as their greatest success after the first year of implementing SIGs (Center on Education Policy, 2012).

For those schools that are recipients of a School Improvement Grant, The Education Company understands that the ultimate goal of an administrator is to demonstrate prudence in the allocation of federal funds as he or she seeks to bring the dream of true school reform to fruition.



The Education Company wants to help concerned administrators address these issues and others in an effort to create a school climate that fosters scholarly growth and award-winning academic achievement.

For those schools that are recipients of a School Improvement Grant, The Education Company understands that the ultimate goal of an administrator is to demonstrate prudence in the allocation of federal funds as he or she seeks to bring the dream of true school reform to fruition. The Education Company wants to encourage all of the administrators across the country to enlist the assistance of a firm comprised of like-minded professionals who are as devoted to realizing change within public schools as they are.

As in weather conditions, temperature may fluctuate and it may even elicit surprises from time to time, but the general climate of a region is consistent over an extended period of time. Likewise, The Education Company knows that every day will not be perfect for the administrators who strive to improve their schools through grant funding. However, it is possible to create and promote a school climate that is unequivocally conducive to learning for each and every student. In summary, working towards the improvement of school climate through the elimination of discipline concerns in order to increase academic achievement and effectively utilize the school improvement grant is the primary objective for each SIG-school administrator and The Education Company is ready to help.

# The Education Company

For more information, visit: [www.educationcompany.com](http://www.educationcompany.com)

## References

- Center on Education Policy. (2012). *Opportunities and obstacles: Implementing stimulus-funded school improvement grants in Maryland, Michigan, and Idaho*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Kendziora, K., Osher, D., Chinen, M. (2008). Student connection research: Final narrative report to the Spencer Foundation.
- Oshar, D., Sprague, J., Weissburg, R.P., Axelrod, J., Keenan, S., Kendziora, K., & Zins, J.E. (2008). A comprehensive approach to promoting social, emotional, and academic growth in contemporary schools. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds). *Best practices in school psychology V*, Vol. 4, (pp. 1263-1278). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Redding, S. (2006). *The mega system: Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A handbook for continuous improvement within a community of a school*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.centerii.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012a, March 1). *Guidance on fiscal year 2010 school improvement grants under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/legislation.html>