

School Climate



School climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student's educational experience. A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community no matter the setting—from Pre-K/Elementary School to higher education.

A positive school climate is critically related to school success. For example, it can improve attendance, achievement, and retention and even rates of graduation, according to research. School climate has many aspects. Defining a framework for understanding school climate can help educators identify key areas to focus on to create safe and supportive climates in their schools.

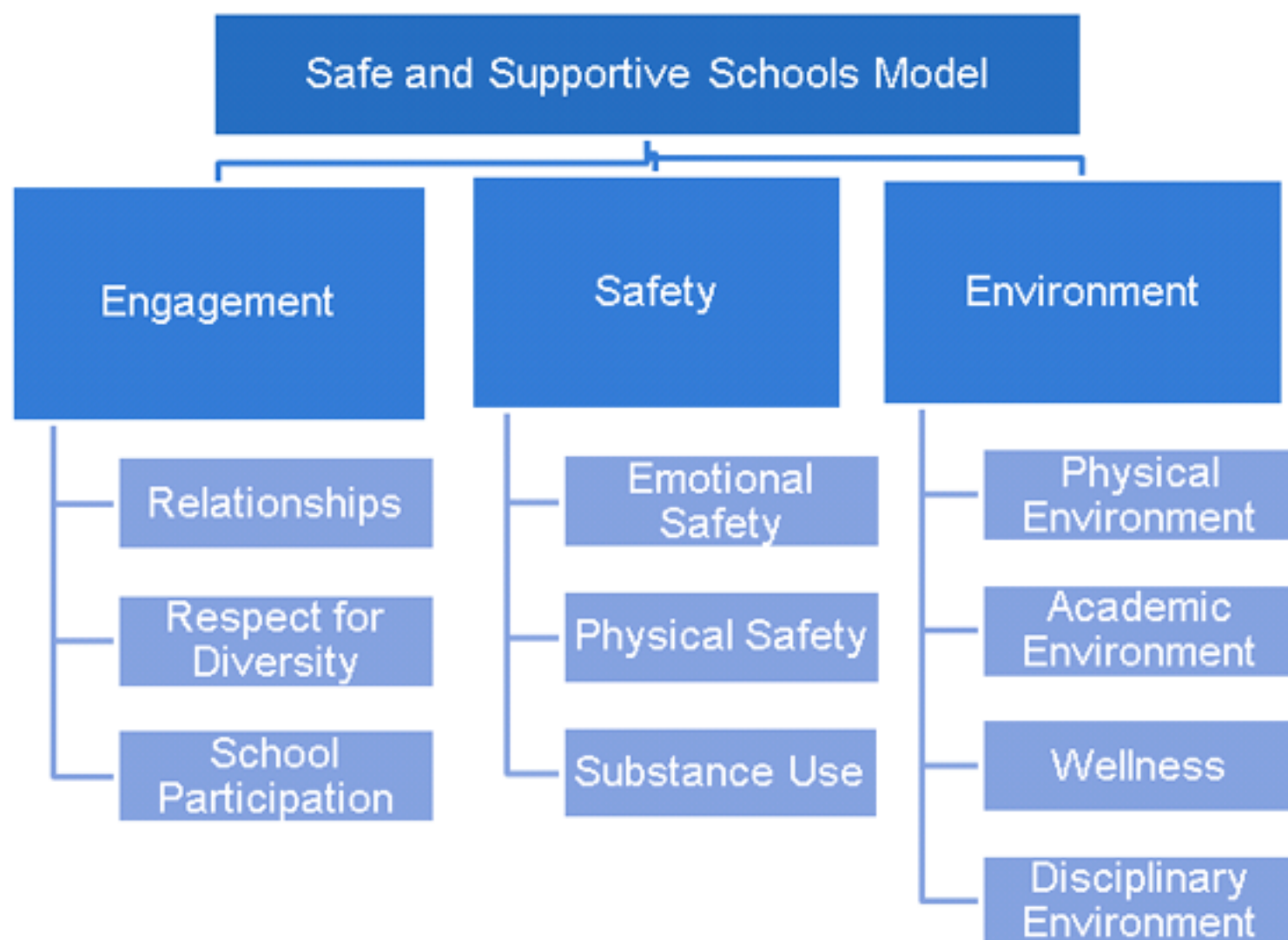
> [School climate describes school conditions that influence student learning \(Safe Supportive School/EDSCLS Model\).](#)

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According to the Safe and Supportive Schools Model (see below), which was developed by a national panel of researchers and other experts, positive school climate involves

- **Engagement.** Strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools and strong connections between schools and the broader community.
- **Safety.** Schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and controlled-substance use.
- **Environment.** Appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy.

These areas overlap in many existing frameworks of school climate, and it is critical that all three areas be considered as a single issue in policy and practice.



> [School climate affects student learning.](#)

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Research has shown that positive school climate is tied to high or improving attendance rates, test scores, promotion rates, and graduation rates. For example, a 2008 study examined seven years of longitudinal data on school leadership, parent and community ties, faculty quality, school safety and order, and instructional guidance. Schools that measured strong in most supports were 10 times as likely as schools with one or two strengths to show substantial gains in reading and mathematics.

Conversely, negative school climate can harm students and raise liability issues for schools and districts. Negative school climate is linked to lower student achievement and graduation rates, and it creates opportunities for violence, bullying, and even suicide.

The Safe and Supportive Schools Model demonstrates general consensus among researchers and practitioners on many common characteristics of schools with a positive climate. Some researchers use the concept of creating conditions for learning in speaking about school climate, meaning that students are supported, students are socially capable, students are safe, and students are challenged. Others have outlined the importance of climate at the classroom level.

The strength of the linkages between school climate and academic achievement make it essential that all students have the opportunity to attend schools that provide a safe and supportive environment where they can thrive and fully engage in their studies.

> [Measuring school climate is essential.](#)

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"What gets measured gets done" is a common saying among researchers. For that reason, to make school climate improvements, it is critical to know the strengths and issues in a school according to students, staff, and family. For more on measuring school climate, visit the [School Climate Measurement page](#).

> [References](#)

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School Climate Improvement Resource Package. This resource package is designed to help schools and districts improve school climate. It includes a variety of resources that meet a range of needs among stakeholders interested in improving school climate.

[Get This Product. \(/scirp/about\)](/scirp/about)



ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS). This surveying tool allows States, local districts, and schools to collect and act on reliable, nationally-validated school climate data in real-time. The EDSCLS builds on federal initiatives and research, which recommended that the Department work on the issue of school climate. The surveying tool is free of charge and can be downloaded on the NCSSE website.

[Get This Tool.
\(https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/
edscls\)](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls)

Roles. While most resources and information could be beneficial to all, there are some materials specific to particular roles in making improvements to the learning environment.

[Learn About Particular Roles.
\(https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-
technical-assistance/roles\)](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-technical-assistance/roles)

Education Levels. While engagement, safety and environment, are the cornerstone for safe supportive learning environments for all students, developmental and system differences lead stakeholders to approach learning environment improvements differently.

[Learn About Education Levels.
\(https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-
technical-assistance/education-level\)](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-technical-assistance/education-level)

National and State Indicators. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSE) developed State Profiles for each state highlighting current programs to create safe and supportive learning environments and improve student outcomes.

[View State and Grantee Profiles.](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/stategrantee-profile)
(<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/stategrantee-profile>)

[View National Data Trends & Indicators.](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/state-profiles/data-trends-indicators)
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