

REDEFINING SCHOOL CLIMATE: ENGAGING STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

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Abstract

This article examines the vital role that school climate plays in shaping students' educational experiences, emphasizing its effect on academic achievement, student behaviour, teacher retention, and parental involvement. A positive school climate, characterized by high levels of safety, supportive relationships, and mutual respect, can improve student engagement, reduce disciplinary issues, and foster social-emotional development. In this article, student leadership, teacher collaboration, and parent involvement are discussed as important components of promoting this climate. It is suggested that nurturing and inclusive environments are created through open communication, building positive relationships, offering professional development to teachers, promoting student voice, and developing culturally sensitive engagement programs. In conclusion, the article concludes that all stakeholders must collaborate to create a thriving, supportive school climate.

Introduction

School climate has become an increasingly important factor in shaping students' educational experiences in recent years. Positive school climates, characterized by supportive relationships, a sense of safety, and mutual respect, have been found to have a positive impact on students' achievement, teacher retention, and parental involvement. The achievement gap, mental health issues, and behavioural problems are just some of the challenges that schools face today, and stakeholders' students, teachers, and parents need to collaborate more than ever in order to create a nurturing and inclusive environment. The purpose of this article is to discuss how school climate impacts student performance, the roles of stakeholders, and strategies for fostering a collaborative environment that supports positive transformation.

Defining School Climate

A school's climate consists of relationships, teaching practices, and organizational structures. According to Thapa et al. (2013), it encompasses several aspects, such as safety, relationships, teaching and learning, institutional environment, and school improvement. A positive school climate is associated with fewer disciplinary problems, higher student engagement, and better academic performance. Negative school climate can lead to student disengagement, behavioural issues, and even higher dropout rates.

Studies are increasingly highlighting the importance of creating a supportive school climate. An NSCC report from 2022 indicates that a positive school climate not only boosts academic performance but also improves social-emotional skills, reduces bullying, and improves teacher satisfaction. The findings highlight the need for schools to prioritize climate improvement as an educational objective.

The Role of Students in School Climate

Developing the school climate is a student-centered process, and students should be actively involved in shaping it. Students' engagement, behaviour, and emotional well-being greatly influence the school's overall atmosphere. Students who feel safe, respected, and valued are more likely to participate in academic and extracurricular activities; they feel more connected to the school community.

In order to empower students to act as change agents, schools can implement peer mentoring programs and student leadership programs. Mitra (2018) found that students feel more connected to their schools when they assume leadership roles, such as serving on school councils or participating in

decision-making processes. Students can contribute to a positive climate by fostering inclusion, reducing conflict, and fostering positive relationships with their peers through these opportunities. Additionally, social-emotional learning (SEL) has grown in popularity as a way to improve school climate. According to Jones and Kahn, SEL programs that teach empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving help students develop the emotional intelligence needed to navigate the complexities of school life. In addition to enhancing relationships, these skills can reduce bullying incidents and create a more supportive learning environment.

The Role of Teachers in School Climate

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the school climate by interacting with students and colleagues. Their attitudes, expectations, and behaviour influence the classroom climate, which influences the broader school climate. Student engagement, motivation, and academic success are particularly dependent on positive relationships between teachers and students.

Relationships between teachers and students are built on trust, respect, and open communication. Roorda et al. (2017) found that strong teacher-student relationships are associated with higher levels of engagement and less disruptive behaviour. A classroom climate that fosters emotional growth and learning is created by teachers who demonstrate empathy and provide consistent support.

The importance of teacher collaboration in promoting a positive school climate cannot be overstated. A supportive professional community is created when teachers share best practices, discuss student progress, and develop cohesive teaching strategies to enhance students' educational experiences. Collaboration can be encouraged in schools by forming professional learning communities (PLCs), participating in peer observations, and engaging in team-teaching. According to Vangrieken et al. (2015), teacher collaboration not only enhances instructional practices, but also contributes to job satisfaction and retention, which are important to maintaining a positive and stable school climate.

The Role of Parents in School Climate

A child's attitude toward school and learning is profoundly influenced by his or her parents as primary caregivers. The involvement of parents in education is associated with positive outcomes for students in terms of their academic achievement, behaviour, and social development. As a result, parents need to become active participants in the school community beyond traditional forms of involvement, like attending parent-teacher conferences or helping with homework.

According to a meta-analysis by Wilder published in 2021, parental engagement is most effective when teachers and administrators collaborate. By establishing clear communication channels, offering workshops on parenting skills, and including parents in school decision-making processes, schools can foster this collaboration. For example, schools can form parent advisory councils or invite parents to participate in school improvement planning. By making parents active partners in their children's education, schools can improve home-school connections and foster a more positive learning environment for all students.

Furthermore, schools should recognize the diversity of family backgrounds and tailor their engagement strategies accordingly. A culturally responsive family engagement approach, such as providing materials in multiple languages or accommodating different schedules, can foster parental involvement and foster a sense of belonging for all families, according to Mapp and Kuttner (2020). Inclusivity is essential for creating a school climate that reflects the values and needs of the entire school community.

Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders to Promote Positive Change

Creating a positive school climate requires intentional efforts from all stakeholders. Here are some evidence-based strategies for engaging students, teachers, and parents in meaningful ways:

1. **Fostering Open Communication:** Schools must establish clear and open lines of communication among students, teachers, and parents. This can be achieved through regular newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, and student feedback surveys. A study by Epstein et al. (2018) found that schools with strong communication practices had higher levels of parental involvement and student engagement.
2. **Building Positive Relationships:** Schools should prioritize relationship-building activities, such as team-building exercises, mentorship programs, and community-building events. Research by Gregory et al. (2021) highlights the importance of positive relationships in reducing conflict, promoting cooperation, and enhancing the overall school climate.

3. **Professional Development for Teachers:** Nadeem et al. (2024) explores the relationship between professional competence of teachers and the school climate. It examines the common factors of both professional competence and school climate and their interrelationship with various influencing factors. Schools should invest in ongoing professional development that focuses on social-emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching, and classroom management. A 2022 report by Darling-Hammond emphasizes the need for teachers to receive training on how to create inclusive and supportive classroom environments.
4. **Encouraging Student Voice:** Schools should provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. According to Cook-Sather (2019) the student voice initiatives can lead to increased engagement, improved academic outcomes, and a stronger sense of belonging.
5. **Parental Engagement Programs:** Schools can offer workshops and training sessions for parents on topics such as homework support, social-emotional development, and college readiness. Research by Grolnick et al. (2018) shows that parents who feel equipped to support their children's education are more likely to be engaged in school activities.

Conclusion

A collaborative approach is needed to redefine school climate and engage students, teachers, and parents in the process. Schools can cultivate a climate that supports academic success, emotional well-being, and social development through open communication, positive relationships, and inclusive opportunities for participation. It is essential that all stakeholders are involved in making school a positive, inclusive, and empowering place. In light of schools' continuing challenges, this engagement will be essential in driving positive change and in ensuring a thriving educational environment.

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