Using Staff Climate and Safety Survey Data

The purpose of the Staff Climate and Safety Survey is to gather information about how respected, safe and supported staff are while at school. This report highlights areas of strength for your school and areas that may need improvement. On this and the following pages, you will find some suggested next steps that will guide you towards additional resources to improve areas of school climate. You may also work with the Department of Accountability, Counseling, Family-School Partnerships, and School Police if you want assistance improving your school's climate.

1. Review Data

Review this report with your school staff and school improvement planning teams. You may want to read the next few pages of this report to get a better understanding of why these questions were asked of school staff and how their responses might relate to important outcomes like burnout, teaching quality, and academic achievement. Examine your composite scores to get a sense of how well your school is doing in each area of school climate and school safety. Finally, review your individual item scores to identify specific areas you may want to examine further.

2. Validate Findings

Because the Climate Survey is only one measurement of factors affecting student learning and staff outcomes, it is important to compare the data in your report with other sources of data. For example, you may want to use the student and parent climate surveys to verify if the same problems were identified across respondent groups. You may also want to look at other sources of data at your disposal, including school discipline, attendance, annual Positive Behavioral Support surveys, and student monitoring tools. For example, if you find that both students and staff report that they do not feel respected while at school, you may want to review the status of SWPBS implementation at your school using the Benchmark of Quality (BoQ) survey your IAT team completed last year.

3. Explore Solutions

Establish a safe place to talk to staff to understand why they might feel the way they do. Examine your policies and practices and ask critical questions. To what extent are staff included in discussions about how time on Early Release Wednesdays are spent? Are the same rules and norms for *students*' positive behavior communicated to and reinforced with staff? Are staff provided a forum to speak openly about concerns ? Examine the resources provided here and reach out to School Police, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Dept. of Family-School Partnerships, and other WCSD departments for further ideas about improving your school climate.

4. Implement Improvement Plan

Using your data to guide your selection, identify a few areas of school climate to improve for the upcoming school year. Implement an action plan for improving staff climate using input gained from students, parents, staff, and WCSD departments. Solutions could come in a number of forms, including professional development, book or video studies during PLC's, school assemblies, development of student or staff task forces, and implementation of evidence-based programming.

5. Monitor Progress

Monitor progress by obtaining ongoing feedback from students, parents, and staff and by comparing with your 2013 climate and safety scores.
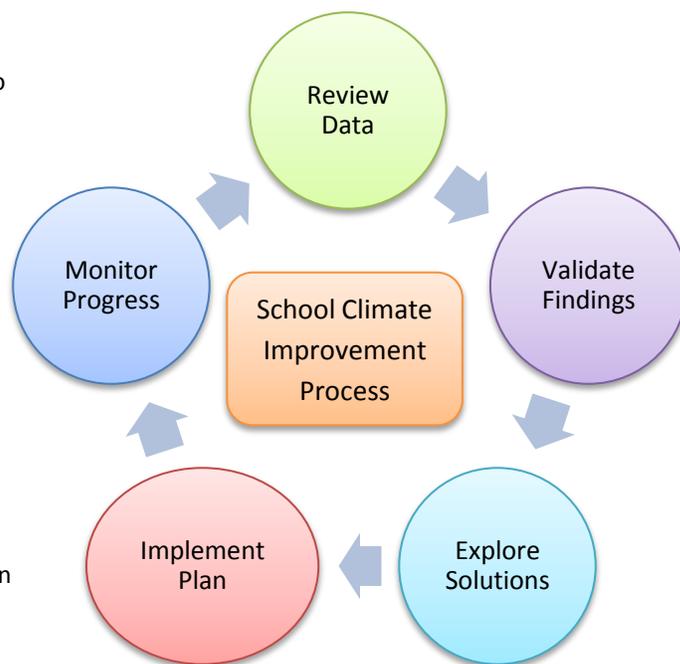
Why Were the Staff Climate Questions Asked?

Using this framework as a guideline, items selected for the Staff Climate Survey have been shown through research and experience to be critical to student learning, discipline, teacher retention, and academic success. The following provides a brief overview of why each factor was included in WCSD's Climate and Safety Surveys.

Expectations for Success

Research has shown that when students feel that teachers and other adults hold high expectations for them, they are likely to do better in school (Catalano et al., 2004). Teachers who use more learner-centered practices (i.e., practices that show sensitivity to individual differences among students, include students in the decision-making, and acknowledge students' developmental, personal and relational needs) produced greater motivation in their students than those who used fewer of such practices (Daniels & Perry, 2003; Perry & Weinstein, 1998).

Fairness and Respect

Positive teacher-student relationships — evidenced by teachers' reports of low conflict, a high degree of closeness and support, and little dependency — have been shown to support students' adjustment to school, contribute to their social skills, promote academic performance, and foster students' resiliency in academic performance (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teachers who experience close relationships with students reported that their students were less likely to avoid school, appeared more self-directed, more cooperative, and more engaged in learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004).

Parent Involvement Scale/Home School Communication and Relationships

Items in the Parent Involvement scale assess how frequently parents and families participate in their child's education. A major reason that parents' involvement has been considered beneficial for children's achievement is that it emphasizes the value of school to children (Epstein, 1988; Hill & Taylor, 2004). For example, when parents assist with homework or volunteer in the classroom, they are likely to convey to children that they believe school is important.

Instructional Focus

Items included in the Instructional Focus Scale ask teachers to rate what proportion of teachers in their building exhibit high quality teaching attributes. High quality instruction is at the center of all major initiatives in WCSD, including Common Core State Standards, the New Professional Growth System, MTSS, and cultural competency training. These data will be important to monitor as these initiatives expand throughout the district in the upcoming years.

Getting Started on Improving School Climate

Expectations for Student Success

Resources
- *2011 C.A.R.E. Guide: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap http://www.nea.org/tools/2011-CARE-guide.html*

Where to Start: Get in touch with the Equity and Diversity Office to schedule cultural competency trainings for your staff. Developing respect for cultures different than our own and building awareness of our unintentional biases will help ensure that we treat all students more equitably. Review or try out a few of the videos, exercises, and other resources available in the C.A.R.E. guide with staff.

Staff Collaboration/Leadership

Resources:
- *Building Collaborative Cultures* by Kent Peterson http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le0pet.htm

Where to Start: Positive working climate includes the following critical components:
1. COLLABORATION is characterized as the degree to which people work together, share information and instructional strategies, and are encouraged to have constructive discussions and debates.
2. COLLEGIALITY is about a sense of belonging, emotional support, and inclusion as a valued member of the organization.
3. EFFICACY, for the purpose of the Climate Survey process, tends to focus on whether individuals feel as if they have control over aspects of their job or do they view themselves as victims of "the system?" Do school leaders promote efficacy among staff through collaboration and mutual respect, or do staff feel detached from the decision-making processes of their school site?

Staff Collaboration and School Leadership

Teacher burnout is strongly linked with effective instruction and a number of student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Identifying predictors of low staff efficacy and high burnout may result in both increased staff retention and enhanced student outcomes.

Early Release Wednesdays

Early Release Wednesdays provide schools with additional time to hold professional development meetings with staff. Schools largely determine their own structure and standards for Early Release professional development. The items in this section assess staff's perceptions of how useful those sessions are, whether they have an impact on their instructional practices, and how they can be improved for the future. The most successful Early Release PD sessions:

(1) are designed collaboratively with all staff providing input on which areas to focus;

(2) provide time for staff to work in small department grade level groups that are not led solely by district staff or school leadership;

(3) are planned well in-advance and held consistently;

(4) build upon each other rather than presenting new, unrelated content each week;

(5) consist of meaningful instruction and time for collaboration.

Social and Emotional Learning

The items in this section assess staff's baseline awareness and use of social and emotional learning and practices at an individual- school-, and district-level. Through a grant funded by the Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), WCSD will be planning and implementing a number of trainings, programs, and other efforts to increase the social and emotional learning of WCSD students and staff over the next few years. Including this measure in the School Climate Survey will help measure the impact of these efforts over time. Schools can promote social and emotional skills through regular practice and modeling among adults and students in the school, and by placing a high value on conflict resolution, communication, caring, appreciation for diversity, problem solving, and teamwork.

Physical Environment/School Safety

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2004), teachers were the victims of approximately 234,000 total reported nonfatal crimes at school between 1998 and 2002. When staff perceive that their school has peeling paint, dark hallways, littered playgrounds, or poor air quality, the message is that their educational setting is not valued. This disregard undermines efforts to create a caring and respectful school community.

Early Release Wednesdays

Resources
- *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities* by Rick Dufour
- http://allthingsplc.info/

Where to Start: Have staff rate the quality of PLC's in department/grade level groups using DuFour's Professional Learning Community Continuum Rubric. Plan early release time in collaboration with staff and stay on schedule. Establish objectives for meetings and review whether objectives were met at the end of the meeting. At the beginning of each meeting, discuss updates and progress on previous objectives. Make sure staff meetings follow a PBS framework so that meetings are characterized by respect and allow for all voices to be heard.

Social/Emotional Skills

Resources
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning http://casel.org
- *A+SEL: A Guidebook for Principals and School Leadership Teams*

Where to Start: Review your own social and emotional competencies by going through the personal assessment and reflection sheet in the Guidebook for Principals and School Leadership Teams. The first step to embedding SEL into interactions with students is recognizing our own personal strengths and weaknesses in our self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. Review the CASEL website above to find activities, articles, and other resources to try with your staff and students.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Staff Climate Survey

Q: Is the survey confidential?

It is not possible for staff at the Washoe County School District to link an individual with their survey responses. Responses to the survey are immediately submitted electronically to an external survey provider where they are collected and maintained until the survey closes. The responses are returned to the Department of Accountability after specific identifying information has been removed (employee email addresses, parent email addresses, student ids). Individuals and individual classrooms are not identified. Data is only presented or reported at the school- or district-level.

Q: How will WCSD use the data?

Schools may use the climate data to guide school improvement planning, spark discussion about climate during staff meetings, and help identify areas of professional development and programming that might be needed. At a district level, administrators will use climate and safety data to identify patterns in school climate that will help guide decision-making. Data may also be used for writing grants and evaluating the effectiveness of programs aimed at improving school climate. Finally, data may be used to monitoring progress on foundational targets outlined in the district's strategic plan.

Q: How do we know that the issues we bring up in the Climate Survey will be addressed by school leadership?

The purpose of the staff climate survey is to provide school staff with an opportunity to voice their opinion about factors that affect their work environment. Principals, area superintendents, counselors, and Central Office staff will participate in several training sessions throughout the year that explain how to use school climate data for school improvement planning. School climate measures may also factor into the new accountability model. We encourage you to use your school report to provide evidence about mutual concerns among staff.

Q: Can I compare my school data from last year to my data from this year to assess trends?

The Climate Survey was first launched in 2011. After this pilot administration, a number of changes were made to the instrument to enhance its reliability (how consistently we see the same response or pattern of responses) and validity (whether we are measuring what we set out to measure). As a result of these changes, we do not recommend that you compare scores from 2011 to 2012. You will be able to compare future years of data.

Q: What do the bolded items in the table mean?

Not all individual items were used to create the scales featured in the pie graphs of this report. The items that were bolded were included in the development of the composite score you see in the pie graphs. The items that were not bolded either had a low factor loading (were not assessing the same construct that the other items were) or were only asked of teachers or staff. The non-bolded items were therefore not included in the construction of the scale.

Q: Who can I talk to about the School Climate Project?

If you have suggestions about how to improve the School Climate Project, would like help interpreting your data, or would like additional ideas about improving areas of your school's climate, please contact the Department of Accountability at 348-3850 or ldavidson@washoeschools.net.