



National School Climate Center

Educating Minds and Hearts...Because the Three Rs are Not Enough

National School Climate Center
School Climate Brief
Number 6, December 2012

December 2012 Policy Update: School Climate and Bully Prevention Trends State-by-State Assessment

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This December 2012 Brief updates NSCC's 2011 report *State Policies on School Climate and Bully Prevention Efforts: Challenges and Opportunities for Deepening State Policy Support for Safe, Supportive and Civil Schools* (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/papers-briefs.php). This Brief provides a summary of State level: (i) anti-bullying legislation; (ii) school climate policies; (iii) funding trends; (iv) disciplinary practice trends; and (v) federally supported school climate efforts.

Anti-Bullying Legislation—49 states, plus Washington D.C. have passed anti-bullying legislation (Montana is the only state that has not passed anti-bullying legislation)

School Climate—25 states, plus Washington D.C. have school climate “measures” in place. However less than 20% of those states have school climate measures mandated by legislative statute

** Of those states that have measures in place, less than 1/3 have funding in place to support the measures*

Funding—Bullying - about 20% of the states have identified some source of funding (appropriations, grants, state fund) in support of the legislation

Discipline—Approx. 70% of the states have a punitive based discipline system as a consequence for bullying, which generally takes students out of the classroom

Shift towards alternative discipline—*Maine*—The law focuses on “alternative discipline”, which means disciplinary action other than suspension or expulsion from school that is designed to correct and address the root causes of a student’s specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class or school, or restorative school practices to repair the harm done to relationships and persons from the student’s misbehavior. Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. Tit. 20-A, §6554(2)(A)

Recent School Climate Research—Six SIG funded schools participating in a case study all took steps to create a more positive school climate, often as an initial priority before implementing other reforms. The key to the school climate reform was FUNDING.

Some findings and analysis:

- even with their primary focus on school climate, the schools also made small gains in student achievement
- One school cited the change in school climate as the

“biggest success”, and on that would “absolutely not” have been possible without SIG funding

- Students who are engaged in school tends to have fewer discipline problems and contribute to a more positive learning environment
- Prior to receiving a SIG award, a school in Detroit had struggled to find time to coordinate school climate strategies at the school level.
- With SIG funds, a school in Saginaw, MI was able to compensate teachers for their time in professional development, which has helped encourage teacher buy-in and enthusiasm
- An elementary school in Idaho had ongoing efforts to improve climate, but prior to the SIG award, their effort lacked resources and focus

For a more comprehensive summary of school climate research, see NSCC's 2012 School Climate Research Summary: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/schoolclimatebriefs.php>.

The findings from these case studies suggest that federal and state Policymakers should factor improvements in school climate when evaluating the overall impact of these grants, making decisions about future funding, drafting legislation and designing school improvement programs.

The National School Climate Center’s (“NSCC”) goal is to promote positive and sustained school climate: a safe, supportive environment that nurtures social and emotional, ethical, and academic skills. School Climate research shows that safe, supportive, engaging and helpfully challenging schools are associated with and/or predictive of positive youth development, effective risk prevention efforts and increased academic achievement as well as teacher retention.

NSCC works with schools on a daily basis to help them assess and improve their climates for learning. NSCC recognizes that policy will in large part dictate practice guidelines. As such, NSCC is continuously surveying the current School Climate landscape in order to monitor policy trends, which allows it to implement what it deems the most comprehensive School Climate improvement process available.

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