

Students

School Climate Policy

The CREC Council believes that all schools/programs must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

This policy is adopted pursuant to the Connecticut School Climate Standards, and sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation. Further, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

Consistent with the Connecticut School Climate Standards, CREC has:

1. A shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behavior.
2. Policies that promote:
 - a. a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
 - b. a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community
3. Practices that are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
 - a. promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students;
 - b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;
 - c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
 - d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.
4. Created a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.
5. Created a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220a

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§10-222g - 10-222i

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-233a - 10-233f

P.A. 19-166 An Act Concerning School Climates

P.A. 21-95 An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions and Editions to the Education Statutes

P.A. 23-167, An Act Concerning Transparency in Education

P.A. 24-29, An Act Concerning the Legislative Commissioners' Recommendations For Technical Revisions to the Education and Early Childhood Statutes

P.A. 24-45, An Act Concerning Education Mandate Relief, School Discipline and Disconnected Youth

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CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL
Hartford, Connecticut

School Climate Plan

Definitions

“Bullying” means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

“Challenging behavior” means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

"Connecticut school climate policy" means the school climate policy developed, updated and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.

"Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

“Effective School Climate Improvement” is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

- A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;
- B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;
- C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;
- D. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to educate the whole child;
- E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of

youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and

- F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:
- a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
 - b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
 - c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
 - d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
 - e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

"Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo-optical system.

"Emotional intelligence" means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.

"Evidence Based Practices" in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

"Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

"Positive sustained school climate" is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:

- (A) Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.
- (B) People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively.
- (C) A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
- (D) Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and, and
- (E) A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

"Restorative practices" means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

"School climate" means the quality and character of school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, based on people's experiences of school life, and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures within the school community.

"School climate improvement plan" means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

"School climate survey" means a research-based, validated and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that (A) measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan; and (B) (i) meets the school climate survey standards developed by the social and emotional learning and school climate advisory collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the Connecticut General Statutes, or (ii) is the state-wide school climate survey developed by said collaborative.

"School community" means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

"School employee" means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, superintendent, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator or coach employed by CREC or working in a CREC school or program; or (2) any other individual who, in the performance of their duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a CREC school or program.

"School environment" means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

"School-Sponsored Activity" shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by CREC.

"Social and emotional learning" means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

"Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

School Climate Coordinator

The Superintendent, or an administrator appointed by the Superintendent, shall serve as the School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. providing district-level leadership and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;
2. collaborating with the school climate specialist for each school to (A) develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (B) communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the student handbooks;
3. collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and
4. meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to (A) identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices; (B) propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan; and (C) assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

School Climate Specialist

The principal/director of each school/program or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10-145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices, and is designated by the school principal, shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The school climate specialist shall be responsible for:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment;
2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Committee

Each school climate specialist shall appoint members to the school climate committee who are diverse, including members who are racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse and representative of various roles in the school community.

The school climate committee shall consist of:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes;
3. a demographically representative group of students enrolled at the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. families of students enrolled at the school; and
5. at least two members of the school community, as determined by the school climate specialist.

Membership of the school climate committee shall be annually reviewed and approved by the school climate specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator.

The school climate committee shall be responsible for:

1. assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the school climate survey data;
2. using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan;
3. assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan;
4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community;
5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community; and

6. engaging the school community, at community meetings held at least twice during the school year, in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Survey

The school climate committee for each school/program shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees, and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.

School Climate Improvement Plan

The school climate specialist for each school/program, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, shall develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

Training

CREC shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding:

1. social and emotional learning;
2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
3. restorative practices.

Such resources and training may be made available at each school/program, and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in such training. The school climate coordinator, shall select, and approve, the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

Funding and Accountability

CREC allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools/programs in the district. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.