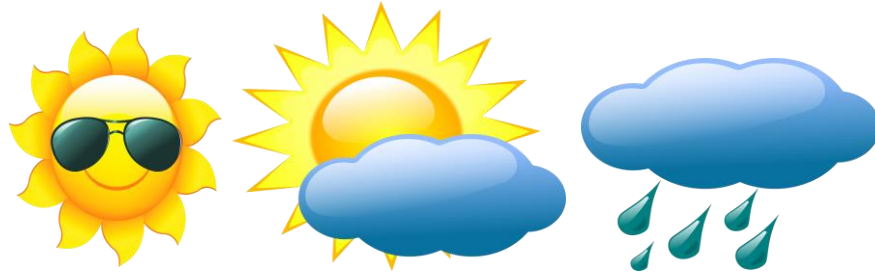# SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate is best described as the school conditions that influence a student's learning.

Schools all across the country, in every state, serve students from a multitude of diverse backgrounds. Each student brings their unique cultures, beliefs, personalities and experiences.

According to a survey done by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the recent presidential election led directly to "heightened anxiety on the part of marginalized students, including immigrants, Muslims, African Americans, and LGBT students." Other research also indicates a rise in hate speech and bullying behaviors directed towards minority students. In January of 2017, a cyberbullying researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire released data showing an increase in the number of high school students being bullied because of their race or skin color compared to previous years.

Everyday acts of intolerance manifest themselves in many ways: name-calling, slurs, sexual harassment, put-downs regarding race, ethnicity, gender, size, abilities, perceived sexual orientation or gender identification. As we know, growing intolerance can also be found online, posted on social media sites.

In many cases, these intolerant acts are intentional, while other times they are not. Of course, many times, the issue is less about intent and more about impact. Because no matter the intention, these messages and behaviors can cause fear, damage and injury to individuals and the entire school community.

One way to safeguard against this is through inclusive education where we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Through these thoughtful actions we can achieve a positive school climate where all students feel safe, included, and accepted.

Because school climate plays a vital role in addressing and changing behaviors and attitudes that produce bullying and threatening learning environments, it is important to cultivate and promote positive, inclusive, respectful behavior and interactions in schools and classrooms.

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Moreover, a positive school climate fosters safety; promotes a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encourages and maintains respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community.

The following are some of the characteristics associated with a positive school climate:

- Students, staff members and parents feel safe, included and accepted within the school.
- Members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness and kindness in their interactions, and build healthy relationships that are free from discrimination and harassment.
- Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community; for example, by speaking up about issues such as bullying and harassment.
- Students, principals, staff members, parents and community members have open and ongoing discussions where all member are actively engaged and respected.
- Strategies for bullying prevention and intervention and awareness are reinforced for students and staff.
- The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners.
- Every student is motivated and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations, such as school.

It should be further noted, a positive school climate is significantly related to school success. According to much research, a positive school climate can improve attendance, achievement, and retention and even rates of graduation.

For more information on inclusive, positive school climate please visit the websites below.

Sources:
www.inclusionbc.org/our-priority-areas/inclusive-education/what-inclusive-education

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/school-climate

www.schoolclimate.org

www.tolerance.org

*https://www.washingtonpost.com/.../the-frightening-effect-of-trump-talk-on-americas-**sc***

*www.forbes.com/.../how-parents-can-protect-their-children-from-**hate**-and-**bullying**-o*