

National School Climate Standards

**BENCHMARKS TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE TEACHING,
LEARNING AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

The logo of the National School Climate Council is a large, light blue graphic consisting of three concentric circles. The innermost circle is a solid light blue. The middle circle is a slightly darker shade of blue and is partially filled. The outermost circle is the darkest shade of blue and is mostly empty, with the inner circles visible through it.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

There is growing appreciation that school climate—the quality and character of school life¹—fosters children’s development, learning and achievement. School climate is based on the patterns of people’s experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures that comprise school life. The increased attention to school climate reflects both the concern for improving schools and the need for preparing students to address the myriad of challenges they will face in the 21st century.

A growing body of empirical research shows that a sustainable, positive school climate reduces drop-outs and fosters youth development and academic achievement, as well as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for students to be responsible and productive members of society². All learners want and need to be safe and happy: to be supported, cared for, valued, appropriately challenged and engaged in ways that touch our hearts as well as our minds. Empirical research has also shown that when school members feel safe, valued, cared for, engaged and respected, learning measurably increases, and staff satisfaction and retention are enhanced.

The National School Climate Council stresses that a sustainable, positive school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;

- Members of the school community who are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators that work together to develop, and contribute to a shared school vision;
- Educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning; and,
- Members of the school community who contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its physical environment.

These factors matter and show the importance of school climate. Practices are designed to promote a positive climate that fosters the environment which ensures all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and become socially conscious and ethical members of society. Furthermore, such practices play a critical role in the graduation of young people who will go on to lead satisfying lives, care about the common good, engage in the democratic process, possess the skills and abilities to work with others in the workplace and in their communities, and who are productive members of society.

Given that all efforts to improve schools benefit from being based on a well developed set of standards and indicators, leaders from across the country have collaborated on the development of the following *National School Climate Standards*³.

¹This definition of school climate was consensually developed by members of the National School Climate Council (2007). The terms “school climate”, “school culture” and “learning environment” have been used in overlapping but sometimes, quite different ways in the educational literature. Here, we use these terms interchangeably.

²For information about school climate research, see the following reports: Adelman & Taylor, 2005; Cohen, et. al. 2009; Freiberg, 1999; National School Climate Council 2007.

³See Appendix A for details about how these standards were developed.

ABOUT THE STANDARDS

The National School Climate Standards present a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate. They complement national standards for Content, Leadership, and Professional Development and the Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Family School Partnerships Standards.

This framework is comprised of five standards that support effective school climate improvement efforts:

- 1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.**
- 2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.**
- 3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.**
- 4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.**
- 5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.**

The *National School Climate Standards* provide a research based framework and benchmark criteria for educational leaders (School Boards, State Departments of Education, Superintendents, Principals and After School leaders) to support and assess district and school efforts to enhance and be accountable for school climate⁴. They also provide guidance for professional preparation and continuing education. Appendix C includes a glossary of terms.

As with most standards, School Climate Standards do not recommend or detail specific assessment, curricular, leadership, professional development, and related systemically informed programs, curricula, or services. Each state and/or school community must consider how best to translate these standards into practice in ways that build on past experiences, values, strengths, priorities, and contextual needs of the local school community.

The five standards presented below include sixteen indicators for supporting student learning, positive youth development and teaching. Thirty-sub indicators further delineate essentials.

⁴See Appendix B for research related to each of the five standards.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

School Climate Standard #1

The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

1.1 School policies and practices support school, family, youth and community members working together to establish a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.1 School, family, community and youth members agree to work on strategies to be implemented for ongoing school climate improvement.

1.1.2 Policies and practices are regularly assessed to ensure continual refinement that enhances the quality of a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.3 School, family and youth members collaboratively develop, publicize and model codes of conduct that support positive and sustained school climate.

1.2 Schools gather accurate and reliable data about school climate from students, school personnel and parents/guardians for continuous improvement and share it regularly with the school community.

1.2.1 Educational leaders regularly assess and monitor policies and practices and revise as necessary to determine the effectiveness of school, family and community members working together to support student learning, teaching and positive youth development.

1.2.2 Schools use multiple evidence-based methods of collecting data, such as surveys, observational methods and behavior reports, that recognize the range of factors that shape school climate (e.g., social norms, school connectedness, sense of safety, discipline, learning/teaching, leadership, absence rates and mobility).

1.2.3 School, family, community and youth leaders establish procedures for using school climate findings (including disaggregated data) to establish instructional and/or school-wide improvement goals and implementation strategies that will enhance student learning and positive youth development.

1.2.4 School climate reports are periodically provided that communicate effectively with all school community members and families about goals, benchmarks and progress.

1.3 Capacity building is developed over time to enable all school community members to meet school climate standards.

1.3.1 Capacity building includes developing infrastructure, classroom and school-wide prevention and intervention strategies/practices, and developing policy and systemic changes that promote positive school climate.

School Climate Standard #2

The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge and dispositions and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

2.1 Policies and mission and vision statements that promote social, emotional, ethical and civic, as well as intellectual, skills and dispositions are developed and institutionalized.

2.1.1 Policies promote curriculum content, continued monitoring and standards for social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and are fully integrated into the classroom and school in ways that align with 21st century learning and with students' prevailing cultures, circumstances and languages.

2.1.2 Policies for instructional and assessment processes and standards are personalized in ways that model and promote mutual respect, caring and a psychological sense of community.

2.1.3 Accountability measures and data are used and monitored that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to promote social, emotional, ethical and civic learning.

2.2 Policies and mission and vision statements are developed and institutionalized that promote a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

2.2.1 Policies promote engagement and address barriers to learning and teaching while reengaging disconnected students through an intervention framework that generates a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports as delineated in Standard 3.

2.2.2 Policies ensure continuing development and sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports.

2.2.3 Accountability measures, data and monitoring are used that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging students who have become disengaged.

2.3 Policies promote use and monitoring of natural and informal opportunities (e.g., recreational and extracurricular aspects of classroom and school life, formulation of codes of conduct and fair enforcement of rules, mentoring, and informal interactions among and with students) to ensure they support the helpful norms of learning and teaching that foster mutual respect and caring; engagement; safety and well being; civil, pro social, responsible behavior; and a psychological sense of community.

2.4 Policies ensure the operational and capacity building mechanisms (including staff and student development) related to this standard are fully integrated into a school's infrastructure and are effectively implemented and sustained.

School Climate Standard #3

The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

3.1 Specific practices are designed to enhance engagement of every student through classroom-based social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and in school-wide activities.

3.1.1 Instructional and engaging practices focus on cognitive and behavioral learning as well as social, emotional, ethical and civic engagement.

3.1.2 Practices facilitate students' desire and ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., to enter into dialogues with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making, provide enrichment opportunities, provide a continuum of guidance and support and minimize coercive interactions.

3.1.3 Based on research about intrinsic motivation, practices are designed to maximize feelings of competence, self-determination and connectedness to others and to minimize threats to such feelings. Practices are designed to minimize psychological reactance by not overemphasizing social control strategies and not over relying on extrinsic motivation to promote positive social, emotional, ethical and civic behavior and learning.

3.2 Teachers and school administrators design specific classroom and school-wide practices to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged.

3.2.1 Practices include a full continuum of integrated systems of intervention designed to:

- Promote healthy development and prevent negative problems;
- Respond as early after problem onset as is feasible;
- Provide for those whose serious, pervasive and chronic negative problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

3.2.2 Classroom and school wide interventions are designed to:

- Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction and classroom management practices for maximum engagement and reengagement of all students and to pursue response to intervention practices for those with mild to moderate learning and behavioral problems)
- Support transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions);
- Increase home and school connections;
- Respond to and, where feasible, prevent crises;
- Increase community involvement and support (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers and community resources that fill priority gaps in the system of supports);
- Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed;

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles that enhance their commitment to school and to the development of themselves and others.

3.2.3 Classroom and schoolwide practices are designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; these practices are developed into a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports that weaves together school and community resources.

3.3 School leaders develop and sustain a comprehensive system of learning supports by ensuring an appropriate operational infrastructure that incorporates capacity building mechanisms.

3.3.1 The school has administrative leaders who are responsible for the development, operation and sustainability of high quality practices related to this third standard (Practices are identified, supported and prioritized that (a) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (b) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (c) develop and sustain an appropriate systemic infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.). These responsibilities are delineated in job descriptions.

3.3.2 Sufficient staff are assigned to developing and sustaining such high quality practices.

3.3.3 Leadership and staff are provided continuous professional development in order to develop and sustain practices related to this third standard.

3.3.4 An effective school family community operational infrastructure is in place for weaving school and community resources together and for ongoing planning, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive system of learning supports.

3.3.5 The operational and capacity building systems related to this third standard are fully integrated with the school's mechanisms for improving instruction, management and overall governance.

School Climate Standard #4

The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

4.1 School leaders promote comprehensive and evidence-based instructional and school-wide improvement efforts designed to support students, school personnel and community members feeling welcomed, supported and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

4.2 Students, their families, school staff and community stakeholders are regularly surveyed and are asked to indicate what the school should do to further enhance a welcoming, supportive and safe environment.

4.3 School leaders monitor and evaluate the prevention and intervention strategies designed to support people feeling welcomed, supported and safe and use that data to improve relevant policies, practices, facilities, staff competencies and accountability.

School Climate Standard #5

The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

5.1 Students and staff model culturally responsive and ethical behavior. This reflects continuous learning that builds knowledge, awareness, skills, and the capacity to identify, understand, and respect the unique beliefs, values, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community⁵.

5.1.1 Curriculum and instructional practices promote curiosity, inquiry into and celebration of diverse beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community.

5.1.2 Students have ongoing opportunities to provide service to others in meaningful and engaging ways in their school and in the larger community.

5.2 Relationships among and between staff and students are mutually respectful, supportive, ethical and civil.

5.2.1 Every student is connected to a caring and responsible adult in the school.

5.2.2 Social norms in the school support responsible and positive peer relationships.

5.2.3 Discipline procedures are aligned with the goals of supporting students in their learning and being respectful of all individuals; the goals are enhanced with authentic student-driven opportunities for reconciliation when appropriate.

5.3 Students and staff are actively engaged in celebrating milestones and accomplishments as they work to achieve meaningful school and community life.

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⁵This definition of culture competence has been adapted from the State of Ohio's Governors Cabinet Council.

APPENDIX A

HOW THESE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

Acknowledgements

The National School Climate Standards are the product of the efforts of many individuals and groups.

In July 2008, the National School Climate Council agreed to develop National School Climate Standards. Over the course of the following year a series of drafts were developed, critiqued and revised as detailed below. The National School Climate Council Development Team, members of the National School Climate Council and additional groups of reviewers provided essential counsel to develop these standards.

The Development Team, comprised of Jonathan Cohen, Mary Lou Rush and Bonnie Hedrick (with able support from Robert Canning), developed a first draft of the standards. This first draft built on the Ohio School Climate Guidelines as well as a recent and exhaustive review of school climate research. The National School Climate Development Team critiqued and helped to revise this draft. Over the course of several months many new drafts were completed, critiqued and revised.

In December 2008, the University of Missouri Review Team (noted below) met to conduct a thorough review of work that had been done to that date. This team engaged in the following activities: (1) Generating a list of characteristics that define a positive school climate and/or delineating our vision of an ideal school; (2) Critically and constructively assessing the definition for a positive and sustained school climate developed by the National School Climate Council; and, (3) Using findings that emerged from the two activities noted above to critique a new draft of the standards. As a result of this process, the University of Missouri Review Team recommended that we continue to include the five basic standards with a number of recommended modifications resulting in a 5th draft of the standards. This draft was reviewed by members of the National School Climate Council resulting in a 6th draft.

In the spring of 2009, over forty principals, superintendents, mental health professionals, educational researchers, and state and national leaders (noted below) reviewed the 6th draft. Their feedback and recommendations resulted in the 7th draft of the standards.

On September 17, 2009, the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College hosted a meeting at Brown University to offer feedback on the evolving set of National School Climate Standards. Forty of New England's educational equity advocates and school leaders were in attendance (noted below). Attendees included teachers, administrators, professors, consultants and officials from state and city departments of education from New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The goals of this meeting were: 1) to ensure that the standards help schools effectively and equitably address school climate issues, and 2) to ensure that the standards help schools and communities equitably address the specific, unique needs and common challenges faced in schools by children and families from diverse, minority and underprivileged communities. The group spent the day reviewing the draft School Climate Standards and discussing how each of the five standards might help schools and communities better understand and address the needs of students from various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, disability and religious groups.

In late September, the National School Climate Council Standards Development Committee reviewed the recommended changes that the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College group suggested. Many of the suggestions and recommendations have helped to make these standards even more clear, fair and just.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Morton, Ph.D., Emily Stork, Marcy Borten, and Gene Browne who helped in revising and organizing these standards.

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APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (2006). *The school leader's guide to student learning supports: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

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APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accountability refers to the notion that people (e.g., students or teachers) or an organization (e.g., a school, school district, or state department of education) should be held responsible for improving student achievement and should be rewarded or sanctioned for their success or lack of success in doing so. Accountability measures and data refer to the specific measurement systems (e.g., an academic grade or a school climate pattern) that school leaders use to make decisions about student learning and/or school improvement efforts.

Assessment is the measurement of knowledge, skills and beliefs to determine the level of student achievement in a particular content area (e.g., performance-based assessments, written exams, quizzes).

Awareness refers to how knowledgeable we are about a given topic. It does not relate to our inclination to learn or act in a given way or to what extent we are actually able or skilled to do so.

Barriers to learning refers to external and internal factors that interfere with academic and social success at school. They stem from a variety of widely recognized societal, neighborhood, familial, school, and personal conditions.

Benchmark is a description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades, developmental levels, or during a specific point in the school year.

Best Practice is a technique or methodology that has been proven to reliably lead to a desired result through research and experience.

Capacity building refers to the process of creating a school environment with appropriate policy and human resource development that will support school reform in an ongoing manner.

Coercive interactions refers to the process of educators using force or authority to make a person do something against his or her will.

Codes of conduct delineate explicit or implicit principles, values, standards, or rules of behavior that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of a school (or other organizations) in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations.

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the belief that culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors. Culturally responsive pedagogy and practice facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. In culturally responsive classrooms and schools, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally-supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured and utilized to promote student achievement.

Curriculum refers to the course of study offered by a school.

Data-driven decision making is a process by which district leaders, school leaders, teachers and parents review cause and effect data to determine strengths and prioritize areas in need of improvement to inform instruction, curriculum and policy decisions to positively impact student achievement.

Disaggregated data refers to the presentation of data broken into segments of the student and/or parent-guardian and/or

school personnel populations instead of the entire student/parent-guardian-school personnel population. Typical segments, for example, might include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. Disaggregated data allows the school community to understand how various sub-groups within the school perceive school climate.

Dispositions refers to the tendency to act in given ways.

Engagement (disengaged and reengaged) is defined in three ways in the research literature:

- *Behavioral engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.
- *Cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence” (2004) by J. Fredricks, P. Blumenfeld & A. Paris. Review of Educational Research, 74, 59-109.)
- *Disengaged students* are those who do not manifest behavioral engagement. The source of the disconnect may be either emotional or cognitive, or both. Reengaging such students usually requires addressing intrinsic motivational needs with strategies that maximize student feelings of competence, self-determination, relatedness to significant others and minimizing threats to such feelings.

Evidence-based practices in education refers to instructional and/or school-wide improvement practices which systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

Formative assessment is the process used by teachers to determine how to adjust instruction in response to student needs, and by students to adjust learning strategies. Formative assessments are used to inform and adjust instruction, and are not used to evaluate student progress for a grade.

Instructional practices refers to teaching methods that guide interaction in the classroom.

Knowledge refers to the information or understanding that a person has.

Learning community refers to a group of people who share common values and beliefs and are actively engaged in learning together from and with each other.

Learning supports are the resources, strategies and practices that provide physical, social, emotional and intellectual assistance to directly address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. A *comprehensive system* of learning supports provides interventions in classrooms and school-wide settings and is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management at a school. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, the system is designed to enable holistic student development while addressing negative social, behavioral, academic and emotional problems.

Mobility refers to how often families move from one school community to another within or outside of a school district.

National School Climate Council is a group of educational policy and practice leaders devoted to narrowing the socially unjust gap between social school climate research on the one hand and school climate policy, practice and teacher education on the other hand (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/council.php).

Operational infrastructure is defined as the set of mechanisms developed to carry out an organization's major functions. Examples of such mechanisms include leaders, teams and workgroups. The manner in which they are supported, developed and organized shapes their effectiveness. In education, the need to weave together the resources of school, home and community requires both horizontal and vertical operational infrastructures to interconnect related operations at school, families of schools, district, regional and state levels.

Positive, sustained school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes: norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; members of the school community who are engaged and respected; students, family members and educators who work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision; and educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning. Members of the school community contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its social, emotional, intellectual and physical environment.

Positive youth development refers to the intentional effort to support the healthy development of youth.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a collegial group of educators who are united in their commitment to continuous adult and student learning who work and learn collaboratively to realize a common mission, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making.

Safety – physical, social, intellectual and emotional. Safety refers to being free from danger. Feeling and being safe is a fundamental and basic need. Feeling safe and being safe are not synonymous. Schools measure rates of physical violence and as a result tend to focus primarily on physical safety. Social safety refers to feeling and being safe interpersonally. Mean-spirited, bullying behaviors, exclusion and harassment undermine social safety. Emotionally safety refers to feeling sufficiently comfortable with our own internal feelings, thoughts and impulses. Feeling emotionally safe supports learners to reach their academic potentials. Intellectual safety refers to being able to take academic risks, to engage in necessary questioning and dialogue when one does not know, and to feel comfortable with being confused.

Skill refers to the ability to do something.

School climate refers to patterns of people's experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, as well as the organizational structures that comprise school life.

School connectedness refers to student perceptions that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals. Connectedness is measured in terms of how much/often students feel close to people at school, are happy to be at school, feel a part of the school, feel that teachers treat them fairly and feel safe at school.

Social, emotional, ethical and civic learning refers to the intentional process of promoting students' social, emotional, ethical and civic skills, knowledge and dispositions. There are two major, overlapping educational 'camps' in America today that are focused on social, emotional, ethical and civic teaching and learning: character education and social emotional learning.

Social justice refers to the idea that all people are entitled to full access to life's chances, human dignity, peace, and genuine security. Social justice exists when all members of a society lead lives committed to respectful treatment of all and nondiscrimination and non-repression of others.

Social norms are the behavioral expectations and cues within a society or group. These expectations and cues are the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. These rules may be explicit or implicit.

Summative assessment is an assessment that is employed mainly to assess cumulative student learning at a particular point in time.

Twenty-first (21st) century learning refers to the essential skills, knowledge and dispositions that our students need to succeed as citizens and workers in the 21st century.

Reactance is an emotional reaction in direct contradiction to rules or regulations that threaten or eliminate specific behavioral freedoms. It can occur when someone is heavily pressured to accept a certain view or attitude. Reactance can cause the person to adopt or strengthen a view or attitude that is contrary to what was intended and also increases resistance to persuasion.

Reliable data refers to information that is accurate and dependable.

Vision and mission statements refers to K-12 school goal setting documents that – in theory – act as organizing anchors for all school improvement efforts. Different schools and districts define vision and mission statements in somewhat different ways. Generally, a *vision* statement is the school's clear, motivating description of the desired outcome of K-12 education. Vision statements also define the purpose of K-12 education. A mission statement delineates what the school will do to actualize the school's vision statement.

