Climate and Culture Capstone: School Culture Advocacy through Educator-Driven Leadership

Course Description:

There is a growing appreciation to improve the quality of students' entire K12 educational experience, from norms, values, relationships, teaching and learning, civic and social engagement, safety, and overall wellness. This holistic understanding of student life in schools is referred to as *school climate and culture*. According to the National School Climate Center, positive school climate and culture reduces student absenteeism and dropout rates while increase academic achievement and overall wellness. However, improving districtwide school climate and culture is challenging, as there are a myriad of factors and barriers that prevent students from feeling safe, supported, and welcomed in classrooms and schools.

The purpose of this course is to provide research-based best practices for building a positive school climate and culture. Completing the coursework will provide participants with the necessary tools to create welcoming spaces for underrepresented populations, engage students in civic and social dialogue, and ensure that all students feel safe and supported in school. Participants will analyze school climate and culture through a variety of perspectives, understand the unique needs of individual districts, and identify the systems and structures that prevent all students from succeeding. Participants will learn how to improve school culture through the cultivation of effective stakeholder partnerships, purposeful professional development, and modelling advocacy to student leaders and fellow educators.

Participants will integrate learning from prerequisite courses to highlight the barriers in developing a positive school climate and culture, and they will synthesize strategies for overcoming these challenges. At the end of the course, participants will be required to develop a Capstone Project to implement their new understandings in their classrooms, schools, and districts.

Clock Hours / Continuing Education Units: 25

Learning Objectives:

- Identify best practices for creating safe and supportive learning environments, integrating civic and social dialogue in the classroom, and welcoming students from underrepresented and marginalized student populations
- Describe how stakeholder partnerships with students, teachers, and community members can foster positive school climate and culture
- Evaluate the needs of rural, suburban, and urban districts in the development of a positive school climate and culture
- Strategize how effective professional development can be a change agent to address classroom-level, building-level, and district-level advocacy
- Develop an implementation plan which identifies a key need and addresses how it will positively-impact the school's climate and culture

Course Requirements: To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a non-passing grade

Getting Started:

- After registering for the course, you will be sent an email with the website address, password and course key you need to access your online course, along with login instructions.
- Access each assignment through the course home page. All assignments will be submitted through the Moodle platform on each respective assignment page.
- Please save a backup copy of all course assignments and completed work.

Course Outline:

Lesson Number	Lesson Description	Clock Hours
1	**Introductions and Overview:** Take the time to get to know the class layout, read over the Help section, and review any other materials present in the class to get started. Take your time!	
2	Discussion: What Is School Climate and Culture: In this lesson, participants will learn about what school climate and culture is and the key considerations when educators seek to improve the overall climate and culture of their school district. Participants will derive their own definition for school climate and culture, and in a discussion post, they will reflect on how that definition applies to their school districts.	1.25 Hour
3	Discussion: Evaluating School Climate and Culture: In this lesson, participants will analyze the various ways educators analyze the current climate and culture of their classrooms, schools, and districts. Participants will evaluate the climate and culture of their district and share their findings in a discussion post.	2 Hours
4	Discussion: Safety, Supports and Wellness: In this lesson, participants will reflect on the ways their district is ensuring the safety, support, and wellness of their students. Participants will also analyze the barriers students experience in accessing these resources, and in a discussion post, participants devise potential solutions to these barriers.	1.25 Hour
5	Discussion: Diversity and Inclusion: In this lesson, participants will reflect on the ways their district welcomes and includes students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. In a discussion post, they will analyze the barriers that may exist for students from underrepresented backgrounds and in a discussion post, they will discuss best practices for alleviating these barriers.	1.25 Hour
6	Discussion: Civic and Social Engagement: In this lesson, participants will reflect on their district's curriculum and how it engages students in civil discourse and inclusive curriculum. In a discussion post, participants will reflect on specific strategies they can implement into their curriculum to amplify student voices and model civic and social leadership.	1.25 Hour
7	Discussion: Privilege in Your Community – In this lesson, participants will identify systems of privilege and reflect on how it manifests in their community. In a discussion post, participants will share their experiences.	2 Hour
8	Discussion: Privilege in Your School – In this lesson, participants will identify systems of privilege and reflect on how it manifests in their school. In a discussion post, participants will share their experiences.	2 Hour
9	The Current Climate and Culture of Rural Districts - In this lesson, participants will reflect on the key issues affecting the school climate and culture in rural school districts. Participants will reflect on these issues in a discussion post.	1.25 Hour
10	The Current Climate and Culture of Suburban Districts - In this lesson, participants will reflect on the key issues affecting the school climate and culture in suburban school districts. Participants will reflect on these issues in a discussion post.	1.25 Hour
11	The Current Climate and Culture of Urban Districts - In this lesson, participants will reflect on the key issues affecting the school climate and culture in urban school districts. In a discussion post, participants will reflect on the intersecting issues existing between rural, suburban, and urban districts. They will reflect on how we can ensure that every district is fostering a positive school climate and culture.	1.25 Hour
12	Discussion: Effective Partnerships between Educators and Parents: In this lesson, participants will reflect on the strengths and challenges associated with creating collaborative relationships between teachers and parents. Participants will discuss the best practices they see utilized in their districts.	1.25 Hour
13	Effective Partnerships between Teachers and Administrators: In this lesson, participants will analyze best practices for garnering administrative support in adopting new school climate and culture initiatives. In a discussion post, participants will reflect on the practices for fostering a collaborative partnership.	1.25 Hour

14	**Effective Partnerships between Schools and Community Organizations:** In this lesson, participants will examine several examples of collaborative partnerships between schools and community organizations. Participants will discuss, in a post, the opportunities they see for school-community partnerships.	1.25 Hour
15	**Discussion: Advocacy through Teacher Mentorship:** Participants will examine strategies how teacher leadership can help propel effective climate and culture. In a discussion post, educators will examine the roles and responsibilities of mentors and instructional coaches and how these individuals can be leaders of change.	1.25 Hour
16	**Discussion: Advocacy through Student Leadership**: Participants will examine the power of grassroots change in climate and culture through student leadership initiatives. In a discussion post, they will outline the current ways their school district current develops student leaders, and they will strategize how they can develop student leaders to propel positive school climate and culture initiatives.	1.25 Hour
17	**Discussion: Becoming a CSCA:** In this lesson, participants will reflect on what it means to become a Certified School Culture Advocate and the impact it will have on their school districts.	1.00 Hour
18	**Discussion: Capstone Project:** Participants will outline a project that they want to implement to bring effective climate and culture change into their schools.	3.00 Hours
	TOTAL HOURS	25 Hours

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Student Requirements and Assessment: No outside materials will be required for the completion of this course. Participants will be assessed in four different ways:

1. **Lesson Reflections:** Participants are required to complete a reflection at the end of each lesson to analyze the intersections between the content and the experiences of students in their schools, classrooms, and communities. Participants can earn up to 75 points for all completed lesson reflections. Each reflection will be +graded using the following rubric:

Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Makes connections to the other content and real-life that are supported by reference(s) and/or example(s)	1
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all questions within the reflection assignment.	2
Total Points Possible		5

2. **Course Reflection:** Participants will be required to write a reflection summarizing their new learnings within the course. Participants can earn up to 10 points total for the reflection. The reflection will be graded using the following rubric:

Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Makes connections to the other content and real-life that are supported by reference(s) and/or example(s)	2
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1

Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the reflection	6
Total Points Possible		10

3. **Implementation Plan:** Participants will construct an implementation plan for how their new knowledge can be directly implemented into the classroom, training setting, or professional development environment. Implementation plans will be graded using the following rubric:

Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan		
		Points
Capstone Project	Description of Need – Need is identified and its impact on school climate and culture is described.	2
	Description of Solution – The Capstone Project is summarized in detail, including a timeline, resources needed, methods for evaluation, and presentation of outcomes.	10
	13 Dimensions of Climate and Culture – Dimensions are identified with explanation.	2
	NSSC Climate and Culture Core Competencies – Competencies are identified with explanation.	2
	Effective Partnerships with Parents – Strategies for parent partnerships identified and described.	4
	Effective Partnerships with Administration – Strategies for administrative partnerships described.	4
	Effective Partnerships with Community Organizations – Strategies for community organizations described.	4
	Advocacy through Teacher Mentorship - Plans for teacher education, professional development, and/or mentorship described.	4
	Advocacy through Student Leadership – Plans for fostering student leadership throughout your project described.	4
Implementation	Writing is clear, well developed, and organized. No or few grammar and spelling errors	2
	Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist	2
Total Points Possible		40

Grading Scale:

100-80% (125 – 100 Points)	Pass
79%-Below (<100 points)	No Pass

Americans with Disabilities Act: If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please email academy@iowasafeschools.org or call 515.381.0588.

Professional Development: Prior to purchasing a course registration, it is your responsibility to ensure that National Safe Schools Convening Online Academy coursework satisfies the license renewal requirements for your state and/or district.