PROMOTING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE: A Resource for Schools

Elements Contributing to a Positive School Climate

Student Voice
- Encourage students to apply for a Ministry of Education “Sparkly” project grant. Have students act as experts to report on the outcome of their project. (See www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/seeksparky/ projects.htm)
- Invite former students who were able to overcome past challenges in their lives to share their personal stories at a school assembly.
- Encourage parents to address students about their own learning and the school’s learning environment. Ask for their ideas about how to best support their children’s learning and classroom practice.
- diversify students’ unique strengths, talents and interests through student-led assemblies, classes, and learning activities.
- Support school councils in conducting surveys of students to find out what issues are important to them. Parents can contribute to the design of the surveys and interpret the identified issues.
- Support diverse student-led clubs and teams, such as environmental sports teams; student clubs, music or art clubs, and committees that foster healthy school environments.
- Encourage students to be safe and inclusive in their dialogue, understanding and respect among all students.
- Encourage students to be able to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Parent Engagement
- Foster a positive and welcoming school climate in which all parent perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard.
- Create a welcoming environment for teachers and parents to participate in school events, such as sports day, field trips, parent-teacher conferences, and school assemblies.
- Review and expand ongoing communication and outreach strategies to support learning at home and at school.
- Work towards including parents from diverse communities on all school committees, including the school council.
- Support new students and families as they become part of the school community by providing an extension package, including information about community resources, events and opportunities.
- Provide parents with a choice of ways in which they can participate, from joining the school council or participating in parent student meetings, to engaging in parent student discussion about the school’s learning environment.
- Hold information sessions for parents. Consider venues in the community, such as the public library, or an apartment building, the local community centre, a cultural centre, an Aboriginal Friendship Centre, or a Parenting and Family Literacy Centre, to reach as many parents as possible. Consider using translators and interpreters from diverse communities to help create and maintain a welcoming and positive environment and school culture.
- Encourage the school to apply for a Ministry of Education Parents Reading Office (PRO) grant, which can help parents identify and address barriers to parent engagement in their child’s education.
- Share the announcements of school and activities supported by parents.
- Use results from parent surveys to inform school policy and practices.
- Encourage students to talk to their parents or other caregivers about what is happening in the school.
- Engage teacher-parent-student discussions to develop shared expectations and review students’ learning goals and their progress towards achieving the goals.

Community Partnerships
- Establish multiple partnerships with community groups, such as the local Aboriginal community, the Black community, and other under-represented groups to share their stories and experiences in the school.
- Entrepreneurs of the community, e.g., local artisans or shop owners, seniors, experts in a field, etc. can join the school community in order to connect students in need of support.
- Support students to develop a stronger sense of their own identity and to feel included in the school community.
- Provide opportunities for students to contribute ideas and suggestions on how to support their children’s learning and well-being.
- Invite parents to volunteer as classroom monitors, math coaches, or storytellers.
- Create a “peer-to-peer” program to assist parents who are new to the school or to Ontario’s education system.
- Find ways to show appreciation of all parents’ efforts to support their children’s learning.
- Hold parent-teacher-student discussions to develop shared high expectations and review students’ learning goals and their progress towards achieving the goals.

Learning Environment
- Provide opportunities for students to share their life-based, diverse and rich experiences, such as Aboriginal experiences, multicultural and minorities’ issues, and women’s contributions to science and technology.
- Use classroom displays, and print and digital resources that reflect the diversity of the student population.
- Students should be able to recognize themselves in order to contribute to the school’s success.
- Ask students in what ways they can creatively incorporate the school’s Monthly Character Trait into their learning environment. For example, students could create a screensaver promoting that month’s trait.
- Encourage students in their role as peer mediators and conflict resolution in the school.
- Promote positive relationship building through peer mediation, conflict resolution and restorative practices.
- Teach skills such as mediation, yoga and self-care to help students reduce stress. Encourage students to notice when they are experiencing too much stress.
- Encourage students to demonstrate respect, empathetic behavior and show compassion to their classmates. Ask them to notice any improvement in their interactions.
- Integrate learning opportunities across the curriculum to teach about bullying, supportive and healthy relationships.

Social-Emotional Environment
- Promote positive and accepting in order to support student learning and well-being.
- Encourage students to talk to their parents about what is happening in the school. (e.g., activities, programs, events that they are taking, their learning goals).
- Foster ongoing student-parent-teacher communication through activities such as student-led field trips.

Physical Environment
- Use data from the school climate survey to identify and address issues such as bullying and to support a positive school climate.
- Provide opportunities for students to design and create positive school spaces that reflect their choices and decisions by providing them with the confidence to make their own decisions and the courage to stand up for what they believe is right. Encourage students to take responsibility for making decisions about their choices and decisions by providing them with the confidence to make their own decisions and the courage to stand up for what they believe is right. Encourage students to take responsibility for making decisions about their choices and decisions by providing them with the confidence to make their own decisions and the courage to stand up for what they believe is right. Encourage students to take responsibility for making decisions about their choices and decisions by providing them with the confidence to make their own decisions and the courage to stand up for what they believe is right. Encourage students to take responsibility for making decisions about their choices and decisions. Ask students to participate in a variety of community activities and events.
- Provide opportunities for students to think of ways to creatively incorporate the school’s Monthly Character Trait into their learning environment. For example, students could create a screensaver promoting that month’s trait.
- Encourage students in their role as peer mediators and conflict resolution in the school.
- Promote positive relationship building through peer mediation, conflict resolution and restorative practices.
- Teach skills such as mediation, yoga and self-care to help students reduce stress. Encourage students to notice when they are experiencing too much stress.
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Guidelines for Use
- Think of the following as a menu of options for your school to consider.
- You are encouraged to adapt the activities and practices below to your school environment.
- Take a whole school approach. Emphasize that everyone has a role in to create a safe, inclusive and accepting school.

*In this document, parents is used to refer to (parents or) guardian(s).