

State College Area School District
DRAFT - School Climate / Inclusive Excellence Policy
December 15th edit

Purpose

Each District school and program must support and promote teaching and learning environments in which all students can succeed, both academically and socially; have a strong and meaningful voice; and are prepared for democratic life and successful transition into the 21st century workplace. A positive school climate is an essential element of achieving these goals.

The Board of School Directors developed this policy to ensure that every school community member is: 1) treated with dignity; 2) has the opportunity to learn, work, interact, and socialize in physically, emotionally and intellectually safe, respectful, and positive school environments; and 3) has the opportunity to experience high quality relationships. Each school and program, therefore, has the responsibility to promote conditions designed to create, maintain and nurture a positive school climate.

This policy serves as the umbrella policy for all relevant District policies and sets forth the Board's expectations for inclusive excellence, incorporates the adoption of the National School Climate Standards as official policy, and serves as a framework for the District's school climate improvement process.

Definitions

School Climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student's educational experience. A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a democratic society. In a positive school climate:

- Norms, values and expectations support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People are engaged and respected.
- Students, families and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

(This definition of school climate and a positive, sustained school climate were consensually developed by the National School Climate Council.)

Inclusive Excellence is the understanding that working, living, and learning environments benefit when diversity in thought, learning, and personal characteristics is recognized and utilized. Inclusive Excellence enables us to engage in civil conversation with those who hold views that differ from our own and to socialize with persons who have had different life experiences. In class and field

experiences, inclusive excellence is addressed through ample opportunities to learn about diverse cultures, both locally and globally.

Expectations

All State College Area School District (SCASD) community members deserve a respectful environment in which the diversity of their experiences and background is understood, valued, and contributes to a positive environment and a successful experience for everyone. In addition, SCASD shares responsibility for preparing students to succeed in a racially and culturally diverse world.

The Board of School Directors is committed to promoting and sustaining culturally proficient schools, central offices, and school community support systems in order to create a climate of inclusion in which all individuals feel respected, are treated fairly, and are provided opportunities to excel. It is the intent of the Board that staff and students throughout the SCASD work and interact in schools and classrooms that affirm diverse backgrounds, acknowledge the disparity of outside opportunities related to students' socioeconomic status, and promote appropriate educational experiences in learning options, achievement, and discipline.

Students will develop the capacity to recognize when preconceptions, attitudes, or incidents compromise the school climate; they will be equipped with the knowledge and strategies to respond effectively and appropriately; and they will understand and accept responsibility for their role in contributing to a positive school climate.

To create and sustain an environment of Inclusive Excellence, the Board establishes the following strategies:

- Educating students for life and for reflective democratic citizenship; all students will be prepared to succeed in a racially and culturally diverse local, national, and global community.
- Preparing students to engage with others in diverse community and work settings through skills and competencies in effective listening and communication, leadership, collaboration, participatory deliberation and problem solving.
- Ensuring that every student has access to high quality, culturally relevant, and responsive curriculum and instruction.
- Developing policies, procedures and practices that ensure equitable access for all students.
- Developing a fair student discipline system that: balances the needs of the school community with those of the individual student; includes supportive disciplinary practices; preserves the integrity of the learning environment, and addresses the causes of a student's misbehavior in order to improve positive behavioral skills and long-term outcomes.
- Listening to, encouraging, and valuing student voice as an essential resource and component of this policy.
- Providing a safe environment for crucial conversations among students, between students and teachers, and for all staff.
- Ensuring cultural proficiency among District staff so that every adult exhibits the ability to understand cultural differences and effectively interact with a diverse population. Professional development, staff evaluation, and other support activities will assure that our teachers demonstrate culturally responsive pedagogy, assessment, teaching strategies and practice, and the capacity to effectively facilitate controversial issues and uncomfortable classroom discussions.

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- Creating and maintaining a process that supports the sustainable recruitment, hiring and retention of educators who have a strong commitment to understanding, and the skills to address, a diverse student population.
- Fostering welcoming environments in all schools and offices that reflect and support the diversity of the population served.
- Ensuring that students, parents, teachers and community members have a clear and accessible mechanism for expressing their concerns and that they receive a prompt and appropriate response.
- Developing and maintaining strong partnerships with the community.
- Assessing implementation of this policy on a regular basis through the use of appropriate tools such as student, staff, and parent surveys and reporting on the state of school climate to the public.
- Committing appropriate resources in order to implement and sustain these strategies.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent shall designate a district coordinator to be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this School Climate/Inclusive Excellence Policy. In addition, each applicable administrator shall be responsible for leading a School Climate Committee that develops a plan designed to support continual improvement in the school's climate. This plan will constitute a continuous cycle of preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation. On an annual basis, or more often if appropriate, the administration will report to the Board and the community the progress that has been made on these initiatives.

Related Policies and Guidelines:

Programs

103 Nondiscrimination in School and Classroom Practices

104 Nondiscrimination in Employment and Contract Practices

Pupils

247 Anti-Hazing

248 Sexual Harassment

249 Anti-Harassment/Anti-Bullying Policy

Administrative Employees

348 Sexual Harassment

Professional Employees

448 Sexual Harassment

Classified Employees

548 Sexual Harassment

Operations

806 Child Protective Services

Guideline (in development)