How to Promote Essential Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Competencies and Create a Climate for Learning

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Overview and Goals

- Prosocial instruction: character education, positive psychology, social emotional learning, and mental health promotion
  - What is it and why is it important?
- What works? *Effective prosocial instruction + effective implementation + enabling climate for learning = school transformation and educationally significant outcomes*
- What are the essential school-wide, instructional, and relational goals and improvement strategies that color and shape all effective prosocial educational improvement efforts?
Prosocial Learning

- Prosocial learning: Social, emotional, and civic as well as intellectual/academic aspects of life and learning
  - Promoting school – and life – success!
- As parents and educators: We are always doing it!
- “Camps”
  - Character Education, Social Emotional Learning, Positive Psychology, and Mental Health Promotion
- Prosocial competencies: What skills, knowledge, and dispositions?
What Competencies? Models

- Self Awareness; Self Management; Social Awareness; Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision Making (CASEL)
- Character skills/strengths: Curiosity, Gratitude, Grit, Optimism, Self Control, Social IQ, Zest (Positive Psychology)
- Character Education Partnership's 11 Principles
- Problem Solving/Coping/Defense (Valliant's Triumphs of Experience, 2012)
- Social-Emotional (i) “Decoding” (Reflective & Empathic), (ii) Problem Solving, and (iii) Learning (H. Gardner)
What Works?

For the student and/or the school?

Effective prosocial instruction + effective implementation + enabling climate for learning = school transformation and educationally significant outcomes

- Moving beyond “camps”
(1) Effective Prosocial Instruction

- **Being a Living Example**
- **Discipline**: Punishment or learning?
- **Pedagogic Strategies**: Cooperative learning, conflict resolution, service learning, experiential learning (e.g. “Project Week”), moral dilemma discussions
- **Curriculum**: “In a box” and/or infused into existing curriculum
  - On the importance of ‘SAFE’ teaching: **Sequenced**, **Active**, **Focused**, **Explicit**
What are effective “drivers” of school change?

- Igniting the intrinsic motivation of teachers, students, and, if possible, parents
- Engaging educators and students in continuous improvement of instruction and learning
- Inspiring collective or team work
- Affecting all teachers and students
- Understanding and supporting a continuous process of learning and development vs. short term/annual improvement
The School Climate Improvement Process

Stage 1: Prep and Planning
Stage 2: Evaluation
Stage 3: Action Plan
Stage 4: Implementation
Stage 5: Reevaluation
The Process

- An effective process: Aligned with implementation science
- Intentional, strategic, collaborative, transparent, data-driven, coordinated, and democratically informed
Stage One: Preparation and Planning
• Forming a representative SC improvement leadership team and establishing ground rules collaboratively
• Building support and fostering “buy-in” for the school climate improvement process
• Establishing a “no fault” framework and promoting a culture of trust
• Ensuring your team has adequate resources to support the process
• Celebrating successes and building on past efforts
• Reflecting on Stage One work

Stage Two: Evaluation
• Systematically evaluating the school’s strengths, needs, and weaknesses with any number of school climate tools, as well as other potential measurement tools
• Developing plans to share evaluation findings with the school community
• Reflecting on Stage Two work

Stage Three: Understanding the Findings, Engagement, and Developing an Action Plan
• Understanding the evaluation findings
• Digging into the data to understand areas of consensus and discrepancy, and to promote learning and engagement
• Prioritizing goals
• Researching best practices and evidence-based instructional and systemic programs and efforts
• Developing an action plan
• Reflecting on Stage Three work
Stage Four: Implementing the Action Plan

- Coordinating evidence-based pedagogic and systemic efforts designed to (a) promote students' social, emotional, and civic, as well as intellectual, competencies; and (b) improve the school climate by working toward a safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school community

- The instructional and/or school-wide efforts are instituted with fidelity, they are monitored, and there is an ongoing attempt to learn from successes and challenges

- The adults who teach and learn with students work to further their own social, emotional, and civic learning

- Reflecting on Stage Four work

Stage Five: Reevaluation and Development of the Next Phase

- Reevaluating the school’s strengths and challenges

- Discovering what has changed and how

- Discovering what has most helped and hindered further the school climate improvement process

- Revising plans to improve the school climate

- Reflecting on Stage Five work
(3) Effective Systemic or School-Wide Improvements

- Leadership
- Creating a shared vision (fostering “buy-in”)
- Policy
- Metrics: What is measured is what counts
- Norms, rules, and supports
- School-community-home partnerships
Leadership

- Principal/Headmaster leadership
- Teacher leadership: Pedagogic goals?
  - And, being a reflective teacher/learner: What are the social, emotional, and civic lessons our behavior is “teaching” now?
- Student leadership: Fostering Upstander skills and promoting Upstander Alliances in your school
  - www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstander
  - www.OneGoodThing.org
  - www.facetofaithonline.org/
  - https://www.facinghistory.org/
Developing a Shared Vision

- What kind of school do you want this to be?
  - What policies and rules do we need to support it?
  - What practices (instructional and school-wide) do we need?

- Working together and mobilizing the intrinsic motivations for students, parents, school personnel, and community members to be co-learners and co-leaders in the improvement process

- Common Barriers
  - Competing priorities
    - Adult bullying: Addressing an often hidden taboo
    - Administration and/or teacher focus on increasing scores and not having time for anything else
Assessment

- Readiness assessments
- Process (or “end of stage”) assessments
- Comprehensive school climate surveys
- Community assessment: school-community partnerships
- Targeted assessments (e.g. bully-victim-bystander)

Using data as a “flashlight” rather than a “hammer”!
Norms, Rules, and Supports

- How are rules/codes of conduct now developed and shared with the community?
  - Top down vs. bottom up
    - Bottom up: Potentially another engagement strategy that ignites the intrinsic motivation of students to be co-learners and co-leaders

- Expectations

- Norms: Foundational
  - Being a learner?
  - Being an *Upstander* or being socially responsible
Individual/Relational Efforts

- The 3 R’s: Relationships, relationships, and relationships
- Moment-to-moment interactions
- Educators, parents, and mental health professionals learning and working together to recognize and support students who “fall into” categorical roles as bully and/or victim and/or “stuck”
- Suicide prevention
The Four A’s Protocol and Next Steps

Four A’s Protocol
What are the speaker’s Assumptions?
What do you Agree with?
What do you want to Argue with?
What do you Aspire to?

Possible Next Steps
- What are you doing already?
- What are your needs/weaknesses as well as current strengths (and how do you know)?
Thank You!

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Additional Resources
- School Climate Resource Center (SCRC)
  - http://www.ssrc.schoollclimate.org/
- The Upstander Alliance Tool Kit
  - http://www.schoolclimate.org/BullyBust/upstander