

Advocating for Equity Across All Levels of Government

DIMENSION 6:

POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

**ALLIANCE FOR
RESOURCE
EQUITY**

Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student



DIMENSION 6:

POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE



THE VISION: Each student — including students with higher needs and students of color — experiences a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment at school, including fair and consistent rules and discipline policies, positive relationships with staff and students that foster belonging, effective social-emotional learning opportunities, and meaningful family engagement that meets students’ needs, so all students can reach high standards and thrive.

KEY QUESTION

6.1

Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?

Federal

● Congress:

- Can ban discriminatory school discipline practices through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Authorizes, oversees, and funds federal programs that support the creation and implementation of equitable discipline policies, such as:
 - Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to support students from low-income backgrounds
 - ESSA Title II to support effective teachers
 - ESSA Title IV, which includes:
 - Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, which can be used for social and emotional learning approaches and programs, Positive Behavioral Interventions Support (PBIS), drug and violence prevention, bullying and harassment protection, and other related purposes

- School Safety National Activities and School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to support students with disabilities, which can be used in part for the creation and implementation of discipline policies

● The US Department of Education can:

- Distribute federal education funding to states for school climate strategies and school discipline efforts
- Issue guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used to support equitable disciplinary policies
- Issue technical assistance on adherence to Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, which obligates schools to ensure nondiscriminatory school disciplinary practices
- Require states to collect and publicly report student data, including disciplinary data

State

- **State legislatures** can:
 - Ban the use of harmful discipline practices, such as corporal punishment and the use of exclusionary discipline and discriminatory dress and grooming codes
 - Require districts to consider alternative forms of discipline (e.g., social-emotional learning practices and restorative practices)
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Set strategic goals to reduce disciplinary disparities along lines of race, gender, disability, income, and LGBTQ+ identity
 - Require schools to collect and publicly report data on student discipline and other measures of school climate
 - Distribute state funding designed to help connect students with resources such as multi-tiered systems of support and social and emotional learning programs
 - Provide free professional development opportunities to help teachers better support students' social and emotional well-being
 - Issue guidance to help schools implement restorative justice practices and integrate social, emotional, and academic supports

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Collaboratively develop inclusive student dress codes and codes of conduct with students and families
 - Set discipline and school climate goals that align with or improve upon state-level goals
 - Monitor progress related to discipline and school climate and meet or exceed state minimum reporting requirements
 - Establish channels for students and families to dispute unfair discipline practices and advocate for themselves
 - Fund and determine ratios of support personnel dedicated to discipline and school climate
- **School district administrators** can:
 - Provide professional development opportunities for school staff in positive discipline practices

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Establish positive school climate plans informed by social and emotional learning resources and supports
 - Decide how to implement discipline policies and how to support teachers and staff address student behavior
 - Build partnerships with community organizations to support students' social, emotional, and academic development and well-being
- **Educators** decide when and how to use discipline practices

Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes, oversees, and funds programs that support the creation of positive school climates and can enrich positive relationships in schools, especially through Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which funds Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, National Activities for School Safety, and other items, but also through:
 - ESSA Title I to support students from low-income backgrounds
 - ESSA Title II to support effective teachers
 - ESSA Title III to support students who are English language learners
- **The US Department of Education** can:
 - Distribute federal education funding designed to help states enrich positive relationships in schools
 - Issue guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used to support building positive relationships in schools

State

- **State legislatures** can:
 - Establish requirements for schools to have a student-to-school-counselor ratio that meets or exceeds the American School Counselors Association's recommendation of 250:1
 - Adequately fund school support staff (e.g., school counselors and restorative justice coordinators) to help facilitate and build positive school relationships
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Distribute state program funding for professional development

relating to school climate, which can focus on building relationships in schools through an evidence-based framework

- Issue guidance on restorative practices that repair relationships and prioritize opportunities for social-emotional learning

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Approve codes of conduct that can set the tone for students' and adults' relationships
 - Work with district administrators to establish pathways to address conflicts and repair relationships in schools
 - Provide funding and staffing for social-emotional learning initiatives
- **District leaders** can provide professional development for educators on how to effectively build and support positive student relationships

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Prioritize social-emotional learning and relationship-building over punitive measures of discipline
 - Provide opportunities for educators and students to build relationships during the school day in advisory groups or mentoring
 - Hire school staff, including school counselors and educators of color who reflect the racial and cultural background of their students
- **Educators** decide how to respond to student behavior and address or resolve conflict

Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes, oversees, and funds programs that support social-emotional learning opportunities, including:
 - Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act to support students from low-income backgrounds
 - ESSA Title II to support effective teachers
 - ESSA Title III to support students who are English language learners
 - ESSA Title IV, which provides funding for School Safety National Activities, School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV), Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS), drug and violence prevention, bullying and harassment protection, and other related purposes
- **The US Department of Education** can:
 - Distribute federal education funding to states to support social-emotional learning opportunities
 - Issue guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used to support social-emotional learning opportunities

State

- **State legislatures** can establish grants and appropriate funding for strategies proven to promote students' social-emotional well-being
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Distribute state program funding for evidence-based social-emotional learning opportunities

- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn social-emotional development and healing-centered conflict resolution practices
- Issue guidance on creating positive school climates and implementing evidence based social-emotional learning strategies
- Work with state boards of education to establish equity-driven social-emotional learning competencies and standards

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Approve evidence-based programs and curricula that integrate social-emotional learning opportunities into academic learning (See [CASEL Program Guide](#))
 - Work with school district administrators to establish multi-tiered systems of support that include social-emotional learning opportunities
- **School district leaders** can provide professional development and training opportunities for educators to help them integrate social-emotional learning into their curricula, lessons, and practices

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Encourage educators to use a race-equity lens in classrooms and integrate social-emotional practices in classrooms
 - Designate a social and emotional learning team to develop a school-based plan to grow social and emotional learning practices
- **Educators** decide what social-emotional practices to use in their classrooms

Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes, oversees, and funds programs to support instructional time and attention, such as:
 - ESSA Title I, which sets aside funds to support family engagement
 - ESSA Title IV, which sets aside funds to support after-school and extended school year programming
 - The Full-Service Community Schools program
 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - The Statewide Family Engagement Program, which supports organizations that provide technical assistance and training on family engagement
- **The US Department of Education** can:
 - Issue guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used to provide students with targeted family support
 - Create structures to ensure family engagement guidance is co-constructed with stakeholders

State

- **State legislatures** can:
 - Adopt statewide family engagement standards and evidence-based practices for educators and school leaders
 - Require state institutions to provide training and instruction to teachers and school leaders in student, family, and community engagement as a requirement for accreditation

● **State education agencies** can:

- Distribute student and school-level data directly to parents and caregivers
- Establish strategic goals informed by family engagement research to improve family engagement and support
- Establish statewide offices of student, family, and community engagement to help schools and districts engage families and communities
- Develop evidence-based resources for districts on family and community engagement, including information on funding and best practices
- Include family and community voices in state-level decision-making through parent advisory councils and other committees
- Offer professional development to districts or schools focused on student, family, and community engagement

School District

- **Local school boards** can create spaces for families and community members to voice their opinions on upcoming school board decisions
- **School district administrators** can:
 - Create systems for family and community engagement, including language interpretation, staff compensation, and support
 - Integrate family and community engagement into their strategic planning and budget processes
 - Create structures for family engagement, such as parent advisory councils

- Provide professional development, training, and coaching for educators on evidence-based practices for family and community engagement

School

- **School leaders** determine how and when to engage families and caregivers and solicit input on school-level decisions
- **Educators** can:
 - Decide how and when to engage families and caregivers in decisions about their students' experiences and individualized support plans
 - Integrate families and communities to create culturally affirming classroom experiences