

Ohio School Climate Guidelines Facts and Highlights

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* began a series of education reforms aimed at improving student achievement and making schools safer, healthier and more conducive to learning. In keeping with the spirit of that law, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has created the *Ohio School Climate Guidelines* as a framework to use in creating and maintaining positive learning environments. The guidelines stress four themes: accountability for results, doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options and involvement, and expanded local control and flexibility.

Central ideas contained in the nine *Ohio School Climate Guidelines*, as well as key activities for schools related to each guideline, are listed below. For further information, contact the ODE Center for Students, Families and Communities toll-free at (877) 644-6338.

Guideline 1: Schools, parents & communities together bolster academic achievement.

- Hold quarterly stakeholder meetings and communicate regularly with local businesses, emergency responders, and social, health and mental health agencies.
- Establish business partnerships that offer service learning and family-friendly policies.
- Contact local health, mental health, substance abuse treatment, counseling and tutoring services about providing consistent care.
- Actively participate in local emergency response planning.

Guideline 2. Integrate students' social and emotional needs into the school district's organizational framework.

- Establish a staff development agenda that covers best practices for social and emotional education.
- Establish core standards and adopt plans aligning curriculum, student supports, professional development, policies and resources.
- Form a task force to identify barriers to learning and make recommendations for a comprehensive, community-school plan.

Guideline 3. Evaluate the learning environment & ensure its ongoing improvement.

- Audit existing information thoroughly and identify gaps and potential improvements.
- Review such data as attendance and graduation records; student surveys; discipline reports; and audits of existing programs that promote safety, good nutrition, health care, and avoidance of substance abuse.
- Review ongoing data assessments, current resources and district policies. Develop plan and measure its progress and effectiveness.

Guideline 4. Maintain caring, engaging & well-managed classrooms.

- Plan professional development programs to help teachers and administrators better understand children's social and emotional development and how it affects academic success.
- Best practices among teachers — such as regular coaching and constructive feedback — help improve a student's sense of connection to school and deter unhealthy and disruptive behavior.

Guideline 5. Deal with threats to safety for a better focus on learning.

- Participate in community-wide crisis planning and establish communications systems.
- Follow national standards for building safety and establish school crisis response teams.
- Establish policies and procedures regarding positive ways to resolve conflict and effectively deal with bullying, harassment, and other violent or offensive acts.

Guideline 6. Teach social & emotional skills to foster student success.

- Plan training sessions that assist schools and parents in maintaining high standards for learning while simultaneously meeting individual student needs.
- Provide training and supportive resource materials to help build and maintain a caring school atmosphere: one in which students' emotional security and safety needs are dealt with; where positive relationships and goals are established; and where individual needs and problems are addressed.
- Integrate into the school curriculum specific elements of social emotional learning instruction.

Guideline 7. Involve parents & family to maximize student learning.

- Establish regular and meaningful two-way communication between home and school.
- Support parents by promoting parenting skill classes and use of related resources.
- Sponsor workshops and other activities that encourage parents to foster learning at home and participate in developing personalized education plans for their children.
- Initiate activities that welcome and engage parents and caregivers in school activities.
- Involve parents in well-publicized processes for influencing decisions, establishing school plans, evaluating programs, raising concerns and resolving problems.

Guideline 8. Connect students with school by empowering them in responsible roles.

- Involve students in planning youth-oriented, culturally-specific ways to eliminate prejudice, racism, hate crimes, bullying, harassment and other forms of violence. Participation by students increases their sense of belonging and purpose, and it results in better cooperation and improved academic performance.
- Provide students with meaningful opportunities to serve on school and community committees.
- Recognize students for their community and classroom service.
- Encourage citizenship by introducing students to local government issues and officials and by getting them involved in local advocacy initiatives.

Guideline 9. Provide high-quality food service and emphasize physical activity.

- Maintain a high-quality, affordable food service program that provides well-balanced, nutritious and appealing meals for children and youth.
- Promote healthy eating and physical activity to students, parents, teachers, administrators, foodservice staff and the community.
- With a community task force, promote the availability of affordable community food sources throughout the year, including summer programs.
- Enforce policies regarding healthy meal and snack options during the school day.
- Provide a pleasant and educational dining environment and reasonable meal schedule.

Related Information: For the Ohio School Climate Guidelines, see <http://education.ohio.gov> and search the keywords, *school climate*. For further information, contact the ODE Office for Family and Community Support toll-free at (877) 644-6338.