

# Element 7: Training

For schools to support their students holistically and create a safe school community, they must invest in high-quality training for their staff. Trainings must be carefully planned and implemented to gain staff buy-in. Often, staff attend trainings because they are mandatory but may quickly become disinterested, rendering training ineffective at addressing schools' needs. It's important for schools to offer training that is interesting and interactive, but also relevant to the school community. By analyzing data and seeking input from staff, students, and the broader school community, schools can identify trainings that are most relevant for their current contexts.

## Training do's

- **Use data to identify areas that warrant further training.** Opportunities for staff training are often limited. Regularly assess what needs are most urgent and determine whether evidence-based training is available to help address those needs.
- **Ensure that trainings and trainers align to school values, context, and community.** No training will work for all schools. Consider whether identified trainings are consistent with your school's approaches and aligned to state and local requirements. Often, trainers from the local community can speak best to a school's needs.
- **Make trainings interactive, interesting, and focused on building lasting skills.** Find opportunities to keep staff engaged in the content and ask staff for feedback to improve trainings over time.
- **Gather feedback from staff following trainings.** Use staff perceptions of the training—including the relevance of the training to their needs, what they liked, and what they did not like—to inform future training activities.

## Training misdirections

- **Don't make trainings about reinforcing rules.** Even if trainings are about mandatory issues, they can be tailored to fit the specific context and focused on building skills.

## About This Series

From 2016 to 2020, a group of public schools and public charter schools in Washington, DC participated in the "Improving School Climate in DC" project (ISC-DC). ISC-DC was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Justice (NIJ) under the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, and aimed to evaluate whether supporting schools through a research-based framework (Safe School Certification; SSC) could improve students' perceptions of school climate and reduce incidents of violence. SSC is not a structured program; rather, the framework consists of eight key elements that underscore a data-based decision-making and program implementation process: leadership, data, buy-in, policy and policy enforcement, student engagement, parent and community engagement, training, and programs. As part of the process, key stakeholders and experts formed an independent Certification Advisory Board (CAB) to assess schools' progress in achieving key milestones for each component, provide feedback, and provide opportunities to obtain grant funding. The CAB had a birds-eye view of what schools were doing and how they found innovative ways to achieve each element, and of the common struggles and pitfalls that schools faced. The CAB also focused on ensuring that schools' efforts were grounded within an equity lens to ensure that all students would benefit. This educator tipsheet is based on the CAB's review of workbooks schools submitted through the process of completing Safe School Certification. It should be noted that these briefs do not necessarily reflect the findings of the more rigorous implementation study conducted by Child Trends, but rather reflect our learning through our review of workbooks.



- **Don't continue trainings without considering current needs.** Just because a training has been useful in the past does not mean it fits the current needs of the school community.
- **Don't invest in trainings just because they are popular or available.** Trainings should be tailored to each individual school. Even if a training is successful elsewhere, it is not necessarily the right training for your school.

## Training equity reflection questions

Applying an equity lens requires considering power, identity, and justice when making decisions, creating systems, or prioritizing issues. If trainings are not grounded in an equity lens, they can reinforce systemic inequities and biases. Trainers should be knowledgeable about how racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other systems of oppression impact the information and tools they are providing. Similarly, all trainings should be interactive, multimodal to reach a wide range of learners and acknowledge neurodiversity, and incorporate education rooted in the real-life experiences of the staff receiving the training. Trainings that aren't rooted in the needs of the community will be irrelevant to your school. Questions to ask when considering trainings include:

- How do these trainings get to the root cause of issues impacting your school's community?
- How might training content reinforce or perpetuate implicit biases about certain groups of students?
- What goals has the school created that relate to its safe school climate? How can our trainings align with those goals?
- What trainings can we identify that will support our staff's competence in being allies and advocates for oppressed communities?

**Examples of how schools that participated in the Improving School Climate in DC project approached the Training Element can be found at:**

[https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SafeSchoolCertificationAppendix\\_ChildTrends\\_October2020.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SafeSchoolCertificationAppendix_ChildTrends_October2020.pdf)