

# Safe School Certification Case Study

## Appendix

This appendix provides narratives from ten schools that participated in the Improving School Climate in DC (ISC-DC) project from 2016 through 2020. Each narrative is based on schools' responses to workbooks schools submitted as evidence of their completion of each of two checkpoints. Checkpoint 1 workbooks covered schools' efforts on the first three elements of the Safe School Certification (SSC) framework: Leadership, Buy-in, and Data and Databased Decision-making. Checkpoint 2 workbooks covered the remaining five elements: Policy and Policy Enforcement, Student Engagement, Family and Community Engagement, Training, and Programs and Practices. Although every school could take their own approach, the SSC provides "desired states" (descriptions of the successful outcome, without a prescribed process for getting to the outcome) for each element. Over the course of the project, a Certification Advisory Board (CAB), consisting of local experts and providers, reviewed each workbook upon submission for alignment with the SSC desired states and provided feedback to school teams to help refine their approach. The CAB provided written feedback and scored schools' workbooks based on a rubric (see Appendix B) describing each element's desired states on a scale of 0-2, with 2 indicating that a school has fully engaged on that element. The CAB deemed schools to have "passed" a checkpoint if schools scored at least 70 percent of the total potential points (11 out of 16 for Checkpoint 1 and 28 out of 40 for Checkpoint 2). Passing a checkpoint did not indicate that schools had achieved the desired state of each element; rather, it indicated that the school had made progress towards this goal and had clear plans for addressing any gaps.

Although ten schools submitted at least one workbook, only eight passed Checkpoint 1. Four submitted and passed Checkpoint 2. Although one school (School 5) passed Checkpoint 2, its overall average score was below the 80 percent threshold needed to be considered "certified." Often schools that did not pass checkpoints did not provide sufficient information for the CAB to make a determination and did not revise their submissions.

Across the three schools that reached certification, the CAB scored the schools an average of 81 percent for Checkpoint 1 and an average of 88 percent for Checkpoint 2. Final Certification scores had an average of 86.6 percent.

In addition, all three schools who met certification:

- Were law compliant
- Attended community of practice meetings
- Had less turn-over with their points of contact during the grant period
- Received technical assistance
- Passed their checkpoints and didn't require additional reviews
- Had final certification scores between 85 to 88 percent.

The CAB found that across all three schools, on average, the elements that schools scored highest on were "Policy and Enforcement" and "Student Engagement" and schools scored the lowest on "Data and Data-Based Decision Making" and "Family and Community Engagement."

We have anonymized some aspects of each school's narrative to prevent identification of schools. Table 1 provides a high-level overview of the types of schools represented by these narratives and whether they



passed Checkpoint 1 and/or 2. For the purposes of this table, a small school is a school serving less than 300 students, a mid-size school serves more than 300 but less than 700 students, and a large school serves more than 700 students.

<b>School</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>SSC Completion</b>
1	School 1 is a mid-size high school serving a majority white population with a sizeable population of Black and Hispanic students.	Checkpoint 1
2	School 2 is a mid-size Title I middle school serving a majority Black population with over 60 percent of students coming from families with low incomes.	Checkpoint 1
3	School 3 is a mid-size middle and high school with a majority of Black and white students.	Checkpoint 2
4	School 4 is a small Title I middle school serving a majority Black population.	N/A
5	School 5 is a large Title I high school serving a majority Black population.	Checkpoint 2
6	School 6 is a mid-size Title I elementary and middle school serving a majority Hispanic and Black student population.	N/A
7	School 7 is a mid-size elementary and middle school serving a diverse student population of primarily Black and White students.	Checkpoint 1
8	School 8 is a mid-size Title I elementary and middle school serving a majority Black and Hispanic population.	Checkpoint 2
9	School 9 is a small Title I middle and high school serving a majority Black population.	Checkpoint 1
10	School 10 is a large middle school serving a diverse population of students.	Checkpoint 2

Each narrative is divided by SSC element. We first provide a description of the desired states for each element and an overview of the variety of approaches schools took to reach that element's desired states. Then, we provide a narrative overview for each school for which we have information and highlight key successes and challenges they faced. These examples are provided to help highlight the range of strategies other schools might take. However, what works for one school may not work for another; all schools should critically assess the needs and culture of their community in devising their approaches.

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## Leadership

SSC stresses that for school climate improvement processes to be successful, leadership for such efforts must be distributed across the schools' community and include the voices of not only school administrative staff, but teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and community members. Under this element, SSC has two desired states:

- The school has a Core Leadership Team (CLT) that meets at least once a month and includes administration, staff, students, and family and community members.
- The school has a Student Leadership Team (SLT) that meets at least once a month and school climate data to provide feedback specific to school climate improvement to the Core Leadership Team. This group represents a diverse cross-section of the school population.

For many schools participating in ISC-DC, they found success building their CLT off existing, often mandated, teams, adding parent and family participants if not already represented. Many schools struggled with including families and students as core members of the team. Schools that were most successful on this element established group norms, ensured a diverse representation of voices from all stakeholders, and ensured everyone was kept informed even if they were unable to attend meetings.

### School 1

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School 1's Core Leadership Team (CLT) included the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), the School Climate and Culture Committee (SCCC), and a liaison from the local university. Each of these committees had wide representation from members of the community. They also had group norms that included formalized election processes, published meeting notes and agendas, open discourse and a forum for sharing opinions, and regular participation of the administrative team. The administrative team served to facilitate students' academic, social, and emotional growth. They ensured that the faculty had the necessary professional development to become better teachers and members of the school community while remaining current with educational trends within their respective content areas.

The LSAT was a mandated union committee made up of various school stakeholders, which included parents, staff members, students, community members, and members of the school administration. Faculty, parents, and students elected peer representatives each year and community members attended meetings as requested. One student member on the LSAT had an equal vote as other adult members. LSAT's purpose was to advise the principal on important matters that promoted high behavioral expectations and high academic achievement for all students. Some of the matters they advised the principal on included resource allocation, school culture, and curriculum options. LSAT met the first Wednesday of each month during the school year. The LSAT also established subcommittees, as needed. The LSAT distributed meeting notes after every meeting and discussed the notes at the next meeting. The LSAT turned over each year. LSAT meetings were open to the whole community, unless otherwise noted. Like the LSAT, the SCCC was also made up of various school stakeholders which included student leaders, student-selected faculty members, parent leaders, members of school administration, and community members. The SCCC met weekly.

The Student Governor Association (SGA) and the Student Union made up the Student Leadership Team (SLT) in School 1, and both groups met regularly. The SGA represented a diverse cross-section of the school population and was a well-established group that had been in existence for many years. School 1 started the Student Union during the spring of 2017 in response to school culture concerns, and included members representing all four grades. The Student Union met weekly and discussed school cultural issues, created proposals, and met with administration. A faculty advisor attended meetings, although some meetings were purposely planned without an adult presence. The Student Union established meeting times according to the times that worked for most members. They also welcomed freshmen representatives after the first advisory meeting of the new school year to ensure that freshmen had time to get to know each other before

elections. The SLT reflected the diversity of the student body, and members were from all the wards in the city. In addition to students being in the SLT, student leaders were also active participants of the SCCC.

Both the Student Union and the SCCC were newly formed groups that offered a fresh perspective. The SLT was well-established; however, the number of groups involved in school climate decision-making led to some confusion about their differing roles. The operation of these groups also necessitated that there was a balance between students' desire for autonomy and required adult supervision and guidance.

Although there was a wide representation of community members within the CLT, School 1 indicated that there were areas that could be addressed with better communication and coordination. They felt that there could be better coordination of purpose and efforts across all the committees, and from the committees to the broader community. Many of the programs and objectives identified by the CLT also required additional resources to implement.

Overall, School 1's leadership had a diverse representation of different stakeholders who met regularly and adhered to their group norms and processes, although intergroup communication and collaboration could be improved. Their overall goal for their efforts was that all students would graduate on time and be accepted into the colleges of their choice with financial support in addition to being culturally competent.

## School 2

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School 2's Core Leadership Team (CLT) consisted of three students, three teachers, the school counselor, and a community member who was also a parent. Each member of the CLT, except for the students, volunteered for their role on the CLT after receiving communication from the school administration about the opportunity. The principal selected the student members of the CLT based on their social capital, their insights on students' needs, their academic excellence, and their potential to be great leaders. The students also represented diverse gender identities, religious groups, and social affiliations. They were encouraged to voice their opinions as this was important to the dynamic on the CLT. The CLT did not have a school administrator on the team as they believed the absence of an administration team member would foster a sense of ownership and frankness among the CLT. The school counselor was the liaison between the CLT and the school administrator who communicated the needs and updates from the CLT to the administration. The CLT was going to add new students to the team in the coming spring with the current student members mentoring them on the meeting processes and its logistics. They also hoped to add more parents to the CLT. The CLT met monthly after school as this allowed all team members to coordinate their responsibilities on the CLT with personal and professional obligations. The school administration ensured that the CLT had the space and resources to conduct their meetings consistently and with fidelity.

The Student Leadership Team (SLT) which consisted of the three student members of the CLT met monthly during their lunch hour. Through the SLT, students honed their skills on how to respectfully communicate and advocate for students in an appropriate and effective way. However, due to the conflict in lunch hours, the SLT only consisted of seventh grade students, but School 2 planned to add more students to the SLT and increase the number of meetings to twice a month.

School 2's goal was to have a CLT that included team members that would advocate for every member of the school community and most importantly provide honest and constructive feedback. The goal of the CLT was to utilize their time, thoughts, and opinions to produce sustainable systems to improve the school. They also worked to uplift each member's voice, and they created group norms that aligned with those goals. The meeting processes allowed for interaction, open discussion, group activities that required movement around the space, and above all, collaboration to ensure that all voices were heard. As part of the first CLT meeting, the team participated in an activity that focused on communicating the state of the school and the goals for the future. They organized their objectives based on different domains from school climate data

reports and openly discussed barriers and strengths of the school's climate and culture. Once this was completed, the CLT compared the team's responses to the data report.

If a team member missed a meeting, the facilitator of the meeting would meet with that team member to discuss the contents of the meeting. The administration team had an open discussion regarding turnover of staff prior to finalizing the CLT. They selected team members who were invested in improving the school's culture and who had a commitment to the school. If a team member was not going to return in the next school year, the team planned to discuss the pros and cons of adding on a new team member or maintaining the current number of team members.

Overall, School 2's CLT had a good representation of staff and students and needed to engage more parents and community members. Despite the limited parent and community representation on the team, they implemented group processes and norms that would help them achieve their goal of sustainable systems to improve the school.

### School 3

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School 3's Core Leadership Team (CLT) included teachers, the dean of students, director of student affairs, the head of school, parents, students, and community members. School 3 invited staff to join through a whole school email. Similarly, School 3 invited parents by sending an email to the parent booster group asking for recommendations. School 3 informed students of the opportunity through the Student Leadership Team (SLT) meetings. Interested students had to be regular members of the SLT and they had to go through an application process similar to a job application. The SLT was fully representative of the student populations as it included members of the school's Gay Straight Alliance, students of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, and from all seven wards in Washington, D.C.

The CLT met on a biweekly to monthly basis from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The CLT scheduled their meetings as close to group consensus as possible to promote maximum attendance. Absent members received meeting minutes, which were shared via email to all team members. The group established their norms and values, and each meeting was run using restorative circle practices as its primary means of communication with email follow up for support. Each member of the CLT had a role and a committee based on which of the eight Safe School Certification (SSC) elements they signed up for. Committees within the CLT gave out homework which members did and turned in, in adherence to the group norms.

In addition to establishing norms and values, the CLT defined their priorities for school culture and received training around the eight SSC elements. They also reviewed the school's data and used that information to set goals for the school in relation to the SSC's eight elements. CLT's goals were to:

- recommend and advise the school's leadership regarding safety and culture
- improve the number of options for prevention programming in the school
- help sustain ongoing efforts related to school culture and community
- help achieve recognition for the school

As a step to achieve their goals, the CLT leveraged the SLT who used school climate data to provide specific feedback on school climate improvement to the CLT. Although School 3 established a process to engage students in the leadership process at that time, the CLT believed that the process could be improved to engage more students. Specifically, the CLT felt they could involve more lower school students through the implementation of a lower school mentoring program and have more open sessions around evaluating school climate data.

Overall, the CLT developed process within their leadership teams that facilitated using data to improve the school culture and climate. They experienced minimal turnover and had processes in place to mitigate the effects of turnover and onboard new team members.

## School 4

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School 4's CLT consisted of the principal, the assistant principal, the dean of students, the director of special education and the director of strategy and logistics. The principal selected the members, and the team met weekly. They worked together to implement the mission and vision of the school. The members of the CLT completed a review of the team and their strengths and weaknesses. They identified commitment to the school vision as a strength and communication as an area of need. Specifically, they wanted to do a better job of communicating with teachers and parents and conducting classroom observations.

The CLT made decisions about the dates and times of meetings as a group. They also developed group norms, which included providing open and honest feedback to each team member, holding each other accountable, and completing all deliverables. They used Google for Education to document the meeting. All meeting minutes were available on Google Docs to keep absent members apprised of the meeting contents and proceedings.

School 4 did not have a functioning Student Leadership Team (SLT); however, they did have a Student Governor Association (SGA) and a National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). The SGA was not a school-wide leadership team as it only included eighth grade students. School climate was also not a focus of either student group. Although, the SGA and the NJHS sponsored some school-wide programs like a canned food drive and a coat drive, these were not focused on improving school climate. To close this gap, School 4 indicated it would develop more student-led programs that addressed school climate.

Although School 4 had established shared leadership teams, they did not expand these teams to include the voices of students and parents nor focus on school climate issues.

## School 5

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School 5's CLT included three different groups who met for the sole purpose of supporting the school climate. These groups included:

- the School Leadership Team, which included the administration, directors, deans, and instructional coaches who met biweekly;
- the Culture and Climate Team (CCT), which included the administration, deans, and directors who met weekly; and
- the Student Governor Association (SGA), which was comprised of elected students who met weekly.

School 5's CLT did not include parent representation within the three teams as School 5 had broadly struggled with engaging parents even beyond this initiative. The school used a nomination and voting process to select SGA membership. Since the SGA served as the voice of the student body, they also set an example of how leaders should perform in and out of the classroom, addressed issues that were most concerning to their peers, and fundraised for, sponsored, and organized student activities. In addition to the SGA, who formed the Student Leadership Team (SLT), School 5 also engaged an additional group called Youth Court, which met weekly to review discipline referrals and to address student behavior. The Youth Court also used this time to discuss climate concerns and develop plans to address negative climate issues. The Youth Court was a part of the SLT; however, they were not members of the CLT. Both student groups met weekly to review school climate data and decide appropriate consequences for student behavior. Both groups were representative of the student body at School 5.

Each group established their norms and meeting times. School 5 typically set the agenda for these groups, but the agenda's content often focused on response to students' successes and/or challenges in the school. All members of the CLT received emailed meeting minutes so absent members were apprised of the meeting contents.

In addition to establishing norms and values, the CLT defined their goal for an ideal school environment as a nurturing, structured environment where students felt safe, respected, and had a sense of buy-in within the school community. According to their goal, the CLT's ideal school environment would provide every student vast academic and extracurricular opportunities that would prepare them to be productive members of the society.

Within the CLT, the student leadership group developed working processes. Despite this success, ninth and tenth grade students were not readily engaged in leadership opportunities. Overall, School 5 adopted a student-centered approach to addressing school climate with decision-making power lying with the student leadership groups. These student groups harnessed the opportunity and were instrumental in developing restorative practices and working with other students to support climate needs, even working to support community activities and providing opportunities to promote mindfulness and community service projects.

## School 6

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School 6's CLT consisted of the principal, assistant principals, instructional coach, social worker, ESL teacher, students, and a community member. The administrative team selected this team to analyze data and survey staff and students to make recommendations to improve school climate. Given the lack of parent representation in the CLT, School 6 planned to be more diligent with recruitment of parents and other family members who would participate in the meetings and provide ideas for improving parental engagement and school climate.

In addition to the CLT, School 6 had a Student Leadership Team (SLT) comprised of middle school students that represented the diversity of the student population regarding race, socioeconomic class, gender, and language. Staff nominated and selected the members of the SLT, who served as leaders of the school, to discuss innovative ideas to improve the school culture and climate. The members held discussion groups with their peers and brought any feedback to meetings. However, School 6 recognized its need to create a more defined structure for SLT members to gather data from peers and family members to improve school climate.

Both the CLT and SLT held monthly meetings. For the SLT, the adult advisor made decisions on where, how, and when to meet based on the members' class schedules, lunch times, and assignment duties. Members were assigned different roles to facilitate the meetings including secretary, timekeeper, public relations, and facilitators. Furthermore, norms were established in meetings around punctuality, full participation, respecting others' thoughts, and creating a safe environment for sharing. In case of turnover, the adult advisor for the SLT discussed alternates with the team and the best plan of action to fill any vacancies.

Although School 6 had functioning CLT and SLT teams, the SLT was largely adult driven, which limited the ability of student leaders to make change.

## School 7

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School 7 did not have a Core Leadership Team. Instead, they had a Climate Committee which included an executive board and four subcommittees: relationships, environment, safety, and teaching & learning. Each subcommittee had two chairs leading the group's effort as well as 10-20 participating staff members. The Climate Committee Chair created an organized system to track agendas, attendance, and resources for the

executive board and subcommittees via Google Drive. The executive board met monthly and subcommittees met twice a month.

The Climate Committee supported the development of the Student Leadership Team (SLT). The SLT represented a cross-section of the school's student population, with members belonging to groups in the school focused on a variety of topics such as leading open houses and being classroom representatives when guests visit the school community, creating a garden and finding new ways for people to conserve food and energy, and speaking out against bullying.

Over time, the Climate Committee, administrators, and community partners worked to develop a stronger student voice to help guide students toward academic achievement and social emotional awareness. However, there continued to be a need for a social-emotional learning curriculum and leadership trainings.

## School 8

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School 8's CLT consisted of teachers, parents, and school staff (i.e., principal, assistant principals, dean, behavioral tech, and the manager of strategy and logistics). The principal and/or assistant principal selected each member of the CLT, although all staff were invited to participate. The CLT did not include any student representatives. As a result, School 8 indicated it wanted to recruit more students and elect two student representatives from the Student Leadership Team (SLT). While the CLT included some parents, School 8 wanted to further recruit parents and ensure a consistent core of middle school teachers.

In addition to the CLT, School 8 had an Academic Leadership Team (ALT) that consisted of teachers and school staff who were also members of the CLT, and a Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) that consisted of teachers, parents, staff members, and a community member who advised the principal on school initiatives and budgeting.

The CLT chose the members of the SLT. The SLT included nine students, representative of grades six through eight (three members per grade), who were of different race/ethnicities and genders. Overall, the SLT only experienced turnover post-graduation, with new sixth grade students identified at the beginning of the year.

To ensure meeting consistency, the CLT and SLT met on dates that they decided well in advance. Specifically, for CLT meetings, School 8 added meeting dates to the school year calendar and held the meetings at 3:40 p.m. so that teachers and staff could participate after school.

School 8 did not initially identify school climate goals. However, through a discussion of the term "climate," both the CLT and SLT reached a shared understanding that relationship building was at the center of positive school climate. As a result, in subsequent meetings they discussed the need to foster a cohesive school community that would not feel like three separate schools—pre-K, elementary, and middle School—and to implement systems and structures to support interconnected relationship building.

## School 9

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School 9's CLT consisted of three students, two parents (who were members of the Board of Trustees), two staff members, and two administrators. The CLT included students with diverse backgrounds related to programs, ages, grades, academic performance, attendance, and behaviors so that they could articulate the concerns of various types of students. The two staff members included a middle school teacher (instructional) and the program lead for the program targeted to overaged and under-credited students (which are the two programs not represented by the students on the CLT). The two administrators consisted of the co-director of academics and the director of behavior interventions who brought different perspectives to the team. While there was no turnover of students for the CLT, School 9 anticipated it would happen, especially as students graduated or transferred. Therefore, at the end of each year they indicated

they would review the list of CLT members and determine any vacancies that would need to be filled over the summer so the CLT would be complete at the beginning of the following year.

Beyond the first meetings, the CLT determined all meeting times and spaces as a group based on members' calendar availability. In the first and second CLT meetings, the team worked to establish a rapport with everyone. The agenda primarily focused on team building, learning the importance of data interpretation, and gradually moved to defining roles and assignments. The CLT also used these meetings to discuss what school climate meant to them. The CLT identified three important aspects of school climate: people at school (i.e. staff), a commitment to students, and a belief in building harmonious relationships. By the third meeting, the CLT nominated and confirmed officers and outlined members' duties, roles, and responsibilities. One of the parents in the team disseminated the minutes from the CLT meetings via email, and they were made available to anyone who was absent.

School 9 also had a SLT that consisted of 17 students, one from each advisory or homeroom class. Two staff members facilitated the SLT. All students were D.C. residents including those who were experiencing homelessness or temporarily housed outside of D.C. Each homeroom nominated a representative student to serve on the SLT. The SLT's goal was "to increase student involvement and engagement while creating a positive shift in school pride, culture, and an all-around sense of community". The SLT had an executive board with five positions: president, vice president, sergeant of arms, secretary, and treasurer. The SLT's membership consisted of a mix of male and female students of different ages. SLT members met to discuss a range of topics, including school climate concerns by reviewing school climate data and interacting with members of the CLT. Because the SLT was new (founded in 2018), next steps for the team focused on ensuring the team's sustainability and that they held regular meetings (at least once per month) despite students graduating or transferring.

## School 10

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School 10 engaged several established leadership groups that represented a diverse set of administration, staff, students, and family members. School 10 identified the administrative team as the Core Leadership Team (CLT), which included the principal, three grade-level assistant principals, and a general assistant principal. This group met multiple times a week in addition to weekly and monthly meetings that included other leadership teams such as the Academic Leadership Team (ALT), the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), team leaders (a core group of teachers across grade levels and content areas), and the community association (CA) which was led by parents and included teachers and school leadership. School 10's ideal school climate was one that was safe, predictable, and valued the tenets of social emotional learning which are self-awareness, self-management, social and cultural awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

All teams produced documented meeting minutes shared via email. Membership in the leadership teams was consistent from year-to-year but some positions were open to new members. Records of past procedures, initiatives, and information were recorded and used to onboard new members.

The student council made up the Student Leadership Team (SLT). The SLT's goal and vision for an ideal school climate was one where all students had a voice and ownership in their school experiences through a lens of inclusion. To achieve this, the SLT strove to ensure that students across grade levels, racial and ethnic groups, identity groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds could feel a sense of belonging through grade-level and school-wide events that provided opportunities for relationship building among students.

The SLT was made up of the elected students in each homeroom. Because of time constraints for teacher facilitators, the SLT was separated by grade-level to provide targeted approaches to inclusion and spirit. The membership of the SLT changed each year as a result of students' advancement in grade-levels and academic and extracurricular demands. Sixth and seventh grade SLT members represented the races,

socioeconomic classes, sexual orientations, and gender identities present within the student population. However, members did not represent the wide array of interests and social groupings at School 10. Eighth grade did not have any student representation. School 10 experienced challenges in garnering interest and recruiting the target number of students. The active grade-level student leadership groups met once a week.

The SLT did not review school climate data, but students were generally focused on creating opportunities to build relationships through inclusive extracurricular events and school pride-centered activities during the school year. The SLT held monthly meetings with the principal to discuss and propose school-wide events and initiatives to build a culture of inclusiveness, belonging, spirit, and pride in the school.

The SLT was slow to form. Because of this, there was a gap in the inclusion of student voice and choice about school climate improvement. The CLT also recently added two new members, which posed some challenges. These members had to embed themselves in the school culture while working simultaneously to implement innovative initiatives to drive grade-level climate improvement efforts. Grade-level messaging and implementation of newer initiatives across the large staff were not consistent. As a result of staff members departing mid-year, School 10 experienced challenges with acculturating new staff members while supporting their understanding, investment, and facilitation of culture improvement initiatives.

To address some of the gaps, School 10 indicated that the principal and the CLT would establish student, teacher, and family focus groups. Then, towards the end of the school year, they would establish a culture team who would work with the dean of culture to streamline and build upon climate improvement efforts and identify future gaps and the best practices to address them. During the second half of the school year, the assistant principals would collaborate with the dean of culture to support the initiatives that they had established to build community relationships within their grade-levels. To address the lack of eighth grade representation within the SLT, the dean of culture would speak with the eighth-grade teachers who had been responsible for student council efforts to offer support in forming an SLT and identifying culture-building priorities.

## Buy-In

For a change process to be successful, SSC recognizes that a majority of individuals within the school community must be open to that change. SSC focuses first on the buy-in of staff, given their role in establishing and enforcing rules, norms, and processes. Under this element, SSC has two desired states:

- School staff support efforts to improve school climate.
- School staff implement school climate improvement efforts with fidelity.

For purposes of assessing buy-in, the staff survey used as part of the ISC-DC project included a series of items that assessed staff buy-in and agency to improve school climate. Schools additionally used other metrics, including participation in meetings, other survey data, and direct feedback from staff to add to their understanding of buy-in.

### School 1

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The majority of the teachers at School 1 were concerned about the school climate and attended meetings to discuss improving the school climate. The three school committees that dealt with school climate issues had full faculty participation. Results from a teacher stakeholder survey showed that 63 percent of teachers, an increase from 59 percent in the previous year, felt that the school was a good place to teach and learn. Despite the increase in teachers' perceptions, School 1 identified conducting a more thorough stakeholder teacher survey as an area of need. School 1 noted that the existing survey questions were more general and did not specifically address the different issues related to school climate at School 1. Some survey data provided staff opinions of the school learning environment; however, the survey did not specifically indicate faculty buy-in on addressing substance abuse and school violence, which were issues in School 1. In some cases, the teacher survey questions misdirected the source of the problems. School 1 indicated they had only a limited amount of time to meet to discuss the issues. School 1 also lacked the standard 80 percent teacher buy-in to address school climate issues. The School Climate and Culture Committee (SCCC) also lacked cohesion and needed more time to implement recommendations as a newly formed committee.

School staff implemented climate improvement efforts with fidelity. School 1 conducted a teacher evaluation that measured essential practices, including their efforts "to cultivate a responsive learning community". The evaluation specifically measured teachers on "supportive community" and "student engagement". Evaluations revealed a high level of adherence in this area. Although teachers worked to improve the school climate, there were no formal plans and school staff struggled to identify solutions to improve the school climate. In order to close this gap, School 1 indicated it would create a formal school climate improvement plan that would be shared effectively with school staff. In addition to the teacher evaluation, School 1 also determined it needed an evaluation tool to measure faculty implementation of the plan.

School 1 also assessed school staff and administration on school climate related issues, which was used to measure initial buy-in. Every staff member also submitted evidence documenting their commitment to the school community, of which many aspects encompassed a safe and healthy school climate. To assess ongoing buy-in, School 1 indicated it would use attendance rates and level of parent/faculty inquiries through different feedback forums as indicators. Faculty could provide input through faculty meetings, home school association (HSA), Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), After School Night, and parent class meetings, whereas students could provide input through advisory meetings, class meetings, and the Student Union/Student Governor Association (SGA). In addition to these forums, the school administration recognized the need for the occasional town hall and scheduled three student assemblies per year.

Improving the school climate tied into the mission and goals of School 1 as they believed that their philosophy, vision, and mission could not exist without a safe and healthy culture. Their goal was to have

whole community buy-in at 100 percent for school climate improvement efforts, but the ultimate responsibility for a safe school community rested with the principal.

Overall, School 1 experienced some hesitation from staff, especially when they faced competing priorities to complete other professional and academic goals. School 1's staff also wanted to see student buy-in first and positive results of the initiative before they fully bought into the plan. This hesitation was the natural by-product of the gap that existed between student and teacher, teacher and administration, and administration and student perspectives.

## School 2

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Staff in School 2 showed their support for school improvement efforts through active participation in weekly grade-level team meetings and one-on-one weekly meetings with direct supervisors. Staff also served as chairpersons and committee members of the Staff Wellness Committee. This committee was integral to improving the adult culture, which aimed to improve staff buy-in. The committee facilitated two monthly school-wide initiatives for the staff. In the past, they also facilitated surprise Random Acts of Kindness treats, Party for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), Ugly Holiday Sweater Day, and Superhero Day.

The Staff Wellness Committee planned to host more staff initiatives externally, thereby creating a community for all staff members. The school administration had consistent one-on-one weekly meetings with teachers and was committed to continuing the practice and openly communicating to teachers if the meeting had to be cancelled. School 2's plan to improve the school climate hinged on staff wellness and their teachers feeling happy and committed to the school. School staff expressed that the school systems could be facilitated with more consistency and fidelity, especially about behavioral consequences and open communication from the school administration. The staff also had open discussions with the head of school, leading to an incentive program. This program rewarded staff members who remained committed to the organization, students, and parents. Staff members were provided with both monetary and non-monetary rewards based on their number of years employed at the school.

School staff implemented school improvement efforts with fidelity by ensuring that all grade-level team meetings and Staff Wellness Committee meetings were consistent. As part of the ongoing process to garner staff buy-in, School 2 planned to continue to check in with school staff through grade-level team meetings, one-on-one weekly meetings with direct supervisors, and Staff Wellness Committee meetings. These meetings were also necessary to gather data on initial and ongoing staff buy-in and to gauge professional growth. In addition, School 2 used internal surveys to measure staff buy-in at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

School 2 indicated that it was the shared responsibility of every staff member and student to create and maintain a safe school climate. School 2 believed that staff's positive attitudes toward the organization and their buy-in influenced students' enthusiasm to be in school. For them, positive adult-student interactions were the steppingstones towards an improved school climate.

## School 3

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School 3 developed a data-informed implementation plan to improve school climate that aligned with both the vision and mission of the school and the CLT. In addition to addressing school climate, the plan was a response to the implementation challenges that School 3 had previously faced, including staff's lack of clarity on their responsibilities in the implementation plan and a lack of transparency around staff buy-in data.

The leadership was 100 percent bought in and 79 percent of teachers self-reported buy-in for the implementation plan and improving the school climate in general. Additionally, the administration team and the staff had a large amount of word of mouth communication which provided feedback on staff status in relation to the implementation plan. School 3 used school climate data, weekly reports, and data tracking to measure ongoing teacher buy-in. The administrative team also assessed individual staff buy-in through weekly data documents.

School 3 indicated that, to improve buy-in at the staff level, teachers needed to feel like their opinions were being considered. Staff also provided feedback on the implementation plan and expressed their uncertainty with accountability parameters for the implementation plan. School 3 required staff to follow the implementation plan and expectations that they provided to them at the beginning of the school year. They monitored staff efforts towards achieving those expectations. To promote a sense of ownership among staff, the school implemented three strategies:

- establish working committees that were open to anyone and allowed for a more direct link to planning and implementing changes
- establish a CLT and expand the role of teacher voice through the ISC-DC project
- increase transparency, email staff the actual implementation plan, and provide an open opportunity for the staff to give commentary and feedback

Within School 3, all stakeholders in the school community were responsible for creating a safe school climate; however, the school leadership and the CLT—who provided feedback and advice to the leadership team—retained the burden of creating that environment. Overall, School 3 created a structured approach to garnering and monitoring buy-in on their implementation plan which aligned with their vision and mission to prepare students to prosper at globally competitive colleges.

## School 4

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In School 4, school staff worked together to improve school climate through student and staff recognition, town hall meetings, and grade-level meetings. They noted that every member of the school community had a role in creating a safe school climate. Despite the presence of some efforts, however, staff members were inconsistent in their implementation. For example, not all staff regularly engaged in practices such as student of the month. To address the need for consistency in these practices, School 4 indicated that teachers and staff needed to be held accountable for making sure that all areas were implemented consistently.

School 4 used a software system to recognize students by giving points to reward students for positive behavior. Behavior point reports showed that students received points for upholding school norms; however, the reports also showed that teachers were not consistent in implementing the point system. School 4 indicated it would close this gap by urging leaders to remind teachers of the importance of celebrating student achievements.

School 4 also monitored staff use of the software system to measure initial and ongoing staff buy-in as the reports provided detailed information on teachers' consistent use of the point system. According to the usage report, 83 percent of staff consistently used the software. Improving the school climate aligned with the mission of School 4. Their mission was to provide a learning environment that was inclusive, engaging, and academically rigorous for the students. School 4 worked towards realizing their mission by recognizing students who were upholding the school's norms. School 4 also used a school climate score card to provide feedback on how well each staff member was bought in. Overall, staff had not expressed any hesitation towards improving the school climate or buying-in to the plan.

## School 5

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For School 5, Restorative Justice (RJ) processes were core to their school climate improvement plan. To equip staff with the capacity to buy into and implement these practices, School 5 provided training and technical assistance for staff members on RJ processes. Staff members also participated in RJ circles hosted in the school.

School 5 assessed staff buy-in based on staff members' efforts to improve school climate. Overall, staff had a positive response to School 5's efforts to improve the school climate. The school continued to conduct trainings, provide support, and obtain feedback from staff to ensure their total buy-in. In addition, School 5 sought the counsel of staff who bought into the school's mission and vision to assess ongoing buy-in of other staff members. School 5 used strategies such as discussion, professional development, surveys, and individual consultation to assess individual staff buy-in. For staff who were still inclined to use punitive measures, School 5 helped change their mindset by partnering them with staff that were supportive of the school climate improvement practices.

School 5 used a climate observation tool to observe and provide immediate feedback regarding the implementation of school-wide systems, as it pertained to the climate and culture of the school. Members of the Climate and Culture Team (CCT) were responsible for class observations and providing feedback. Data from the tool indicated that staff felt supported by the CCT. Staff were also central to the school climate improvement processes as they were responsible for staffing transition plans and incentivizing (or reinforcing) positive behavior.

School 5 indicated that all stakeholders within the school body and the broader community had a role in improving school climate and this work aligned with the school's vision and mission. School 5 believed that success in other educational areas was dependent on a positive school culture and climate.

## School 6

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School 6 believed that creating a safe school climate was the responsibility of students, staff, parents, and community partners. Their ideal school climate consisted of an environment where students, parents, and staff looked and felt happy to be in the school, treated each other with respect, and the focus was not only on academics but also fostering a safe and structured environment.

Staff members in School 6 supported the efforts to improve school climate. Surveys, grade-level meetings, and committee meetings showed that 81 percent of staff members were bought in to the school climate improvement plans. Nonetheless, School 6 planned to further collaborate and strategize ways to increase and continuously assess staff buy-in to ensure their needs were being addressed. School 6 did not provide data on staff's hesitation to support school climate work; however, School 6 planned to investigate and analyze such data in the future.

School climate efforts directly aligned with the school's mission and goals, as School 6 worked to increase student achievement, family engagement, and sense of safety for students, staff, and parents.

## School 7

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School 7 believed that creating a positive school climate where staff, students, and families are consistently greeting each other; offering to help one another; and recognizing each other for the role they play in education, was the responsibility of all staff members. The Climate Committee team and the subcommittees led all efforts to help staff members, families, and students create and sustain a safe school climate.

At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, School 7 implemented a range of initiatives to support school climate including a mentoring program, staff coupons, self-care boxes, accountable talk posters, and

a teaching and learning checklist developed by the Climate Committee. The checklist was a guidance document for all staff members that outlined strategies for cultivating positive student relationships and classroom environments focused on community. Since the release of this document, School 7 saw school-wide alignment of many student-centered practices. For example, throughout the school, teachers started the day with a Morning Meeting to make sure every child felt a sense of belonging in their community. Additionally, the Climate Committee provided staff members with common language to use when talking to students and gave clear expectations for creating a positive environment in all classrooms across the school. While School 7 experienced a very positive and engaging climate during this time, School 7 found it difficult to maintain the energy and enthusiasm throughout the remainder of the school year. One of School 7's main challenges was that teachers often needed additional training and support within certain areas to be able to implement some of the new initiatives.

Over half of the school staff at School 7 indicated that they were interested in being involved and supporting school climate work through the Climate Committee. School 7 measured initial buy-in through monthly Executive Board meetings, monthly subcommittee meetings, meeting minutes, and products of those meetings (e.g., classroom visuals, a Staff Shout-Out Board full of sticky notes, students' names on an Upstander Bulletin Board, etc.). School 7 assessed ongoing buy-in in the same manner, in addition to a formal evaluation system that assessed staff members' commitment to school wide-initiatives and the teaching and learning checklist developed by the Climate Committee. While there was not much hesitation from staff, aside from wanting additional training, School 7 hoped to continue working to increase staff members' levels of engagement in school climate efforts.

## School 8

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School 8 strongly believed that a successful and positive school culture would enable their students to achieve successful outcomes in their school environment. As a result, they began implementing school climate improvement efforts, focusing on integrating positive and preventive discipline approaches. They monitored buy-in and fidelity through staff surveys, classroom walkthroughs, and classroom photos and videos. While most school staff realized the need to improve school climate and were open to professional development and exploring new resources, some staff were still skeptical that positive and preventive discipline approaches would succeed with their most challenging students.

For School 8 to reach their desired state on school climate improvement efforts, they acknowledged that there needed to be:

1. Greater buy-in for integrating social emotional development into all instruction.
2. Greater buy-in for understanding that even the most challenging students need this approach and can make progress.
3. Greater buy-in for accepting incremental progress.

School 8 chose to stick to their key initiatives with consistent feedback and support for teachers and continued assessment of buy-in through teacher, student, and parent surveys.

## School 9

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School 9's mission was to provide an individualized and rigorous education in a supportive environment to prepare scholars for postsecondary success and responsible citizenship. They believed that creating a safe school climate was the responsibility of all staff, students, and parents, and their efforts were overseen and facilitated by the CLT and Student Leadership Team.

Staff at School 9 fully supported school climate efforts. According to school climate data, staff buy-in increased from 66 percent in the 2016-2017 school year to 100 percent in the 2018-2019 school year. Data from other surveys also demonstrated staff buy-in. Specifically:

- 63 percent of staff said they had dedicated time to analyzing interim assessment data and/or student work to plan for future instruction and intervention based on student performance.
- 67 percent of staff said School 9 was a good place to teach and learn which was reflected in School 9's staff retention rate of 88 percent in the 2017-2018 school year
- 80 percent of teachers viewed families as partners in efforts to increase student achievement.

Moving forward, School 9's goal was to focus on maintaining the momentum by continuing the ongoing efforts to engage staff through the CLT and various professional development activities. Furthermore, School 9 believed that with all the staff bought in, they would be more willing to participate and lead efforts to make changes in other areas of improvement such as reducing substance abuse. Overall, there was no hesitation from school staff regarding school climate improvement efforts. However, staff indicated some tension between personal and professional values around maintaining safe schools, as School 9 began to implement alternative strategies to discipline such as Restorative Justice and new policies around suspensions.

In addition to survey data, School 9 used a range of strategies to assess staff buy-in including one-on-one meetings between staff and the CLT, weekly check-in meetings, and evaluations (both formal and informal).

## School 10

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According to school climate data, 82 percent of staff in School 10 were bought in to school climate improvements. To assess on-going buy-in, the dean of culture and the CLT monitored the school's proactive relationship building periods twice a week to document the number of teachers, staff, and students engaged in the designated activities.

According to School 10, staff members, students, parents, and the community at large were responsible for collaboratively creating and supporting a safe school climate. They believed that all stakeholders ought to feel safe entering and leaving the school environment and the surrounding community. School 10 also indicated that empowering multiple voices and perspectives and creating opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue allowed relationships to develop, grow, and maintain strong bonds so all members felt a sense of belonging, accountability, ownership, and pride in the school community.

School 10 monitored whether programs were being implemented with fidelity. The staff reported time constraints and competing priorities as obstacles to consistently implementing climate improvement efforts. Most staff agreed that strong relationships were critical to providing students with opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions and improving instruction and learning, but some staff were anxious about getting penalized on formal evaluations for pausing instruction to address a climate issue in the classroom. Some staff also felt uncomfortable with implementing a new initiative with minimal knowledge of best practices, while other staff did not review the pre-created advisory lessons that centered on relationship and community building before applying them in the classroom. This resulted in loose and confusing implementation and inconsistent messaging and effects on the students. Other staff expected that the initiative would produce immediate results for tackling undesirable behaviors and attitudes and when this did not happen, they considered the initiatives to be passing fads. Some of these concerns caused a small number of staff to intentionally skip dedicated relationship-building time to focus on academic activities.

School 10 identified a several areas for continued focus, including attaining 100 percent staff buy-in and improving implementation of school climate initiatives with fidelity. Staff members required more training

to address the implementation gaps which included proactive language, consistency in redirecting student engagement and behavior, and using both designated advisory times to build and maintain relationships in addition to embedding proactive relationship-building strategies in instructional time. To address these gaps, School 10 was going to:

- identify steps to support the implementation of restorative practices through the Restorative DC partnership
- implement a middle of year staff feedback session to address the needs of individual staff members
- incorporate more opportunities for staff voice and collaboration with students to create new relationship-building initiatives to improve buy-in
- introduce strategic coaching and student groupings during advisory periods and instruction time to help differentiate and support the needs of students and staff
- increase opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and time to plan to support teachers and staff in their capacity to implement the culture improvement plans with fidelity

## Data and Databased Decision-making

Data are the core driver of nearly every element of the SSC framework. SSC recognizes that data are critical to communicating priorities, identifying previously unknown needs, and monitoring progress over time. Data need to be central throughout the planning and decision-making process for school climate initiatives. Under this element, SSC has four desired states:

- There is an ongoing process for the collection of school climate data.
- An adequate response rate is obtained on student, parent, and staff school climate survey data collections.
- Measurable targets or benchmarks are established based on a review of school climate data reports.
- Programs, trainings, and other efforts are clearly tied to needs presented in the data.

Schools participating in the ISC-DC project collected data using the Education Department School Climate Survey (ED-SCLS). Child Trends, the evaluator and prime grant recipient, processed data for each school and provided detailed data reports for schools to use in their decision-making processes. Though most schools achieved adequate student participation, schools struggled with getting staff and parent participation. Most schools reviewed their data and began using the data in their ongoing work with their Core and Student Leadership Teams.

### School 1

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School 1 provided members of the various leadership teams and committees with data and trained them on analyzing these data. School 1 also shared data with all concerned stakeholders within the school community. The use of data led to the creation of a Student Union in response to students' needs to improve school climate. School 1 collected data through a variety of surveys that clarified the direction for school climate improvement efforts. They also collected and analyzed data from incident reports and focus groups.

School 1's active parent engagement through the HSA helped to support the school community and ensured that the school received parents' feedback. At the time of workbook submission, only 40 percent of students responded to the survey, and the survey was not administered to upperclassmen. To close this gap, School 1 supplemented school climate survey data with data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

School 1 set measurable targets using data reports to achieve some of their school improvement plans. Based on these reports, School 1 identified substance abuse as an area for improvement, which motivated different groups within the school to address this issue. As part of their response, School 1 gave students a student handbook that outlined the school's mission and vision, academic priorities, student code of conduct, list of extracurricular activities and sports, and school regulations to communicate academic and behavioral expectations. Despite this work, students still perceived School 1 as having a negative climate with respect to drugs and alcohol.

School 1 also identified social media as an area of concern based on School 1's disciplinary actions for the school year. Eighty percent of the disciplinary actions against students were a result of social media postings that were inappropriate, humiliating, or derogatory. School 1 decided that the long-term plan was to teach students the proper and best use of social media.

Overall, some strategies that worked well in School 1 were improving mental health care and implementing different student engagement events such as music concerts and pep rallies, extracurricular activities, and academic activities. Some of the challenges School 1 faced related to data were the inability to interpret survey results and connect them to tangible plans for implementing change and inadequate training for staff on fully implemented programs. To keep the momentum of data-based decision-making going, School 1

indicated it would establish a consistent process for data collection and dissemination for the subsequent years that would include developing plans for interpreting and analyzing the data and using the data to inform action plans and next steps.

## School 2

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School 2 worked diligently to have students, staff, and parents complete the ED-SCLS survey. They worked collaboratively with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to coordinate and administer the survey. To maximize response rates, School 2 asked staff to complete the survey during professional development time. Students completed the survey during study hall period. The school ensured there were enough laptops for students to use to complete the survey and coordinated the students' schedule with the OSSE representative. Students had an adequate response rate for the survey. Due to technical difficulties with the parent survey, School 2 had to reschedule the time for parents to participate in the survey, which may have resulted in the low response rates from parents.

School 2 engaged all members of the school community in ED-SCLS data collection efforts. The school administration had an open and honest dialogue with the students, parents, and staff about the importance of their participation in the survey as this was a way to amplify their voices on the current school climate. The school administration also emphasized the importance of being part of change in the school. Administrators were in constant communication with staff, students, and parents on ways that the school climate could be maintained and improved.

In addition to collecting ED-SCLS data, the CLT and SLT worked with the school administration to collect data on incident reports and behavior trackers to compare with the survey results to find instances of correlation. The CLT, SLT, and the school administration all had access to the data which they consistently reviewed to facilitate open dialogue on the best steps to improve school safety and culture for all members of the school community. To keep up momentum for on-going data collection, the CLT worked with the school administration to propose future survey administration dates for students, staff, and parents to include in the school calendar to show the importance of surveys and data for school climate and culture improvement.

School 2 collected data because it provided the CLT, SLT, and the school administration with information on the people they served. Data also informed the school's decisions on how to make the school a safe place where parents would send their children, students would be excited about learning and engaging with teachers and their peers, and staff would choose to work.

The leadership teams used data to determine areas of concern and identify potential intervention programs. As part of the first CLT meeting, the team participated in an activity that focused on discussing the current state of the school and the goals for the future. Prior to reviewing the data, the CLT divided into groups and each group tackled one of the domains from the data report. Each group listed the strengths and the areas for improvement for the school in each domain. The activity prompted a conversation about school climate and safety and helped prepare the teams to receive their data report. The SLT also discussed the activity from the first CLT meeting. Throughout the meeting, team members openly communicated how the lack of engaging relationships with teachers impacted the learning environment for students. School 2 noted that it would be important for the SLT to focus on using data to research and implement evidence-based programs.

Based on data, School 2's areas of concern were improving the provision of mental health supports to seventh grade female students, improving the relationship between students and teachers, and lowering staff turnover rate. Through discussions, the teams determined that the high staff turnover rate had a negative impact on the school climate as students were not feeling invested, parents and staff were struggling with feelings of uncertainty, and students were losing teachers that they had connections with. According to School 2, lowering the turnover rate would be a way to improve staff and student

relationships. Based on recommendations from the CLT and SLT, School 2 researched and implemented evidence-based programs. School 2 also focused on programs that would improve seventh-grade female students' experience with mental health support and the relationship between students and teachers. These recommendations were based on measurable targets that were set after reviewing the ED-SCLS data reports.

Overall, School 2 used their data to identify their areas of concern and determined that a focus on relationship building was a stepping-stone to addressing some of the other climate and culture related issues within the school.

### School 3

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School 3's student survey response rate was almost 100 percent and staff response rates were also good. However, there were no parent responses to the survey which contrasted with parents' responsiveness to other surveys that the school administered. School 3 speculated that this was due to the specialized code that parents had to enter to access the survey.

School 3 used ED-SCLS data because they provided a unique opportunity to formally garner student feedback on school climate and culture. Additionally, the survey provided a comprehensive picture from parents, staff, and students on their perceptions of the school's culture. Data were shared in multiple formats with all stakeholders in the school. The school's leadership team and the CLT had full access to the data reports. Students, parents, and teachers had limited access to broad themes from the data. The data-based goals and visions were sent out to all community members in various formats. School 3 planned to continue using data to inform conversations and recommendations and to share the data with the various stakeholder groups as each group used the data in different ways to inform the improvement of school culture and climate.

School 3 indicated that they intended to modify the survey dissemination plan for parents and teachers for future collections. The school leadership team was going to hold a mandatory staff meeting during which teachers were expected to complete the survey. After the teachers completed the survey, they would participate in RJ peacekeeping circles to share their feedback evoked by the survey and members of the CLT would be in attendance to answer any questions. To improve parent response rates, the school and the CLT would organize a series of town halls/workshops for parents about school safety and culture where they would be informed of the survey and provided computers to complete the survey. Parents would also receive the surveys through grade report letters and email reminders. The discussions and group processes were supposed to help parents and teachers feel invested in the data collection process.

In addition to the ED-SCLS, School 3 had its own internal data collection system. These other data sources included internal survey data, student focus groups, weekly academic data, student behavior and attendance data, and compiled lists of mediations and bullying reports. This system surveyed parents, teachers, and students and used these data to inform decisions. School 3 developed a pathway from data-based goal setting to program implementation. For instance, the CLT used data and feedback from multiple sources to propose three goals with implementation recommendations that were sent to the school's leadership team. The CLT linked each goal to a target area in at least one data source. They then linked each program that was implemented in the school to a goal; the CLT only selected evidence-based programs. This process provided justification for any program or intervention that the CLT selected.

School 3 aligned interventions for school culture and climate to categories of need on the ED-SCLS survey: engagement, which included cultural and linguistic competence; relationships and school participation; environment, which included physical environment, instructional environment, mental health and discipline; and safety which included emotional safety, physical safety, bullying/cyberbullying, substance abuse, and emergency readiness/management. Based on multiple data sources, School 3 was in the bottom third for

cultural and linguistic competence, relationships, school participation, and discipline and they created goals to address these elements.

#### School 4

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In addition to school climate survey data, School 4 collected discipline data, grade-level focus group data, and data from parents. They also administered teacher surveys that provided additional feedback about teachers' concerns so these insights could be used to create an engaging learning environment. School 4 provided grade-level teams and the leadership teams with data from various surveys, which these teams reviewed and analyzed. All staff, parents, and students were also able to access these data as well. School 4 collected data because they showed students' perceptions of the school and helped the school to design interventions that would positively impact school climate.

School 4 used school climate data reports to identify areas where they needed to make changes. They were able to develop "SMART" goals to address those changes based on the data. They also implemented programs and trainings tied to the needs of relationship building and responsive classrooms that were indicated in their data. The leadership team also used data to determine the cultural changes that the school needed to make and what professional development the school needed to provide.

School 4 designated a staff member as a parent liaison with the responsibility of maintaining constant communication with parents around data collection. The school also formed a student leadership council that represented each grade level and set specific goals for the school climate. Parent involvement in data collection was a strategy that worked well.

Despite their systems for the collection and use of data, School 4 indicated they needed to be better organized around the timing of surveys, specifically the yearly school climate survey. The survey was given to all the parents and students, but the response rates were lower than expected. School 4 indicated it would continue collecting data through student, parent, and teacher surveys. In the future, they would implement the survey at a different time, monitor the survey responses, and provide multiple ways to submit the survey so that the response rates would improve. They would also provide access to the data to the PTA and student leadership teams and continue to create interventions to improve school climate based on data.

#### School 5

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School 5's staff and student response rates to the ED-SCLS were high. School 5 indicated that this success was because they established a designated time for survey completion. School 5 did not survey parents, as parents generally had low participation. Although direct parent feedback was not collected through surveys, the school still invited parents to meetings to review student data. Several community stakeholders participated in "data dives" to explore the data.

School 5 had a clear process for collecting school climate data from multiple sources. School 5 expected staff to input data daily into the different data management systems in the school. These databases were the collection points of all data related to school climate, and they contained indicators on student attendance and academic and behavior progress. The school then categorized interventions according to the needs of students, staff, parents, and leadership. From the data, the school identified attendance and suspension rates as areas of concern.

Prior to the beginning of every school year, School 5 reviewed the available data on attendance, parent engagement, behavior initiatives, and staff morale from the previous school year and used it to inform decisions for the new school year. The data reports influenced all major school decisions, and data were instrumental in developing the school-wide climate plan and targets. The school used leadership meetings to

conduct data dives and determine next steps. For instance, the CLT participated in a retreat where they took a deeper dive into school- and student-specific data prior to the Professional Development week. The school then shared school-level data with teachers. School 5 also introduced the idea of staff buy-in and continued data dives throughout the school year. The school also disaggregated school climate data and disseminated the data to the Culture and Climate Team during climate meetings, shared them with staff on a weekly basis, and reviewed them with the student leaders.

The Student Governor Association also used data to determine areas of concern, as identified by their peers, to select areas of focus. The student leaders in the Youth Court used the climate data to shape their deliberations when reviewing behavioral referrals. Within the school community, the principal had shared data with parents during a monthly meeting.

School 5 indicated they would continue collecting data weekly and conducting frequent data dives during all leadership meetings. Information from these data dives would be used to make decisions about the school climate. School 5 also indicated they would conduct professional development at the beginning of the school year with staff to disaggregate data and determine priority initiatives to address school needs.

## School 6

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School 6 collected data from the ED-SCLS and incident reports. They also provided space and technology for students to take the survey which made data collection easier. However, School 6 struggled to get staff and parents to take the survey on their own time.

The principal and leadership teams reviewed, analyzed, and discussed the school climate data report upon receipt. The data report indicated that Hispanic students felt safer at school, had a more positive view about the environment, and were more engaged than non-Hispanic Black students. To further analyze the data, the administrative team trained the leadership teams to disaggregate the data and develop measurable benchmarks; however, School 6 indicated it needed additional structure to ensure leadership teams were using and monitoring the data effectively to enhance the school climate and culture.

School 6 used the data to select trainings and programs for implementation. They also used the data to develop measurable goals to improve student engagement, emotional safety, and physical environment. The Student Leadership Team also used the data to create peer survey topics and discuss ways to improve school climate. While School 6 found the school climate data useful in making decisions about their efforts, they acknowledged that additional work was needed before they could reach their desired state.

## School 7

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All middle school students in School 7 participated in the ED-SCLS survey. Parent and staff participation in the survey was a challenge. School 7 acknowledged that it was difficult to get staff to participate without a structured timeframe or deadline. School 7 noted that they generally struggled to engage parents and the lack of parent survey participation was unfortunate but not surprising. While they relied heavily on weekly/biweekly teacher emails, personalized phone calls, and home visits, these methods were not always effective with families. School 7 indicated it would continue working on engaging families and providing additional school-wide events and activities to improve parent buy-in. Specifically, School 7 indicated they intended to send information to families related to the importance of the survey and how the school addressed specific needs based on the data.

ED-SCLS data helped School 7 shift their focus to what their stakeholders felt was important. As a result, School 7 made the decision roll out a safe climate-focused initiative that started with ensuring that teachers felt valued and that they had the skills necessary to handle stress. They planned to move into the student-focused phase where the goal was to involve students more actively in the community. They noted that a

planned final phase would focus on parents. Overall, school climate data helped School 7 set measurable targets that were attainable and focused on increasing the perception that the school was a safe, welcoming environment where everyone belonged and was valued.

School 7 also implemented a range of new practices and programs based on the ED-SCLS data. For example, data revealed that students had negative perceptions of the academic environment. As such, School 7 created programs that allowed students to have more input in their school community, as well as programs that acknowledged students' community contributions in a more public manner. A committee of teachers, administrators, and mental health leaders focused on addressing needs in relationships, environment, safety, and teaching and learning, and led decisions about new interventions. The committee consisted of smaller subcommittees that each focused on specific areas of needs based on the ED-SCLS data.

While School 7 participated in the yearly ED-SCLS administration, the committee also recommended creating a mid-year survey, based on similar questions from the ED-SCLS, to follow progress and collect data that could inform their focus areas for the second half of the year. School 7 also planned to review RTI referrals, with the goal of reducing those numbers, and to hold student town hall meetings to hear student concerns.

## School 8

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School 8 collected school climate data from a variety of sources, including the ED-SCLS, classroom walkthroughs, discipline referrals, and student and teacher feedback. Student and staff response rates met or exceeded participation requirements, with approximately 95 percent of students and 100 percent of staff participating. However, parent response rates were below the desired rate, with only three parents completing the survey. In order to increase parent participation, School 8 planned to:

1. Encourage parents to complete the survey during events with high parent attendance.
2. Make computer labs and/or laptops available to parents to facilitate their participation.
3. Provide incentives to parents for survey participation.
4. Leverage online communication to encourage survey participation.

Given an increase in referrals, the administrative team focused on data on student discipline referrals. The administrative team collected these data to provide teachers with reliable information, identify trends, promote staff reflection, and measure whether their interventions were succeeding in reducing referrals—especially as it applied to student fights and increasing safety. School 8's goal was to decrease the overall number of referrals and analyze the types of referrals to measure any changes in the number of student fights.

The principal shared survey and student discipline data with the entire school staff, as well as various teams throughout campus including the Administrative Team, the CLT, and the Local Advisory Team. The Student Leadership Team also reviewed school climate data to help provide insight on what the data meant from students' perspectives.

Some of the school climate efforts at School 8 were informed by the school climate data. For example, data demonstrated a need to strengthen school-wide and classroom-based preventive measures in the form of rules, consequences, and rewards. As such, School 8 provided professional development around discipline. While they were able to provide professional development to target some of the identified needs, School 8 recognized that more training was still needed around other needs identified in the data. Specifically, School 8 noted that more professional development was needed to support staff in integrating social emotional learning into all instruction, making recess and lunchtime more structured, using reminding and reinforcing language, cultural proficiency, and restorative practices.

## School 9

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School 9 participated in its first ED-SCLS data collection during the 2016-2017 school year. Students participated each year since then, whereas staff were surveyed in Fall 2016 and 2018. Parents were surveyed for the first time in Fall 2018. At the beginning of administering the survey, School 9 faced challenges with response rates, so they used several strategies to increase response rates for students, parents, and staff. For students, School 9 administered surveys to all high school students by the 2018-2019 school year—as opposed to only ninth and tenth grade students who had been the focus in previous years. Additionally, School 9 implemented a multi-faceted approach where surveys were administered on two separate dates, which improved response rates by almost four times compared to the 2017-2018 school year. School 9 allocated time for staff to complete the survey during a staff professional development day. In addition, School 9 sent several follow up emails to any staff unable to attend the professional development day and provided incentives to those who completed the survey. For parents, School 9 provided them with opportunities to participate at two different events with high parent attendance. At both events, School 9 set up a specific table for parents to complete the survey on school-provided computers or on mobile devices.

School 9 used the ED-SCLS data to address and close identified gaps, in partnership with the management and the CLT. While the school did not set numeric benchmarks, School 9 focused on instituting programs to address recommendations from the reports. For example, School 9 partnered with behavioral health care and social service agencies that provide behavioral health treatment, prevention, and community and family support services for students with substance abuse issues to address the recommendation from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 ED-SCLS reports to identify strategies to improve safety with regard to substance abuse. Additionally, School 9 focused on improving the enforcement of policy for students who went to school under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Both teachers and intervention specialists began to pay closer attention to symptoms to ensure students were getting the help that they needed.

In addition to the ED-SCLS data reports, School 9 used data from a custom data system that organizes a range of student data such as academic, discipline, and attendance data as well as other staff surveys to make informed decisions around improving school climate, planning professional development, and determining whether they were meeting their goals.

## School 10

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The assistant principal of School 10 oversaw testing logistics for the student survey. School 10 asked teachers to set aside one period of instruction to administer the survey. The survey administration was successful with a response rate of 91 percent. School 10 did not implement a coordinated effort to obtain an adequate response rate from parents and staff. Previously, School 10 tried sending school bulletin notifications to help increase response rates, but this was not successful. School 10 emailed staff a link to complete the survey but only achieved a 20 percent response rate.

In addition to ED-SCLS, School 10 also collected data from students and staff through focus groups. School 10 also developed and administered an internal survey to all students, teachers, and staff to measure the impact of restorative practices on school culture and climate at the beginning of year. School 10 shared these data with the CLT and the staff to identify trends, questions for further data collection, and next steps to continue supporting the shift in staff mindsets and practices.

The CLT analyzed ED-SCLS data reports each summer. The CLT identified discipline, safety, and building cleanliness as areas of concern. The CLT prioritized working on consistency of discipline across race, sexual orientation, and grade-level social emotional learning opportunities. The CLT developed clear targets in these areas, in addition to focusing on the inclusion, safety, and voice of transgender students. Through school-wide community building, relationship-building activities, and twice a week lessons on an advisory model, School 10 provided students with the opportunity to engage in dialogue around topics of equity,

race, sexual orientation and gender identity within the LGBTQ+ community, trust and friendship, boundaries and advocacy, cyberbullying, social media responsibility, and more. School 10 also identified goals to decrease the inconsistencies in discipline practices through policy reflection and revision, to be more transparent, and revisit norms and expectations with students and staff members while emphasizing consistency.

School 10 based decisions on programs and trainings on data reports and students' experiences. They established a partnership with Restorative DC to train all members of staff to provide clear and consistent messages, resources, and opportunities to practice implementation of restorative practices. School 10 also implemented an Overcoming Racism training to identify and modify policies and practices that were inequitable to create a culture and climate where all students experienced fair and equitable treatment from all staff. They prioritized funding to recruit three staff members to support student needs, become trusted adults, and facilitate communications between students and between students and teachers. School 10 also formed a partnership with an organization to establish a platform to honor teachers for their dedication to instruction and their strong, supportive relationships with students. School 10 designed the student advisory program to address areas that reflected a need for improvement from the data reports. Some of the programming focused on becoming an LGBTQ+ inclusive and ally-oriented school, digital citizenship and boundaries to address bullying and harm, as well as team-building exercises for staff to incorporate social and emotional awareness.

## Policy and Policy Enforcement

Policies provide the guidelines around which schools define and enforce their community norms. For SSC, the Policy and Policy Enforcement element primarily focuses on policies designed to help prevent and address bullying and violence, although schools are encouraged to consider how their full scope of policies contribute to their school's climate. Under this element, SSC has four desired states:

- Adult supervision is increased in areas identified as school violence “hot spots.”
- Possible bullying or school violence situations are consistently reported by students and staff, and reports are analyzed for patterns.
- Building investigators are identified and consistently investigate reports of bullying or violence based on best practices.
- Appropriate safety plans and other interventions are regularly utilized both during and after investigations.

Generally, the four schools that completed Checkpoint 2 had established systems for reviewing violence and bullying data and monitoring, but noted reluctance from students and staff to make reports. While many schools described their ability to respond to incidents, only one described embedding a response within overall efforts to improve social and emotional learning.

### School 3

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School violence incidents made up only six percent of total recorded incidents for the 2018-2019 school year in School 3. The school identified hot spots for bullying and school violence which included common areas with an influx of students and less adult supervision. School 3 developed a system where adult supervision was available at various hot spots in and around the school, especially during transitions, lunch, and after school as these were the times when the school had the largest influx of students.

Students could report incidents of bullying or school violence either through forms or in-person to the student affairs department. Teachers also reported allegations and incidents of bullying and school violence to the student affairs department. The director of student affairs, the dean of students, the school psychologist, and the school counselor were all available to receive reports of incidents. Both students and staff consistently reported possible instances of violence and bullying because they felt safe and comfortable. In the reporting trends, students in the upper school (grades 8-12) were less likely to report instances of bullying than students in the lower school (grades 5-7).

The school took bullying allegations seriously. Once an allegation of bullying was made, the student affairs team, which was also the bullying investigation team, initiated a soft or hard investigation. The investigation process was thorough, with investigators gathering information and evidence, determining if bullying occurred, assigning consequences in accordance with the handbook, and following up with the complainant and parents.

School 3 used safety plans in instances of bullying and violence. Safety plans separated students when there had been negative interactions between those students. The school communicated with all parties involved including the students, parents, and adults who regularly interacted with the students within the school on the terms of the safety plan.

Teachers and members of the student affairs department used software to report disciplinary incidents. Student affairs members used the software to add disciplinary consequences, and the software showed trends which members of the student affairs department reviewed monthly. In School 3, incidents of bullying and violence were minimal, so no trends emerged.

In order to improve the school environment, School 3 used data to inform policy creation and enforcement and shared data on school violence with staff. Some of these policies included more structure and targeted adult supervision before first period, during lunch and transition periods, and after school. Teachers were central to enforcing these new policies as they were responsible for staffing the hot spots and transition times. School 3 made bullying and violence reporting forms available in all classrooms and clarified which staff members bullying and violence could be reported to.

Overall, School 3 implemented a clearly defined structure for addressing bullying and school violence through policies and enforcement and used data to inform their policymaking processes.

## School 5

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School 5 used behavior data to identify specific locations where incidents of bullying and violence were occurring. The hot spots were common areas, the second floor, and the stairwell. These spots were staffed by behavior techs and security personnel including a security guard who monitored the cameras in these hotspots. The security guard alerted the team if immediate attention was needed to address an incident. The team debriefed daily after school to discuss incidents and strategize on ways to address ongoing concerns.

Staff communicated behavioral and reporting expectations related to violence and bullying to students during community meetings and Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) conferences that were held individually with students. Despite the communication with students, they were hesitant to report possible incidents of violence or bullying because they did not want their peers to consider them as “snitches.” Students seemed unaware of the anonymous option for reporting incidents of bullying and violence. In addition to reporting anonymously, students could report to the behavior team for their grade level. Most bullying incident reports came from parents. Teachers also did not report incidents consistently. The school speculated that this could be a result of one of two reasons:

- Teachers did not believe that the school was responding to reports of bullying and actively chose not to report; or
- Most bullying incidents did not happen in the classrooms, so teachers were unaware and therefore, did not report any incidents.

School 5’s building investigator was the student resource coordinator who supervised data collection of incidents and directed staff to respond to incidents. Combining those roles helped the building investigator to be connected to the larger climate and culture work.

To investigate a report of bullying or violence, the building investigator would start by identifying and interviewing all involved parties to determine if the incident matched the bullying criteria (power differential, persistence, and hostile intent). Based on the evidence collected, the investigator would determine if the incident was bullying. For matters of violence, the school used cameras to identify those involved and the sequence of events. The building investigator would interview all students involved independently and any staff who witnessed the incident. All parties and witnesses would be asked to provide a statement.

For bullying incidents, the school determined that there was no discernible pattern as the three reports cut across all demographics. Incidents of violence typically involved fractured friendships. For domestic violence cases, School 5 initially responded to the incident and then referred the cases back to social workers so that students could engage in a healthy relationship group.

School 5’s safety plans were personalized for the student and based on the preliminary findings of the investigation. They also enlisted the help of social workers and counselors on the student’s floor.

For students who were involved in acts of bullying, School 5 used restorative conversations and invited the parents to meet about the incident. They also tracked data and watched for repeat offenses. For incidents of violence, students worked with an external partner to facilitate a restorative conversation between both parties.

Overall, School 5 indicated it would improve awareness of the anonymous reporting system and educate students on acts that were categorized as bullying and the role that bystanders play in improving their environment.

## School 8

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School 8 identified hot spots during late Fall and mid-year meetings. School 8 increased adult supervision in these areas and closed and/or relocated some areas. The school also took several preventive measures to minimize altercations, such as:

1. Expanding lunch and recess duty rosters by incorporating more general education teachers
2. Assigning hallway posts to administration and middle school teachers and making sure staff were consistently at their posts
3. Staggering middle school lunch and recess to prevent students from different grades having lunch and recess together.

School 8 also noticed a pattern of social media incidents, and an increase in incidents during recess, which is traditionally unstructured. As a result, they partnered with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) school resource officers who facilitated bullying prevention community meetings with each middle school grade, including cyberbullying prevention. Additionally, the school selected a recess social emotional learning program to help address an increase in incidents during recess.

Based on feedback from the Core Leadership Team that a more consistent, structured, and transparent process for reporting these incidents was needed, School 8 aligned their revised Schoolwide Discipline Plan with the Bullying Protocol and research-based methods. Specifically, each administrator assigned to a grade-level was the lead for responding to bullying allegations. The school selected these administrators based on their administrative leadership and training and their grade-level supervision responsibilities. Administrative leads also analyzed incident patterns and trends and shared them periodically with grade-level teacher teams.

Bullying or violence incidents were consistently reported by staff and students. Staff made reports on possible bullying incidents by entering them into the discipline referral Google database, which was monitored daily by grade-level administrative leads and weekly by the principal. They could also make incident reports in person, by phone, or via email but were required to follow-up with an entry in the discipline referral database. Administrative leads were also required to enter administrative responses into the database. Students and parents could make reports to the grade-level leads in person, by phone, or via email.

Once a report was made, administrative leads, would interview the student and contact the parent as soon as possible on the same school day. They would gather additional information and context from other staff such as teachers, counselors, and social workers, and sometimes from other students. They would also consult with the principal, assistant principal, and MPD school resource officers. During and after an investigation, the administrative leads would consult with the principal to create formal safety and/or behavior intervention plans, which could consist of referrals to the counselor, staff facilitated mediation, student contracts, disciplinary consequences, and/or parent conferences. The school involved parents early in and throughout the entire investigation process.

While School 8 implemented some practices and policies to address bullying and violence incidents, they noted the need for more consistent and transparent practices and more communication about bullying reporting processes to ensure everyone in the school community understood what to do if they had a concern.

## School 10

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School 10 reported that it did not have any consistent hot spot areas for bullying and violence beyond lunch and recess transitions. School 10 indicated that violent incidences were infrequent. All staff were responsible for hallway duty during transitions and some staff were strategically positioned during recess and lunch duty. The school also placed staff strategically, as needed. For example, the eighth-grade social worker was assigned to the eighth-grade music class where students were disrupting the class. The school also trained all staff, including school resource officers, in conflict resolution through restorative practices.

Generally, support staff remained with students for the duration of their middle school experience as they moved from one class to the next class, which helped the support staff build trusting relationships with students. These relationships made it easier for students to report bullying to them. Teachers also relied on support staff and their grade-level administrator when reporting possible bullying or school violence. Despite the presence of support staff and trusting relationships, some students may not have reported possible incidents of bullying and violence. The school indicated students' hesitancy to report may have been a result of some students feeling uncomfortable reporting as the office environment was not private and there was a general culture of betrayal or "snitching" if students reported these incidents. School 10 identified the possibility of creating an anonymous reporting form but noted that students did not use this in the past when it was available. School 10 also noted that students may not perceive acts of violence as bullying.

Grade-level administrators received reports of violence while grade-level counselors received reports of bullying incidents. Counselors, social workers, deans, and assistant principals communicated with one another and with the parents to develop a plan of support which could include a safety plan. Support plans could include additional check-ins with trusted staff, counseling sessions, and other SEL strategies.

School 10 created and utilized safety plans for various students to ensure student safety during and after investigations. Social workers, counselors, and administrators took part in the creation of safety plans with parental input, and the plans were signed by all parties including the student. All teachers were given a copy of the safety plan to review and enact in accordance with the outlined safety procedures. Plans were not used for all cases and were usually developed to communicate with parents that steps would be taken to ensure safe interactions among students and adults when warranted.

School 10 recognized the need to look beyond addressing individual cases to addressing the basis of the behaviors. School 10 indicated that the counseling team would continue to develop advisory lesson plans to continue their work with students to develop healthy social, emotional, and behavioral habits and coping strategies. The advisory lesson plans developed by the counseling team and the dean of culture would also inform how to report incidents and reduce the stigma associated with reporting through SEL opportunities. The bullying point of contact would also facilitate a session during a faculty meeting to train staff on the signs of bullying and reporting procedures. All staff would continue to monitor hallways and common spaces and identify areas that could benefit from increased adult presence and report those areas to the administration. Counselors and administrators would work with the CLT to identify and address communication needs related to possible bullying and incidents of violence. The CLT would also review policy and enforcement periodically to address identified needs with the necessary supports.

## Student Engagement

SSC recognizes that student engagement in school and school activities is a critical indicator of the health of a school's climate. Further, SSC stresses the need for schools to not only engage students but provide them with an active voice in decision-making about the issues that affect them. For this element, SSC has three desired states:

- Students are active members of groups that seek diverse and inclusive membership and support efforts to improve school climate.
- Specific strategies are identified and implemented to support students who may be disengaged.
- The school and the SLT seek feedback from students and student groups regarding school climate improvement.

In all four schools that completed Checkpoint 2, students had ample opportunity to participate in school activities and provide input into school climate improvement.

### School 3

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School 3 offered over 20 student groups with approximately 30 percent of students participating in at least one group. One of the student groups was the SLT which was instrumental to improving school climate through programming. Student groups were representative of the diversity of the student population, and a group of students could create a new group with the permission of the auxiliary coordinator. School 3 wanted to have more representation from students in lower grades in the SLT, so they could get more ideas on how to improve the school climate and culture for every student.

School 3 provided for the social emotional needs of the students with the presence of an in-house school psychologist and an in-house school counselor. They also provided support for students who were disengaged socially and emotionally, behaviorally, and because of low attendance. The school psychologist or counselor would check in with a student who was identified as disengaged socially and emotionally and would provide additional support when necessary. For students who were disengaged because of school absences, the attendance coordinator reached out to parents to set up a meeting once the student reached five unexcused absences. The attendance coordinator would try to learn the reason for the absences and would then develop a plan to support the student. If communication failed, the attendance coordinator would conduct a home visit.

For students who were disengaged behaviorally, the student would be put on a behavioral tracker after an in-person meeting with the parent. With this tracker, the student checked in with a member of the student affairs department in the morning before starting classes. The tracker provided three to four in-class goals for the student to achieve in all of their classes. At the end of the day, the student did a check-out with the same member of the student affairs department; the tracker was turned in and the student affairs member assessed the student's behavior, discussed triggers and ways to manage them, and decided if the student met the daily goal.

School 3 solicited feedback from students regarding school climate and culture, and student safety through student surveys that were administered during the school day by trained professionals. They also conducted RJ circles as a part of the lower school curriculum, so students were able voice their opinions on different issues regarding school climate, culture, safety, and bullying. In addition to this, they leveraged the National Bullying Prevention Month to bring heightened awareness to the issue of bullying in school.

Overall, School 3 had engagement practices to address students' academic and psychological well-being and ways to garner feedback on their efforts to improve the school climate and culture.

## School 5

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School 5 had more than 20 student groups with approximately 70 percent of the student body participating in at least one group. Student groups were representative of the demographics in School 5, and all students had to participate in Career and Technical Education (CTE) as a graduation requirement. The school developed additional student groups based on student needs as determined by the Culture and Climate Team and the social work team.

School 5 observed that students' after-school responsibilities, such as work or babysitting younger siblings, were obstacles to participation in student groups. To overcome these obstacles, School 5 offered student clubs and groups during lunch time. Lunch lasted 45 minutes, and the lunch period was common across grades so that all students could have access to clubs during that time.

In addition to providing student clubs, the school met the social emotional needs of students through the following supports.

- The school assigned social workers and counselors to each grade level so they could build relationships with the students in their grade level.
- Social workers and counselors provided a variety of therapeutic groups (healthy relationships, loss and grief).
- Each grade level hosted regular grade-level meetings that discussed SEL.
- Various student groups and activities provided students opportunities to connect with each other socially.

School 5 solicited feedback from students regarding school climate and culture and student safety through surveys and focus groups. They also provided incentives to students who responded to the survey and ensured that all students participated in focus groups.

Overall, School 5 had developed different opportunities to engage students both academically, socially, and psychologically. They also identified gaps within their system. In order to improve student engagement, School 5 indicated that it would create a student tracker that listed each student in the building with their mentor and their student activity/group. They would also continue to seek out students who were not engaged to discover their interests and needs so that they could create groups to fill those needs.

## School 8

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School 8 had approximately 40 percent of their students participate in student groups. These groups included sports teams, such as basketball, track, and soccer, and leadership teams such as the SLT. The SLT discussed student survey results and provided valuable insight into students' experiences. Specifically, representatives from the SLT were from each middle school grade (three per grade) and provided diverse perspectives from different cultures, genders, racial backgrounds, and academic levels.

To support students who may have been disengaged and to meet their social emotional needs, School 8 implemented a range of strategies, such as a Response to Intervention (RTI) instructional block where middle school students received small-group intervention in reading or math; student-led conferences where students led their own "parent conferences"; student-teacher check-ins as part of behavior plans; social-emotional learning team support through check-ins and counseling; retention meetings with parents and students for students in danger of not moving to the next grade level; and behavior management to clarify expectations for classroom activities and transitions.

The SLT sought feedback from the broad student population and student groups regarding violence and bullying. They also analyzed student survey results and engaged in discussions around specific survey items and results. While School 8 noted that a third of SLT members were students who had not demonstrated engagement prior to joining the SLT, they acknowledged that they needed to work on getting input from students who did not feel their voices were being heard. They also noted the need to increase participation in student engagement efforts among upper elementary and middle school students. To do so, they would rely on feedback from their SLT and Core Leadership Team, work closely with teacher teams, and get input on student survey results from a broader set of stakeholders.

## School 10

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School 10 had multiple student clubs and activities which ranged from academic and athletic to interest and skill-based clubs. There were also activism and advocacy groups, cultural affinity groups, and student support groups. Forty-five percent of the student population participated in student groups. These groups were reflective of the diverse demographics in the school. Some affinity groups had targeted membership, and some groups were created to support the targeted needs of students within the population, such as students involved in special education or students who were from low-income families.

To engage students who may not have been able to participate in after-school programming due to family obligations or academic demands, School 10 offered an activity period once a month with offerings that ranged from creative expression to sports and STEM-based programming. The goal was to create an opportunity for students who could not participate in after-school programming to participate in fun, skill-building activities with their peers who had similar interests. The counselors, administrators, and social workers also tried to identify students who may have been disengaged and recommended groups that would cater to their interests. Students were also encouraged to create new clubs with adult support and share their ideas for potential clubs and activities with their peers. There were also evidence-based treatment groups to provide targeted support to students in need of intervention.

Counselors and social workers provided individualized sessions, groups sessions, and other opportunities for students to have their social-emotional needs met. Students could visit and speak with counselors and social workers. There was a variety of extracurricular activities that provided students with opportunities to form meaningful connections. The school also provided parents with resources and workshops for parents of students with executive functioning needs. Additionally, the school provided teachers with resources to help them support students, and the school had a mental health resource binder.

Students and student groups provided feedback on issues relating to violence and bullying through the biweekly advisory period known as community-building time. Through the small group homeroom discussions and the trusting relationship that students had with their teachers, they felt safe to share their perspectives. Teachers and staff were able to share needs and perspectives with counselors, social workers, and administrators as needed. Students who did not participate in school groups or activities provided feedback through surveys given during community-building time.

Some of the challenges School 10 identified around student engagement were students' time constraints and students' interests not being voiced or supported to turn into a club or activity. Other challenges were time constraints and responsibilities of counselors, deans, and social workers that impeded their abilities to provide support services. Some eighth-grade teachers also identified a need to support students of color and a need to ensure that the Gay-Straight Alliance appealed to more students of diverse racial and ethnic identities.

To address these challenges, School 10 indicated they would focus community-building time topics on inviting students and staff to share their perspectives on personal boundaries, gossip, cyberbullying, and advocacy. The school would also remind teachers and staff to check in with students on their extracurricular

activities and engagements and determine what additional needs and interests could be addressed. School 10 would also explore the demographics of every extracurricular group as some activities were less diverse. This would provide insight as they worked to address the development of culture and climate initiatives.

## Family and Community Engagement

SSC recognizes that for school climate initiatives to be successful, they must not only focus on students and staff, but engage families and communities to help the school achieve its goals. SSC has four desired states around this element:

- Family and community members are actively engaged in and are supportive of school climate initiatives.
- The school initiates family and community discussions and education around school climate issues.
- The school notifies families and the community of successes.
- Information on how to report violence and bullying is publicly available for families and communities.

Family and community engagement were a challenge for most of the schools that reached Checkpoint 2. All four schools, however, used innovative strategies to encourage more family participation.

### School 3

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Parents and families at School 3 were involved in multiple events during the school year from Back-to-School Night to showcases to talent shows. The school indicated that overall parent engagement for these events was moderate, and generally, parents were supportive of how these events improved the school climate and culture. A strong coalition of parents planned the events and helped to promote a positive school climate and culture.

School 3 did not have a standardized way to measure family and community support of school climate work. However, School 3 planned to garner more buy-in from parents for the events they held throughout the school year, to have more parents and community members attend Core Leadership Team meetings, and to solicit more feedback from parents through surveys. School 3 decided that in order to maximize parent response to surveys, they would set up laptops at events and have parents and families fill out the survey in the school.

Although School 3 communicated with parents, it was not effective because of the communication platform. School 3 used a dedicated platform for general communication and communication about successes around school climate with parents and families, but there was minimal parent engagement and feedback regarding school culture and climate work. The school noted that the platform was not user-friendly. Beyond this platform, the school psychologist sent out information every Friday to parents about success with Second Step, a social-emotional program that lower school (grades 5-7) students participated in. The auxiliary programs coordinator also communicated with parents about any awards that the school received and the contents of student discussion in RJ circles.

In addition to communicating about successes and content of student programming, School 3 also communicated about the procedures for reporting violence and bullying through the handbook that was given to families at the beginning of the school year. Bullying/harassment forms were also available to parents. As next steps, School 3 planned to improve family engagement for school events and parent response rates to their surveys on school climate and culture.

### School 5

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School 5 engaged families and community members in school climate initiatives through monthly chats with the principal, newsletters, monthly parent-teacher-student association (PTSA) meetings, and community meetings where they discussed various topics about the school including the star rating and redesign. School 5 engaged more than 1,000 families through the redesign process. School 5 also used these family

engagement forums to communicate their successes on improving school climate and culture to families and the community.

School 5 evaluated family and community support for school climate work through surveys and feedback received at family events. The school used survey data to design yearly systems to improve the climate and to create more offerings to students as parents provided more insights about students' interests than the students were willing to disclose.

Overall, School 5 had developed different channels to communicate with and engage families and members of the community. However, they wanted to strengthen the reporting mechanisms for parent engagement at different events and work on getting increased parent representation at their events.

## School 8

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School 8 engaged family and community members in their school climate initiatives through leadership meetings (Core Leadership Team and Local Advisory Team), PTO-sponsored events (for example, Parent Cafes which provided a space and structure for parents to surface questions and concerns related to school climate), home visits and student-led conferences. School 8 also incentivized participation in the school climate parent survey, which drastically increased parent participation, compared to previous years. They used similar methods—surveys, parent participation, and leadership meetings—to measure family and community support for their school climate work and receive feedback about school climate. Additionally, the principal at School 8 shared successes around school climate in PTO meetings and public community meetings.

In addition to communicating information related to school climate, School 8 provided their Schoolwide Discipline Plan, electronically and in hard copy, to all parents. In this plan, parents, families, and community members could access information on how to report violence and bullying. Nevertheless, School 8 planned to make this information more accessible to parents by creating a one-page flyer in several languages that identified key staff for discipline, violence, and bullying concerns at each grade level.

School 8 realized that there were gaps in their family and community engagement and identified a few steps to address these gaps. First, they planned to partner with an organization specialized in facilitating race and equity dialogue and capacity building for school communities to help recruit and empower parent representations among families “furthest from opportunity” (as defined by the school). To encourage participation, they would send out individualized invitations from teachers and the principal, share meeting summaries, and schedule follow-up conference calls with interested parents unable to attend in person. They also indicated they would make better use of their school website and social media handles to celebrate small wins with school climate data.

## School 10

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Parents at School 10 were engaged through grade-level barbecues, sixth grade orientation, parent workshops, the parent association, fundraising campaigns, and in-school events. The parent association and the LSAT identified the need and funded new positions for the dean of culture, two additional security guards, and three grade-level deans in order to meet the relationship-building goals of the school. School climate data also offered additional insights into the measure of family and community support of school climate improvement efforts. School 10 also measured family and community support through participation in different initiatives and fundraising efforts. Additionally, parents also provided feedback through individual family meetings, open office hours with the principal, community association (CA) and LSAT meetings, and phone calls and emails with the school staff and the CLT.

The feedback that was received showed the need to develop a strong social emotional learning base that would support relationship building across all members of the school community. Through informative dialogue and survey results, the CLT dedicated funding towards hiring a dean of culture and a behavioral dean for each grade level.

In addition to the parent association updates on family engagement opportunities, School 10 communicated with parents and families through various platforms.

- The principal sent out weekly updates on school climate initiatives and successes through a family newsletter.
- Individual staff members sent out text messages to families on students' needs and successes.
- Social media and a digital bulletin were used to highlight community fundraising efforts, workshops, trainings, relationship-building opportunities, and parent and student initiatives. The school also used social media to share quick snapshots of daily successes.
- The school held occasional special events to celebrate major accomplishments.

Families and communities found out about school policies, such as mechanisms and procedures for reporting bullying and violence, through the website and poster displayed at the entrance of the welcome center. The school counselors also shared information on bullying and school violence during parent workshops at the beginning of the year, and they were available during parent-teacher conferences to address any concerns.

School 10 reported that time and availability were obstacles to parent engagement as familial responsibilities and personal obligations conflicted with parent community association meetings which occurred during weeknights.

To address these challenges, the parent association communicated with families that couldn't attend meetings through the weekly bulletin. School 10 felt the association could include a periodic digital questionnaire to survey families about engagement and alternative communication methods and meeting times to support different family structures and needs.

## Training

SSC recognizes that staff often need training and support to implement new practices and enact change. Both the training program elements are predicated on all the other elements. Trainings should be informed by data and determined with input from the leadership team, students, families, and the community. Additionally, SSC recognizes that staff need to understand how to interpret data and have awareness of key local laws and policies that govern safe school climates. Under this element, SSC has three desired states:

- Trainings are aligned to data.
- Staff, students, volunteers, and families annually receive information regarding The DC Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012.
- Appropriate staff are trained on:
  - evaluating school climate (ED-SCLS) data
  - receiving ongoing feedback, support, and instruction to improve the effectiveness of their implementation
  - how to investigate reports of violence, bullying, and harassment

Overall, most schools that passed Checkpoint 2 had a wide array of training opportunities related to climate and culture. Many struggled with ensuring all staff had sufficient training and alignment between the many trainings and data.

### School 3

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The director of student affairs at School 3 was responsible for evaluating data and was trained to look at trends, which were shared with the head of school to plan further training. School 3 used a specific type of software (DL) to store and analyze data. DL also conducted a yearly training to ensure that the director of student affairs was looking at and analyzing data correctly.

Other trainings at School 3 included RJ training, bullying prevention training, and inclusion training. An external organization engaged many staff in RJ training so that RJ practices could be used among students, staff, and parents. All training from the student affairs department directly affected aspects of school climate and culture. RJ training was instrumental to creating a safe and collaborative environment for the students. The inclusion training educated staff on ensuring all spaces were inclusive for all students and staff. The inclusion training presented information about social injustices and inequalities and asked staff to reflect on how they would handle such situations. This training also educated staff on supporting students from marginalized backgrounds.

The school also ensured school leadership, staff, and students received violence and bullying prevention and intervention training. The director of student affairs was trained on evaluating school climate data and making data-based decisions. The student affairs department was trained on how to conduct a thorough investigation in situations of bullying, violence, and harassment. The student affairs department planned a training for the entire school which covered violence, bullying, and harassment. They also coordinated with the SROs to speak to students about violence and drug use and provided ongoing feedback to teachers after the bullying and harassment training which included making sure teachers were aware of how to deal with situations of violence, harassment, and bullying within their classes. However, the school did not formally train new staff.

School 3 identified a few gaps in training, including a lack of a formalized training structure for new teachers and a lack of trainings to improve school climate and culture. To address these gaps, School 3 planned to reserve time during staff meetings each week to have trainings aligned to data. The student affairs

department would look at trends and communicate with the head of school to plan the necessary trainings. During Meet the Teachers Night, the leadership team planned to review the guidebook with families. The guidebook, which contained the DC Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012, was not available to volunteers, but it was available to parents. School 3 planned to make this information available to the PTA so that volunteers who worked with students regularly would be aware of the DC Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012. School 3 also wanted to have all teachers and staff trained on violence, bullying, and harassment.

Overall, School 3 initiated a training plan that centered RJ practices and worked to improve school climate and culture.

## School 5

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School 5 analyzed weekly incident data and created a weekly data report to share with teachers. Training for the staff responsible for analyzing data and creating weekly reports happened during the afternoon Culture and Climate Team (CCT) meetings. Department leaders were also trained on interpreting school climate data.

During teacher pre-service training, School 5 provided two different professional development (PD) sessions on trauma-informed instruction through partnerships with external organizations, and the CCT led a session on school procedures and approaches to use in the classroom. Generally, the school offered PD sessions every Monday morning around climate and culture. Teachers with low evaluations in classroom culture received individualized training through an external partnership.

School 5 sought to achieve its mission and vision through a focus on the SEL strength of the students, and the trainings helped build this skill. The trainings focused on building empathy and awareness of trauma. The trainings primarily addressed trauma-informed instruction but did not directly address bullying and violence prevention and intervention.

New staff members participated in a group that met regularly to teach new staff how to support school climate and culture. The school also offered trauma-informed instruction as part of the teacher pre-service training and as part of the morning PD offerings to equip staff members to support students from marginalized backgrounds. School 5 noted that they still had to address ways to strengthen the consistency in implementing the skills from the trainings across the building. School 5 indicated it would strengthen the teachers' ability to use their trauma-informed instruction to de-escalate student behavior situations. To achieve this, the school would schedule trainings as part of term three PD offerings, and the department chairs would coach teachers on how to implement the strategies discussed in morning PD.

Overall, School 5 designed a training plan that was embedded in SEL best practices to support students and improve school culture and climate.

## School 8

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School 8 trained its CLT to evaluate school climate data, two to three times per school year. The CLT then presented these data to the whole staff during their staff meeting and used the data to make decisions about new trainings to implement.

School 8's 2017-2018 school climate report showed a decrease in seventh and eighth grade students' perceptions of physical safety, emotional safety, relationships, discipline, and instructional environment. As a result, during the 2018-2019 school year, they implemented trainings aligned to evidence-based programs (see Programs element), including an SEL curriculum that provides teachers with lessons and materials to help build students' awareness and skills to manage emotions. They also trained staff on a positive and proactive approach to classroom management. Additionally, School 8 sought training as part of their mission to build student's diversity and strength through arts integration. They also created a Diversity Committee

to promote equity and strengthen their relationship-building efforts across the different backgrounds in their school community and began to utilize community-building circles in their staff meetings to build relationships and foster a climate of care and respect among the staff. The Diversity Committee goals directly related to social justices and inequities by focusing on promoting equity through awareness, relationships, and practices.

School 8 shared information related to bullying prevention to staff through the Schoolwide Discipline Plan. The school made the Plan available to families and staff in hard copy as well as electronically at the beginning of the school year.

School 8 noted that they needed more trainings to support deeper relationship-building dialogue focused on race and equity, empowering staff to lead trainings, and forming trusting relationships with more families with home languages other than English. To address these gaps, they chose to partner with an organization that supports deep relationship-building dialogue focused on race and equity, would further educate their teachers on using community circles in their classroom and have them take turns to facilitate circles during staff meetings, and would involve stakeholders to determine best ways to reach families with home languages other than English.

## School 10

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School 10's CLT was responsible for receiving and analyzing data and had been trained to analyze social, emotional, and behavioral patterns in the data. Administrative staff also received training to evaluate and report behavioral incidents, analyze data for patterns, and address behavior supports. School 10 further ensured the counseling department received training in identifying and analyzing bully data and performing needs assessments.

A restorative justice program also provided monthly trainings for all staff. These trainings were divided into teacher-based sessions and leadership sessions. Some staff also attended mandatory LGBT Cultural Competency training, Language Access Training, and Sexual Harassment Prevention training. Newer staff were invited to complete an online training to better equip them to respond to student behavior in a consistent, predictable manner.

School 10 consistently used data from observations and surveys to drive the professional development sessions that the school provided to staff. The dean of culture frequently provided feedback and support to staff through informal walk-throughs, which were sometimes conducted with partners from the district.

The school included information on the DC Youth Bullying Prevention Act in both staff and family handbooks. Prior to the start of school, this information was reviewed with all staff.

School 10 experienced gaps in staff usage of restorative practices and proactive relationship-building strategies and in students' usage of restorative practices during conflict situations. All teachers were not bought into the use of restorative practices and relationship-building strategies. School 10 indicated it needed more training to close these gaps but not all teachers were able to attend all restorative practice trainings as there was a separate coinciding training on equity in the classroom.

To address these issues, School 10 indicated it would provide opportunities to discuss the learnings and new ideas from trainings during faculty meetings and collaborative problem-solving sessions to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. The school would task grade-level team culture captains with reporting on the culture of their student teams and providing recommendations on mini trainings for targeted support within their individual teams. The counseling team would provide staff with training on bullying and reporting so all staff

would be equipped with the appropriate knowledge and resources to support students. School 10 believed that ongoing training, advisory lessons, consistent use of proactive language, restorative responses, and active monitoring and modeling would help them to address their gaps.

## Programs and Practices

As the final element of SSC, programs and practices should be built upon the foundation established by each of the preceding elements. SSC stresses that programs must be aligned to the schools needs and that schools should regularly evaluate these efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of students, staff, and families. SSC has four desired states for this element:

- Selected Programs/Practices are aligned to data.
- Selected Programs/Practices are evidence informed.
- Programs/Practices are multi-tiered, including Universal, Targeted, and Intensive supports and interventions.
- Programs/Practices are coordinated with one another, tied to data and goals, and sustained over time.

### School 3

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School 3 implemented three evidence-informed programs.

The first is an evidence-based holistic program rooted in SEL that transforms schools into supportive learning environments and provides the larger community with the tools to enable them to support the social emotional growth of children. The program was provided to all students in grades 5-7. Additionally, teachers completed a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which was used to identify students in need of targeted support by the school psychologists. Students who were identified as needing targeted support met with the school counselor and psychologist in groups not larger than five students called “lunch groups”. The contents of the discussions in lunch groups were consistent with those of the general program being offered to other students. The school counselor and school psychologist used daily notes collected from the lunch groups to inform instruction. The school collected SDQ data three times a year. The school psychologist and counselor had oversight of the program to ensure that it was being implemented with fidelity.

The second program is an evidence-based high school curriculum with four modules focused on increasing awareness about adolescent depression. School 3 offered the curriculum to students in grades 9-12. In addition to the curriculum, high school students could 'drop in' with the school psychologist or school counselor. The goals of the program were to increase awareness about depression and suicide, identify signs and symptoms of depression in oneself and peers, and provide strategies for finding help.

School 3 did not have programming for eighth grade students; however, the school indicated it was set to begin a consent training for students in all grades. School 3 also indicated it wanted to design a multi-tiered support program and a social emotional awareness program for eighth grade students. Overall, School 3 implemented evidence-based programs for the majority of the students and was taking steps to mitigate the gap for eighth grade students.

### School 5

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School 5 underwent an instructional redesign. Based on the community feedback from multiple data sources, they planned a new school climate program that focused on building the school as a healing center. To determine the indicators and targets of the school-wide program, School 5 looked at data from multiple

sources to gather staff feedback and understand students' perceptions and their performance on the SEL indicators.

School 5 implemented a permissive cell phone policy where students were permitted to maintain their cell phone if they were on time to school and in their uniform. School 5 determined this policy would offer an incentive for students to attend class. School 5 saw marked successes with the policy with an increase in first period attendance. Based on research that indicates that a sense of belonging improves student behavior, School 5 offered more clubs through the community hour. School 5 also offered mentoring groups to all students and classroom guidance on SEL topics and community service opportunities. Ninth grade classrooms also started with community-building circles, and all classrooms used structure to promote positive student-teacher and student-student relationships.

For targeted interventions, School 5 held restorative conversations with students after incidents occurred to address the problem and its root cause. School 5 also offered social worker sessions with students in special education with an Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) classification.

School 5 analyzed data and identified gaps in their current offerings so they could create new programs to fill those gaps. School 5 also worked to map their assets within the building and community to identify redundancies and gaps in program offerings and to match students with programs in the school building. The school manager and the Climate and Culture Team monitored program fidelity. School 5 also ensured sustainability of success through tracked data which the school reviewed in administrative meetings. However, School 5 indicated that this was an area that needed more attention as new programs were constantly being implemented and evaluating them for success was paramount to sustaining the programs.

Overall, School 5 wanted to bridge the communication gap between teachers and staff members in different grade levels. In order to achieve their desired goals, they were developing a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system and incentivizing students who were on track to meet expectations.

## School 8

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School 8 implemented a range of initiatives during the 2018-2019 school year to increase student engagement and connection with families. These initiatives were a response to data including in-seat attendance, student satisfaction results from district surveys, and student reports of sense of safety from the ED School Climate Survey. Initiatives included monthly assemblies to celebrate student improvement in areas such as attendance, compassion, and work completion; student-led conferences for middle school students which allowed students to lead their own parent conferences by sharing work samples, grades, behavior updates, and reflections; increased home visits with support from their local partner; and pro-social groups led by SEL team members (counselor, social worker, psychologist) to help students through targeted, high-need interventions. The fidelity of these programs and initiatives was monitored through biweekly meetings with administrators and lead teachers, as well as informal walk throughs of advisory classes by the principal, assistant principal, and school counselor.

School 8 chose programs and initiatives that would help with relationship building, trust building, and engagement in the service of students' learning. The administration and teacher leaders used middle school staff meetings to ensure that all staff understood the reason behind each program and initiative implemented. Further, to ensure programs were sustained over time, School 8 focused on building the capacity of all team members, empowered teacher leaders to facilitate planning with colleagues, and communicated practices with all staff and students through their respective handbooks. Ultimately, their goal was to have all programs coordinated with one another and tied to data.

While School 8 already implemented several programs, they realized the need for programs to address the challenges of unstructured time during recess and the sense of belonging of marginalized students.

Therefore, they planned to implement an evidence-based recess program the following school year to help increase the capacity of all recess staff to provide more structure and increase students' sense of safety. Through an external partnership, they planned to build strong dialogue and equity planning to strengthen relationship building through their school community. Lastly, they planned to continue involving staff in identifying programs to be implemented and listening to students to identify programs that matched their interest. For example, they partnered with a soccer and poetry after-school program given students' expressed interest in soccer through the Student Leadership Team.

## School 10

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School 10 identified SEL development as one of their priorities. To address this goal, School 10 selected and adapted various mindfulness resources to build a restorative school community. One of the school climate initiatives was to improve and strengthen relationships between students, staff, and families and change the staffs' mindsets and approach to discipline from retributive to restorative. Establishing a partnership with a local restorative justice program provider was an integral part of the school climate improvement efforts. School 10 also used opportunities provided by the teachers' union and a partnership with an anti-racist consultant to reflect on and identify systems of inequity within the school structure. Members of the CLT partnered with two programs for leadership training to strengthen their knowledge and strategies for working within the school system. Social workers and counselors also used intervention strategies from various evidence-based curricula.

These programs were meant to address students' perceptions and experiences with regards to feeling loved, challenged, and prepared, which were indicators that were ranked low in the school climate surveys. A sizable number of students disagreed or strongly disagreed on the emotional safety indicators, and there was an increased perception of fighting. School 10 also identified bullying and cyberbullying as areas that needed targeted intervention. The data showed that students had inconsistent perceptions of the use of discipline policies by race. Transgender students reported feeling more unsafe than the rest of the student population due to negative interactions and bullying from peers. These indicators signaled that conflict resolution, communication skills, and proactive relationship building were key elements that could improve student dynamics and interactions.

School 10 used evidence-informed strategies to implement consistent expectations across all classrooms. The behavior matrix incorporated restorative practices, proactive relationship-building opportunities, and mindfulness practices. These practices resulted in a reduction of discipline incidents when staff and students were provided with alternative peace-promoting and perspective-taking strategies. The seventh-grade counselor and assistant principal also collaborated to incorporate conversations about healthy habits and their effects on peoples' lives.

The response to intervention specialist collaborated with families and members of staff to identify supports for students to strengthen their ability to make informed decisions and succeed academically and socially. The school identified targeted interventions and the students who needed them based on special education status, patterns of academic and social behavior, and staff and parent observations. Social workers and counselors utilized evidence-based treatments such as art therapy approaches, power cards, workbook activities, and behavior trackers. The dean of culture provided interventions on classroom culture for individual students identified as needing targeted support. Students were also identified by teachers and occasionally by the assistant principals to be recognized and celebrated for academic successes, social emotional development, and additional traits such as kindness and perseverance. These targeted interventions were done in a bid to develop strong relationships between adults and students. This tied back to the school's mission of inspiring excellence, curiosity, and compassion through intellectual and social engagement.

The school monitored restorative practice implementation through a survey for teachers and students at the beginning of the year to identify needs and areas of growth, address questions on implementation, develop future programming, and plan future professional development opportunities. The dean of culture partnered with the CLT to monitor the fidelity of the community-building time advisory program which occurred twice a week. The CLT and teacher leader innovator teams also monitored relationship building in co-taught classrooms to identify next steps for support.

For some students, the climate efforts did not have the desired effects. The school also had mid-year staffing vacancies, and staff had varying levels of comfort with implementation of restorative practices and proactive relationship building. Social workers' and counselors' scheduling demands in tandem with other school safety priorities during transitions, lunches, and before school limited their capacity to provide interventions to a larger number of students within the school year. Students in crisis or with other immediate needs took precedence over regular, scheduled interventions. The dean of culture and the CLT were unable to monitor teachers' fidelity to the community-building time advisory lesson because these times often coincided with parent meetings and other competing priorities. This resulted in a lack of complete documentation to assess and identify the teachers' implementation needs. Privacy considerations limited the development of a system to communicate strategies and interventions between all staff members, parents, deans, and the CLT. The teachers expressed a desire for more transparent and timely communication of efforts.

To address some of these gaps, the dean of culture planned to conduct informal walkthroughs to obtain a complete picture of individual teachers' classroom cultures in order to identify teachers who could serve as exemplars. The school also identified additional community-building time support within the advisory periods and improved group processes as steps that would be taken to improve school culture. All staff members would work to build positive relationships and integrate positive language exchange and collaboration. Social workers, counselors, and administrative staff would address scheduling needs and requests for adjustments with safety priorities within the school. The CLT would communicate with the dean of culture regarding advisory monitoring and conduct additional informal observations of teachers to address needs and build relationships in the classrooms as well.

Through their partnership with their restorative justice partner, teachers and staff at School 10 received monthly, practical PD sessions on classroom-based relationship-building and problem-solving strategies and insights into the benefits of using restorative practices. School 10 believed that providing teachers and staff with monthly proactive strategy resources to implement within their spaces with students and increasing classroom supports with the dean of culture would help model restorative practices and empower teachers and staff to implement strategies and dialogue with more fidelity.