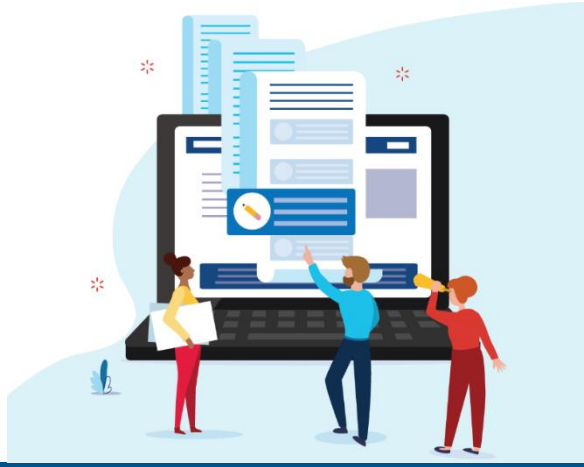
Improving School Climate in K-12 Schools

Thursday, March 31, 2022

SchoolSafety.gov



Webinar Agenda

- Webinar Objectives
- Speaker Introductions
- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
  - Why think about school climate?
  - What is school climate?
  - How is safety connected to school climate?
  - What does it take to improve school climate?
  - Key takeaways
- SchoolSafety.gov
  - Additional Resources
  - Product Offerings
  - Topic Pages
- Q & A

Webinar Objectives

1. Provide an overview of how communities can foster a positive school climate, help prevent acts of violence, and lead to improved behavioral and academic outcomes.

2. Promote social, emotional, and behavioral support systems to create a climate that supports and responds to student behavior.

Featured Speakers

Amy Banks
Program Officer
Office of Safe and Supportive Schools
US Department of Education

Greta Colombi
Director
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Amber Reid
Administrative Services Officer 3
Student Investment Division
Nevada Department of Education

Ryan Streeter
Program Manager – Product Branch
School Safety Task Force
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
Department of Homeland Security

Improving School Climate in K-12 Schools

March 31, 2022

- Amy Banks, Program Specialist, U.S. Department of Education
- Greta Colombi, Director, NCSSLE
- Amber Reid, Administrative Services Officer 3, Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Engagement • Safety • Environment

Meet the Speakers

Amy Banks, Ph.D.

Management and Program Analyst , U.S. Department of Education

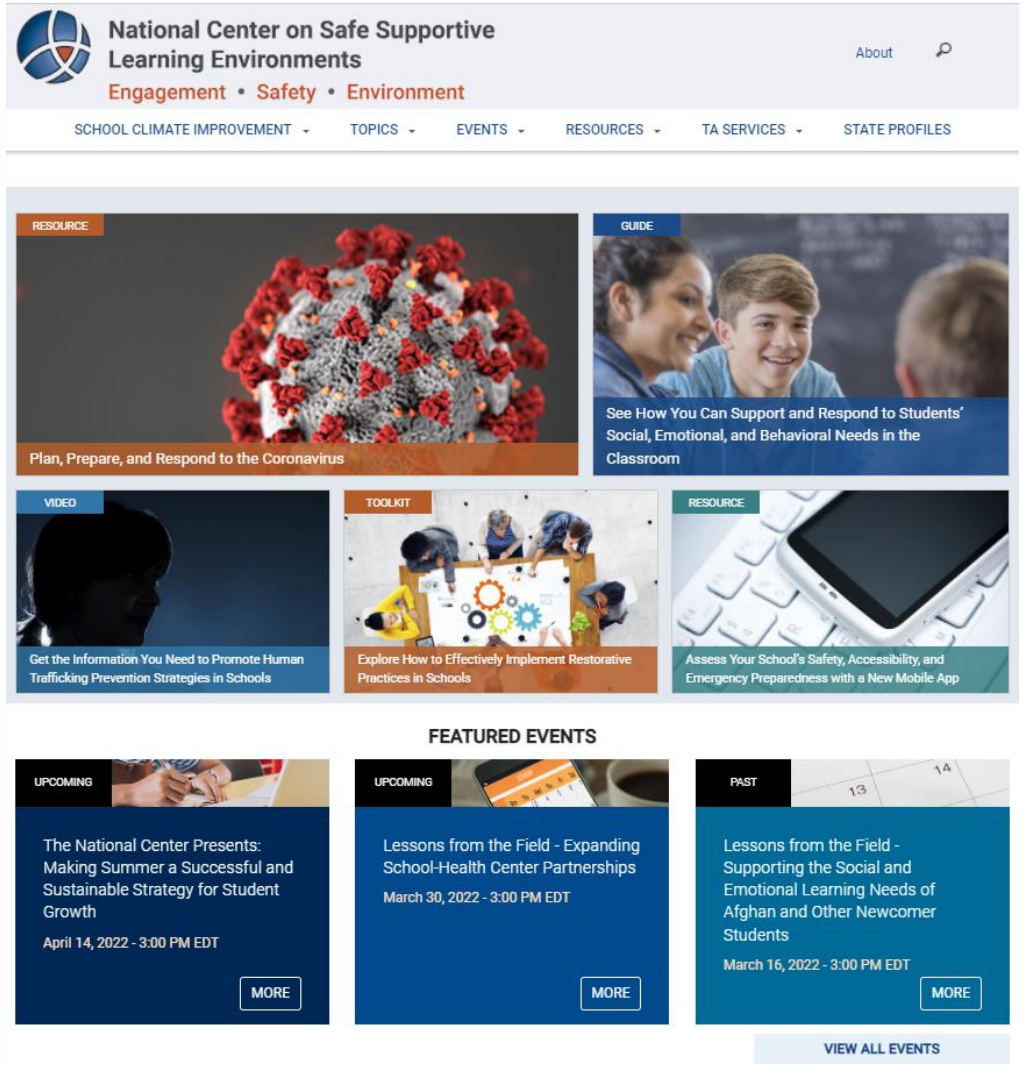
Greta Colombi

Director, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)

Amber Reid

Administrative Services Officer 3, Nevada Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education Partnership with NCSSLE



https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov

Nevada Department of Education's Commitment to School Climate Improvement

Predicated on school safety focus post Parkland:

- Task Force
- Policy
- Implementing comprehensive approach to prevent and intervene

Administers school climate surveys statewide:

- School climate data is required as part of annual school improvement plans
- Systemically explore other sources of data with survey data

Agenda

1. Why think about school climate? – especially now
2. What exactly is school climate?
3. How is safety connected to school climate?
4. What does it take to improve school climate? – big picture and 5 sets of activities
5. What are the key takeaways?

Why think about school climate? – especially now

School Climate Connection to Current Events

As we experience challenges related to:

- COVID-19
- Natural disasters
- Politics
- Economics
- Conflicts
- Other

We are hearing educators express challenges related to:

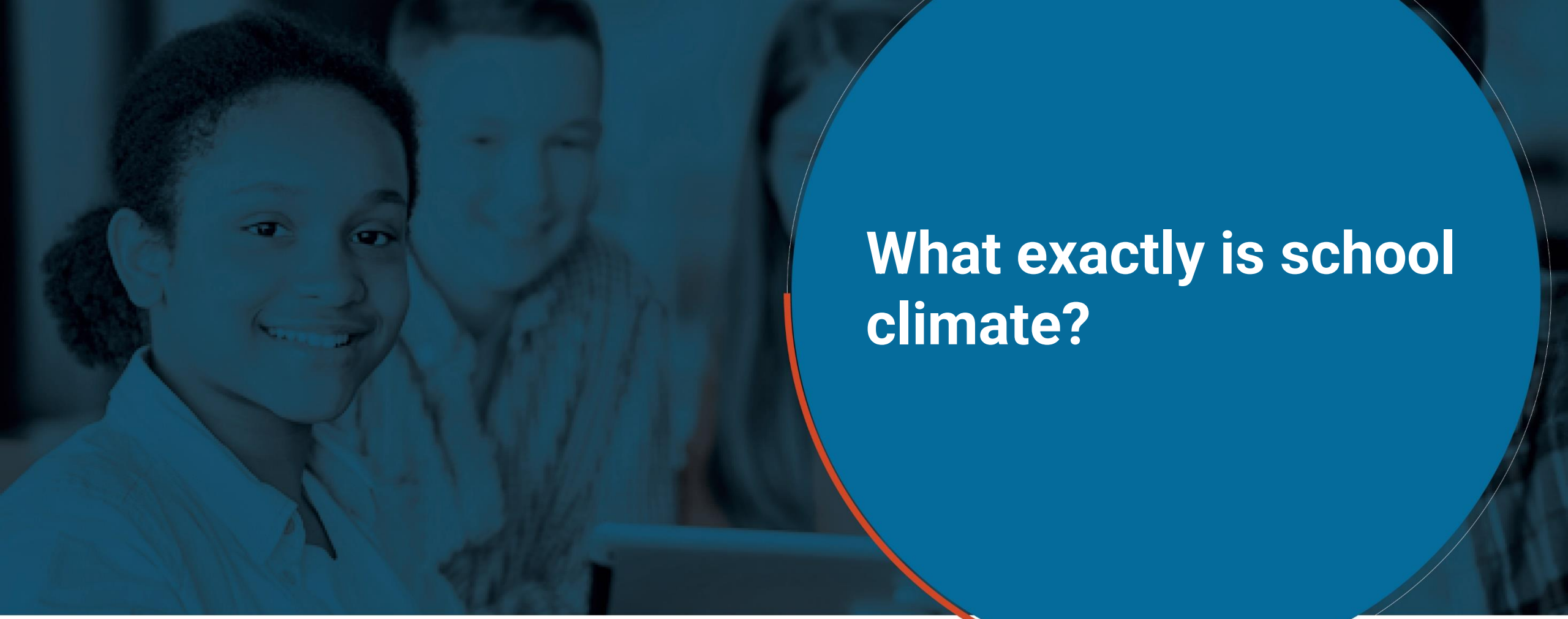
- Mental health
- Relationships
- Participation
- Belonging
- Bullying
- Physical violence
- Discipline

Now

Always

School Climate Connection to Other School Improvement Efforts

- Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child
- Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
- Science of Learning and Development
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- Supportive School Discipline
- Trauma-Sensitive Schools
- Social and Emotional Learning



What exactly is school climate?

What is school climate?

U.S. Department of Education Safe Supportive Schools Model

Engagement

- Cultural and linguistic competence
- Relationships
- School participation

Safety

- Emotional safety
- Physical safety
- Bullying/ cyberbullying
- Substance abuse
- Emergency readiness/ management

Environment

- Physical environment
- Instructional environment
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Discipline

What do we know about school climate?

School climate is associated with a variety of student outcomes:

- Positively: Academic achievement, empowering bystanders to stand up
- Inversely: Absenteeism, dropout, suspension, drug use, aggressive behavior and violence

It is also associated with how teachers experience school:

- Lower teacher turnover
- Higher teacher satisfaction

Bradshaw, C. P., Cohen, J., Espelage, D. L., & Nation, M. (2021). Addressing school safety through comprehensive school climate approaches. *School psychology review*, *50*(2-3), 221-236.

How is safety connected to school climate?

School climate is like a three-legged stool.

Engagement

Environment

Safety

Nevada's Aim to Address School Safety Led to Its Focus on Improving School Climate

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The School Climate/School Safety Connection

Universal efforts to increase the **safety of schools** often also begin with a focus on the promotion of a positive school climate (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2012; Lagana-Riordan & Aguilar, 2009)

Negative school climate has a direct impact on aggression and delinquency, as well as many other negative behaviors (Bruns, et al, 2004; Ferrans & Selman, 2014; Konold, et al, 2017; Wilson, 2004)

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The School Climate/Violence Prevention Connection

Preventative efforts implemented at universal, primary levels should include:

- creating a climate with a **low tolerance for bullying** (Laursen, 2011)
- educating students and all school employed personnel about the **warning signs and risks** associated with violent behaviors, in an effort to reduce the acceptance or downplaying of pathological behaviors (Cowell, 2013; Flannery, et al, 2012)

Zero tolerance policies have not been found to be effective, and may even escalate problems with violence in schools (Flannery, et al, 2012; Laursen, 2011; Johnson, et al, 2011)

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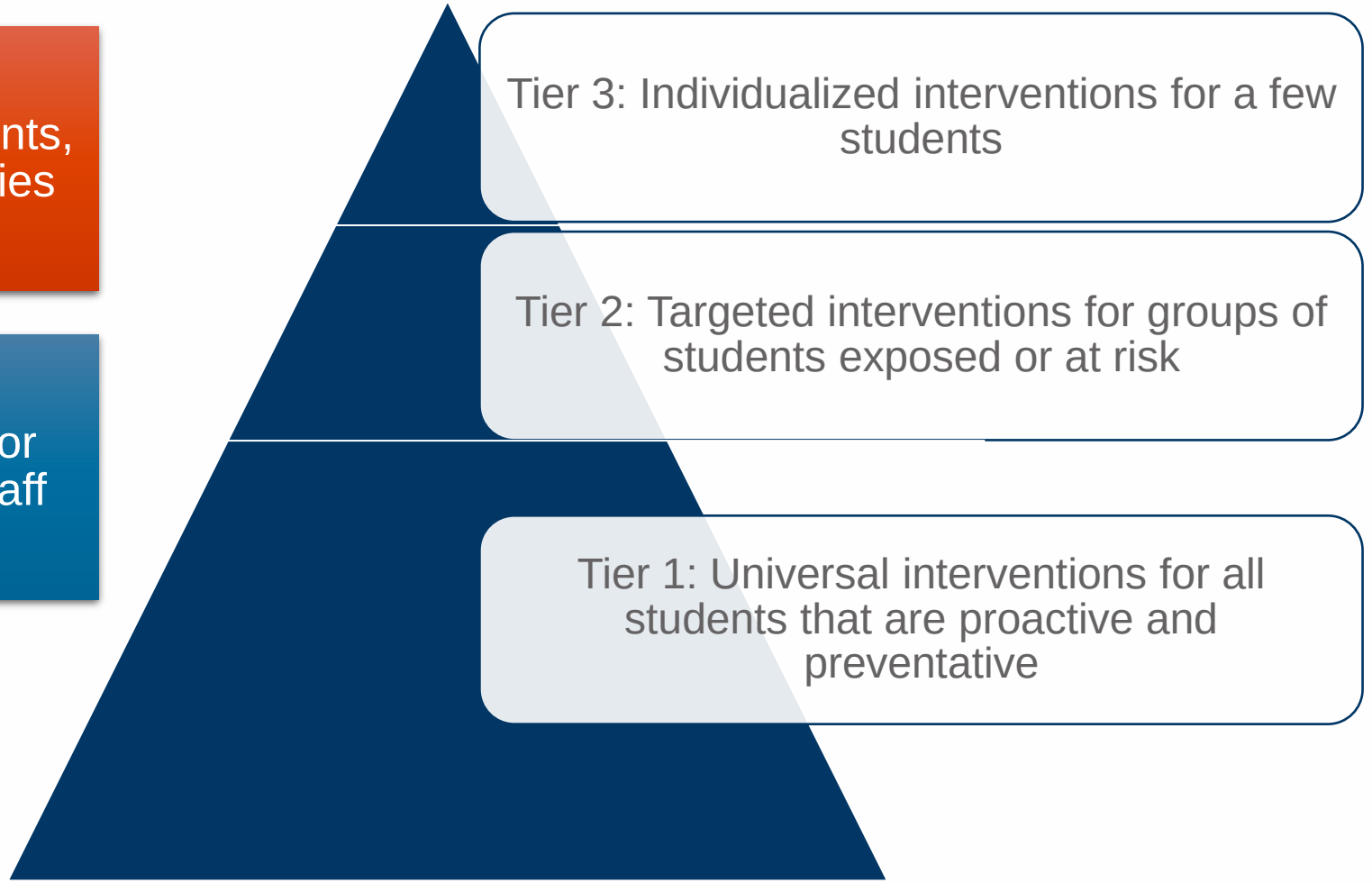
What does it take to improve school climate?

MAKING SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENTS

What does it take to improve school climate?

- Understanding how students, staff, and families perceive the school climate.
- Engaging students, staff, and families
- Making school safe for all
- Creating an environment for student and staff success



MAKING SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENTS
How can it be done?

Over time….

- Policy and System Change
- Schoolwide Practices and Strategies
- Classroom Practice

MAKING SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENTS
Is it doable?

Yes! You are probably already doing something to improve your school climate.

It is relatively inexpensive. It is more about changing the way you do your work, one step at a time.

Nevada's Overarching School Climate Improvement Approach

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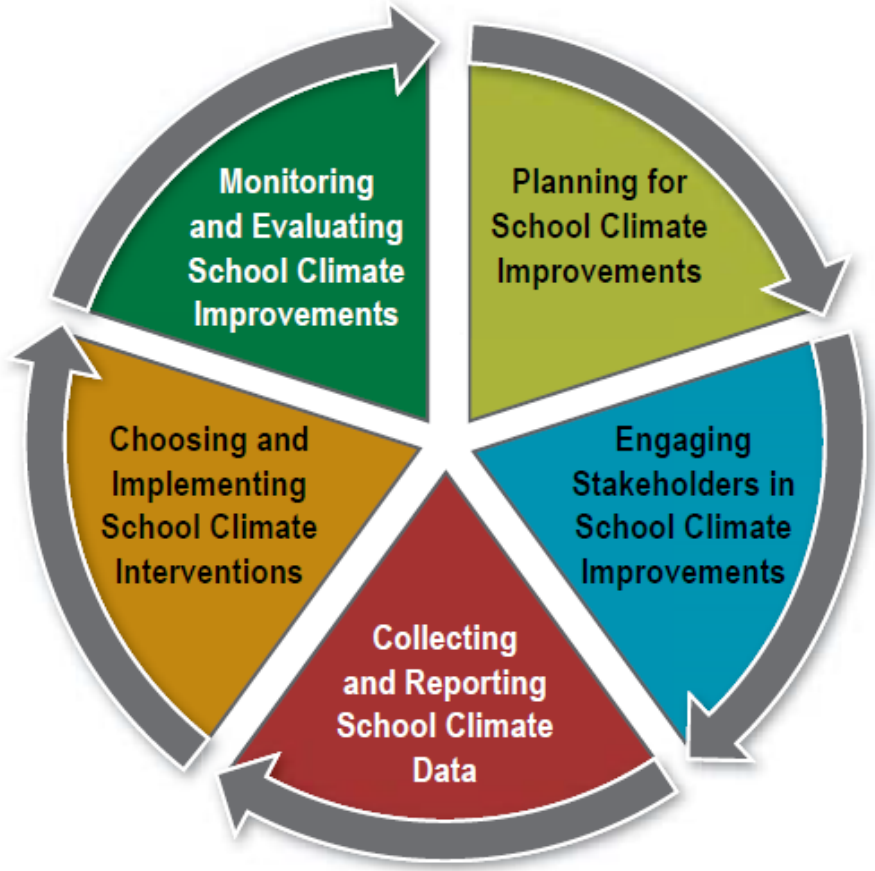
MAKING SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENTS
What can help?

- NCSSLE developed a **suite of resources** within the **School Climate Improvement Resource Package** to
  - help school district and school leaders **analyze and understand** local school climate survey data and
  - provide practical advice and information to support the **implementation and sustainability** of local school climate improvement efforts.



https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about

Contents of the SCIRP

1. Quick Guide
2. Reference Manual
3. Data Interpretation Resources
4. Action Guides for a Range of Stakeholders
5. Online Modules
6. Customized List of SCIRP Items Based on an Assessment
7. Self-Assessment Tool

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Purpose

- Maximize impact of improvements from the start.
- Ensure efficient resource use.
- Enhance the likelihood your improvements are sustained.

Action Steps

a) Develop a core planning team.

b) Integrate school climate improvement.

c) Create a vision and logic model.

d) Plan for data collection and analysis.

e) Develop a communication plan.

f) Plan to routinize practices.

g) Plan to differentiate supports.

What does it look like when you do this work well?

What do you want to avoid? What are potential pitfalls?

Nevada's Efforts to Support School Climate Improvement Planning

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Activity Set 2: Engaging Stakeholders in School Climate Improvements

Purpose

- Enhance response rates and quality of responses.
- Better identify stakeholder needs and concerns.
- Gain input and feedback that can make school climate improvements more effective.

Action Steps

a) Disseminate key messaging.

b) Obtain stakeholder input.

c) Build a shared understanding.

d) Share information about the importance of data.

e) Develop family-school-community partnerships.

What does it look like when you do this work well?

What do you want to avoid? What are potential pitfalls?

Nevada's Efforts to Engage Stakeholders

Activity Set 3: Collecting and Reporting Data

Purpose

- Furnishes evidence of how your stakeholders perceive your school climate.
- Guides your action plans to improve school climate.
- Informs other school improvement efforts that relate to school climate, such as bullying prevention.

Action Steps

a) Finalize measures/confirm survey instrument.

b) Collect data.

c) Analyze data.

d) Use additional resources.

e) Allow stakeholders to review data.

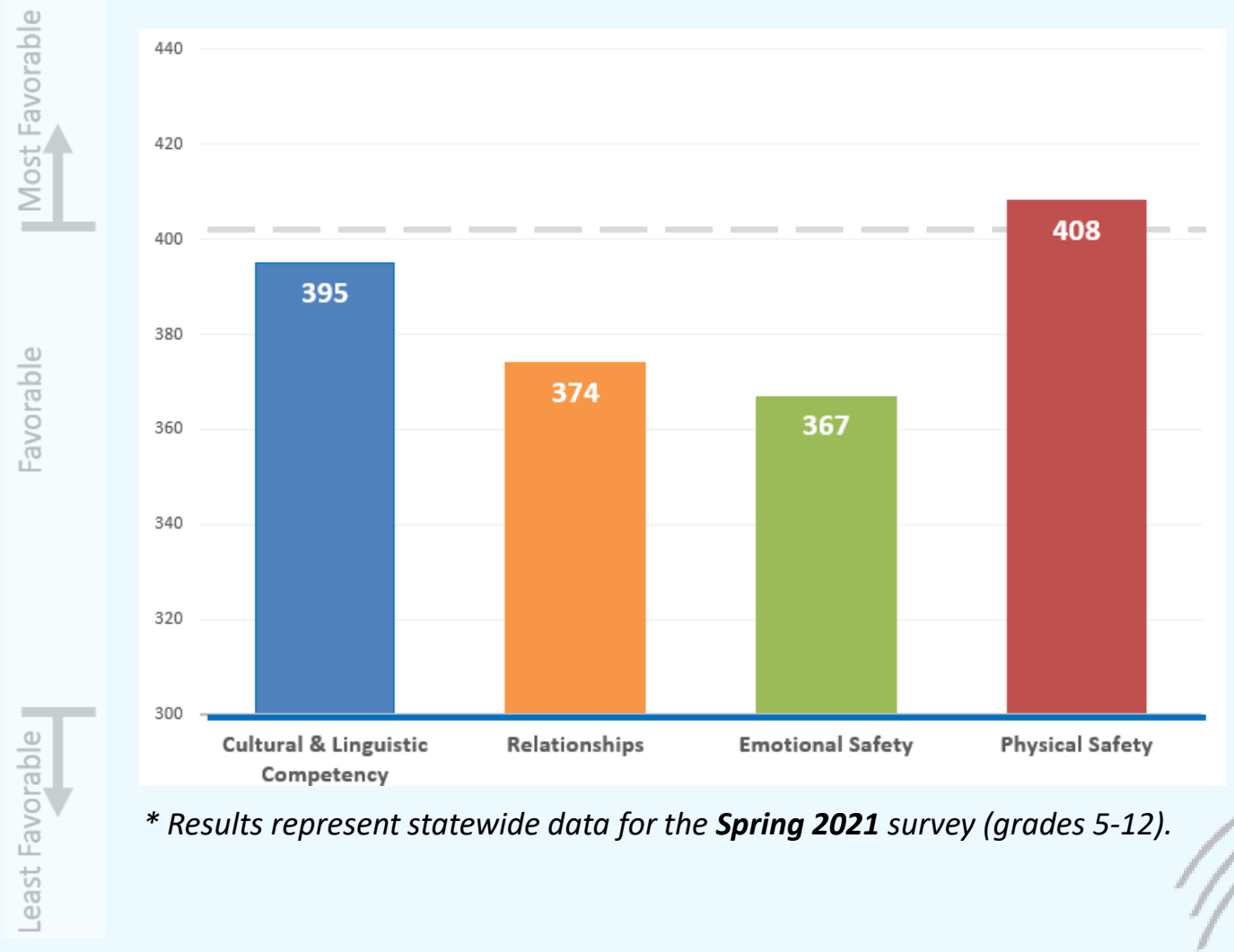
What does it look like when you do this work well?

What do you want to avoid? What are potential pitfalls?

Nevada's Data Collection Efforts

School Climate Constructs

All Nevada Students



** Results represent statewide data for the **Spring 2021** survey (grades 5-12).*

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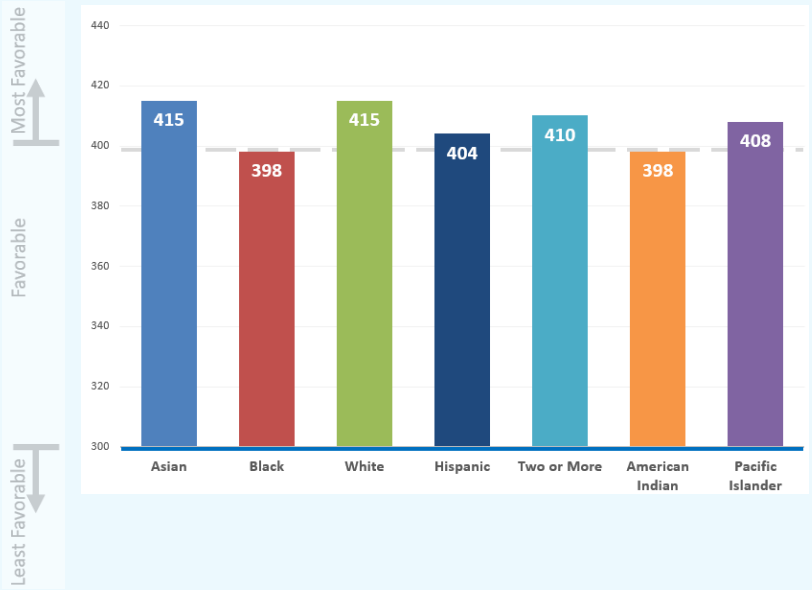
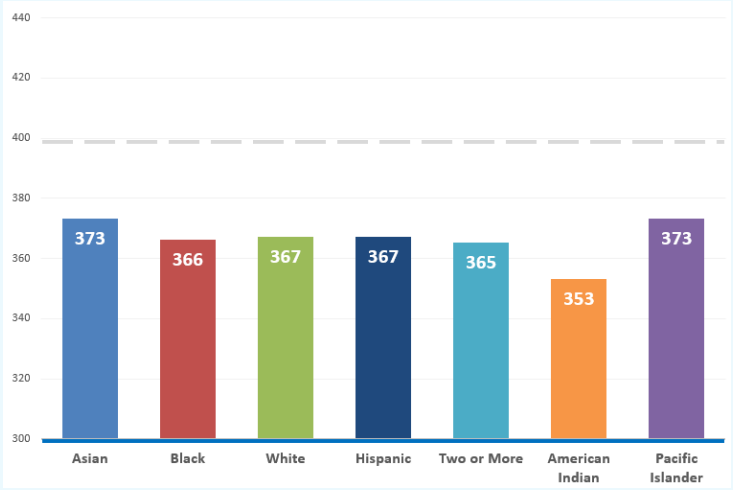
Comparison of a Selection of School Climate Constructs, by race/ethnicity

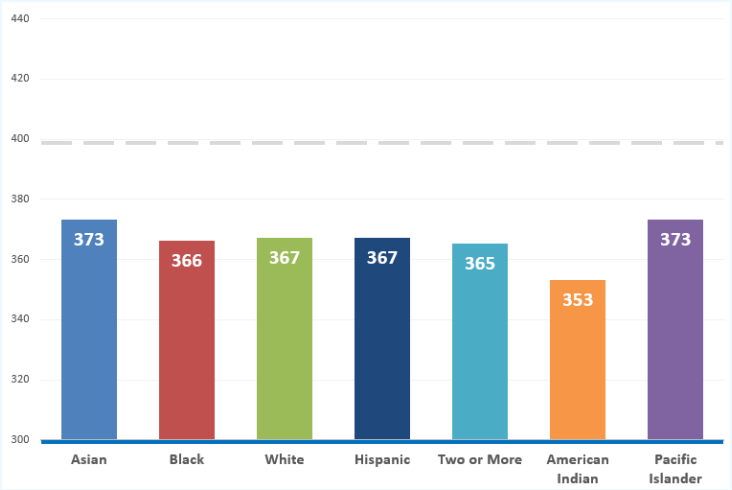
Physical Safety



Emotional Safety



Relationships



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Nevada's Data Collection Effort

Activity Set 4: Choosing and Implementing School Climate Interventions

Purpose

- Identify interventions, broad strategy approaches and evidence-based programs that will help your school.
- Meet your school and students' needs.
- Coordinate necessary supports to ensure successful implementation.

Action Steps

a) Review current interventions.

b) Review potential interventions.

c) Determine interventions to implement.

d) Address logistics.

e) Implement interventions.

f) Communicate with stakeholders.

What does it look like when you do this work well?

What do you want to avoid? What are potential pitfalls?

Nevada's Implementation Effort

Activity Set 5: Monitoring and Evaluating School Climate Improvement Efforts

Purpose

- Helps assess:
  - Stakeholder engagement strategies
  - Implementation of interventions
  - Outcomes
- Provides information your school can use to make improvements to your school climate improvement efforts.

Action Steps

a) Plan to assess.

b) Get stakeholder input.

c) Identify leading indicators.

d) Collect additional data.

e) Prepare a year-end report.

What does it look like when you do this work well?

What do you want to avoid? What are potential pitfalls?

Nevada's Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts

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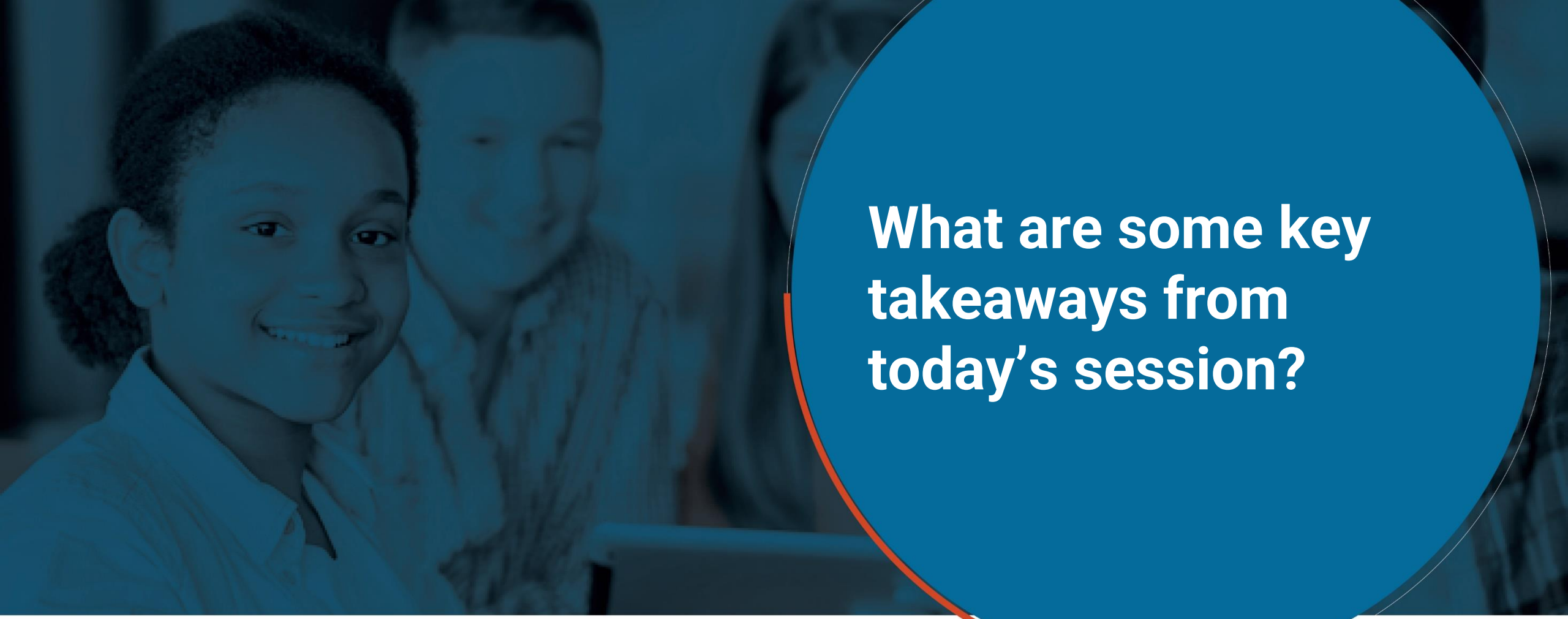


What are some key takeaways from today's session?

The glass is half full, but it is a bigger glass!

The challenges are great, and so are the opportunities.

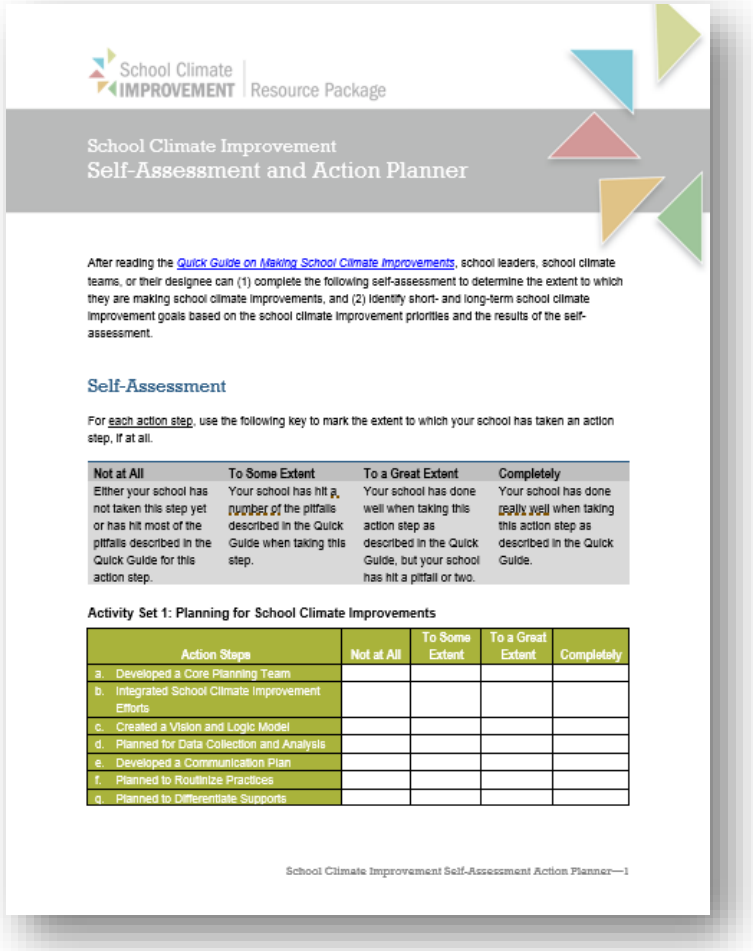
As we see ***increases*** in…

- Appreciation of the need to support the whole person.
- Resources to support this work from the public and private sectors.
- Openness to partnership.
- Opportunities to innovate and learn.

There are opportunities to (re)focus on school climate, as a foundation to address the burning issues of the day – now and always.

NEXT STEPS: School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment and Action Planner

1. Review the Quick Guide.
2. Assess the extent to which you have taken the listed action steps based on the Quick Guide using the self-assessment tool.
3. Meet with colleagues to discuss your impressions as a group and plan your next steps:
   a. What should your school continue doing?
   b. What can your school change in the short-term?
   c. What will take more time for your school to change?



School Climate IMPROVEMENT | Resource Package

School Climate Improvement
Self-Assessment and Action Planner

After reading the *Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements*, school leaders, school climate teams, or their designee can (1) complete the following self-assessment to determine the extent to which they are making school climate improvements, and (2) identify short- and long-term school climate improvement goals based on the school climate improvement priorities and the results of the self-assessment.

Self-Assessment

For each action step, use the following key to mark the extent to which your school has taken an action step, if at all.

Not at All	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent	Completely
Either your school has not taken this step yet or has hit most of the pitfalls described in the Quick Guide for this action step.	Your school has hit a number of the pitfalls described in the Quick Guide when taking this step.	Your school has done well when taking this action step as described in the Quick Guide, but your school has hit a pitfall or two.	Your school has done really well when taking this action step as described in the Quick Guide.

Activity Set 1: Planning for School Climate Improvements

Action Steps	Not at All	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent	Completely
a. Developed a Core Planning Team				
b. Integrated School Climate Improvement Efforts				
c. Created a Vision and Logic Model				
d. Planned for Data Collection and Analysis				
e. Developed a Communication Plan				
f. Planned to Routinize Practices				
g. Planned to Differentiate Supports				

School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment Action Planner—1

THANK YOU

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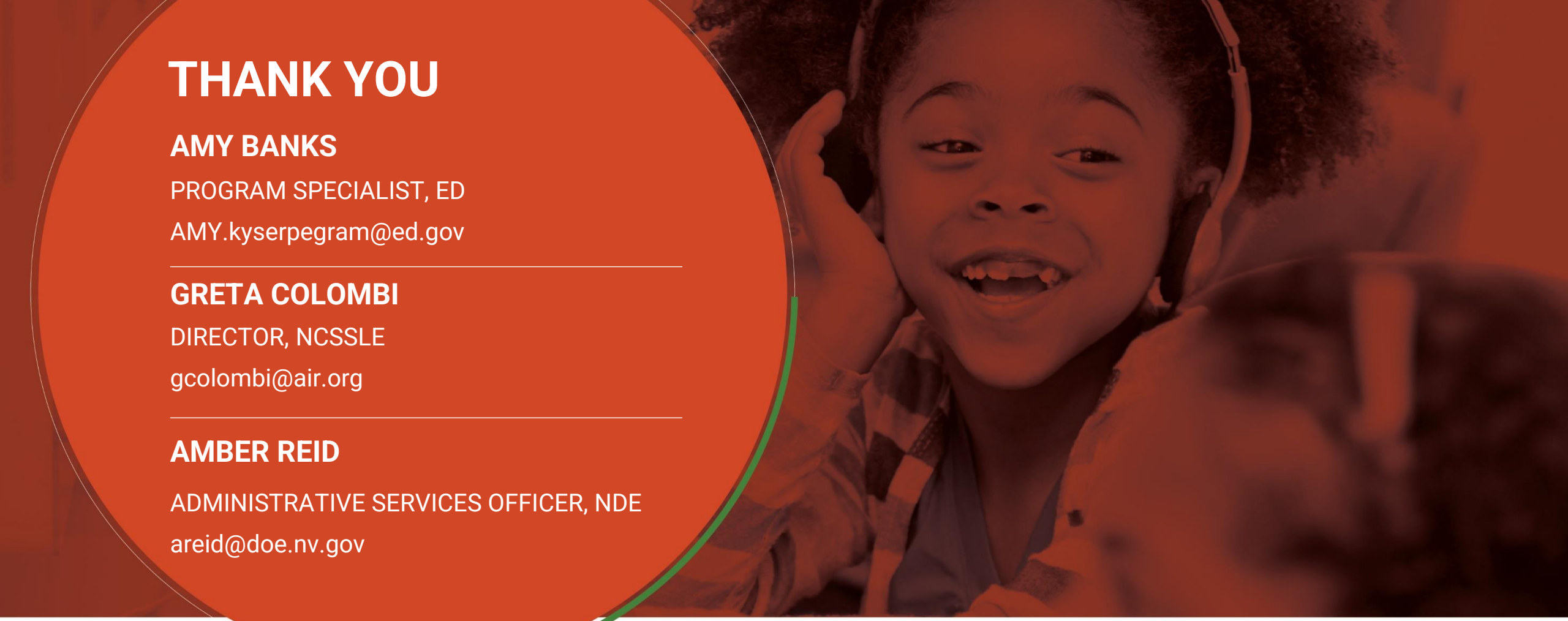

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

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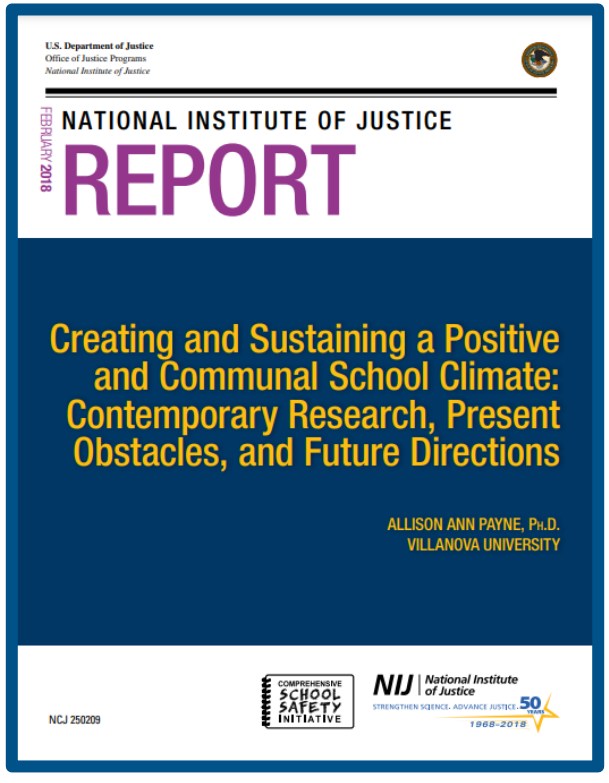
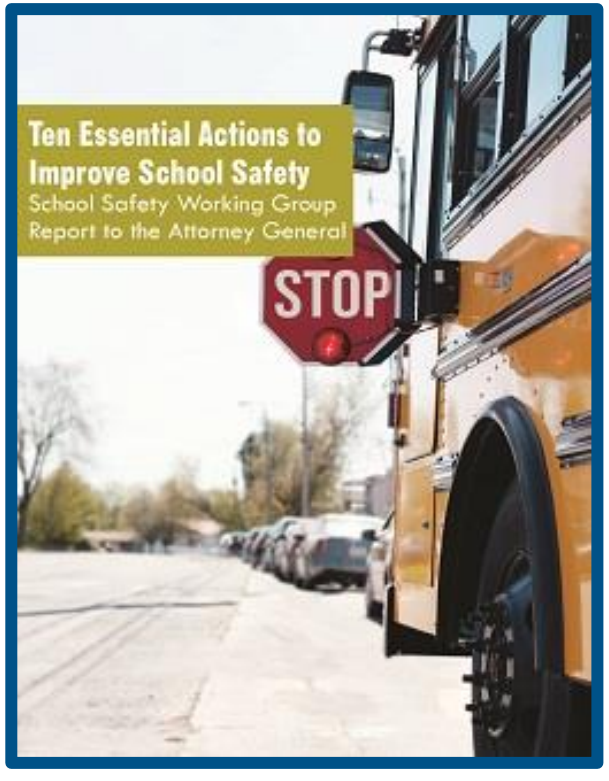
SCHOOLSAFETY.GOV RESOURCES

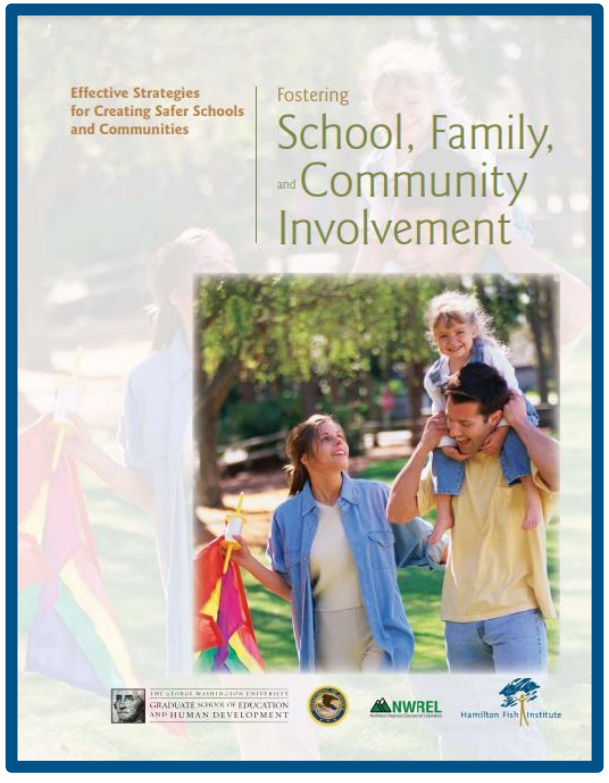
Additional Resources – Guidance



[Creating and Sustaining a Positive and Communal School Climate (DOJ)]



[Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety (DOJ)]



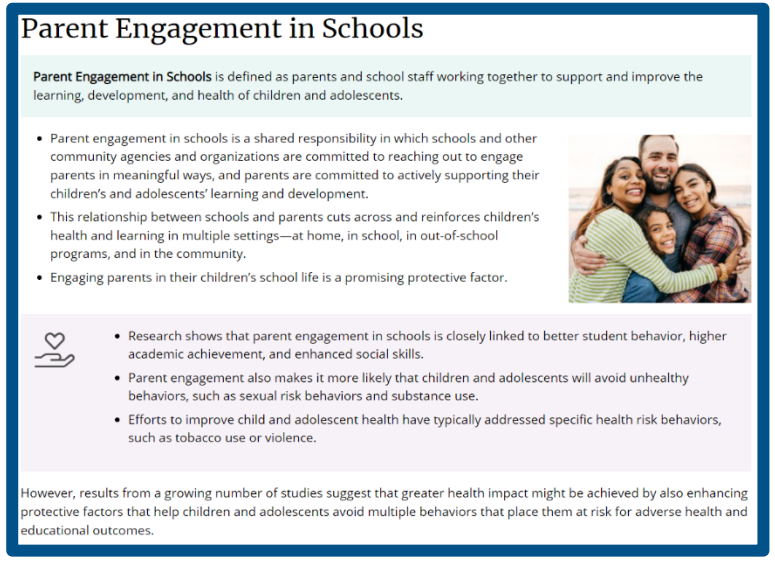
[Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement (Revised) (DOJ)]

SchoolSafety.gov

Additional Resources – Web Resources

[Build a Safe Environment](#)
(StopBullying.gov)

[School Connectedness](#)
(CDC)



[Parent Engagement in Schools](#)
(CDC)

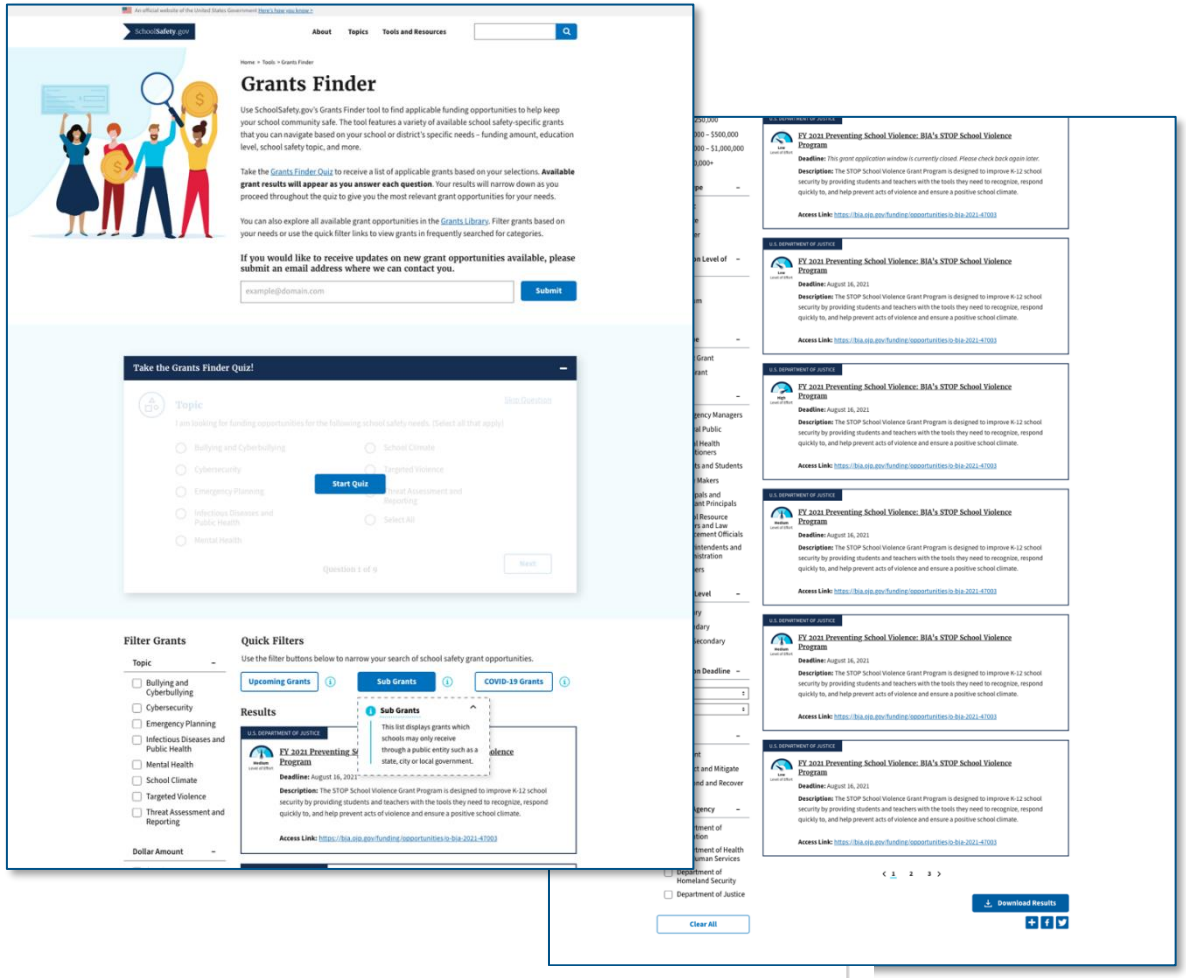
SchoolSafety.gov

Grants Finder Tool | SchoolSafety.gov

New tool that features Federally available school safety-related grant opportunities in one centralized location.

Designed to help schools determine eligibility and applicability of grant programs for their specific needs, challenges, and characteristics.

Option to take quiz, select pre-populated lists, or filter grants by specific criteria such as school safety topic, funding agency, application level of effort and deadline, and intended audience.

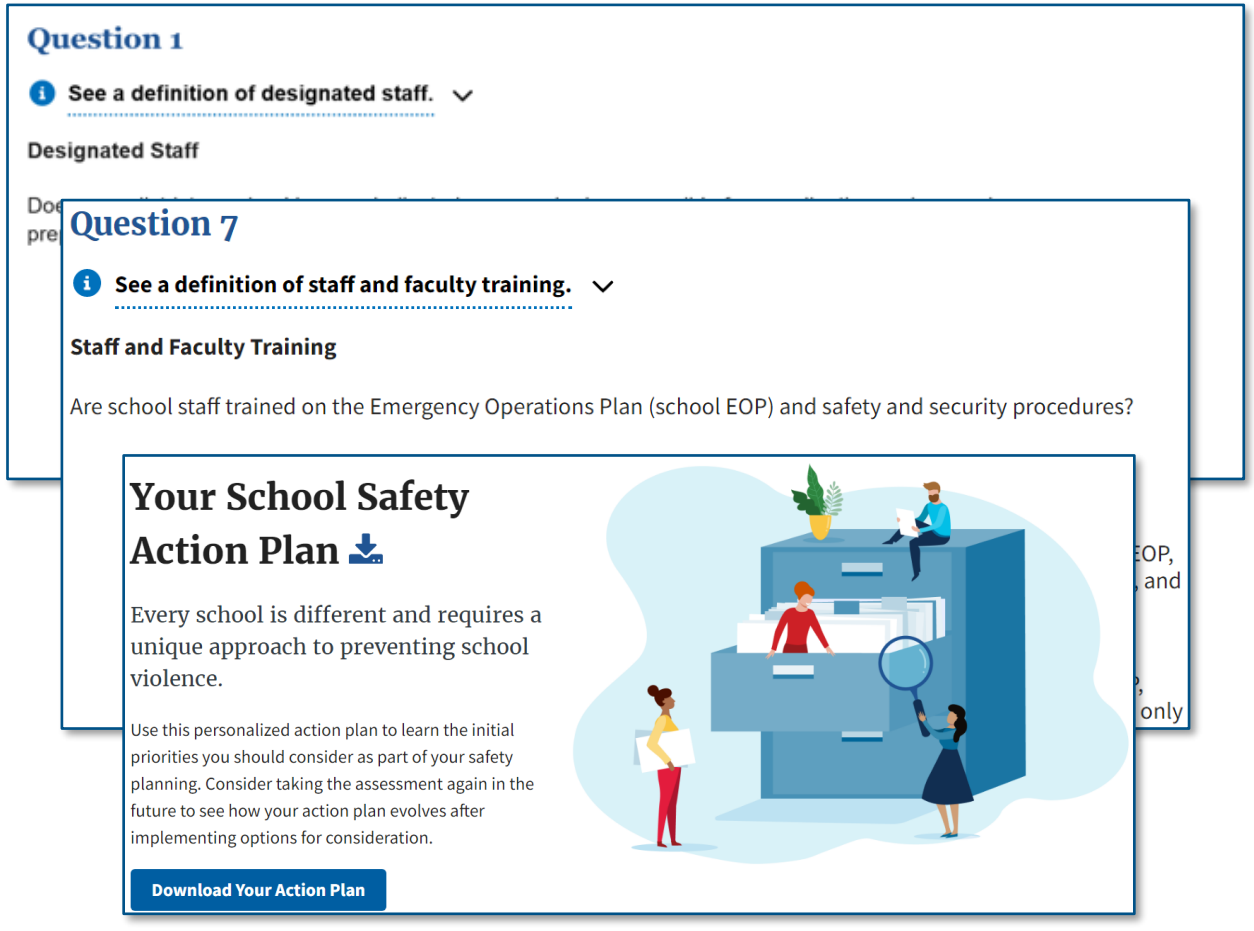


SchoolSafety.gov

Safety Readiness Tool | SchoolSafety.gov

The Safety Readiness Tool assists users in evaluating their respective school's safety posture across 10 foundational elements of school safety.

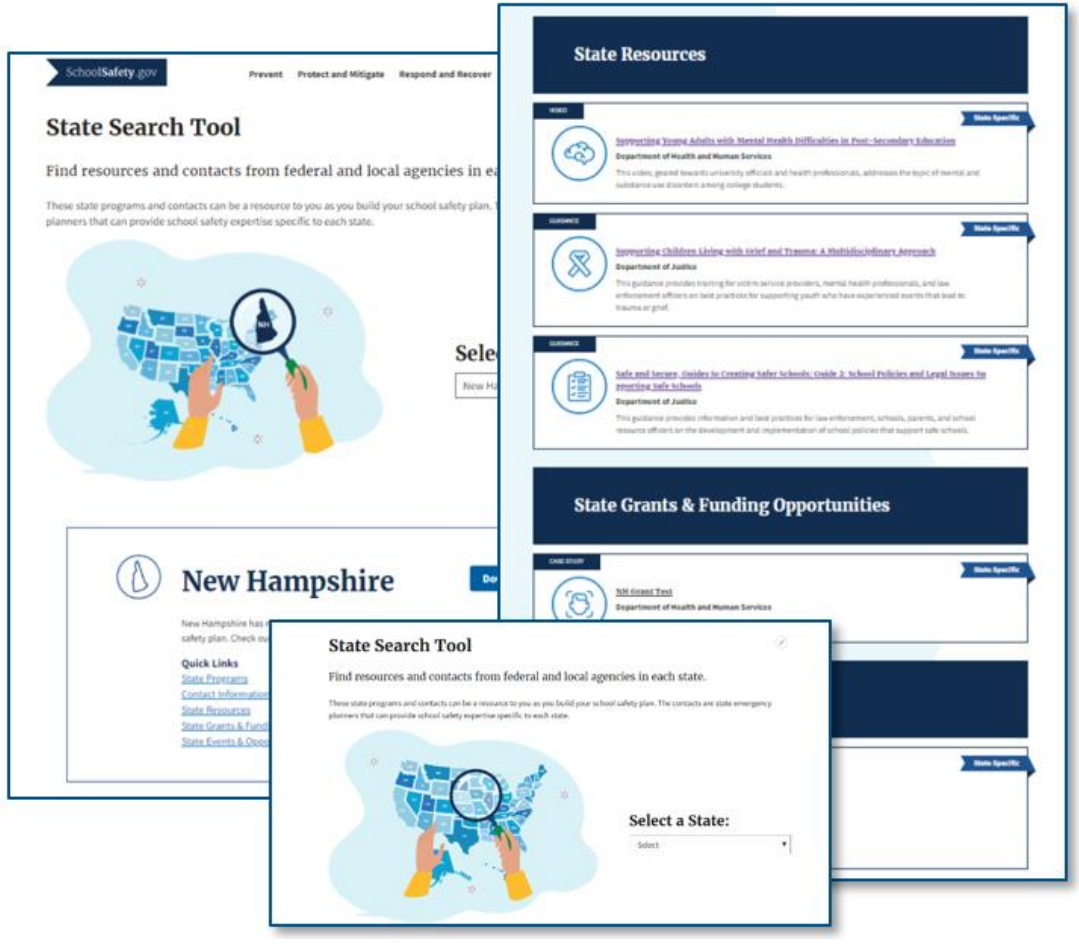
After completing the assessment, users are provided a tailored Action Plan with task prioritization, options for consideration, aligned resources, and grant opportunities specific to their individual school's needs.



State Search Tool | SchoolSafety.gov

SchoolSafety.gov offers a State Search Tool to provide the academic community with a streamlined and centralized tool to access state-specific school safety information, including programs, resources, contacts, and engagement opportunities.

Through the tool, state school safety leaders connect with the Clearinghouse, its partner agencies, and other state security entities to share resources, exchange best practices, and collaborate on school safety-related efforts.

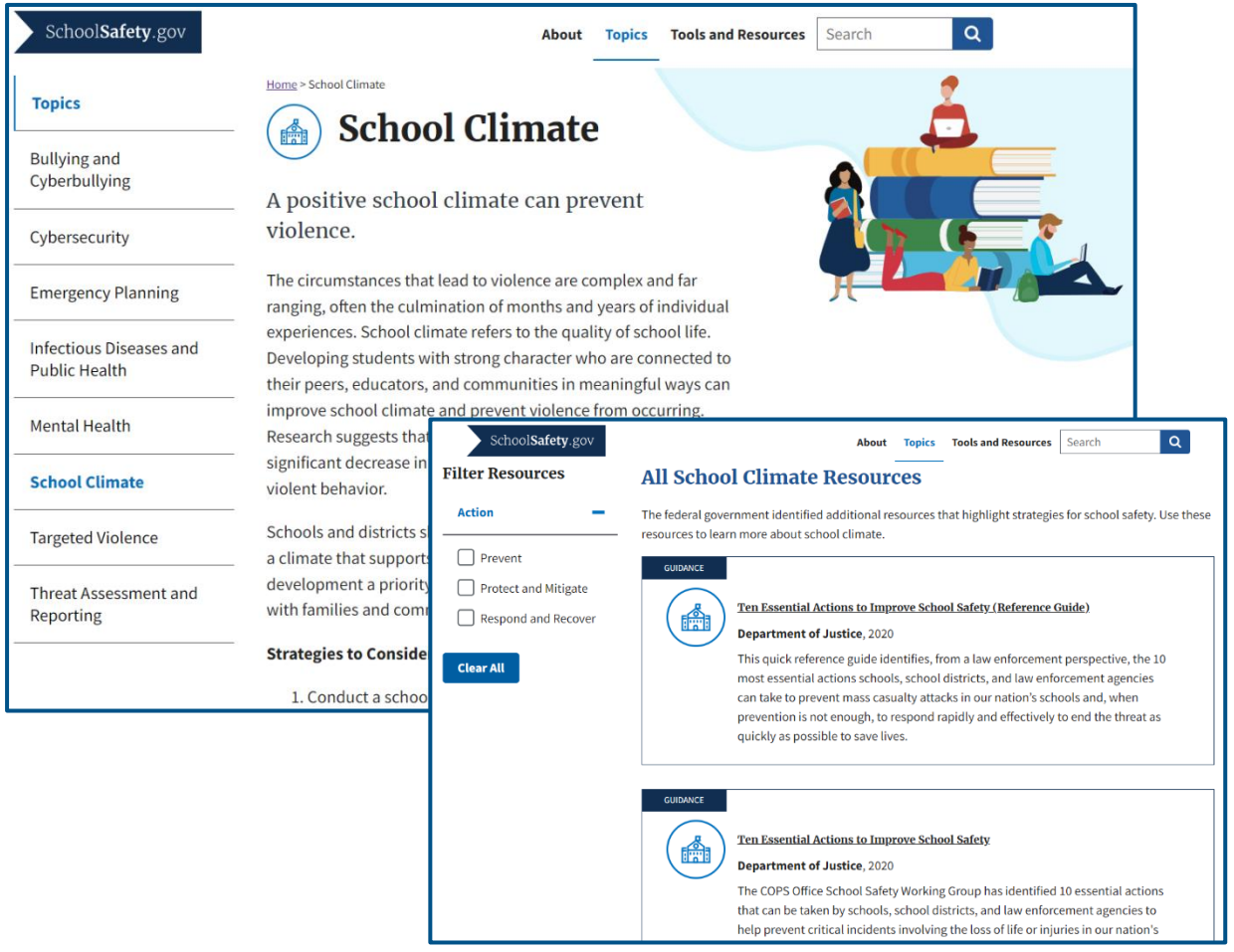


SchoolSafety.gov

Topic Pages | SchoolSafety.gov

Topic pages contain a definition along with accompanying information regarding the topic, key strategies to consider, and featured resources to support schools and districts.

Resources tend to be how-to or action-oriented guides that inform users on how to implement strategies to address the topics.



School Climate | SchoolSafety.gov

- Prevent | SchoolSafety.gov
- Protect and Mitigate | SchoolSafety.gov
- Respond and Recover | SchoolSafety.gov

Contact Information and Questions

Follow Us on Twitter for Upcoming Events and School Safety News!

- @SchoolSafetyGov
- @usedgov
- @SSLearn
- @NevadaReady

Click here to sign up for regular updates or scan QR code.

SCAN ME

Key Resource Links

- https://SchoolSafety.gov
- https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/safe-supportive-schools/
- https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/
- https://doe.nv.gov/SafeRespectfulLearning/School_Climate/

Questions, feedback, or ideas?
Please contact SchoolSafety@hq.dhs.gov

SchoolSafety.gov