

# 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



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# 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

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## Ryan Streeter

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

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# Improving School Climate in K-12 Schools

March 31, 2022

- Amy Banks, Program Specialist, U.S. Department of Education
- Greta Colombi, Director, NCSSE
- 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.**

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



**Greta Colombi**

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




**Amber Reid**

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*Administrative  
Services Officer 3,  
Nevada Department  
of Education*



# U.S. Department of Education Partnership with NCSSLE

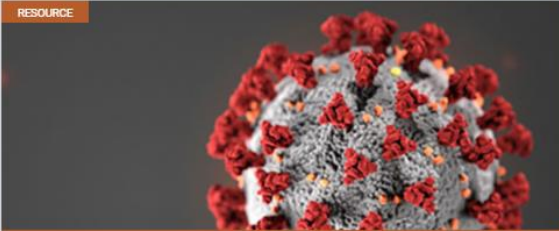
 **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments**  
Engagement • Safety • Environment

About 🔍

SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT ▾ TOPICS ▾ EVENTS ▾ RESOURCES ▾ TA SERVICES ▾ STATE PROFILES


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**RESOURCE**




Plan, Prepare, and Respond to the Coronavirus

**GUIDE**




See How You Can Support and Respond to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs in the Classroom

**VIDEO**




Get the Information You Need to Promote Human Trafficking Prevention Strategies in Schools

**TOOLKIT**



Explore How to Effectively Implement Restorative Practices in Schools


**RESOURCE**



Assess Your School's Safety, Accessibility, and Emergency Preparedness with a New Mobile App

**FEATURED EVENTS**


**UPCOMING**



The National Center Presents:  
Making Summer a Successful and Sustainable Strategy for Student Growth  
April 14, 2022 - 3:00 PM EDT

[MORE](#)


**UPCOMING**



Lessons from the Field - Expanding School-Health Center Partnerships  
March 30, 2022 - 3:00 PM EDT

[MORE](#)

**PAST**



Lessons from the Field - Supporting the Social and Emotional Learning Needs of Afghan and Other Newcomer Students  
March 16, 2022 - 3:00 PM EDT

[MORE](#)

[VIEW ALL EVENTS](#)

 **School Climate Improvement Resource Package**

 **ED School Climate Surveys**

 **Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package**

 **Building Student Resilience Toolkit**

 **Human Trafficking in America's Schools**

 **Improving Higher Education Learning Environment**

 **Supporting Trauma Recovery**

 **Promoting Mental Health**

 **Responding to Covid-19**

<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**

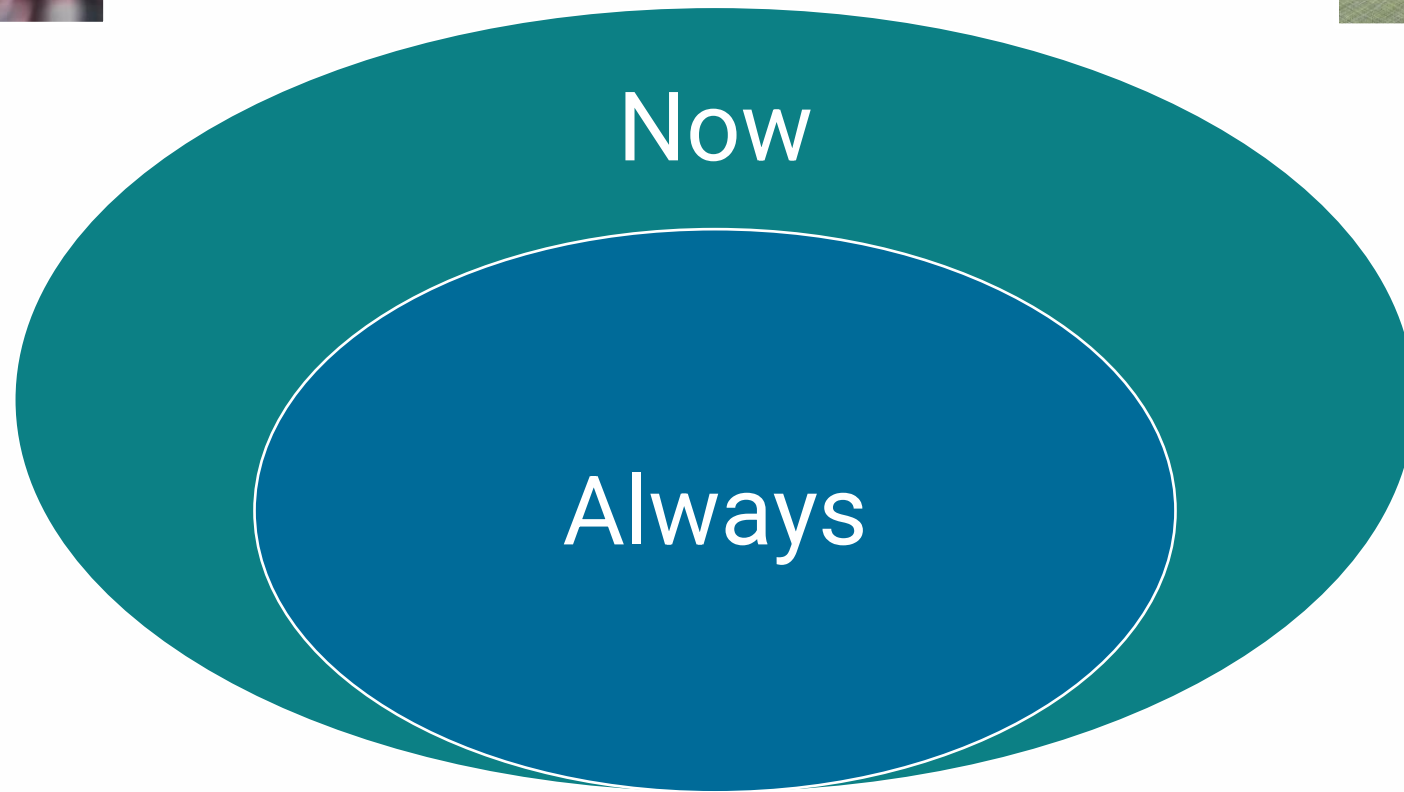
# School Climate Connection to Current Events

As we experience challenges related to:

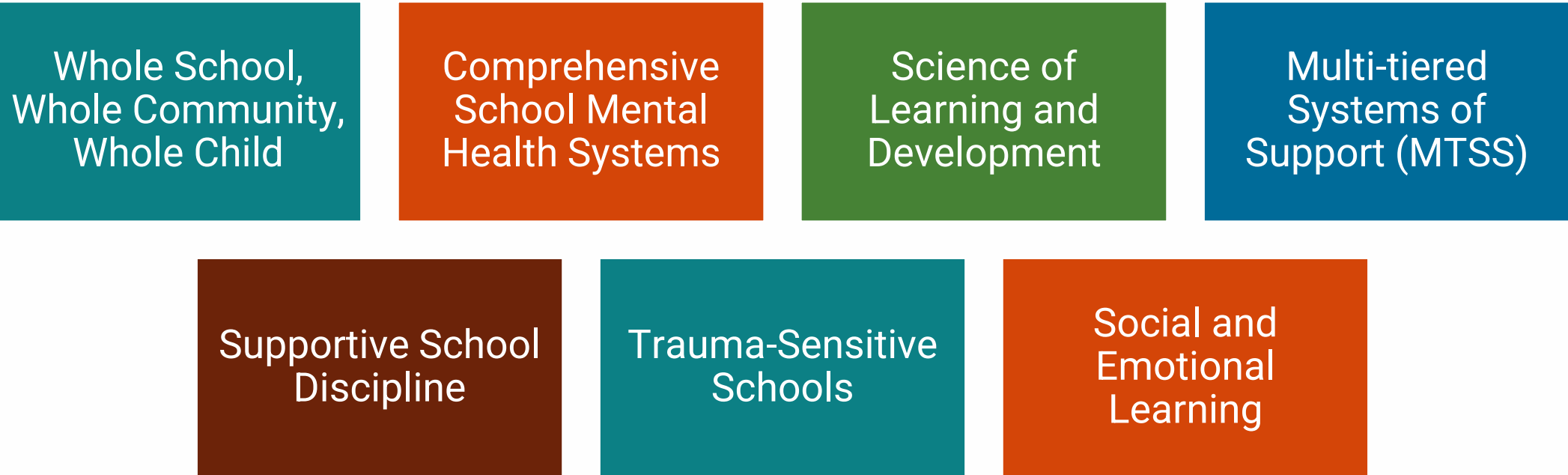
- COVID-19
- Natural disasters
- Politics
- Economics
- Conflicts
- Other

We are hearing educators express challenges related to:

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



# School Climate Connection to Other School Improvement Efforts







# 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.







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



# 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)




# 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)

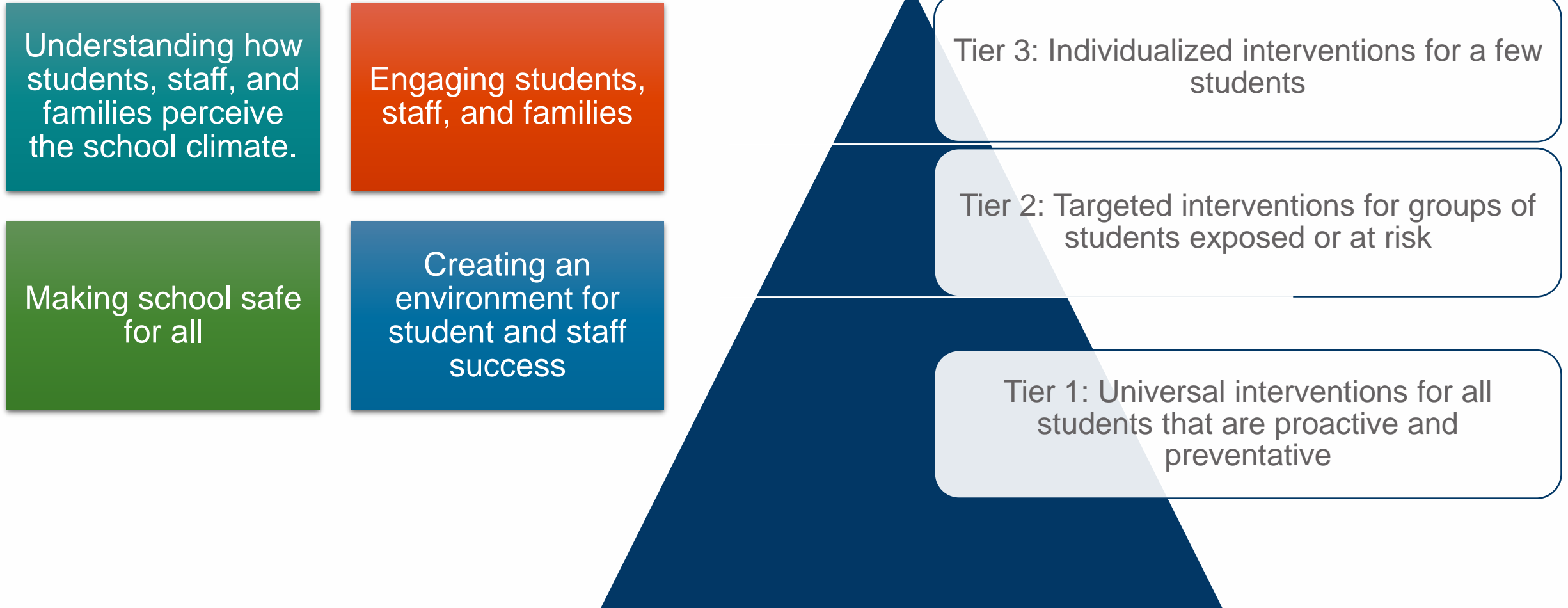




# What does it take to improve school climate?

# MAKING SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENTS

## What does it take to improve school climate?





# 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.



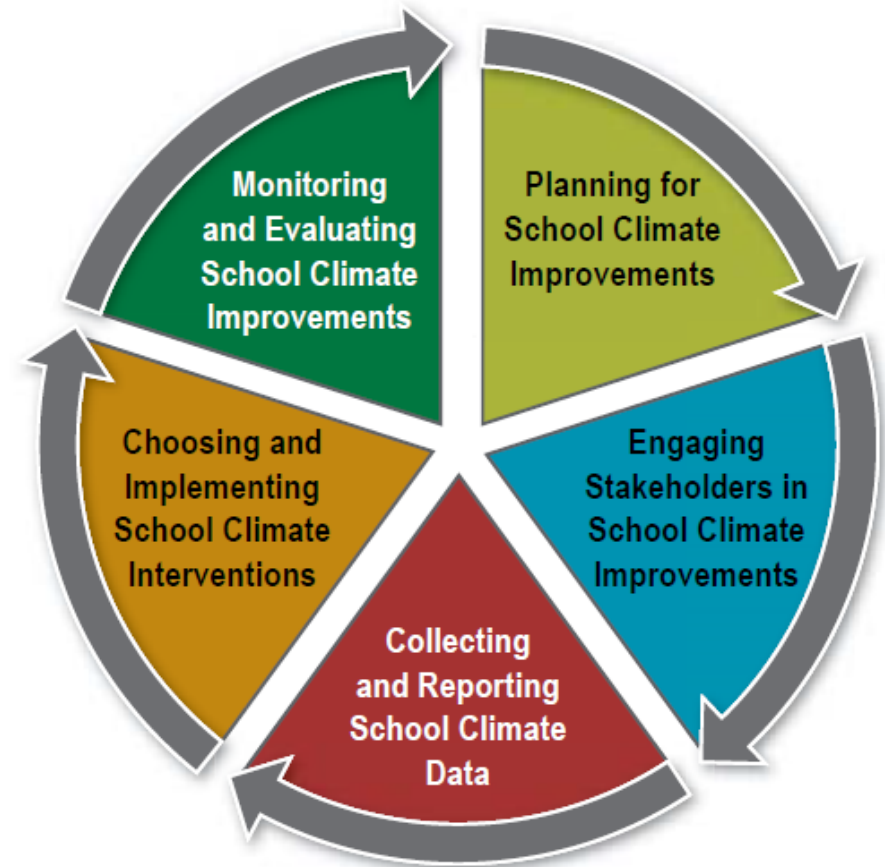
# Nevada's Overarching School Climate Improvement Approach



# 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



# 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?

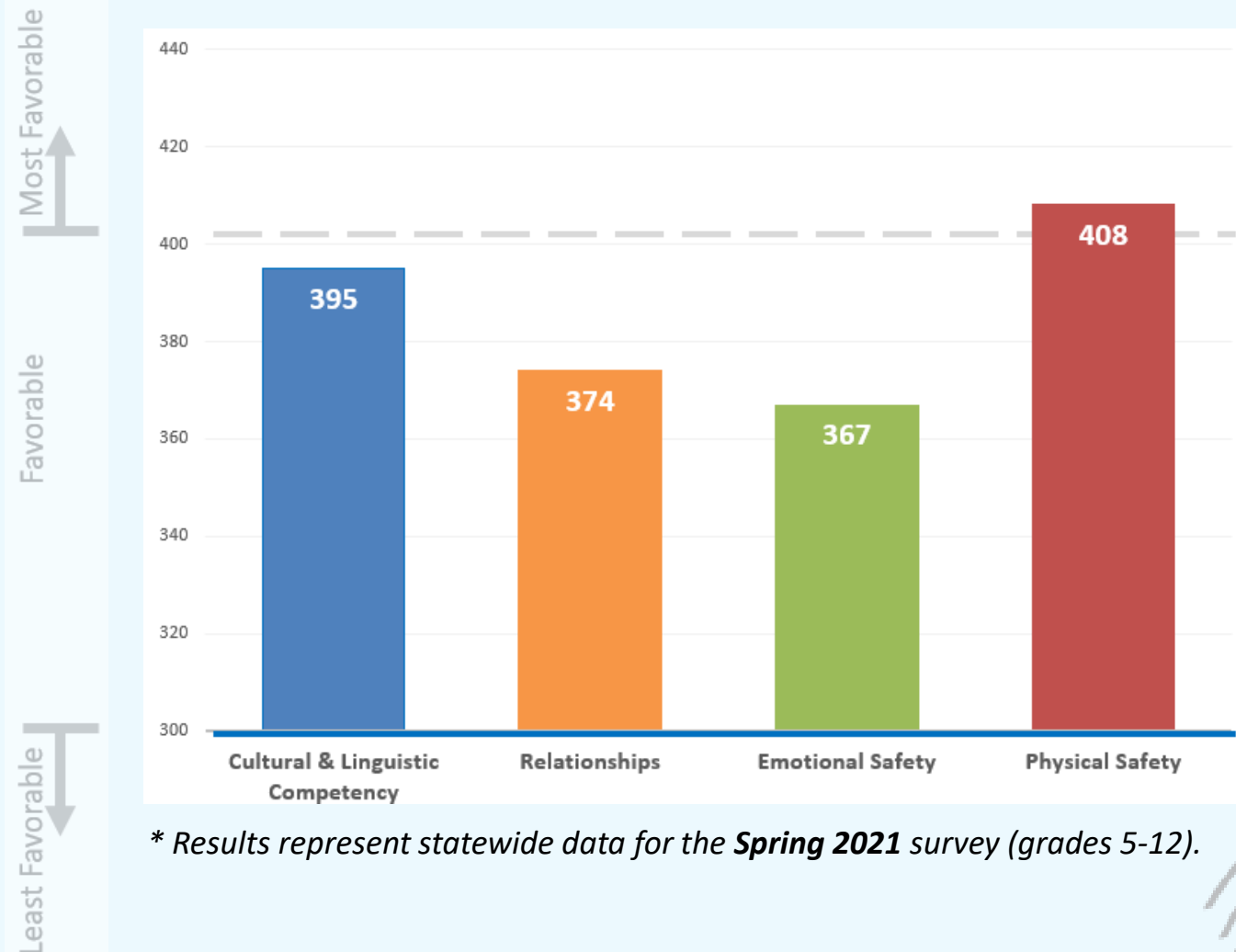


# Nevada's Data Collection Efforts



# School Climate Constructs

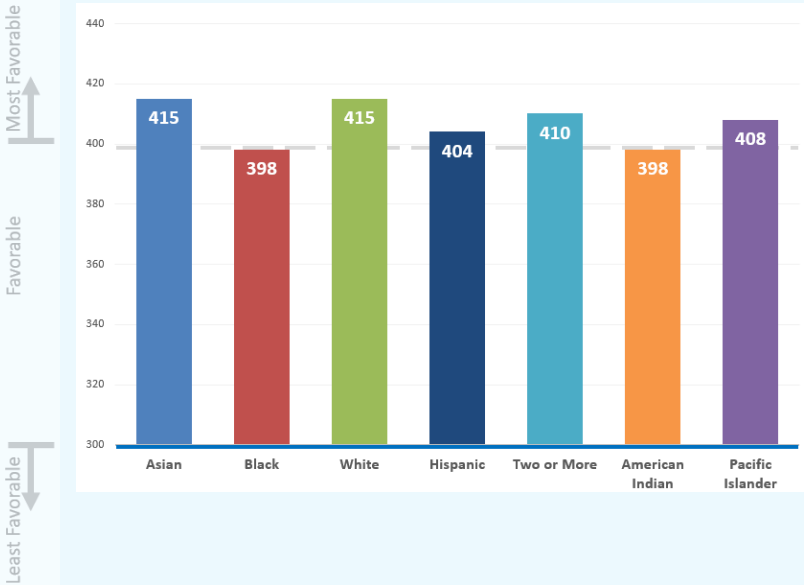
## All Nevada Students



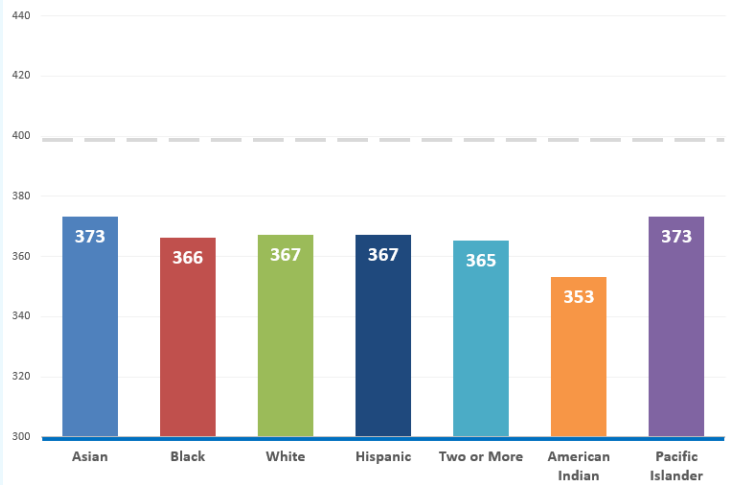


# Comparison of a Selection of School Climate Constructs, by race/ethnicity

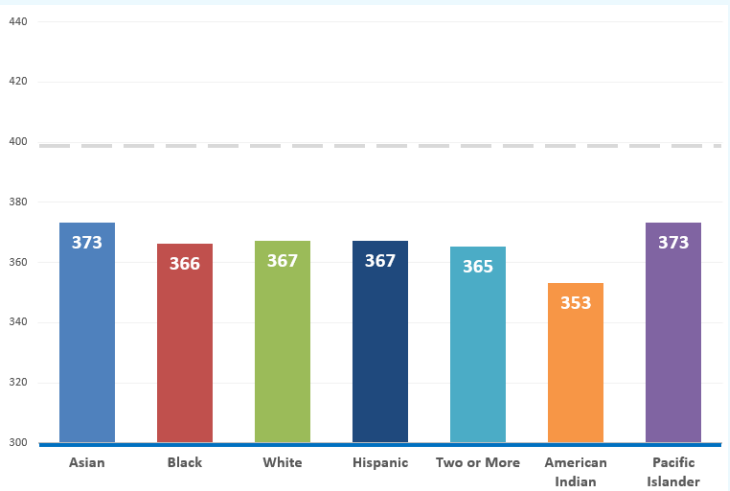
## Physical Safety



## Emotional Safety



## Relationships





# 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.

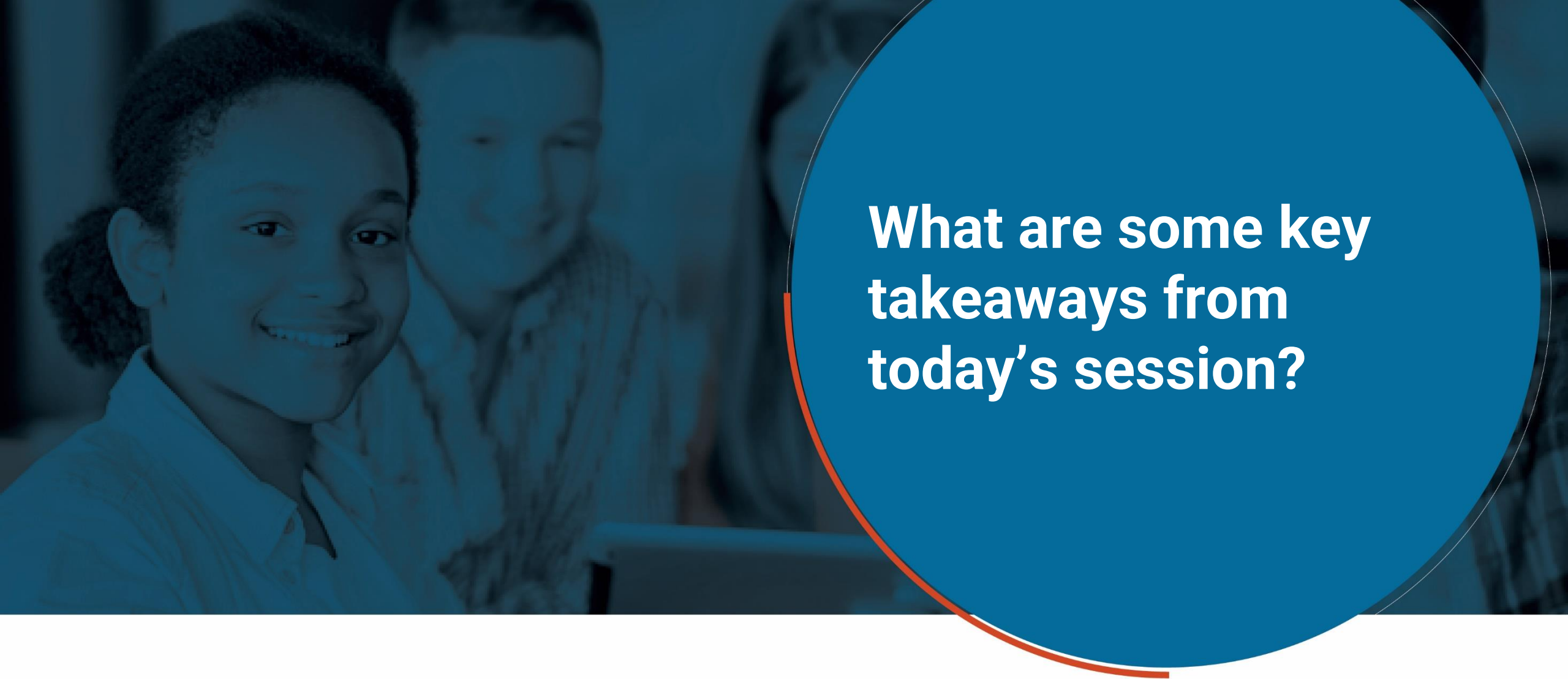
What does it look like when you do this work well?

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



# Nevada's Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts





**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

## AMY BANKS

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**National Center on Safe Supportive  
Learning Environments**

**Engagement • Safety • Environment**



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Improving Lives.

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# SCHOOLSAFETY.GOV RESOURCES

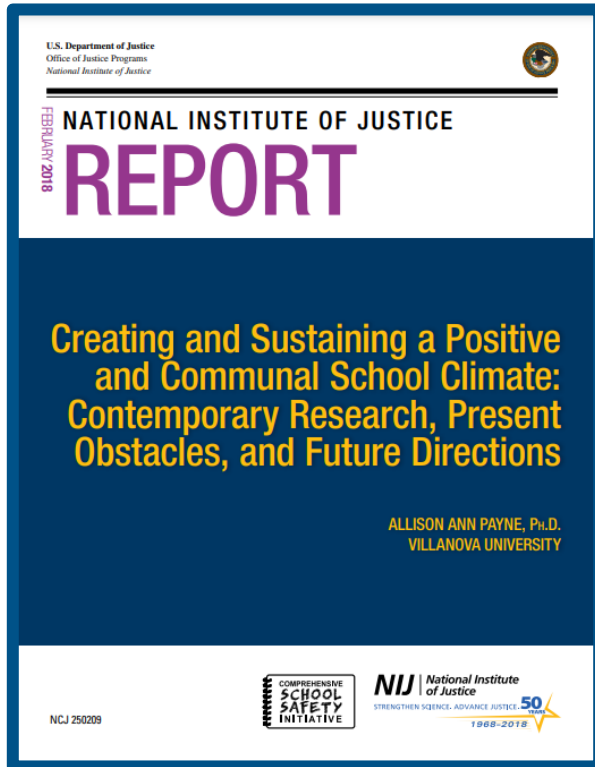


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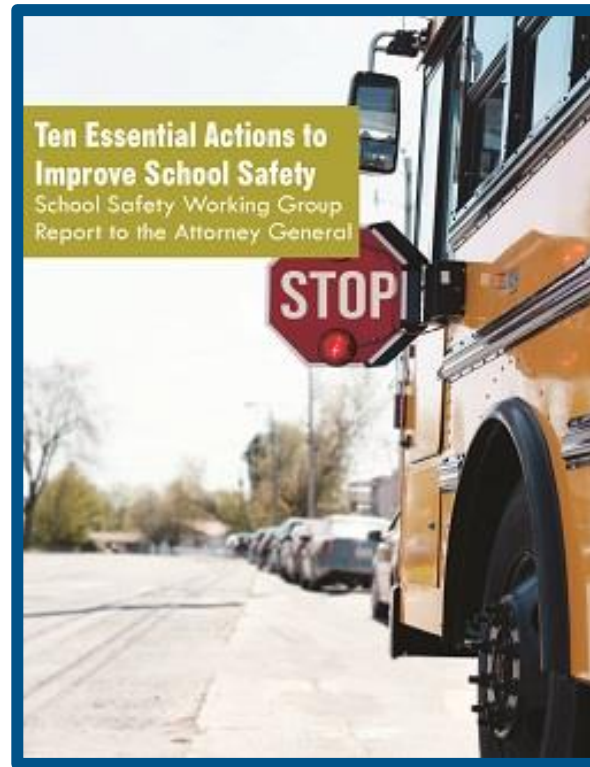
SchoolSafety.gov



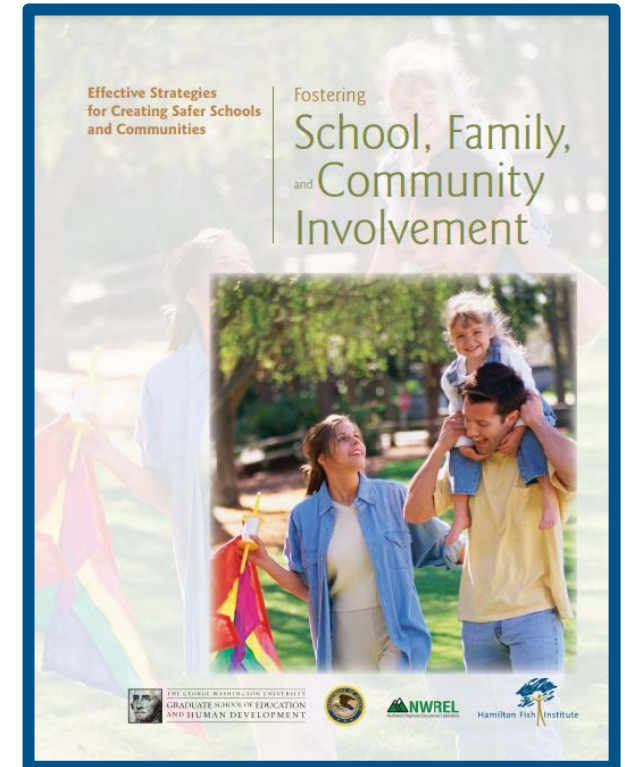
# Additional Resources – Guidance



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)



# Additional Resources – Web Resources

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Prevention

Resources

Blog



Home » Prevention » Build a Safe Environment

How to Prevent Bullying

Prevention at School

Assess Bullying

Engage Parents & Youth

Set Policies & Rules

**Build a Safe Environment**

Media in the

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## Build a Safe Environment

A safe and supportive school climate can help prevent bullying. Safety starts in the classroom. Students should also feel and be safe everywhere on campus—in the cafeteria, [in the library](#), in the rest rooms, on the bus, and on the playground. Everyone at school can work together to create a climate where bullying is not acceptable.

- [Create a Safe and Supportive Environment](#)


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

## School Connectedness

**School connectedness**—the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals—is an important protective factor.

Research has shown that young people who feel connected to their school are less likely to engage in many risk behaviors, including early sexual initiation, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and violence and gang involvement.

Students who feel connected to their school are also more likely to have better [academic achievement](#), including higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance, and stay in school longer.



Efforts to improve child and adolescent health have typically addressed specific health risk behaviors, such as tobacco use or violence. However, results from a growing number of studies suggest that greater health impact might be achieved by also enhancing protective factors that help children and adolescents avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes.

### School Connectedness Fact Sheets


- [School Connectedness: For School Districts and School Administrators](#)
- [School Connectedness: For Teachers and Other School Staff](#)
- [School Connectedness: For Parents and Families](#)

[School Connectedness](#)  
(CDC)

## Parent Engagement in Schools

**Parent Engagement in Schools** is defined as parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents.

- Parent engagement in schools is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage parents in meaningful ways, and parents are committed to actively supporting their children's and adolescents' learning and development.
- This relationship between schools and parents cuts across and reinforces children's health and learning in multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community.
- Engaging parents in their children's school life is a promising protective factor.



Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills.

- Parent engagement also makes it more likely that children and adolescents will avoid unhealthy behaviors, such as sexual risk behaviors and substance use.
- Efforts to improve child and adolescent health have typically addressed specific health risk behaviors, such as tobacco use or violence.

However, results from a growing number of studies suggest that greater health impact might be achieved by also enhancing protective factors that help children and adolescents avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes.

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

# 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.

The screenshot displays the 'Grants Finder' tool on the SchoolSafety.gov website. The main heading is 'Grants Finder', followed by a brief description of the tool's purpose. Below this, there is a section titled 'Take the Grants Finder Quiz!' with a 'Start Quiz' button. To the left, there are 'Filter Grants' options, including 'Topic' (Bullying and Cyberbullying, Cybersecurity, Emergency Planning, Infectious Diseases and Public Health, School Climate, Targeted Violence, Threat Assessment and Reporting) and 'Dollar Amount'. To the right, there are 'Quick Filters' for 'Upcoming Grants', 'Sub Grants', and 'COVID-19 Grants'. The 'Results' section shows a list of grants, with one example highlighted: 'FY 2021 Preventing School Violence Program'. The right side of the image shows a list of search results for 'FY 2021 Preventing School Violence: BIA's STOP School Violence Program', including details like 'Deadline: August 16, 2021' and 'Access Link: https://hsa.ssa.gov/funding/opportunities-to-bia-2021-47003'.

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.

**Question 1**

**i See a definition of designated staff. ▾**

.....

**Designated Staff**

Do  
pre


**Question 7**

**i See a definition of staff and faculty training. ▾**

.....

**Staff and Faculty Training**


Are school staff trained on the Emergency Operations Plan (school EOP) and safety and security procedures?

**Your School Safety Action Plan** 

Every school is different and requires a unique approach to preventing school violence.

Use this personalized action plan to learn the initial priorities you should consider as part of your safety planning. Consider taking the assessment again in the future to see how your action plan evolves after implementing options for consideration.

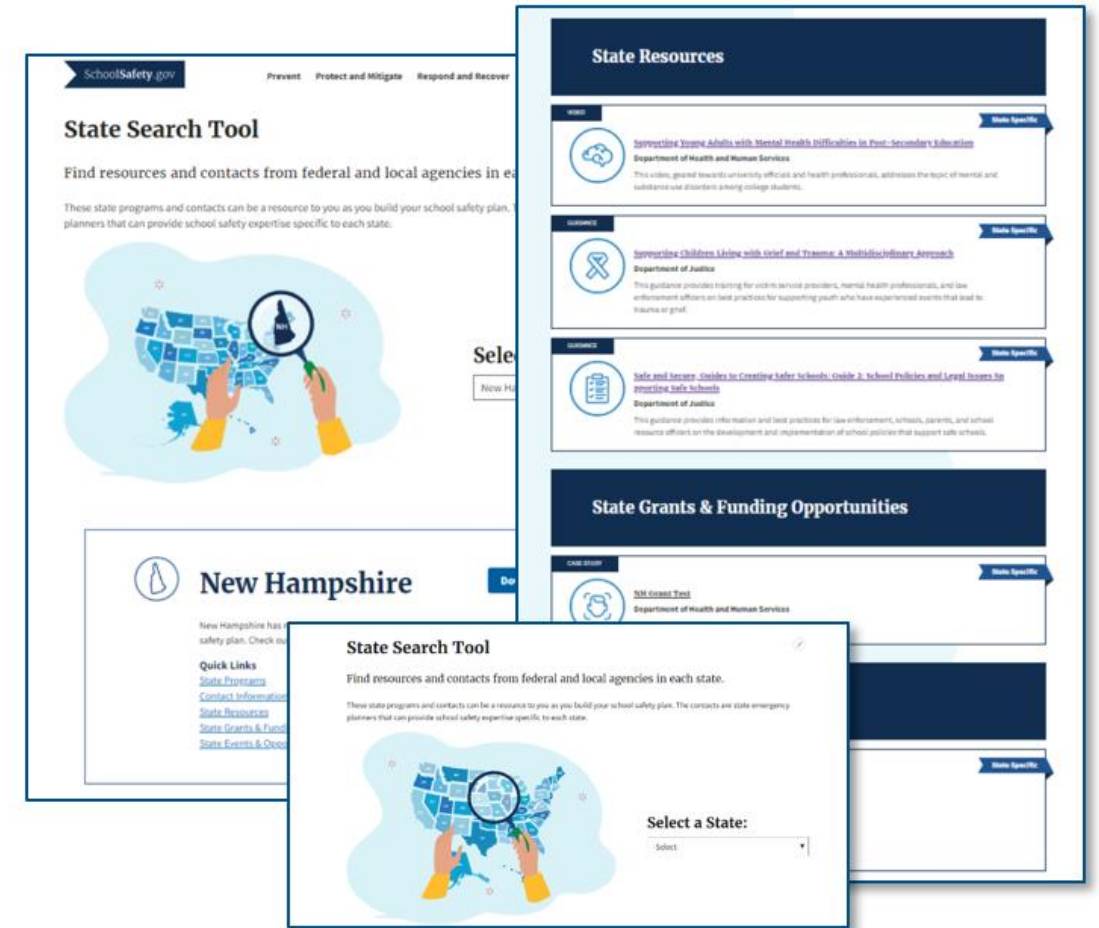
[Download Your Action Plan](#)



# 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.



# 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](#)

The top screenshot displays the 'School Safety.gov' website with the 'School Climate' topic selected. The page includes a sidebar with topics like Bullying and Cyberbullying, Cybersecurity, Emergency Planning, Infectious Diseases and Public Health, Mental Health, School Climate, Targeted Violence, and Threat Assessment and Reporting. The main content area for 'School Climate' defines it as a positive environment that can prevent violence and lists strategies to consider, such as conducting a school climate assessment. The bottom screenshot shows the 'All School Climate Resources' page, which features a 'Filter Resources' section with options for 'Action' (Prevent, Protect and Mitigate, Respond and Recover) and a 'Clear All' button. It also lists resources, including 'Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety (Reference Guide)' from the Department of Justice, 2020, and 'Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety' from the COPS Office School Safety Working Group, 2020.

SchoolSafety.gov



# Contact Information and Questions

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- [@usedgov](#)
- [@SSLearn](#)
- [@NevadaReady](#)

Click [here to sign up](#) for regular updates or scan QR code.

## 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/](https://doe.nv.gov/SafeRespectfulLearning/School_Climate/)



Questions, feedback, or ideas?  
Please contact [\*\*SchoolSafety@hq.dhs.gov\*\*](mailto:SchoolSafety@hq.dhs.gov)

