FIVE STEPS
.......TO A BETTER SCHOOL CLIMATE

Pat O’Keefe, Consultant
NJPSA – Foundation for Educational Administration
WHY WE CARE ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE?

When students have healthy peer relationships, teachers they trust and school policies they perceive as fair, they are more likely to feel safe in school and less likely to misbehave.

F.C. Curran, *The Conversation*
WALT understand five priority building blocks for a better school climate.
The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights establishes a School Safety Team to:

“Develop, foster, and maintain a positive school climate by focusing on the on-going, systemic process and practices in the school and to address school climate issues such as harassment, intimidation, or bullying.”
SCT = PLC

A Professional Learning Community = educators committed to working together using processes of inquiry, problem-solving and reflection upon their practice become a professional learning community. A professional learning community is a team or group of teams working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members hold themselves mutually accountable. (DuFour 2006)
#2 BUILD A WORKING DEFINITION OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

With input from all school stakeholders, come to a clear and common understanding of what school climate is?

What does it look like?

Sound like?

Feel like?
WHAT IS SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE?
#3 ASSESS YOUR CURRENT REALITY

What assumptions are alive in your school?

Let’s consider 4 sets of relationships.

What’s already in place? Disjointed?

How can you gather and analyze school climate data?
CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS
WHICH ONES ARE ALIVE IN YOUR SCHOOL?

✓ School climate will fix itself.
✓ There needs to be little alignment between the expectations for students and the expectations for adults.
✓ Addressing negative adult behavior will cause more problems.
✓ A mission statement does not impact practice or climate.
SCHOOL CLIMATE - RELATIONSHIPS

- Student to Student
- Student to Adult
- Adult to Student
- Adult to Adult
CLIMATE FOR STUDENTS

- A **physical environment** that is welcoming and conducive to learning

- A **social environment** that promotes communication and interaction

- An **affective environment** that promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem

- An **academic environment** that promotes learning and self-fulfillment
CLIMATE FOR ADULTS

• A physical environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning

• A social environment that promotes communication and interaction

• An affective environment that promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem

• An academic environment that promotes learning and self-fulfillment

©FEA 2016
A CLIMATE FOR ADULT LEARNING

- Civil
- Congenial
- Contrived Congenial
- Collegial
1. What is the goal of the program, approach or initiative? What need is it addressing?

2. Is it achieving that goal and effectively addressing the need? What data supports our answer?

3. Decide to keep, modify or abandon

4. If you keep - clarify the purpose and the connection to an overall school climate improvement plan

Focus on PROCESS, not Programs
WHAT IS YOUR ...CURRENT REALITY?

Looking at Data:

1. School Climate Surveys *(NJDOE+)*
2. Attendance data
3. Grade distributions
4. Disciplinary referrals
5. Bullying reports
6. I&RS referrals
7. Other data

Focus groups – ex. discussion of assumptions, etc.
What do we expect students to know/understand/do in terms of social and emotional (SEL)?

NJDOE SEL COMPETENCIES
EFFECTIVE SEL PROGRAMS

- All staff members are trained.
- Skills are taught consistently by all staff creating a common language related to expectations for behavior.
- Skills are connected to the student code of conduct and discussions related to discipline.
- Instruction is integrated into the curriculum across grade levels and content areas.
- Skills are assessed to determine program effectiveness.
- Parents are trained.
#5 DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

- Prioritize the areas of concern – do these relate to any commonly held assumptions?
- How will your team help stakeholders change their perspective?
- What areas of strength can be leveraged?
- Create a plan to address areas of concern that includes the specific goal, the people responsible, a timeline, assessment tools and an intended outcome
- Anticipate roadblocks and be proactive
- Focus on clarity around the evidence of success
Build a sense of community among the students and adults in your school!

Thank you! Have a great summer.