



The SEL SOLUTION

**Integrate Social and Emotional
Learning into Your Curriculum
and Build a Caring Climate for All**

**CLASSROOM-
TESTED
STRATEGIES**

Jonathan C. Erwin

The **SEL**
SOLUTION

**Integrate Social and Emotional
Learning into Your Curriculum
and Build a Caring Climate for All**

Jonathan C. Erwin

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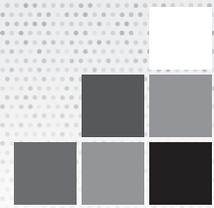
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Introduction

Beginning this book with an analogy may belie its practical nature. But as a former middle and high school English teacher, I love analogies. And actually, analogies are very practical: They are a wonderful teaching tool, helping people see clearly that which otherwise may be obscure.

Here's the analogy: Educating students is like growing a garden.

Imagine an empty lot, one that we want to transform into a lush flower garden. As those responsible for this garden, we might begin by hiring a well-respected landscape architect to create a design for it, just as in education we spend billions paying teams of experts to create federal, state, and local curricula. Once we have our design, we might then hire a knowledgeable landscaper to plant, fertilize, water, weed, and nurture our new garden. Similarly, in schools we hire the best teaching candidates, expecting them to use the most effective instructional and classroom management practices available, resulting in our students learning and growing to their potential.

In time, we will evaluate our garden in terms of how we originally envisioned it. Based on our evaluation, we may need to make adjustments—moving a plant into a sunnier spot, watering more or less frequently, and so on. In schools, educators use a wide variety of assessments to evaluate our students' learning: formal, informal, formative, summative, standardized, teacher-created, and more. As in the gardening scenario, the results of the assessment may call for adjustments or improvements. In such cases, we may reexamine and revise our curriculum, our instructional

or classroom management practices, and/or the assessment tool, hoping for better scores on the next assessment.

Common sense would tell us that these three elements—planning (curriculum development), planting and nurturing (instructing and managing), and assessing and adjusting—would be everything we need to create a beautiful garden or educate our students.

There is a fourth element, however, which seems so obvious that we may not even consider it: the climate in which we attempt to grow our garden. For example, if a landscape architect from the American Southwest doesn't consider the climate of a garden planted in a southern Quebec province—many of the flowers and fruit trees he plants won't survive the harsh winters. His design will fail. No amount of tending will make a difference.

Similarly, if we don't attend to the climate in which our students are “planted,” we, as educators, will also fail—no matter how well-designed the curriculum or how effective the teaching is.

Of course, some plants can thrive in a wide variety of climates, just like many students can learn and thrive in almost any learning environment. However, many plants thrive only within a limited range of temperature, rainfall, and other climate factors, and many students require specific school climate conditions in order to reach their “growing” or learning potential.

If we don't consider the climate in which our students and educators are striving to meet education standards, we are doomed to repeat the

pattern of examining and revising our curriculum, instruction, and/or the assessments while continuing to achieve the same unsatisfactory results. Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results: Isn't that the definition of insanity?

Here is where the garden analogy breaks down: We can't control the physical climate in which we garden. It's impossible to turn an arctic tundra into the tropics. However, we *can* have a profound positive impact on the climate in which we educate our children. Through intentionally focusing on improving and maintaining a positive school climate, we can create a learning environment in which all students can thrive.

This book shows you how.

Why School Climate Matters in an Era of Standards and Assessments

Educational policies in the United States and Canada, and those in many other countries throughout the world, seem to focus on one main goal: global economic competition. In the United States, especially, education seems to be driven by the economic and political objective to be number one to an extent not seen since the Cold War—particularly since the Sputnik launch in 1957 and the subsequent emphasis on science and mathematics. Today, however, more is involved. Nations are concerned with attaining or maintaining their economic status in a highly globalized, complex, dynamic, volatile, and ever-shrinking world.

This drive to be first in the global marketplace has had a profound effect on educational policy and practices over the years. The call to “Raise the standards!” has been the battle cry since the 1980s, with educators in the United States now grappling with more demanding student learning standards (such as Common Core State Standards, or CCSS). We have been introduced to dozens of learning and teaching models, from Madeline C. Hunter's elements of instruction to collaborative learning to brain-based learning to differentiated

instruction to response to intervention (RTI)—and on and on.

Likewise, educators have learned about many assessment models, including authentic assessment; curriculum-based assessment; and mastery, competence, or proficiency-based education. And, of course, today's educators are well aware of assessments designed to evaluate how students and teachers are performing in terms of meeting the CCSS. Even with the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), with its intent to diminish excessive use of testing, the focus remains on testing and accountability that impacts educators and students every day.

The Impact of Current Trends on Administrators and Educators

For educators, federal and state mandates and the focus on achievement test scores can be overwhelming. Administrators are concerned with finding dollars in the budget to comply with the ever-increasing unfunded state and federal mandates. They express frustration with the number of teacher observations required while continuing to effectively address the daily crises, parent communication, stacks of paperwork, student discipline, and other responsibilities piled high on their professional plates. The bottom line is stress for most, *distress* for many.

Being under this kind of pressure and scrutiny is too much for many teachers, who are choosing to leave the profession. New teacher retention has reached what some call a crisis. The stresses of teaching, and subsequently of high teacher turnover, take a tremendous toll: first, on those thousands of young people who have invested money and time toward achieving a teaching degree that they are not likely to use; second, on already inadequate school district budgets in terms of taxpayer dollars spent on advertising, hiring, and training new teachers; third, and most importantly, on students who are assigned to novice teachers or long-term substitutes. The students in these classrooms often lose a sense of continuity and the benefits of learning from seasoned professionals.

Getting Started



You may be a principal or other administrator starting from scratch—perhaps you’ve been charged with reducing violence, increasing attendance, or improving achievement at your school. If so, *The SEL Solution* provides a thorough and effective program. Share this book with your staff and communicate with them regularly about progress. This chapter provides a roadmap for working with staff and students throughout the school year. Or maybe you’re already using an anti-bullying or social-emotional program in your school; if so, the ideas and activities in this book can be a great complement, easily integrated into what you’re already doing. Reading this chapter will help you figure out which aspects of the book to introduce at your school. Guidelines for a whole-school approach begin on this page.

If you’re a teacher, coach, club advisor, counselor, or other leader looking for ways to build community in your smaller groups, feel free to pick and choose aspects from this book that make sense for your situation. Suggestions for where to begin and what to include are provided in this chapter. Go to page 15 for guidelines on individual use.

Whatever your situation, I recommend you make the climate solution your own. While my recommendations are based on my years of experience in improving school climate and culture, the way you implement in your situation may need to be modified because of your school’s unique resources, opportunities, and challenges. Every successful school climate initiative eventually takes on its own unique personality, which is one of the

best aspects of the climate improvement process. It shows that a school has taken ownership of the process and has a compelling shared vision.

As you read these recommendations for beginning and sustaining the climate improvement process, you will find that there are many opportunities to make it your own, while still maintaining the integrity of the general program.

The Whole-School Climate Initiative

As the leader of the climate improvement initiative, whether you are a school administrator, faculty member, or school counselor who has been delegated the responsibility of leading the process, it is critical to involve—right from the beginning—various stakeholders in the school community: staff, faculty, students, administrators, and parents. If students and other members of the community see the initiative as a program driven from the top down, it is unlikely to succeed. On the other hand, if you are able to garner grassroots support from the beginning, the initiative is likely to catch on like wildfire.

One of the most effective ways to establish support is by creating a Climate Improvement Team (CIT).

Create a Climate Improvement Team (CIT)

A CIT is made up of a diverse group of people who represent different stakeholder groups: faculty, administrators, counselors, staff, parents, and students. Members of this team will serve as representatives of their groups and communicate with them, both to advise and make decisions in the implementation of the initiative and to champion the effort. The CIT will meet early on—ideally in the summer before school begins—to help get your initiative off the ground as smoothly as possible and continue to meet throughout the year to keep everyone informed of what’s working and what can work better.

Although it’s important all these subgroups in the school community are represented, keep the size of the CIT manageable. Even in a large school, more than 25 team members is too many, making scheduling and decision-making cumbersome and slow. Three to four representatives from each stakeholder group is ideal, making the size of the team between 16 and 21 members. In smaller schools, it may not be practical or necessary to include as many representatives from each subgroup, so the CIT may be even smaller.

During the summer, as the school year approaches, send an email or letter to every member of the school community explaining your school climate initiative, describing the CIT, and inviting anyone who is interested to apply to be on the CIT. Writing to the entire school community helps ensure that faculty members, staff, and students see membership on the CIT as open to all, not as an elitist group or the principal’s inner circle. This helps prevent complaining and blaming behavior later on in the process.

Your letter to adults and older students might look something like my sample (see the thumbnail on page 18). (Feel free to modify this reproducible handout for your letter.)

In addition to sending this general invitation to the school community, you may want to personally invite individuals who you know have an interest in school climate and who you believe would be a positive asset to the initiative.

To reach students, send an email or hand out a letter to secondary students and copy parents.

Because of the time commitment required to be on the CIT (and the shorter attention spans of younger kids), I recommend limiting elementary kids’ participation to fifth graders and up. To contact them, consider having teachers make an announcement in class and send home notes to parents. See the thumbnail on page 18 for an example of a note that could go home to students’ families. Here are a few other suggestions for establishing your CIT.

- Include union and parent-teacher organization leaders. They will add credibility and a sense of cohesion to the initiative.
- Personally invite leaders among the custodial, food service, and transportation staff.
- Include a variety of grade-level teachers and at least one school counselor, social worker, or school psychologist.
- In secondary schools, choose students from a variety of grade levels, based on recommendations from their counselors or teachers. Ideally these are students who are both liked and respected by their peers and who are on solid ground academically. It is also important to choose students who are comfortable voicing their opinions at team meetings and making presentations to their peers, faculty, and parents.

Hold Your First CIT Meeting

Hold your first CIT meeting just before school begins or within the first week or two. The purpose of the meeting is to build relationships among team members, clarify roles among the various stakeholder groups involved, and clarify what is involved in the process.

After welcoming and having team members introduce themselves, lead a group discussion around the following talking points and questions:

- We’re here to improve our school climate. What, in your mind, is a positive school climate?
- What motivated you to be a member of this team?
- How would it benefit staff to achieve a more positive school climate? Students? Parents?

I recommend that you follow this discussion with the PDF presentation included in the digital content of this book. The presentation gives a brief overview of how positive climate results in better student and staff attitudes toward work and school, improved attendance, fewer behavior problems, and higher achievement. It also gives an overview of what makes a school climate positive and how the activities in *The SEL Solution* can help achieve that climate.

You may want to take extra time with the slides that discuss community meetings, which are an important foundation of the initiative that teachers in particular will need to know how to conduct.

After the presentation is finished and you have answered any questions raised, go through the following timeline for the year (this is also summarized as a chart on page 15 and provided in the PDF presentation), setting dates for meetings and giving jobs to team members.

Schedule Your School Year

The following steps are described with minor detail to provide a rough overview of the school year and help you make decisions about what steps to cut or modify. They will also help you set up dates for your school year and assign roles to members of the CIT. Information and guidelines for all the parts of the school climate solution are covered in detail in the other chapters of this book.

Scheduling times suggested are deliberately general; you'll want to establish a more precise schedule based on your own situation. On page 15, you'll find a timeline that provides a snapshot of the year.

Recruit and Begin Working with Student Leadership Team (SLT)

Since students make up the majority of the school community, it is only logical to involve them as early as possible.

Chapter 6 explains in detail how to recruit, train, and employ student leaders as powerful agents of positive change in the climate improvement initiative. Ideally, student leaders are recruited in the spring and begin their training in August or early to mid-September, shortly after the first CIT meeting.

Present School Climate Initiative to All Staff

Within the first month of school, the CIT hosts a meeting for all faculty and staff to present the school climate initiative you're undertaking. The CIT may use the PDF presentation if desired. The goal is to make sure everyone understands and is on board with the plan. **Important:** At this meeting, pass out the "Faculty and Staff School Climate Survey" (see the thumbnail on page 18) to everyone present and collect the completed surveys by the end of the meeting.

Present Climate Initiative to Students

Shortly after the all-staff meeting about the school climate plan, teachers will hold community meetings in their classrooms to discuss school climate with their students. See page 23 for guidelines for this meeting. Teachers ask students about the kind of climate they would like at school, discuss the benefits of a positive school environment, and provide a brief overview of the climate improvement process. **Important:** Pass out the "Student Climate Survey" (see the thumbnail on page 19) to students and collect completed surveys at the end of the meeting.

Analyze and Present Survey Results

After the surveys have been collected from both groups, compile the results. Assign a point value of 1 for every answer of "Strongly Disagree," 2 points for "Disagree," 3 points for "Neither," 4 points for "Agree," and 5 points for "Strongly Agree." (You may want to ask for a faculty volunteer to do this.) Keeping the adult and student surveys separate, calculate the average response for every question. Create a slide or handout that summarizes the findings, and present them at your next CIT meeting. You will also want to present the results to your entire faculty and staff.

In both meetings, explain that the purpose of this is not to assign blame or invite excuses. It is simply a reflection of the current perceptions of students and staff. It is always interesting to note any discrepancies between staff perceptions and those of students. Any item receiving an average

under 3.5 is worth examining. Discussion might follow, listening to suggestions about addressing the most pressing items immediately.

At the CIT meeting, you may also want to use the survey results to help shape the topics for future community meetings and activities in classrooms. You may also use this information as the basis for creating goals for the year, one of them being the development of the school-wide touchstone. Review the importance of the touchstone (see Chapter 3).

Begin the Touchstone Process

Working together, your school community will determine which values it holds highest—the values you want to guide the behavior and interactions in your school. The beginning of this process involves each of the stakeholder groups meeting separately to brainstorm values and narrow their lists to a manageable size. See Chapter 3.

As you discuss this at your initial CIT meeting, you may want to set dates for these meetings and direct the CIT members from each stakeholder group to communicate with its group about the meeting. You will probably want to host the student meeting yourself, but you'll need to enlist plenty of help. See page 36.

Try to begin this process by late October or so.

CIT Meets to Finalize Touchstone

Shortly after touchstone stakeholder meetings are completed, the CIT takes the lists from those meetings and works to establish a final touchstone and determine how to present it.

Hold an Assembly to Unveil the Touchstone

This is a fun celebration for all members of the school community, so be sure to invite everyone. Consider making it an evening meeting so more parents can attend. It should be held before winter break.

Teachers Begin Teaching SEL in Class

It's a good idea to start SEL (social-emotional learning) lessons for students as early in the year

as possible, but with the touchstone process also competing for limited time, you may not be able to begin these until right before or after winter break. It all depends on how much of a priority you're able to make them. It's also up to you how stringent you want to be regarding which SEL topics and activities you require teachers to conduct. You may require emphasis on certain topics based on the survey results from earlier in the school year, or you may simply direct teachers to work their way through Part 2 (beginning on page 84) on their own.

If you're in a secondary school, you will have to determine which classes will do SEL activities. It's often best to do SEL in advisory, homeroom, ELA, social studies, or health classes.

SEL lessons continue through the end of the school year. See the chapters in Part 2. You may want to schedule the activities you want teachers to do so that they can plan ahead to make time for them—and so that you can make sure everything is covered that you want covered. It's up to you to decide how precisely you want to schedule things from the beginning, and how tightly you want to control teachers' lessons.

End-of-Year Climate Survey/Data Collection

Toward the end of the school year, conduct climate surveys for both adult and student populations, and aggregate the data. Members of the CIT and SLT compare these results with the results from the beginning of the year, looking for areas of success and ongoing challenges. Using this book as a reference, make plans for your second year.

Summer SEL Training for Teachers

Consider holding a two- or three-day summer training on SEL for teachers to personally experience the SEL activities that they will integrate into their curriculum. This will give them the rationale and skills they need to begin implementing SEL in the classrooms.

Timeline for the First Year of Whole-School Climate Improvement

Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Recruit Climate Improvement Team (CIT) ↓ Recruit Student Leadership Team (SLT)
Late summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Hold first CIT meeting ↓ Collect data such as absentee rate and behavior referrals ↓ Hold first SLT meeting
Early fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Present climate initiative to all staff; administer climate survey to staff ↓ Present climate initiative to students; administer climate survey to students ↓ Analyze and present survey results
Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Begin touchstone process (separate faculty, staff, and student meetings to determine shared values)
Early winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Teachers begin teaching SEL in classes
Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ CIT and SLT meet to finalize touchstone and determine how it will be presented ↓ Hold assembly/celebration to unveil the touchstone
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Administer end-of-year climate survey ↓ Begin planning for second year
Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ SEL training for teachers

Other Things to Keep in Mind

The chapters in Part 3, *Creating a Needs-Satisfying Environment*, provide extensive guidelines for classroom and behavior management. As the leader of the school climate solution, it's up to you whether you require teachers to read these chapters and/or adopt their lessons. Read these chapters well before school begins and make a plan for your approach. You may want to weave information and lessons from them into your monthly CIT meetings.

The Smaller-Scale Climate Solution

If you aren't part of a whole-school climate initiative, your goal in reading this book may be to create and sustain a positive climate within your classroom, sports team, extracurricular club, musical cast, or other small group. This section provides guidelines for getting started. (I use the term *teacher* throughout this section, but if you are a coach or other leader, that word refers to you, too.)

Communicate and Garner Support

For these smaller efforts, the community of stakeholders is smaller than it is for a whole-school initiative, but you'll still want to communicate your plans with your school leaders and parents. Your principal will most likely be interested in what you are doing and the results. Keep her informed along the way; she may want to share what you're doing as she coaches other teachers. Parents will most likely be happy to hear you care about providing their children with a safe, connected, engaged learning environment. Sending home a regular parent newsletter or dedicating part of the classroom website to "climate news" will help parents keep up on the process.

A letter to families at the beginning of the year is a good idea. I've provided a sample in the digital content for this book (see the thumbnail on page 18). Feel free to use or modify this reproducible handout for your letter.

These efforts will pay off by helping you gain the support of your administration and your students' families.

Prioritize and Schedule Your Initiative

Read this book and choose what elements you want to use. With fewer stakeholders and a smaller community compared to a school-wide effort, you are free to pick and choose the elements of this book that are most appropriate for your situation, and you have the flexibility to make changes quickly if something isn't working. It's not necessary to plan every meeting and activity for the whole year, though it's a good idea to have a general plan. The general outline provided on this page can be used as a model.

I strongly recommend that you implement the elements of Part 1, Setting the Foundation, in your classroom. Introduce community meetings as early as your first day together, and use them throughout the school year. If you're teaching younger students, you may want to hold one meeting every day or three times a week. For older students, especially if you only have them for 50 minutes a day, once every week or two is sufficient. Begin working on a class touchstone in those early community meetings.

If you're not planning to use all the chapters of Part 2, Teaching Social-Emotional Skills, it's best to focus on the material in the first chapter or two, leaving off later chapters which may not stand up well without the foundation of the earlier material. Use the timeline model on this page to plan your approach.

The chapters in Part 3 provide extensive guidelines for classroom and behavior management. Reading these chapters before the school year begins will give you plenty of good ideas for running a more positive classroom and allow you plenty of time to prepare to institute them. Any classroom norms, rules, and procedures should be in place on day one.

Timeline for Classroom Climate Development

First day of school	↓ Begin community meetings
Early fall	↓ Discuss climate initiative with class; communicate about it with your principal and with families ↓ Begin working on the class touchstone
Early winter	↓ Finalize touchstone and determine how it will be presented
Winter	↓ Begin teaching SEL in class ↓ Hold celebration to unveil touchstone
Spring	↓ Hold end-of-year community celebration

Final Thoughts About Getting Started

As you think about setting up your unique approach to school climate change and what your school year will look like, here are a few important things to keep in mind.

Commit to Ongoing Evaluation

Throughout the climate improvement initiative, it is essential to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the process. Use concrete quantitative data (climate survey, grades, attendance, and so on), but also use any information you can gather from what educators might call *informal formative assessment*. At CIT meetings, part of the meeting

should include time to share anecdotes and information that might help the initiative. For example, a teacher on the team might have overheard students talking excitedly about the social-emotional learning that's happening in ELA. Or someone on the team might have had a conversation with a staff member who criticized the initiative as coming from “them” (the administration).

With anecdotal as well as quantitative data at its disposal, the CIT can evaluate progress and, if necessary, make adjustments or change behavior in some way. This evaluation process is called the Process for Positive Change (PPC) (see pages 167–177). In brief, PPC involves the team discussing the following questions:

- What do we want? What is our goal?
- What are we currently doing to achieve that goal?
- Is what we are doing working? What's working and what's not?
- What is our plan moving forward?

Ongoing evaluation not only allows you to make adjustments and see better climate results, it also helps establish and sustain universal support for the initiative through the first year.

Keep Up Regular Communication

All members of the CIT and SLT have the responsibility to communicate accurate information to the groups they represent: Parent members to the parent-teacher organization; teacher members to the faculty; students to a designated number of classrooms, and so on. Use group email, social media, a dedicated website, or an old-fashioned newsletter to keep school community members informed.

This ongoing communication is a great way to obtain the anecdotal feedback about how people perceive the climate initiative. It also serves to keep the topic at top of mind so community members are thinking and talking about it. This can only help the effectiveness of the program.

Celebrate Success

By the end of the year, if you have followed the processes described in this book and conducted at least most of the activities, you will see positive results. In my experience, the most salient improvements the first year are related to climate survey results, behavior referrals, bullying, attendance, and student grades. These improvements, even if they don't achieve the goals you set at the beginning of the year, show that the school community is doing something right and is moving in the desired direction. (One of my favorite sayings is, “Better is better!”) It's wise even before the end of the year to mark your successes. Communicate improvements with the entire school community. Share anecdotes and qualitative evidence with students.

Many schools and classrooms will have some kind of end-of-year field trip, field day, picnic, or other event to celebrate progress made during the year. Use this as a way to celebrate ways that people in your community developed friendships, respected differences, and achieved and grew as learners and as people. You might hold an end-of-year community meeting focusing on those topics and challenging students to continue to learn, read, and grow their bodies, minds, and hearts over the summer. I encourage you to give students a voice in creating a celebration that is both fun and meaningful to them.

By marking and celebrating improvements—and by establishing new goals and a plan to move forward—you will most likely sustain the initiative for the following year. You will have the opportunity to make even more progress.

Let's get started!



Printable Forms

Letter Inviting Participants to Climate Improvement Team

Dear [Parents, Students, Staff Members, Teachers, etc.]:

Research shows that a positive school climate leads to improvements in everything from attendance and graduation rates to student learning and achievement. That kind of climate is based on safety and order, positive relationships, and engaging teaching and learning. To achieve that at [School Name], we will begin a school climate improvement initiative this school year, and I would like to invite you to be involved in the process.

I am creating a Climate Improvement Team (CIP) made up of representatives from different parts of our school community: teachers, staff, parents, students, and administrators. Your involvement would require attendance at our first meeting, a full day on [date and time], as well as shorter monthly meetings throughout the year. You will also be asked to communicate regularly with other [parents, students, staff, etc.]. Monthly meetings will be held on [recurring day and time] starting [date]. All meetings will be held in [room number] at the school.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting opportunity, please email me at [email address] by [date]. Because interest in membership may be very high, and in order to end up with a team of optimum size, I am limiting the number of [parent, student, teacher, staff] representatives to [three or four]. I will select members from the pool of applicants to create a team that is as diverse and representative as possible.

Thank you for your interest in helping make [school name] the best school we can be for your child.

Sincerely,
[your name]
[your phone number]
[your email address]

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Letter Informing Families of Student Involvement on CIT

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Research shows that a positive school climate leads to improvements in everything from attendance and graduation rates to student learning and achievement. That kind of climate is based on safety and order, positive relationships, and engaging teaching and learning. To achieve that at [School Name], we will begin a school climate improvement initiative this school year, and your student is invited to be involved in the process.

If selected, your child would be part of a team made up of representatives from different parts of our school community: teachers, staff, parents, students, and administrators. His or her involvement would require attendance at our first meeting, a full day on [date and time], as well as shorter monthly meetings throughout the year. He or she will also be asked to communicate regularly with other students to get input and feedback about the initiative. Monthly meetings will be held on [recurring day and time] starting [date]. All meetings will be held in [room number] at the school.

If your child is interested in participating in this exciting opportunity and you give permission, please email me at [email address] by [date]. Because interest in membership may be very high, and in order to end up with a team of optimum size, the number of student representatives will be limited to [three or four]. Members will be selected from the pool of applicants to create a team that is as diverse and representative as possible.

Thank you for your interest in helping make [school name] the best school we can be for your child.

Sincerely,
[your name]
[your phone number]
[your email address]

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Faculty and Staff School Climate Survey

Before you begin, please read the following information:

- You are being asked to complete this survey as part of an effort to understand how students and other members of the school community (teachers, staff, and so on) feel about the current school climate.
- Read the statements carefully and base your answers on your thoughts and feelings about your personal experience at school.
- This survey is completely anonymous. No one will know how you responded, so please be honest.
- There are no right or wrong answers. We want to gather information about how people feel while they are here in school.

Directions: Mark an X in the column that corresponds with how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I always feel physically safe at school.					
2. While at school or at school functions, I rarely see students insulting, teasing, harassing, or otherwise verbally abusing others.					
3. Adults at school treat students as if they care about them as individuals.					
4. School leaders encourage and support collaboration among teachers.					
5. Discipline referrals are handled fairly and effectively by administration.					
6. Most staff in this school are generous about helping others with instructional or management issues.					
7. This school encourages staff to get involved in extracurricular activities.					
8. In general, students at my school treat one another with kindness. No one seems to go out of their way to treat other students badly.					

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Faculty and Staff School Climate Survey continued

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. Students at my school accept one another's differences (race, culture, gender, appearance).					
10. There is clear and effective two-way communication between administrators and staff.					
11. Adults in my school treat all students fairly.					
12. I feel as if I have a voice in matters that concern me in school.					
13. I do NOT see fights or physical altercations between students at school.					
14. In school, I teach more than academics, I teach students about things like perseverance, self-control, self-regulation, and collaboration.					
15. The administration at this school is fair in the way it allocates resources.					

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Student School Climate Survey

Before you begin, please read the following information:

- You are being asked to complete this survey as part of an effort to understand how students and other members of the school community (teachers, staff, administrators) feel about the current school climate.
- Read the statements carefully and answer based on your thoughts and feelings about your personal experience at school.
- This survey is completely anonymous. No one will know how you responded, so please be honest.
- There are no right or wrong answers. We want to gather information about how people feel while they are here in school.

Directions: Mark an X in the column that corresponds with how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel physically safe at school.					
2. While at school or at school functions, I am not insulted, teased, harassed, or otherwise verbally abused.					
3. Adults in my school treat students as if they care about them.					
4. My school has clear rules against physically hurting other people (hitting, pushing, kicking).					
5. I have at least one friend at school I can talk to if I have a problem.					
6. Adults seem to like one another and work well together in my school.					
7. There is at least one adult at school that I can trust and talk to if I have a problem.					
8. In general, students at my school treat one another with kindness. No one seems to go out of their way to treat other students badly.					

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Student School Climate Survey continued

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. Students at my school accept one another's differences (race, culture, gender, appearance).					
10. My teachers have high academic expectations.					
11. Adults in my school treat all students fairly.					
12. I am encouraged to take part in extracurricular school activities.					
13. I feel a sense of pride in my school (school spirit).					
14. In school, I am learning more than academics like math and ELA—I also am learning how to be a good person.					
15. In my school, we learn and discuss ways to control ourselves—our thoughts, actions, and emotions.					

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Letter to Families About Classroom Climate Initiative

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am looking forward to getting to know your child this year. In the interest of creating the best learning environment for my students, I am going to be conducting activities throughout the year that are intended to create a positive classroom climate, one in which there is a sense of physical and emotional safety, positive relationships, and engaging teaching and learning. Research has shown that a positive climate not only improves students' attitudes toward school, but also improves learning and achievement.

Some direct instructional time will be sacrificed to intentionally creating a positive climate. Students will work together to develop a classroom touchstone and class constitution, and they will participate in regular community meetings and social-emotional learning activities. The problem-solving, interpersonal, and self-control skills children will learn through these activities will serve them well not only in school, but later in life.

If you have any questions or concerns about my classroom climate initiative, please call or email me.

Sincerely,
 [your name]
 [your phone number]
 [your email address]

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