

11 Ways Parents Can Support a Positive School Climate

Creating a positive school climate takes everyone's help.

What is a positive school climate? It's when a school feels safe, inviting, supportive, engaging and effective.

It pays off: Research tells us that with a positive climate:

- *Grades and graduation rates are higher.*
- *There are fewer behavior problems and risky behaviors.*
- *Staff retention is better.*
- *Parents feel better able to help their children succeed.*

Parents and caregivers play key roles. A positive climate isn't just up to school staff and students. It takes support - at home and at school. There's a lot you can do even if you don't have much free time.

1. Share the vision.

A positive school climate means:

- **Safety:** Students feel safe physically. They also feel free to express themselves - and to be themselves.
- **Positive relationships:** There's a culture of respect and support between students and between students and staff.
- **Learning:** Academics as well as social and civic skills (like conflict resolution) are stressed. Teachers are caring and effective. Students feel engaged.
- **A good environment:** The school buildings and grounds are safe and comfortable. Materials needed for teaching/learning are provided. Students feel connected to the school.
- **A positive staff:** The staff feel supported and work well together.

2. Support school climate efforts.

Ask how you can help with bullying prevention and social and emotional learning programs. Be sure to complete surveys that help administrators

measure and improve school climate. Teach your child the importance of school attendance and how it affects academic success.

3. Support school rules.

Clear policies on behavior help create a sense of safety.

- Your child needs to know the rules and consequences. Review the student handbook and/or code of conduct together.
- Support school efforts to enforce the rules fairly and consistently.
- Set clear rules for behavior at home, too.

4. Work as a team with your child's teachers.

Attend parent-teacher conferences and parent events. Communicate regularly, too. You can use notes, phone calls or e-mail.

- Ask what's expected of your child and how he or she is doing.
- Ask for tips on helping with homework and building on lessons at home.
- Let the teacher(s) or school counselor know if a life event like a divorce may affect your child's performance. Ask for help if your child is struggling with schoolwork or other issues.

5. Get involved.

It shows you care about school and about your child's success. As much as you can, volunteer for class, school or after-school activities. Join parent groups. Attend meetings on school matters.

6. Nurture a school bond.

School pride and sense of belonging motivate students to take care of themselves, one another and the school. Encourage your child to attend school events and to join a school team or club. To see what options are available for your child, check the school newsletter or Web site or ask the school staff.

7. Stress the value of education.

To teach that learning matters:

- Ask about school every day.
- Point out how education makes a difference in life.

- Speak highly of education and educators. If you disagree with a teacher, do it respectfully.

8. Challenge your child.

- Help your child set and work toward educational goals. Doing this for him or herself is good motivation.
- Set high expectations. Let your child know that you believe he or she can meet them.
- Give your child the tools and skills needed for success. For example, provide school supplies and teach time management for homework success.
- Praise your child's hard work.

9. Stress respect and responsibility.

- Teach your child to accept people's differences. Bullying is never OK. Respect for your home, community and school are also key. Don't allow littering, for example.
- Put your child in charge of some chores. When possible, let him or her take part in family decisions. Help him or her find ways to give back to the community, too.
- Teach peaceful, positive ways of solving problems.

10. Encourage positive relationships.

- Ask regularly about what's going on in your child's life. Really listen.
- Support good relationships with classmates and school staff.

11. Be a good role model.

- It's not enough to just talk about being respectful, responsible, caring and fair. Your child learns by watching you.