

# School Culture Resources Guide





## BUILD A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Building a positive school culture is all about ensuring that your school is physically and emotionally safe for both students and staff. As you face challenges each day, you need to be able to safely respond to disruptive behavior before crises can occur. And if behavior does escalate to violence, you need to have the skills to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Structuring a framework for proactive solutions requires a coordinated effort among administrators, staff, students, families, and your community. With policies, procedures, and staff development plans in place, everyone can share a commitment to creating and maintaining a safe school culture.

The resources on the following pages contain a wealth of information dedicated to helping you create a safer, more respectful school culture that helps you enable students to learn and thrive. Please note that while CPI does not endorse the external resources, we believe that they may be helpful to you in your efforts to build a safe school culture.





# CREATING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

You hear the terms “school climate” and “school culture” used interchangeably all the time. But are they really the same? Is there a difference between your school’s climate and its culture?

There is, says veteran educator David Jakes. Your school’s culture is “represented by its shared beliefs, its ceremonies, its nuances, the traditions and the things that make the school unique.” Your school’s climate “is represented by the immediate and current conditions that exist” within it, including factors such as leadership changes, contract negotiations, tragedies, and triumphs.

“Everyone associated with the school has the responsibility to contribute to the creation of a school’s culture, from the custodian to the community member,” Jakes writes.

A key to creating a positive school culture is to first create a positive school climate. Check out [“Your Climate, Your Culture”](#) to learn how even small moves like 1:1 computer implementation can improve the learning climate of your school—and how you can then use the technology change to improve the culture of your school.

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# 6 TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR SCHOOL CULTURE BETTER

## 1. ENCOURAGE COURTESY.

Make it a priority to model an attitude of respect. Even if students, parents, or other staff aren't immediately courteous in return, know that your own positive behavior will foster a climate that values respect among everyone.

## 2. ASSESS YOUR ENVIRONMENT.

How your school looks and feels lets staff, students, and visitors know what to expect. Are parking lots, hallways, and classrooms clean and free of litter? Is the lighting adequate everywhere? Where could students or staff become isolated or be most vulnerable? Are there accessible emergency escape routes? Do you have a solid reporting system in place so safety concerns can be identified and resolved?

## 3. PAY ATTENTION TO WARNING SIGNS.

Watch for cues that indicate distress. Changes in a student's behavior, routines, facial expressions, posture, and tone or volume of voice can alert you to their intentions—and help you take a supportive attitude that focuses on prevention.

## 4. ESTABLISH A COMMITMENT TO SAFETY THAT EVERYONE SHARES.

From administration to teachers to support staff to students and parents, everyone should play a role in making sure that your school climate is safe and enriching for all.

## 5. HAVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE.

In order to ensure that everyone is a part of a shared vision, it's important to establish plans and outline expectations.

## 6. HAVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN PLACE.

Staff come to the job with teaching skills, and become even more effective as educators when they have the training to prevent and de-escalate challenging behavior.



## MORE INFORMATION

Check out *"Culture, Not Curriculum, May Be Key to High School Reform."*





# IMPROVING SCHOOL CULTURE WITH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## Take all threats seriously and assess their validity.

A student-centered restorative justice program within the Oakland Unified School District in Oakland, CA has helped the Ralph J. Bunche Academy reduce suspensions by half. Key to the program is a trauma-informed consideration of students' experiences and the factors that influence their attitudes and behaviors.

A [Christian Science Monitor article](#) discusses the district's restorative justice approaches, which include:

- Establishing rapport with students.
- Gaining their trust.
- Holding them responsible for their actions
- Helping them repair broken relationships.



### MORE INFORMATION

Also check out "[Enhancing Respectfulness Through Restorative Practices](#)" to learn about talking circles, which help students learn how to talk problems out and resolve conflict.

# STUDENTS SPEAK OUT FOR A SAFER SCHOOL CULTURE



When student advocates met with staff from the US Department of Education and the Office of Safe and Healthy Students to brainstorm about creating safer learning climates in schools, they called for more:

- Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)
- Restorative justice
- School resources officers (SROs)
- Guidance counselors
- Social workers
- Psychologists

## National School Climate Center

### TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

The National School Climate Center offers tools such as the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), a survey that provides a profile of your school's strengths and needs. The center also offers a quarterly newsletter, professional development programs, tips for preventing bullying, and more. [Check out the resources.](#)



# Thank You!

We hope you found this resource helpful. Please feel free to share it with a friend or colleague.

## Have questions? We can help!

Give us a call at **888.426.2184** or email [info@crisisprevention.com](mailto:info@crisisprevention.com)



### ABOUT CPI

**THE CRISIS PREVENTION INSTITUTE (CPI)** trains your staff in the language of behavior. How to recognize it as a form of communication. How to prevent it from escalating at the earliest possible stage. How to appropriately respond when it threatens employee safety or quality of care or service. How to get in front of it and stay in front of it to minimize the likelihood of reoccurring issues.

Over 17,000 facilities, 30,000 Certified Instructors, and 10 million trained professionals trust CPI to help create more confident and productive employees who leave a lasting positive impact on the people they serve.

More than 35 years ago our founders gave us the middle name of Prevention for a good reason. It always has and always will be at the heart of everything we do.

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