

## **Essential Dimensions and Considerations For Safe and Supportive School Conditions**

### • ***Environmental*** – Considerations:

Cleanliness; orderliness; noise levels; adequate space, resources and materials; inviting aesthetic quality; sufficient lighting; and appropriate air quality and room and building temperature.

### • ***Structural*** – Considerations:

School size; class size; hallway size and design; entrances; stairwells; scheduling; and curricular and extra-curricular offerings.

### • ***Safety*** – Considerations:

- Social-Emotional– Clearly communicated rules and norms for behavior, including for verbal abuse, teasing, harassment, intimidation and bullying, exclusion, violence and substance use and the threat of these behaviors; clear and consistent response to violations of the code of student conduct; perceptions and attitudes about violence and bias; conflict resolution and conflict management taught and practiced; support for risk taking, independent thinking and questioning; and internal and external support readily available for student problems.
- Physical– Building/facilities maintenance; crisis plans; visitor monitoring; equipment including electronic communications; supervision of students throughout the building; hallway traffic; traffic into and out of the building; travel to and from school; and coordination with emergency and first responders.

### • ***Teaching and Learning*** – Considerations:

High expectations for student achievement among staff, students and parents; all learning styles honored; learning, behavior and health problems identified at early stages of identification and are remediated; help provided to students when requested; learning is relevant to students - linked to “real life;” teaching practices include the consistent use of praise/reward, encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities provided for student participation and demonstration of knowledge and skills; educators use varied teaching methods; instructional leadership is exercised by administrators who communicate a clear educational vision and are accessible to students, staff and families; creativity is valued; social-emotional as well as academic learning is valued and taught; varied student “intelligences” are appreciated; connections are made across disciplines; and students participate in conduct discipline.

### • ***Relationships*** – Considerations:

Positive and “connected” adult-adult relationships between and among new and veteran teachers, administrators and support staff; positive adult-student relationships, including welcoming, orienting and integrating new students, greeting students arriving to and leaving school, demonstrating personal concern for student’s problems); positive student-student relationships; shared decision making; regular and collaborative academic planning opportunities; active professional learning communities; and diversity valued and individual differences respected.

### • ***Sense of School Community*** – Considerations:

Students and adults believe in and demonstrate a sense of community in the school by participating in school governance; collaboratively establishing and supporting core ethical values and standards for behavior and performance; jointly planning and assessing educational policies and programs; and actively planning and participating in educational programs and school activities and events.

• ***Morale*** – Considerations:

High rates of student attendance; high rates of staff attendance and longevity/staff stability; high degree of volunteerism; high rates of participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities; free exchange of ideas; students are engaged learners; staff are enthusiastic about their work; students are connected to one or more adults; and students and staff feel good about and welcome in their school.

• ***Peer-Social Norms*** – Considerations:

Both students and staff: believe learning is important; are invested in caring for one another; appreciate the importance of being able to say “no;” expect collaboration and cooperation; and share understandings of acceptable and unacceptable behavior and performance.

• ***School-Home-Community Partnerships*** – Considerations:

Mutual support and ongoing communication; school-community involvement that results in actions, where appropriate; parent participation in school decision making and problem solving; shared parent-teacher norms vis-à-vis educational performance and behavior; resource sharing; and student and/or family assistance programs.

• ***Learning Community*** – Considerations:

Standards and measures used to support learning and continuous improvement; professional development is systematic, ongoing and driven by the educational mission; goals evident and priorities documented and shared; data-driven decision making linked to learning; and school systems evaluated.