



Prevent • Intercede • Respond
to Sexual Harassment of K–12 Students

Webinar Discussion Guide: School Climate

Enhancing Peer-to-Peer
Relationships to
Strengthen School Climate

LINK TO ARCHIVE OF WEBINAR:

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/events/webinar/enhancing-peer-peer-relationships-strengthen-school-climate>

This *Webinar Discussion Guide* was originally developed to augment the March 2012 webinar ***Enhancing Peer-to-Peer Relationships to Strengthen School Climate***. The guide was reformatted in August 2016 to match the design of the resource package **Safe Place to Learn: Prevent-Intercede-Respond to Sexual Harassment of K–12 Students**.

Original Air Dates

March 28 and 29, 2012

Presenters

Vincent Omni and Flora Sanchez

Event Description

Positive relationships are central to a safe and supportive school climate. This webinar focuses on the power of student-to-student relationships; how these relationships impact school climate; and the role of school adults in nurturing healthy, respectful relationships among students in the classroom, hallway, and cafeteria, and on the school bus and school grounds before and after school. Participants receive detailed strategies and best practice principles that will inform efforts to strengthen student relationships. Presenters offer real-world, practical solutions for strengthening student relationships in our nation's schools.

Event Objectives

- Understand why relationships are important
- Learn what schools can do to promote positive peer relationships and friendships

Key References

Benson, P. L. (2006). *All kids are our kids* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). *Fostering school connectedness: Improving student health and academic achievement*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness_administrators.pdf

Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). The key to classroom management. *Educational Leadership*, 61(1), 6–13.

Roberts, C., & Osher, D. (2011). *Establishing supportive relationships between teachers, staff, and students* [Webinar]. Washington, DC: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Retrieved from https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/sssta/20120105_SCQA2.16.11_EstablishingSupportiveRelationshipsFINAL.pdf

About This Discussion Guide

Purpose

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSE) developed discussion guides as part of a package of supplementary material for the school climate and survey webinar series. This guide can be used to deliver the content of the webinar to a broad range of stakeholders and to engage them actively in the school climate improvement process. To learn more about each topic and the array of information covered in the webinars, users also should refer to each webinar’s question-and-answer and research summary sections.

Appropriate Audiences

Each guide includes an assumptions section describing potentially appropriate audiences. However, facilitators may determine additional audiences for whom this content is beneficial and should not hesitate to adapt the content accordingly.

How to Use This Guide

- Participants are expected to have viewed the webinar previously either during its original airing or through the NCSSE website archives (noted earlier).
- State, district, or school staff may use the activities in this guide with participants who are assembled on-site or remotely by using technology such as teleconferencing, platforms such as Live Meeting, virtual whiteboards, or other tools.
- The activities contained in this guide are iterative—that is, earlier activities are intended to inform subsequent activities. However, facilitators may tailor the session to their needs or audience, depending on their familiarity with the content. Please note that adaptations may affect the flow.

Key to Symbols

The following symbols are used as visual cues for the facilitator throughout the discussion guide.



Timer (activity duration)



Facilitator talks



Handout



Display a slide, flip chart, or whiteboard



Writing activity



Group discussion



Stop—end of session

Activity Summary

This discussion guide contains three activities related to the *Enhancing Peer-to-Peer Relationships to Strengthen School Climate* webinar.

The total duration of all activities is expected to last **60 minutes**.

Presenter Preparation

Prior to Arrival of Participants

Prepare to display the following materials either on chart paper or using a slideshow or a virtual whiteboard:

1. Chart paper/Slide 1

Event objectives

- Review the research on connections between teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships.
- Develop individual and classroom relationship-building strategies.
- Develop schoolwide relationship-building supports.

2. Chart paper/Slide 2

Why relationships matter

- Students who feel connected to their teachers do better in school.
- School connectedness correlates with fewer problems.
- Relationships and connectedness provide students with better social and emotional skills and engagement.

3. Chart paper/Slide 3

Where am I on the relationship scale?

- Level 1—I invite relationships and express care.
- Level 2—I nurture relationships and build trust.
- Level 3—I leverage the relationship, challenge, and mentor.

4. Chart paper/Slide 4

Classroom strategies to enhance relationships

- Model positive social skills.
- Examine my own behavior.
- Guide classroom interactions.
- Find ways to create shared experiences.

Prepare ample copies of the following handouts:

- **Handout 1:** What Can I Do in the Classroom?
- **Handout 2:** What Our School Can Do as a Team

Additional Instructions

For Activity 4:

- Depending on the composition of your audience or the proximity to their viewership of the original webinar, you may want to create an additional Slide 5 for Activity 4 that summarizes the highlights of webinar Slides 52–57 on curriculum, school, and teaching practices.
- If possible, provide online computer access so groups can look up some of the additional resources listed in Handout 2.
- If online computer access is not available for the session, make additional copies of some of the materials from the additional resources listed in Handout 2 to distribute to groups to use as they work.

Assumptions

1. Participants will have viewed this webinar previously either during its original airing or through the NCSSE archives:
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/events/webinar/enhancing-peer-peer-relationships-strengthen-school-climate>
2. Target audiences include the following:
 - a. School district superintendents and allied staff
 - b. School administrators and support staff
 - c. School climate teams
 - d. Student support personnel
 - e. Teachers

Activity 1

Introductions and Overview



5 minutes



- 1.1. Welcome participants and conduct introductions if needed.
- 1.2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the session: This session is a companion to the webinar on *Enhancing Peer-to-Peer Relationships to Strengthen School Climate*. Participants will spend time examining what kinds of individual and schoolwide relationship strategies they currently use as a foundation for developing ideas for taking relationship building deeper to improve school climate.
- 1.3. Display **Chart paper/Slide 1**: Remind participants that you will not be spending a lot of time on the objectives and information presented in the original webinar but rather will be using that webinar as a jumping off point for today's session.

Activity 2

Objective 1: Review the Connection Between Teacher-to-Student and Student-to-Student Relationships



10 minutes

Materials needed:

- Two pieces of blank chart paper and two different colors of markers



- 2.1. Indicate that you'll start by checking in to see how much participants recall about why relationships are important to school climate.
- 2.2. Form small work groups of four to six, depending on the size of the whole group, using a simple method to form groups.

Note: If you are working with a large group and would like to expand connections beyond typical groupings people might form, you can encourage them to "find five other people from different tables," for example.



- 2.3. Once the groups have formed, tell them they will have 5–7 minutes to brainstorm as a group all the reasons why relationships are important to building school climate. Ask them to think about both:
 - Teacher-to-student relationships
 - Peer-to-peer relationships

Tell them that when they are done, you will be asking each group to summarize what they came up with.

- 2.4. *Ask if there are any process questions regarding this activity.* Address any that arise, and then invite the groups to begin their conversations.
- 2.5. Monitor time closely and provide a signal at approximately 3 and 6 minutes. As you do so, encourage groups as needed to keep the discussion flowing.
- 2.6. At the conclusion of 7 minutes (or sooner if you see that the conversation is waning in the groups), call time and ask participants to return their attention to the front of the room.
- 2.7. *Conduct a short reflection on the activity,* asking each group to summarize briefly the reasons they listed that relationships—both teacher-to-student and student-to-student—are important to school climate. As each group reports, record reasons on two different pieces of chart paper by using two different color markers.

***Note:** You will be listing (1) those things that are increased or promoted by relationships and (2) those things that are reduced (e.g., risks or poor behaviors) on the two different charts, but do not title them yet.*
- 2.8. Once the groups have finished reporting and you have completed the two lists, ask if anyone can describe the differences between the two.
 - Once someone has answered correctly, title the two lists **Increasing** and **Reducing**.
 - Leave the two lists up during the remainder of the session.
- 2.9. Thank everyone for their participation and invite them to return to their original seats if they have not done so already.

Activity 3

Objective 2: Individual and Classroom Relationship-Building Strategies



20 minutes

Materials needed:

- Handout 1: What Can I Do in the Classroom?



- 3.1. *Indicate that now you will summarize briefly the research that was presented during the webinar about why relationships are important to building positive school climate.*

***Note:** The length of this summary will vary, depending on the results of the previous activity. If participants did not recall very much or if there were significant gaps in what they recalled, you can be sure to fill in with major points from the webinar. If participants seemed to have remembered quite a bit, this need be only a short summary before moving on to the next activity.*



- 3.2. Display **Chart paper/Slide 2** and discuss. Note the following:
- Although most of the relationship research presented in the webinar was about teacher-student relationships, we have strong reasons to believe that all relationships in a school between adults and students and among students contribute to positive climate.
 - As children get older, they all eventually have separate worlds from the adults in their lives, including through online interactions and social media. It is therefore important for us to model good relationships with them and intentionally help them learn how to have good relationships with each other.
 - Students watch how we act with each other and with other students. If school adults do not treat each other with respect, students will get the message that respect is not important. If we treat a student badly, other students will treat that student badly, too.



- 3.3. Display **Chart paper/Slide 3**. Review the relationship levels model that was used in the webinar.



- 3.4. Display **Chart paper/Slide 4**. Review some of the classroom management and organization strategies covered in the webinar that teachers could use to enhance peer-to-peer interactions.



- 3.5. Distribute **Handout 1** if you have not done so already. Tell participants they will have the next 15 minutes to concentrate on assessing where they are in their use of relationship building and management strategies in the classroom and form some ideas about new strategies to use.




- 3.6. *Ask participants to turn to someone next to them and pair up for this activity.* Tell them to:

- Take a few moments to each look at all the strategies on the handout and put a **check mark** by all those they believe they are using now.
- In pairs, share with each other their list of strategies they are using now.
- Working together in pairs, help each other brainstorm ideas for additional strategies they can begin to use in their classrooms right away.
 - Reassure everyone that they do not need to fill in ideas for everything in the right-hand column titled “Here’s What I Can Do More Of.” They can affirm the continued use of a strategy they are using already that works well for them, or they can concentrate on one of the four areas listed. Encourage them to pick at least one area on which to focus.



- 3.7. *Ask if there are any questions about the activity.* Address any that arise, and then invite the pairs to begin work.

- 3.8. Monitor time closely and provide signals as needed at approximately 7 and 10 minutes. As you do so, encourage groups to keep moving through the strategies to help keep the discussion flowing.
- 3.9. At the conclusion of 15 minutes (or sooner if you see that the conversation is waning in the groups), call time and ask participants to return their attention to the front of the room.
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-  3.10. Process a short discussion with the whole group, asking people to call out some of the strategies they identified that they are using already as well as some that were developed to be used when participants return to their classrooms.
- Be sure to address any concerns that may arise about any perceived barriers to using some of the strategies.
- 3.11. *Thank everyone for working on this activity.* Tell them you are now going to move on to the last activity.

Activity 4

Objective 3: Develop Schoolwide Relationship Supports



20 minutes

Materials needed:

- Handout 2: What Our School Can Do as a Team



- 4.1. *Recap any discussion from previous activities.* Say that now that participants have had a chance to discuss individual and classroom strategies they can use to help students have better peer-to-peer relationships, you want to give them a chance to think about schoolwide strategies that have been found effective to enhance those relationships.



- 4.2. Distribute **Handout 2** if you have not done so already. Go over the strategies reflected on the handout, reminding participants that these strategies were covered in detail in the webinar.

Note: *If necessary, display Chart paper/Slide 5 summarizing highlights of Slides 52–57 from the webinar.*



- 4.3. *Tell participants that they will work in groups next to discuss the strategies listed on the handout.* Indicate that they will have 15 minutes to identify and discuss:
- Any of the strategies already being implemented in their school
 - One new strategy they would like to explore to use in their school

Note: *If online computer access is provided, tell participants they can go online to learn more about the new strategy they choose to explore. If online access is not provided, distribute additional printouts of background information previously prepared.*

- 4.4. Organize groups to optimize whole school discussions. For example, if all participants are from the same school, organize groups by grade level to facilitate strategy discussion by appropriate age level; if participants are from different schools, organize them to work in same-school groups to maximize exploration and discussion.
- 4.5. *Reassure participants* that they are not expected to know everything about the listed strategies, nor are they expected to come up with a plan during this activity. The activity is designed to help them identify evidence-based strategies already being used in their schools, while having some time to explore potential new strategies they can agree on that might enhance their work further.



- Tell participants to make any notes about what they want to explore further in their chosen strategy in the right-hand column titled “What Do We Need to Know?” This could include things such as costs to implement the strategy, relevant school policies that could promote or restrict the use of a strategy, and so on.

- 4.6. *Ask if there are any questions about the activity.* Address any that arise, and then invite the groups to begin working.
- 4.7. Monitor time closely and provide signals as needed at approximately 7 and 10 minutes. As you do so, encourage groups to keep moving through the strategies to help keep the discussion flowing.
- 4.8. At the conclusion of 15 minutes (or sooner if you see that the conversation is waning in the groups), call time and ask participants to return their attention to the front of the room.



- 4.9. Process a short discussion with the whole group, asking people to call out some of the strategies they identified that they are using already as well as some that were identified as worthy of further exploration when they return to their schools.
 - Be sure to address any concerns that may arise about any perceived barriers to using some of the strategies.
- 4.10. *Thank everyone for his or her work on this activity.*

Activity 5

Wrap-Up and Next Steps



5 minutes



- 5.1. Review the purpose of the session.
- 5.2. Summarize issues raised and plans developed. Indicate that using what they have learned in the webinar and this discussion session can have a meaningful impact on helping students learn to have strong, positive relationships with each other that will not only enhance school climate but also help students grow into healthy, successful adults.
- 5.3. *Thank participants again for their participation; their commitment to the future of their students; and their interest in helping create a safe, supportive learning environment for all students.*



Safe Place
to Learn

