CONNECTING COMMUNITIES OF COURAGE:

Building Inclusive, Safe, and Engaging Schools.

A Summit Re-cap Report

NSCC
National School Climate Center

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PREFACE

December 2018

  The Communities of Courage Summit, a collaboration between Facebook for Education and the National School Climate Center, was held at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California on October 27, 2017. Occurring at a moment of unparalleled national political and popular support for schools that attend to the whole needs of students, the Summit was also a culminating moment of sorts for NSCC's mission, values and multi-decade work in the field of social and emotional learning and school climate improvement. In fact, many of the people in the room that day were long time and tireless advocates for the vision of schools as safe, inclusive and engaging spaces for students and adults. The day was intentionally designed to bring together a group of people from different corners of the nation and education system. By virtue of their age, the type of work they have done in education or community advocacy or research, and their own experiences, we observed many different perspectives. Which is exactly what we set out to do. Most importantly, youth played a central role in every aspect of Summit planning and execution. We had student leaders on the planning committee, as morning panelists, in every working group, and as co-leaders of many working groups.

  This Re-Cap summarizes what we learned that day from each other in the form of four themes. Though they do not represent a new paradigm, these themes do represent a universal truth in education: the changes we must make may seem simple or standard, but they are not easy to implement and sustain. The first theme, for example, is "Mission." In order to be safe, inclusive and engaging for all members of the community, Summit attendees said that schools should have a mission that is representative of all voices in the community. And since school communities are not static but are constantly changing, the mission needs to be revisited on a regular basis. These are two very simple assertions. They are, however, incredibly difficult to do.

  As we stepped back from the Summit day over the next few months and turned to analysis, writing, and follow-up research, it became clear that just beyond the four themes that emerged from the day were the conditions that allow for any real improvement in school climate to occur and take hold: intentional planning; **inclusive leadership; and a commitment to continuous improvement.**

  Intentional planning promotes courageous conditions when it ensures all elements of a system align with a shared vision, is consistent with core values, and supports systemic change. What we mean by "intentional" is that the team responsible for leading change be intentional about weaving core values into the planning.

  Similarly, **inclusive intergenerational leadership** was both a hallmark of the day and a necessary condition identified for creating school communities of courage. **Inclusive intergenerational leadership** provides a context for collaborative decision-making that involves a diverse group of adults and youth working together in authentic and meaningful ways. As the Summit did, school leadership
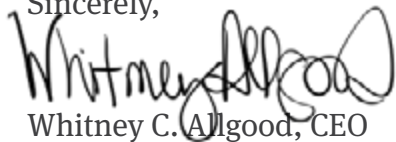
teams should also include and allow themselves and their decisions to be influenced by youth voice. This is far easier said than done for a number of practical reasons, but it can be done when teams commit to putting in the time and effort it takes to build shared agreements for working together.

As a first of its kind undertaking and one that NSCC and Facebook for Education envisioned as a start to a movement and not a culminating event, the Summit leadership team embraced a **commitment to continuous improvement.** In fact, the day's proceedings were rapidly analyzed and used to frame field-research into exemplary practices in school climate improvement that can be found in the accompanying report to this Re-Cap, "Creating School Communities of Courage: Lessons from the Field." Not every aspect of the day was perfect, but by entering into the planning with a **commitment to continuous improvement**, the leaders were all freed to take risks and innovate; to make mistakes that would yield deeper learnings that could be used by them and shared with others. It is powerful work to do and to model for youth who need to see that adults don't have all the answers (or believe that they do) and are willing to embark upon important efforts even though they aren't exactly sure how to get it done.

But courage doesn't stop with the first big step into the unknown; sustained courage requires discipline and commitment. It requires learning, doing, observing, analyzing, re-learning, and re-doing in a constant loop. Using data intentionally throughout a process better informs our decisions, and ensures we are operating from a place of ongoing knowledge building to strengthen our efforts rather than falling back on previous patterns or incomplete understandings. It is what enables innovation over rote execution. It is premised on the ability to sometimes fail on the journey towards improvement, and a willingness to take risks along the way to explore what works best for our students, with youth as critical partners in the process.

The Summit was one step in a journey towards creating school communities of courage where every student (and staff member!) feels safe, included and engaged. What we learned that day is summarized here. We hope you find inspiration or affirmation in the contents of this Re-Cap. And if you want to take your learning further, reach out to us here at NSCC. We are ready to stay on this journey with and for you.

Sincerely,

Whitney C. Allgood, CEO

National School Climate Center

INTRODUCTION

In October 2017, more than 170 diverse stakeholders engaged in the Connecting Communities of Courage: Building Inclusive, Safe, and Engaging Schools Summit, which was co-sponsored by the National School Climate Center (NSCC) and Facebook for Education. The Summit brought together attendees representing national, state and local education agencies and community action organizations. Importantly, youth voice was well represented. The day was designed so that participants could share their individual experiences and knowledge base around the challenge of creating safe, inclusive and engaging schools in every community. The goals for the day were to cultivate a vibrant network of leaders focused on sustainable solutions for fostering school communities where all students thrive.

Through a series of panel presentations and small group deliberations, attendees underscored four recurring themes:

MISSION – Every school should have or develop a mission that is based on consensus among school community stakeholders, shared and promoted widely, and frequently reviewed and enhanced to ensure alignment across the priorities and programs in the school.

WELLNESS – Schools are responsible for the overall wellness of the school community. This requires that each school's mission must include a focus on social, emotional, mental and physical wellness for all members of the school community, as well as promoting their will and capacity for positive and productive civic engagement.

INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES – School leadership teams should look first to what research has shown us to be true when selecting individual and whole school improvement strategies; however, they should also use their knowledge of local context to innovate as necessary to achieve their mission.

INTEGRATION – Schools should integrate best practices in social and emotional learning and school climate improvement with academic content and instruction.

In order to articulate a vision for courageous action, the Summit was organized around the National School Climate Center (NSCC)'s ecological approach to effective school climate improvement (image right), which promotes an integrated process of shared leadership that engages all members of the community to affect long-lasting, positive change (visit schoolclimate.org for more details). This data-informed, people-driven, cyclical approach provided a framework for the Summit. It grounded the days' proceedings in a value for the strength of relationships across the school community and reminded us that courageous school communities and systems are borne of courageous relationships between individuals and stakeholder groups.
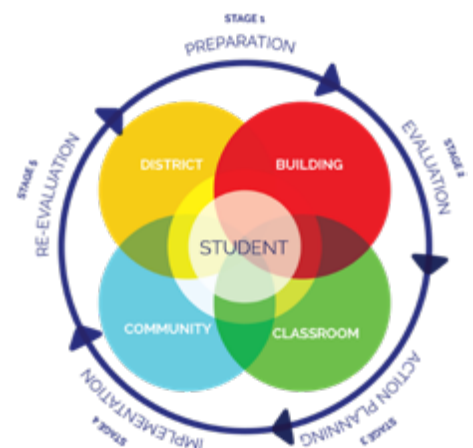
THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

This unique convening sought to address the mismatch between the needs of school communities and the current policies, research, and resources available to build inclusive, safe, and engaging schools. Building safe, inclusive, and engaging schools is complex, and requires all stakeholders working together to identify and commit to strategies and supports.[1] Therefore, the Summit intentionally focused on the foundational values of courage and collaboration to enhance the education experience of each student. The following problem statement was developed by the Summit planning committee of experts, and framed the rationale for the convening:

"There is a mismatch between the needs of educators, students and community partners, and the current climate around policies, research and resources to build inclusive, safe and engaging schools.

Policies, structures, and practices that exclude and discriminate against students hamper their ability to maximize their potential and contribute to society.[2] This creates unsafe schools and disengaged students, fosters conflict among students from different backgrounds, and creates social distance between educators and the students/communities they serve. Some students are excluded or discriminated against, intentionally or unintentionally, by adults, other students, policies, structures, and practices.[3] This has a negative effect on students' psychological, emotional, and physical health, and causes students to experience social, economic, and academic strain.[4] This confluence of circumstances also fuels an inaccurate narrative of an educational system of ineffective teachers, failing schools, broken systems, and struggling families and communities."

The Summit was designed to begin breaking down existing silos across stakeholder groups and build new solutions to support our schools and our youth. The focus was specifically on safety, engagement, and inclusion in schools because each is an elemental component to prevention of the issues noted above.[5] All three are universally identified across sectors, and they allow for us to build bridges between stakeholder groups that might otherwise be overlooked through the lens of our particular roles and areas of expertise. It is, in fact, at the nexus of our shared knowledge that we develop creative, in-depth solutions to meet each community's custom constellation of needs. When our schools are succeeding in creating safe, inclusive, and engaging conditions with intention and consistency, all stakeholders – students, families, educators, and community members – thrive.

Ultimately, the summit brought forth a vision of schools as places where not only does everyone have a seat at the table, but their voices are also elevated to redesign everyday practices, and support individual and communal growth and well-being.

The conditions for making that vision a reality are expanded upon here and represent the combined experiences, perspectives and knowledge traditions of the summit attendees. We encourage you to consider these themes collectively as they inform and contribute to each other. Together, they establish an holistic set of strategies to create and sustain safe inclusive and engaging schools for every student in every community.

SUMMIT THEMES

MISSION

Every school should have or develop a mission that is based on consensus among school community stakeholders, shared and promoted widely, and frequently reviewed and enhanced to ensure alignment across the priorities and programs in the school.

Summit attendees highlighted mission as the defining template for unifying the hearts and minds of all members of the school community. Since a school's mission was envisioned as a living model of its constituents, it should be continually assessed for alignment with the shared values of all school community members. According to participants, this process should involve standardized means of measuring and collecting feedback from school community members, as well as creating intergenerational leadership opportunities in data collection and analysis. Empowering students to own the mission of their school was conceived to be a direct route to instilling pride and a true sense of agency in them to support safe, inclusive, and engaging environments for all.

In redesigning mission to reflect the values and visions of everyone in the school community, school leaders should also intentionally create strategic channels and avenues for communication. These could include culturally focused events held for community gatherings, more effective digital leadership (such as by creating online campaigns), and celebrating individual and school-wide successes. Consistency and commitment to honoring input from all members of the school community is key. Participants envisioned schools as not just places for education, but as community hubs. Steve Becton of Facing History and Ourselves said,

"Schools [should] look like places where parents and other folks in the communities can come and share their stories, can come and feel a part of the learning process, and feel like they have something to bring to that table. When we're operating that way, I think we're... starting to do equity work."

This past year, we changed where our students were suspended out of school. They actually come and stay in our building. They're with us. So we visit them. We do schoolwork with them. We talk about what happened. We actually have a connection with students who are in trouble. And I think that that's really made a difference because I have kids who are suspended who come up to my secretary and say, 'I need to make an appointment with the superintendent. I need to talk to her because I think I'm ready to come back and I'd like to have the conversation with her.' So

"We actually have a connection with students who are in trouble. And I think that that's really made a difference..."

it's something simple. But I think it was a big deal moving the students who are in out-of-school suspension into the actual building where the superintendent and all of central administration resides because they're not forgotten. They're there with us. Once I create a sense of trust with the kids, I can go back into the high school and say, 'How's it going? What's going on?' I can then check up on him with his teachers. I would say that that has been very impactful."

— Elsie Rodriguez,
Monroe-Woodbury School District
Superintendent

Attendees stressed that those who have been historically marginalized or excluded altogether must be given enhanced opportunities to re-imagine and participate in school life. Other participants echoed the need to reform policy to reflect a more humanistic approach. Becton outlined how this unfolds when disciplinary action is taken:

> *"The same kids that are getting suspended, their parents do not feel like they can connect with their school. So we look internally not to place blame. There is a historical narrative to the same people being suspended. There's a historical narrative to the same parents being excluded. We need to really own and look at that narrative and say, 'What do we need to do differently to disrupt that narrative so that we can imagine some new relationships with parents?' "*

One solution was offered by Joseph Hattrick, a working group co-facilitator: *"Activate students in policymaking as policymakers do -respond to students' experiences, insights, strategies and stories."*

By utilizing students' lived experiences as the blueprint for new policies, attendees expressed that schools can begin to break the mold of schools being institutions, and move closer to schools being places that inspire new leaders and civic engagement.

WELLNESS

Schools are responsible for the overall wellness of the school community. This requires that each school's mission must include a focus on social, emotional, mental and physical wellness for all members of the school community, as well as promoting their will and capacity for positive and productive civic engagement.

Many of the issues that have arisen in education, as expressed by Dena Simmons, Director of Education at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, are the result of *"siloing humanity... in many ways... there is a one-size-fits-all model. And in many ways, there are policies in practice that don't necessarily allow young people to have the privilege of feeling safe to be their authentic selves."* With this in mind, wellness became a core theme identified from the Summit, focused on harmonizing efforts to educate both students' minds and hearts. Summit attendees expressed that physical and mental health must not only be addressed by schools; it should be a guiding principle.

School systems' inclusion of wellness ensures students are engaged in classroom, extra-curricular and community-based activities leading to mental and physical health. Corresponding reliable data collection and analysis are essential to inform school improvement efforts in these areas. Such a focus needs to include every student requiring adaptive strategies and supportive policies in order to fully integrate wellness into the core of school offerings. In addition to a commitment to

student wellness, school systems must also encourage wellness of teachers, staff and administrators.

Building SEL skills and creating positive relationships was identified as a crucial first step. Providing students, teachers, and community members with a forum to share their stories on mental health challenges was suggested to be an ideal way to bolster the role of the school as a center for wellness. Participants articulated confidence that such seemingly small steps could ultimately engender a paradigm shift. As captured by the Inclusion working group,

> *"We have to look outside of our own education paradigm for solutions as well, there is a lot to learn. Outside of education we can learn a lot from other areas, for example, learning from the medical paradigm where they have moved from treating symptoms to wellness."*

By moving to activate students and school communities as vital forces for cultural change, attendees stated that schools can provide a framework for individuals to take steps towards self-actualization. Supporting individuals in reaching their highest potential by using their voices to redesign schools was thought to intrinsically create a ripple effect, encouraging community engagement and wellness. As such, a strong connection to the social justice movement was conceptualized as a key piece of this endeavor, namely by highlighting civic learning. Dr. Stacie Molnar-Main, education consultant for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, stated, "My research on deliberation in the classroom suggests that when civic learning is centered...active civic learning, it brings disengaged learners to the table." Steve Becton echoed the fundamental importance of encouraging civic learning:

> *"Instead of being overly obsessed with the academic achievement gap, our greater obsession needs to be around the opportunity gaps and the civic-engagement gap, because I believe if students are more civically engaged, the academics will come. They'll want to learn. They'll want to go to college. They'll want to think critically."*

In other words, participants conveyed that educating students to be mindful citizens, aware of and active in advocacy efforts for the rights of all, is an essential component for ensuring that schools are safe, inclusive, and engaging. Striving for equity by empowering students to create change represents the arch of progress envisioned by attendees as the blueprint for high quality schools. Allowing students to co-design this process by creating their own safe spaces to share their stories was pinpointed as another core practice of high quality schools. As stated by Hana Kaur Mangat, a high school student who created Sikh Kid 2 Kid and panelist at the Problem of Practice discussion,

> *"Honestly, I think that mental health is the most important thing, but we never treat it like it's the most important thing. I think when we're talking about civic engagement or anything else...the kind of umbrella term is mental health. Are you happy when you're going to school? Do you feel like it can be your home, that it's a community? And I think that if we implement everything that we have said, a kid is gonna go to school, a teacher's gonna go to school, and an administrator is gonna go to a school and be genuinely happy to go there and learn. So when you ask me what successful implementation looks like in school, I think that some smiles is what I would want to see."*

A renewed focus on mental health and student wellness not only makes intuitive sense, but it is also beginning to be borne out in research as a reliable indicator of school climate. A recent study published by the Department of Education that explored data from over 1,000 public schools in California showed a strong correlation between positive student ratings of school climate and better academic outcomes.[6] The fact that attendees discussed in detail the importance of various school

climate components (interpersonal relationships, respect for diversity, support for learning, etc.) further cements student perceptions as the key to guiding the creation of schools that are safe, inclusive, and engaging. Thus, the ideas, stories, and reflections of students were identified as the barometer for school's success. In shifting power back into students' and school community members' hands, leaders can instill and uphold the dignity of all individuals involved in school life. This redistribution of power from top down to bottom up ensures that all voices meet in the middle, forming a common language that speaks to the future of schools, where all students are made to feel safe, included, and engaged as vital members of the community.

SPOTLIGHT

Connecting Youth Online for Active Community Organizing

Growing out of the Summit, the Youth Action Coalition is an online group dedicated to those across the U.S. that are engaging students in issues that most impact their education. Coast-to-coast, members of this group are leading organizations and organizing efforts that focus on affecting change at local, state and national levels. All members are actively addressing solutions to pressing challenges in their communities. As a collective, our numbers empower the national youth voice movement. Offline, students engage through local chapters and organizations in activities that improve their schools and communities. Young people have taken a stand by hosting roundtables with their peers to better understand the diverse needs of their schools to testifying at school boards meetings asking for adults to partner in their efforts.

Members use the online space to collaborate, find partners, build coalition, and share ideas about their work and state the of student voice and education. The group shares opportunities (e.g. scholarships, events, fellowships, etc.) and stories of members' successes and struggles.

The Youth Action Coalition utilizes Facebook's groups function to strengthen, inspire, and unite the youth movement. It is driven by and for young leaders. The group was piloted by Student Voice and Peer Forward in Spring 2018, and officially launched with other youth-

inspired partner organizations at the start of the 2018-19 school year.. For more information on the YAC, connect with Student Voice at StuVoice.org or @Stu_Voice on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES

School leadership teams should look first to what research has shown us to be true when selecting individual and whole school improvement strategies; however, they should also use their knowledge of local context to innovate as necessary to achieve their mission.

Redefining "best practices" to develop safe, engaging, and inclusive schools was a focal point of discussions. While the question of what constitutes an effective best practice produced responses that ranged from accommodating different learning styles to initiatives centered on restorative justice, one recurring sub-theme that emerged was that collaboration, sustainability, and evidence should equally inform the creation of "best practices." Consequently, rigorous, empirical research was identified as the foundation for all best practices. Attendees conveyed the need to go beyond traditional research methods, because of the disproportionate influence of white students' experience on available research. For example, one proposal was to bring the research process to life by empowering students to be data collectors in schools to ensure that data more accurately represented a given school's climate. Utilizing this approach in conjunction with evidence-based practices was suggested as a means to achieve a coherent and validated but also individualized research process.

"**Oftentimes, when we're kind of looking at just academic learning, we forget about the social, emotional, and mental health of the kids, and the parents, and the teachers at that school**. I would say that schools very often try to separate identity and learning, which I think is kind of counterintuitive. For example, at my school this past January some kids put up a "White's Only" sign outside our bathroom. It had to be reported to the police because it was a hate crime, but no one knew about it. Two months later, the Washington Post released an article that had a list of hate crimes in the local DC area, and our school was one of them. [When we found out,] we created our own makeshift survey for our students from a student-government point of view, and said, 'Hey, how do you feel about this? Do you feel unsafe? Do you feel like your administration cares about your well-being?' We had 10% of the school respond, and we found out that kids cared, obviously. Kids said, 'I can go to school every day and I can learn Pythagorean theorem or whatever, and still be thinking about, hey, maybe I'm not safe here. Hey, maybe my teacher doesn't respect my existence.' That's something I see a lot, whether it's administrations or governments, trying to separate this idea of identity and learning as if the whole person isn't being educated, as if their brain goes to school [and] not the person."

— Hana Mangat,
Sikh Kid 2 Kid

SPOTLIGHT

Youth Leadership in Action –
The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team (SVT) in KY

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team (SVT) supports students as full research, advocacy, and policy partners in the nonprofit Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence's broader efforts to mobilize citizens to improve Kentucky schools. The SVT was conceived and launched by a small group of high school students in 2012 and now consists of over 100 self-selected KY youth from middle school through college.

The SVT came to national prominence in 2015 when they advocated for the inclusion of students on superintendent screening committees and again in 2016 when their Powerball Promise Campaign led to the restoration of scholarship money from the state lottery for over eight thousand low-income students.

The team also works at the grassroots level. In addition to creating and facilitating the Student Voice Forum, an independent blog elevating student feedback on the education system,

they have published three seminal policy reports about inequities inherent in the college admissions process; student voice in school governance bodies; and student perceptions of school climate.

Most recently, the SVT has been scaling elements of their work, conducting student-led school climate audits, and publishing Ready or Not: Stories from Students Behind the Statistics, the team's first book which lifts the voices they collected from young people throughout the Commonwealth who describe the reality of navigating life after high school.

The Student Voice Team has published over 50 op-eds, presented over 60 times locally and nationally, and been featured in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Atlantic Monthly, the Hechinger Report, Teen Vogue, and on the Rachel Maddow Show.
Learn more: **https://youtu.be/UImBfrRJHLY**

Attendees noted the importance of sufficiently assessing the unique needs of individual schools before any improvements are incorporated into practice. Implementation science was identified as a crucial part of the process for ensuring that best practices are adopted effectively. In action, this translates into assessing the state of organizational climate, and continuously evaluating relationships between all members of the school community to establish that critical elements are already in place, such as: the perceived need for change, resources, and the trust required for substantial, long-term improvement efforts to be successful. [7]

In addition to setting up this procedural framework for adopting best practices, summit participants observed that involving all members of school communities to collaborate in each phase of implementation was the next essential piece of the puzzle. In the process of inviting teachers, students, and parents to engage with the redesigning of school practices, attendees believed that schools should begin to restore power to communities, and strive towards equity in schools. Intentionally coordinating outreach efforts with program implementation, seeking continued feedback, and modifying practices as needed were the methods attendees named for both achieving coherence from planning to implementation, and grounding best practices in sustainability.

By deliberately embracing the ethics of continuous learning, reflection, and communication, attendees expressed that a cultural shift is bound to take place in which teacher learning and innovation are encouraged and rewarded in schools. Striving for this level of continuous engagement with openness to change is a primary objective of the school climate improvement process. Dr. Molnar-Main stated,

"A climate of experimentation allows for this type of work to happen and for learning to be a focus, not just student learning, but teacher reflection and learning. I think that it's okay if you have a moment of failure. It's an opportunity to learn and try to figure out how we can be transparent about the things that we're struggling with, and that we're working together to solve this challenging problem of climate."

Thus, attendees conveyed that implementing best practices should fundamentally be a participatory learning experience for everyone in the school community. By engaging everyone – from parents, to students, to teachers – in the process of school climate reform, school leaders can

demonstrate the value of democracy while revitalizing the community at large. Utilizing feedback from the evaluation process, engaging students as self-advocates, and comparing varying perspectives can offer insights on the importance of critical thinking in designing an equitable environment for all, while also ensuring coherence in the process of planning and implementing positive school climates. By elevating student voices and intentionally shaping environments to support their growth, schools can become incubators of democracy. As noted by a participant in one of the working groups,

> *"The entire authoritarian structure of education impacts the student. We have to use that structure that is problematic and turn it into an opportunity. We have to find leaders willing to model positive engagement or someone courageous enough to break the mold."*

Attendees repeatedly echoed the sentiment that leadership must play a pivotal role in reshaping school climate to be centered on students. Julie Straw, of re:Imagine/ATL, stated,

> *"I know talking with the students at our schools, if they don't feel respected, they don't feel safe. And also mutual respect between the school leadership [and students], [knowing] that they do have a voice and platform, and that it isn't just lip service as far as, 'Oh, we hear you,' but [leadership] actually [takes] measurable steps and [then we] see that environment change based on responding to the students. That open dialogue between students, teachers, and leadership together [really matters]."*

In addition to aspiring to create inclusive school communities, attendees emphasized that leadership should also utilize their role to close the research to practice gap in schools. In introducing evidence-based practices to the community, ensuring controlled conditions prior to beginning a given initiative, carefully assessing results, and utilizing results to re-inform future efforts, leaders can demonstrate to the school community the inherent value of empiricism while working to improve schools. By actively engaging teachers, students, and parents in the process, leaders can empower all constituents to be researchers themselves.

INTEGRATION

Schools should integrate best practices in social and emotional learning and school climate improvement with academic content and instruction.

School climate improvement embodies the vision of collaborative school redesign brought forth by summit attendees. School climate is defined as the character and quality of school life.[8] Today, the research on how a positive school climate can promote the academic and socio-emotional well-being of students is well established, and leading researchers and school leaders observe that a positive school climate provides the foundation for other important school-wide improvements and interventions, such as social emotional learning.[9] Since social-emotional learning (SEL) has been identified in research as one important pillar of school success, participants maintained that integrating SEL, both formally and informally into teaching and learning practices, should be a central focus of school climate improvement efforts. Teachers must be the primary agents of SEL, as research shows that whether a child has at least one positive relationship with an adult at school is a strong predictor of academic success and

SPOTLIGHT

The School Justice Partnership Project

In October 2014, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) was awarded funding by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to support the School-Justice Partnership Project. OJJDP partnered with the Department of Education and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to implement a multidisciplinary initiative to improve school climates, respond early and appropriately to student mental health and behavioral needs, avoid referring students to law enforcement and juvenile justice as a disciplinary response, and facilitate a proactive and supportive school reentry process in the rare instances in which a youth is referred. OJJDP selected NCJFCJ to support implementation and sustainability of the multidisciplinary initiatives that can be expected to achieve positive school discipline reforms

and significantly reduce the number of student suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to court for non-serious behaviors in those project sites selected to receive Education.

The larger goal of the project was to enhance collaboration and coordination among schools, mental and behavioral health specialists, law enforcement and juvenile justice officials at the local level to ensure adults have the support, training, and a shared framework to help students succeed in school and prevent negative outcomes for youth and communities.

To learn more about this project or to access resources as a result of this project, please visit:

https://schooljusticepartnership.org/about-the-project.html

positive attitude towards schools.10 Thus, both pre-service and ongoing teacher training must involve SEL. Fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making are the fundamental skills of SEL, and teachers must embody them in order to teach them. Since stress management is an intrinsic element of SEL, training teachers in this domain will also provide a way to prevent burnout and gain greater job satisfaction. Attendees repeatedly mentioned students' sensitivities toward teachers' treatment of them, further emphasizing the crucial role of SEL and teachers' social-emotional competence (SEC) in ensuring that students feel safe, included, and engaged at school.

The development of SEL skills facilitates connection, but it is the broader systems, approaches, and support structures within the school that promote engagement and build the foundation for trusting relationships to form and be retained. Correspondingly, rebuilding trust in communities that have been historically marginalized, especially students of color and students with disabilities, was conceived as a systemic effort. Schools must "start from scratch," so to speak, by adopting safety, inclusion, and engagement as primary objectives of education, and also institutionalizing the practices and channels of communication necessary to sustain a healthy school community. If this effort is to be successful, all individuals involved must be instructed in the pivotal role that integration plays not only in education, but in daily life. As stated by Dr. Molnar Main:

"The routines and practices in a safe school foreground relationships and the sense of dignity that every individual or member of that school community should have in that environment regardless of their background... safety is intentional and it can be seen because people have made it a point to change the way we do things so that our everyday practices and routines foreground that issue.

IMPLICATIONS

This report responds to The Problem of Practice that impedes the successful creation and sustainability of safe, inclusive, and engaging schools. Through the shared learning of 170 education stakeholders nationwide, we learned that courageous conditions, effective school climate improvement, and cohesive practices do not lead to a linear progression of actions, but are nested in a set of simultaneous actions. This framing is built on the notion that effective practices and supportive systems are not only connected, but inform and rely on each other. These implications encourage us to abandon the idea that we simply need to do new things. Our advocacy instead is to connect the components that are most critical, which will provide the greatest opportunity to create safe, inclusive, and engaging schools where each student achieves to their greatest potential. To that end we offer implications for future research and collaborative advocacy.

Implications for Future Research

First, to better understand how schools successfully focus on safety, inclusion, and engagement we need to conduct a series of case studies. These case studies will examine district policies, support and professional development, and their impact on school practices leading to positive student development in an appropriate school climate. Understanding students' school experiences will contribute to the field's knowledge of the most effective school practices and the connectedness among different approaches.

Second, conducting policy reviews of state and district levels will identify policy impediments and supports for connecting safe, inclusive, and engaging school practices. It will be useful to explore policies in support of measuring and improving school climate to create the conditions for students to feel and be fully included, safe and engaged in their school. These analyses will identify policy options for districts to consider, adopt and/or adapt to create the conditions that support effective practices leading to positive student development.

Third, we need to combine these two research studies to create a better theoretical and conceptual framework of how policies and practices can be mapped to actions that most effectively create both the conditions and the strategies leading to safe, inclusive, and engaging schools. Deeper knowledge in these areas will increase our collective understanding of what components most significantly relate to positive outcomes for the themes explored in this report.

Implications for Collective Advocacy

Successful movements require mobilizing advocates to inform and influence critical decision makers and education stakeholders. This report consistently demonstrates the need for individual courage and collective courage to create the conditions necessary to support effective school practices.

First, individual courage requires an advocate to create and take advantage of opportunities to share evidence of (1) the importance of inclusive, safe and engaging schools; (2) the most effective strategies that create those elements of schooling in systemic ways; (3) the need to ensure school climate is measured and enhanced to support effective strategies; and (4) policy options in support of school

climate, effective practices and positive impacts on students. In addition to informing and influencing others, courageous individuals also deepen and broaden their commitment to creating and sustaining safe, inclusive, and engaging schools.

Second, collective courage requires creating and sustaining collaboration with others to advocate for effective practices, positive school climates, and supportive policies. These collaborations not only increase the volume of the message, but also demonstrate collective action by mobilizing diverse education stakeholders toward a common goal.

Third, continuing to build new alliances across the education and community-based spectrum can help to close the gaps in knowledge and skills, so that there is a more comprehensive campaign for necessary changes in support of our school communities' most pressing challenges and our collective aspirations for each student to succeed.

About the National School Climate Center (NSCC)

The National School Climate Center is a nonprofit with more than two decades of experience working with schools, districts, and states nationwide to help the entire school community—administrators, staff, students, and parents — improve the climate for learning. Our mission is to help school communities measure, improve and sustain positive school climates that will ensure all students realize their fullest potential as learners, individuals, and engaged members of society. NSCC achieves this through: advocacy and policy, measurement and research, and educational services that support a model for whole school improvement. Visit our website to learn more about our services: www.schoolclimate.org. For any questions related to this report, please email: info@schoolclimate.org.

About Facebook for Education

Facebook for Education creates programs, events and products to build diverse learning communities that bring the world closer together and give all young people access to the skills they need to be successful. Learn more about our education initiatives how we can support you and your students: https://education.fb.com.

APPENDIX

Connecting Communities of Courage Summit Design and Data Analysis

The one-day set of activities for the Summit was co-designed by a 14-member committee, which identified and prepared panelists, arranged working groups, selected co-facilitators, developed a plan for collecting and analyzing data, and identified a set of resources essential to prepare Summit participants.

An important objective of the Summit was to inspire discourse across stakeholders. We did this in three ways: 1) The Problem of Practice Panel; 2) Working Groups; and 3) Post-Summit Facilitator Interviews.

The Problem of Practice Panel: The Problem of Practice facilitator and panelists represented a diverse group of education stakeholders, and were selected based on their experiences collaborating with schools to create the conditions necessary to ensure each member of the school community feels included, safe and engaged.

Each of the panelists were asked to respond to the following questions:

- *What are your experiences collaborating with diverse stakeholders to create inclusive, safe, and engaging schools?*

- *What challenges have you faced to address the problem of practice and how have you overcome them?*

- *What resources do you find most helpful in advocating for inclusive, safe and engaging schools?*

- *What insights and advice do you have for Summit participants as we focus on effective collaborative practices, policy recommendations and challenges during the Summit and post-Summit?*

Working Groups: Nine Summit working groups were organized and composed of 18 – 20 diverse educational stakeholders, with co-facilitators trained to equitably engage each participant, summarize responses to questions, and help develop a Culminating Statement. Each Working Group participant was encouraged to share their stories and experiences, challenges, collaborative strategies, and their insights to assist schools in enhancing inclusiveness, safety and engagement. The Summit Working Group's deliberations and decisions were captured on a dedicated Facebook page organized by four core questions (the 4Qs protocol).

- *Current State: How do the panelists define the problems schools face to effectively and equitably motivate and educate each student?*

- *Practice Recommendations: From the panelists' experience, what are some best practices that could be considered, adopted and/or adapted to address the current state?*

- *Policy Recommendations: What policies identified during the panel need to be implemented to increase support of best practices and to sustain inclusive, safe and engaged schools?*

- *Gaps and Opportunities: From the panelists' experience, what gaps inhibit implementing, integrating and sustaining best practices and policies and what opportunities to they provide?*

The Culminating Statements each working group created can be found in the Appendix.

Post-Summit Interviews

Seven of the Summit Working Group Co-Facilitators were interviewed to validate the existing data posted on the Facebook pages, including responses to the four questions and the Culminating Statement. They also provided strategies from their experience that were not included on the Facebook page due to their role as co-facilitator, which prevented them from fully sharing their insights during the Summit Working Groups.

A research team comprised of the Summit co-sponsors and Summit Committee members analyzed the data from these four sources to identify common themes, collaborative processes, and opportunities to advance inclusion, safety and engagement in schools for this report. We utilized a qualitative methodological approach as it allows for a greater explanation and description of the Summit attendee's experiences, and as in exploratory studies such as this one, allows for the identification of unanticipated responses

Content analysis and simple counting methods were applied using nVivo qualitative data analysis software. Emerging and repeated themes were identified and cross-referenced with working group facilitators. Data was then recoded by researchers to determine common organizing themes. The research team used elements of open coding, axial coding, and process coding through repeated cycles of coding and dialogue to examine threads of meaning embedded within the data. These threads were identified as themes. Items that emerged as themes were then prioritized based on frequency, relevance, and context. Themes that emerged from a similar context or had similar meaning were combined.

The final result was the identification of the four themes elaborated on in this Re-Cap.

SUMMIT CULMINATING STATEMENTS

Each Working Group at the Summit crafted Culminating Statements to identify their core goals and orienting ideals for creating safer, more inclusive, and engaged schools. These statements are included below.

Working Group 1 – Schools will become inclusive when we create a common language and vision to: launch a national advocacy campaign through targeted communication – leveraging existing knowledge, and institutions across diverse stakeholders while keeping students at the forefront.

Working Group 2 – 21st century education will be fundamentally shaped by student voice and engagement. To reach this objective we will prioritize equitable and transparent funding and practices within the following components:

- Building formal and informal infrastructures to amplify student voice at all levels of decision-making

- It is essential to come together. All stakeholders need to be at the table to build positive culture and climate

- Meaningful and innovative oversight

- Intentional HR practices including dedicated engagement at all levels, systems for training and coaching, meaningful evaluation

- Strong authentic messaging and communication

Working Group 3 – What we do from here:

- Mandate time for student engagement and student communities

- Mandate student-led school climate teams

- Give legislators the chance to hear the voice of students

- Take research seriously

- Be more thoughtful on who is included and in what

-

Align resources and best practices and create the time and space for it. Let us go forth! To intentionally develop (and share) best practices in our schools, communities and networks that are student-led, and that foster (and help us practice) connectedness, belonging and inclusion in our schools, and advocate for the teaching of SEL and school climate assessments in our schools everywhere we can.

Working Group 4 – We pledge to continue the conversation past today, and go to work with these thoughts:

- Reach out to mayors, state chiefs, state legislators, state boards of education, and governors. We want to have a conversation. Share some data from the polls. Lead a call to action to the current governors. Statewide social emotional learning K-8, bottom up coalition

- Bring all the stakeholders together before going to the governors

- Break down the silos

- Start with communication. Build trust. See each other as humans.

- Thinking about safety more comprehensively, especially meaningful relationship-building.

- Shared decision-making within the district that includes meaningful relationships among all of the stakeholders.

Working Group 5 – It's incumbent upon all of us to do what we can to elevate youth voice and dismantle the structures that impede it. Schools, in partnership with other social organizations, are an essential vehicle for the development of an engaged community.

Values that are important: (1) This is an iterative process that must be sustained (2) Decision-making should be democratic (3) Schools should be safe, engaging, and healthy so students can learn (4) Being a teacher is a privilege (5) Moral imperative to address hate

Things that need to happen: (1) Youth and parent voice integrated at every level and is intergenerational (2) Recognizing institutional bias (3) Rebuilding trust among communities that don't trust the system (4) Create an Imagining Schools Commission (at local, state, and national level policy decisions) (5) Intentional teaching and modeling of kindness (6) Leverage social media and universities to help address these issues in more arenas besides schools (e.g., campaigns, books, etc.)

Working Group 6 – "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children"- John Dewey

In order to create more engaged school communities, we will rethink schools as communities that are empowering, inclusive, and differentiated by:

- Training schools and communities to align skills

- Establishing protocols focused on building relationships, trust, etc.,

- Including all relevant stakeholder groups in decision-making (#StuVoice)

Working Group 7 – In addition to the investment of resources from multiple levels of governance, we need a new narrative of what make schools great through the development of a Scorecard (at the state

level) that elevates the importance of inclusion and re-defines the role of our schools and monitors whether districts / schools:

- Reward youth voice and leadership, student-led initiatives

- Identify disparities, while looking for the strengths through assets-based framework (por ejemplo, the students bringing new languages into the school being seen as valuable rather than a burden to English speaking students!!)

- Integrate restorative practices / replacement of exclusionary practices with understanding of trauma

- Provide trainings and professional development

- Access to elective courses

- Mental health access and provision

- Community-led initiatives at the school level that focus on cultural competencies and learning areas that elevate inclusive practices

Working Group 8 – Our calls to action:

- Foster empathy through engagement with youth

- Families need to be involved in our school and community safety efforts

- We need to focus on training the new generation of teachers and administrators around creating positive school climates

- Broaden the definition of safety – emotional, physical and engagement; resist going backwards

- Every organization has a sharp communication strategy for how they are going to approach school safety, address biases, and create positive relationships among youth

- Engage youth in prevention and intervention

- Commit to understanding the students

- Adults in the school communities need to be equipped with the ability to connect

- We need to use data to inform practices

- Increase engagement through community coalitions

- Joint statement and sign on letters to combat some policy changes that are happening in the current administration

- We need to anchor our own agencies within the larger goal of promoting school engagement

- Be the firewall – have the courage to be the warrior of change

Working Group 9 – Transform education to value SEL and school climate as strongly as we value academics by:

- Standardizing vocabulary (SEL, restorative justice, etc.)

- Getting out of silos and weaving initiatives together; each school has its own way to bring things to life.

- Providing infrastructure above school/district level to support the work in schools (e.g., community partners)

- Sharing power with students to form authentic partnerships

- Developing community-wide support for initiatives in schools that appeal to various segments of society (e.g., businesses love work skills, religious education - inform clergy about how to discuss these skills with kids/parents).

- Encouraging state educational agencies to aggregate and publish data, best practices -- identifying bright spots in our work and highlighting them.

- Form diverse coalitions to organize and advocate in order to support and develop these initiatives in schools

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