

**Social and Emotional Climate: The CT WSCC Partnership On-Demand Webinar Series Transcript**

Welcome to the social and emotional climate on-demand webinar. There are 10 webinars in this series, each corresponding with one domain of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. This webinar will focus on the social and emotional climate domain. Each webinar will begin with an overview of the WSCC model and an introduction to our practice briefs before a deep dive into the WSCC domain of focus.

The CT WSCC Partnership is a joint collaboration between the University of Connecticut’s Collaboratory on School and Child Health and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health. Before we begin, we want to acknowledge our funding partners and share that the content of this webinar does not necessarily reflect the official views of the CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Our practice briefs draw on the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model, which is the CDC and ASCD’s framework for addressing health in schools. The model is student-centered and stresses the need to coordinate policy, processes, and practice across ten domains of student health and well-being to maximize student success. As can be seen in the outmost ring, the model is situated within the community, and emphasizes drawing upon community context and expertise to use the model in contextually-aligned ways.

The model is not a prescriptive program. Instead, it’s a framework for organizing a school or district’s efforts to support the whole child, facilitate high quality teaching, and maximize student learning and success.

Today's content comes from our WSCC Practice Brief series. These are freely available on our website at ctwscc.org. If you'd like to learn more about how these briefs were developed and our CDC-funded project, please watch our "Intro to the WSCC On-Demand Webinar Series" video.

So what is social and emotional climate? Let’s listen to what one of our community partners has to say about the WSCC domain.

Social and emotional climate is the promotion of a safe and supportive learning environment through attention to social emotional development. There’s many components, I think to social emotional climate. Students have to feel safe. I think they have to feel supported within the school community and if they don’t, they really can’t thrive.

So, why is the social and emotional climate relevant to child outcomes?

It’s important because if they feel secure, if they feel supported, they’re able to perform. And I think that means academically, and I also think it means that it improves their character while they’re at school and helps with relationships between peers and even relationships with staff.

Supportive school and classroom climates can positively impact student social, emotional, and behavioral health. Specifically, a social and emotional climate that encourages independence supports shared decision-making and responsibilities among students and staff, maintains high expectations, and fosters supportive student-teacher relationships has been shown to reduce problem behaviors for high school students.

Teachers play a role in encouraging prosocial behaviors, and a strong link has been found between positive classroom management and student-to-student interactions, such as caring and respectful behaviors. In addition, the use of positive, proactive strategies—such as universal and tiered supports—can reduce exclusionary discipline and disproportionality in exclusionary discipline practices.

So how do we create a positive social and emotional climate? let’s take a look at some evidence-based strategies that you can use in your practice.

We’ve organized the strategies by the required resource demand to help schools choose appropriate initiatives for their setting.

We begin with strategies that require a low resource demand. The first is to promote positive relationships among staff and students. Like we heard from one of our partners, school connectedness promotes positive educational and health outcomes for students through fostering supportive relationships with adults and peers. School connectedness may also serve as a protective factor against emotional distress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and substance use. Schools can promote positive relationships and school connectedness by ensuring that students have a connection or relationship with at least one adult in the building. Using a strategy such as Two-by-Ten, where an adult checks in with a student for 2 minutes each morning for 10 days, can strengthen relationships between students and staff.

Another low resource demand strategy is to use positive, proactive strategies to promote engagement and belonging, which are essential components of a positive climate. Examples of strategies to promote engagement and sense of belonging include those that emphasize student voice, choice, and interest, such as involvement in school-based organizations, sports teams, art, or theater. In the classroom, you can promote academic engagement by ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for choice and response during instruction. School-wide environments that use positive teaching and reinforcement should be used over exclusionary practices such as removing a student from class or providing in and out of school suspensions. These positive behavioral support strategies are associated with reductions in exclusionary discipline and improved student behavior across grade levels.

Now, we move into moderate resource demand strategies. The first recommendation is for school teams to collect, review, and respond to school climate data. You can use data sources such as school climate surveys, office discipline referrals, use of exclusionary disciplinary practices, and evaluations of classroom management strategies to continuously monitor and improve school climate, sense of belonging, and engagement. For example, school leadership teams can implement a plan to review available school climate data and create an action plan to respond to identified areas of need.

A second moderate resource strategy is to engage in prevention and intervention efforts targeted at bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment are associated with negative outcomes such as mental health risk and physical illness, which may persist through adulthood. Research supports the use of anti-bullying programs, although more work is needed to identify common components of effective programs.

Currently, it’s recommended that schools use whole school, multi-tiered approaches, as well as strategies such as increased student supervision throughout the school environment and classroom, and school-wide rules related to bullying, implementation of bystander interventions, and use of multi-component interventions as opposed to a one-time presentation related to bullying.

Our first high resource demand strategy is to implement social and emotional learning instruction across developmental stages. This instruction should be sequenced, active, focused and explicit. When delivered to all students, it has been associated with positive outcomes such as improved peer relationships and pro social skills. Schools should consider how social and emotional learning instruction can be embedded into the school day through dedicated blocks or integrated into other subjects. They should also consider opportunities to form authentic partnerships and shared decision-making with students, families, and community partners.

Our second high resource strategy is to develop staff competence and agency in teaching social and emotional learning. Educators are not always trained in delivering social and emotional learning and this can reduce their self-efficacy for doing so. Professional learning opportunities, including training, consultation, or coaching can support educators in feeling knowledgeable and confident in teaching social and emotional learning. Because the outcomes of these programs are likely to be tied to the implementor’s confidence and enthusiasm teaching the material, it’s important that staff be supported in building these skills.

If you are interested in learning about additional resources related to the social and emotional climate domain of the WSCC model, please see the full social and emotional climate WSCC practice brief.

This brief, among the others, can be found on the Tools page of our website at ctwscc.org. After clicking on our tools, scroll down to Best WSCC practices. Here you will find our practice briefs.

Thank you for joining us! We hope you enjoyed today’s webinar. To view the other webinars in our WSCC on-demand webinar series, please visit our website at ctwscc.org. If you have any questions about the Connecticut WSCC Partnership, please feel free to contact us at ctwscc@uconn.edu.