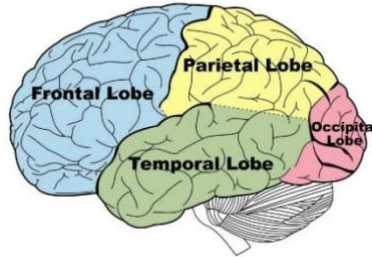


SAFETY AND CLIMATE

Problems occur when human beings experience threat, fear accompanied by a sense of helplessness. When these conditions exist, the brain is designed to focus most of its energy on survival. Survival requires a quick, almost instantaneous response.

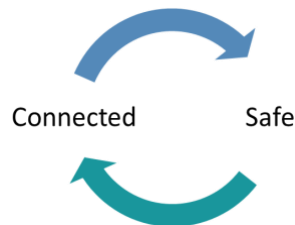


WHAT IS THE CLIMATE IN A SCHOOL?

Climate is the quality of school life. It reflects the norms, goals, values, relationships, teaching practices, discipline practice, and organizational structures

A climate that supports students, staff, and the community to feel connected to the school and participate in its major functions of teaching and learning.

A climate that is free from threatening, violent or criminal behaviors.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CLIMATE?

NEGATIVE CLIMATE	POSITIVE CLIMATE
Disengagement	Pride in institution
Risk of physical or psychological danger (eg. teasing, bullying, gangs)	Feelings of safety
Uncaring, disrespectful interactions	Respectful and dedicated teachers
Unclear rules and expectations	Clear behavior expectations that are being treated fairly
Low achievement expectations	A range of opportunities to become involved in activities
Colorblind approach to discipline	Active social justice agenda
Curriculum and instruction that is not responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students	Culturally responsive practices embedded at all tiers of academic and social-emotional-behavioral support

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY, POSITIVE CLIMATE?

School-wide programs or activities that promote healthy behaviors and reduce the likelihood of adverse and risky behaviors. Here are some resources that can foster a positive climate and support universally applied interventions to the entire school community.

Multi-tiered Support Systems (MTSS) such as RTI or PBIS ([Center on PBIS](#))

Social-emotional learning (SEL)

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Violence, bullying, or substance use prevention curricula.

EMOTIONAL SAFETY

[National Center on Safety Supportive Learning Environments](#) defines emotional safety in schools as "...a student feels secure and confident as they express themselves and take on challenges that encourage them to try something new.

The mind states that accompany survival response and affect the ability to learn.

- Calm and Engaged-relaxed alertness; can think in abstract ways; purpose and meaning.
- Arousal-the most active areas of the brain are the limbic area (emotions) and areas below the cortex. Reflection and higher order thinking are difficult to access.
- Alarm-most active areas are the midbrain (sensory information) and limbic area (emotions). Sending danger and responding emotionally with anger or withdrawal.
- Fear-most active areas are the brain stem (involuntary activities) and midbrain; not thinking in the way most people do; primarily 'reactive' in a stimulus-response or automatic mode.
- Terror-on 'automatic'; the brain's most active area is the brain stem; the autonomic nervous system is highly active; people cannot think in usual ways; reactive are reflexive and totally out of control.¹

¹ Caine, R., N., Caine, G., McClintic, C., Klimek, K., J. (2009). *12 Brain/mind learning principles in action*. Corwin Press.