Maine Schools for EXCELLENCE

Enhancing Educator Effectiveness and Student Learning

School Climate Data Analysis Protocol

Introduction

Purpose

This protocol was developed for guiding a group of 15–30 school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders through analysis of the school climate data to inform school planning to improve the

> *School climate describes the conditions and opportunities that support teaching and learning within a school. School climate impacts all those who interact with schools: students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Sometimes individuals refer to school climate as the teaching and learning environment.*

teaching and learning conditions within Maine schools. Specifically, this school climate data analysis protocol is intended to be used by either school teams working through multiple pieces of school climate data for their school, or by district teams working through multiple pieces of school climate data for their district. The protocol may be used with multiple school climate data sets, including student surveys, staff surveys, attendance, and disciplinary referrals, among other data sets.

This protocol takes approximately 5–6 hours to complete; however, a shortened version can be used each time school climate data are reviewed. The times for a long and short version of this protocol are included in each step.

> *School climate practices refer to policies and actions that seek to improve the teaching and learning climate within the school (e.g., discipline policy and the way the policy is enacted)*

The protocol is designed to help schools and districts think about both the implications of school climate data for the needs of students, teachers, administrators, and community members, and the implications of school climate data as it relates to the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning conditions within schools.

Focus Questions

Questions About School Climate

Throughout the school climate data analysis protocol, you will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do the different data sets and stakeholder perspectives converge and diverge from one another?

2. What do these data tell us about the climate of the school? Strengths? Areas for improvement?

3. How can these data inform practices that are currently working?

4. How can these data inform the professional development and practices needed to move forward?

5. What are the specific action steps in moving forward?

Overview of Process

The protocol is organized into six steps.

Prior to each step, the full-group facilitator will provide an overview of the process for that step.

School climate data will typically be reviewed and interpreted at the school level. As such, the process is set up for school-level teams (small groups of three to five people) to work together through each step of the protocol and share out with the larger group. Ideally, each team is looking at their own schools' data. If the total number of participants is fewer than five or six, then the facilitator may consider full-group discussion by district. The group may also consider a discussion by the full group if only district-level data are available. If district-level staff are present in the meeting, then they can join school-level teams, look at the data across schools, or float from team to team. If staff service more than one school, then we suggest that they stay with one school team throughout the process.

Each small group will need a note-taker and a reporter to share out their findings after each step of the protocol.

Note: The note-takers from each group will share their notes (recorded in this protocol) with the facilitator or a district leader (at the district's discretion) at the end of the session. These notes will be used in reporting the overall outcomes of the session back to your district for planning purposes. Individual names will not be attributed to the comments.

After each step, the small groups will have an opportunity to share out to the larger group. This discussion will be guided by a full-group facilitator.

Materials
Provided by district leadership and American Institutes for Research facilitators:

- School-level **school climate reports** from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) School Climate Surveys (EDCSLS) instructional staff survey (provided to districts by American Institutes for Research in advance of the session)

- Handout including the school climate domains and topic areas

- Chart paper and markers, including some charts that are pre-made to mirror note-taking templates in the protocol

- Multicolored sticky notes that correspond with the data sources

Provided by the school or district:

- School- or district-level **school climate reports** from student climate surveys from the vendor that administers school environment student surveys in your district (e.g., STAR 360, 7C's)

- Other data sources as available (attendance data, behavioral incident data, GPA)

Provided by participants:

- Participants should bring **personal laptops** to view and manipulate data sources on screen. Some data will be provided on paper; other data will only be available electronically. Some data (e.g., spreadsheets) may be difficult to view and/or manipulate using some tablet platforms.

School Climate Data Interpretation Protocol

District Name:

School Name:

Introduction: Overview of the Process
(25 minutes/10 minutes)[1]

Describe the data and the process: The goal is to provide a brief description of the overall process, how it fits in the larger context of school climate improvement efforts, and some of the specifics of the process, including the types of data being reviewed during the session and overview of the protocol. The facilitator will provide an explanation of roles at each table group.

Introductions: For an ice-breaker activity, participants will engage in "SEL Bingo." Participants will state their name and role, and then pick an emotion that they felt at the beginning of the week.

Identify roles in each school team: Each school team selects a "note-taker" to document each school team's reflections using the note-taking template embedded in this protocol and a "reporter" to share with the whole group. The reporter can change between steps but there should only be one note-taker per table.

Clarify questions with participants. At this point, the facilitator can answer clarifying questions as necessary and introduce any other data participants have brought. School teams will not work directly with the data reports until Step 2.

Step 1: Predicting the Data
(20 minutes/10 minutes)

Whole-Group Facilitator: The goals of this step are to make predictions and ask questions to bring to the surface past experiences, preconceived ideas, and assumptions. The table facilitator can use the following questions to elicit responses from participants about each data source and note them in the template below:

- What are some predictions for the results of our data review?

- What are some questions we hope to explore during the data review?

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[1] Note that for each step of the process, the protocol provides a suggested time frame for a longer (5–6 hour) and then a shorter (2–3 hour) meeting.

School Teams:

Note-Taking Template: Complete the following table in your small groups. We will use the table to share out with the full group.

Data Source	Predictions or Questions
Example: Student survey and behavioral incident	*"I predict that the data may show that students perceive safety more negatively than the discipline records show"* *"Why might two different data sources tell different stories about the same topic area? How can we create convergence and align the different perceptions?"*
Staff surveys	
Student surveys	
Attendance	
Discipline data	
Other data sources	

Step 2: Understanding the Data
(15 minutes/5 minutes)

Whole-Group Facilitator:

- **Preview the directions**, data sources, and school climate topics that the stakeholders will review in *Step 3: Observing the data.* Clarify any instances where a given data source is available for only one school and not all schools.

- **Review the slide deck** that describes the different data sources staff will use.

- **Share examples of the school's actual data on screen** and walk participants through the features of each data source, if possible (at a minimum, review the features of the school-level EDSCLS climate reports).

Step 3: Observing Individual Data Sources and Identifying Findings
(90 minutes/45 minutes)

Process Notes:

- This portion requires participants to view data on a laptop computer screen or to partner with a member of their small group to observe data on a shared screen.
- For Step 3 and Step 4, we will not be using the note-taking template and will instead record our thinking using sticky notes and chart paper. For Step 3, we will write each finding for each data source on a sticky note, and place that sticky note on one of the school climate domain newsprint sheets. In Step 4, we will look more closely at these findings and sort them, which is easier to do with sticky notes.

Whole-Group Facilitator:

- **Preview the directions on the slide presentation** on what it means to write findings from the data. In Step 3, we look at the data objectively and identify what the data actually tell us. This is the time to note any patterns or trends that you observe within an individual data source, but without thinking about "why" these patterns or trends exist. At this point, you will be considering each data source individually, not looking across data sources. Making inferences and observing patterns across data sources will come later in the process.

- **Go through an example** of writing findings from the data with the whole group.

- **Ensure that each table has the topic area for each domain of school climate** for reference.

School Teams:

- **Individuals review the data on screen or on paper** (as available) and make observations about the data in each individual data source (not across data sources) as a school group. As a reminder, this step is about understanding facts about the data, not making interpretations or inferences about the data.

- **Each school team record their findings** on sticky notes. Each finding for each data source should be written on an individual sticky note. Each data source should have its own color sticky note. For example, record each finding from the staff survey on individual pink sticky notes, and record each finding from the student survey on individual blue sticky notes.

- **Have school teams categorize findings** by topic area of school climate, placing sticky notes on three different pieces of chart paper based on topic are of school climate (Engagement, Safety, Environment). Each school team will do this independently.

- **Have participants place questions on the parking lot.**

Step 4: Developing Major Themes Across Data Sources
(45 minutes/20 minutes)

Process Note: For Step 4, we are again stepping away from the note-taking template and will continue to record our thinking using sticky notes and chart paper.

Whole-Group Facilitator:

- **Preview the directions on the slide presentation** on what it means to develop major themes across all of your data sources. The primary difference between a finding and a major theme is one grain size: The findings from Step 3 provide objective information from one data source, whereas the major themes developed in Step 4 have a weight of evidence from across multiple data sources. In other words, major themes triangulate data from multiple data sources to create a broader understanding of the data. To create major themes, categorize the sticky notes from each topic area into themes.

- **Look for patterns or trends that emerge.** At this stage, you might identify patterns or trends across data sources, but you still should not be taking the next step of interpreting the cause or reason for the patterns, or asking "why do we think we see this trend?" Ask yourself:
  - Are there any data points that "jump off the page?"
  - Are there cases where two different data sources "tell a different story" on the same topic or have conflicting findings?

- **Go through an example** of writing major themes from the findings across all data sources with the whole group.

School Teams:

- **Have school teams write major themes,** categorizing the findings into larger groupings or categories of how the multiple pieces of data fit together. Groups will put the sticky notes under these higher-level major themes.

Step 5: Interpreting Major Themes
(35 minutes)

Whole-Group Facilitator:

- The purpose of Step 5 is to **look deeper at the patterns identified so far and to make inferences related to school climate.** In this step, participants also generate questions about *"why"* and begin to think about the reasons we may see certain data trends or patterns.

    o Think back to the data points that "jump off the page." What might explain them?

    o Look at the convergence and divergence of data sources. Why might this be case?

- Use this time to **consider the focus questions** at the beginning of this document (also included below for reference). We will focus on questions one and two in Step 5, and we will focus on questions 3, 4, and 5 in Step 6.

School Teams: In the space provided in the table on the next page, school teams will discuss the following focus questions while the note-taker records key discussion points for the group.

Questions About School Climate

1. **How do the different data sets and stakeholder perspectives converge and diverge from one another?**

2. **What do these data tell us about the climate of the school? Strengths? Areas for improvement?**

3. How can these data inform practices that are currently working?

4. How can these data inform the professional development and practices needed to move forward?

5. What are the specific action steps in moving forward?

After five minutes of individual brainstorming, the reporter asks the school team to share inferences within the small group, with all statements rooted in the data. The recorder summarizes the school team responses to share with the larger group.

Whole Group: The reporter shares highlights with the whole group.

Focus Question	Notes and Additional Prompts
Q1. How do the different data sets and stakeholder perspectives converge and diverge from one another?	*Converge* *Diverge*
Q2. What do these data tell us about the climate of the school? Strengths? Areas for improvement?	*Strengths?* *Areas for improvement?*

Step 6: Connecting to School Climate Professional Development and Practices
(35 minutes)

Whole-Group Facilitator:

- Guide participants through a school team and then whole-group discussion on the implications for climate. This step is designed to help participants consider implications for the school climate systems and structures based on interpretation of the data. Participants work in their school teams to discuss school climate strengths and challenges, and propose action steps to address challenges. The note-taker records key discussion points. Consider the focus questions related to professional development, policies, and practices related to school climate.

- Use this time to **consider the focus questions** at the beginning of this document (also included below for reference). We will focus on questions one and two in Step 5, and we will focus on question three, four, and five in step 6.
    1. How do the different data sets and stakeholder perspectives converge and diverge from one another?
    2. What do these data tell us about the climate of the school? Strengths? Areas for improvement?
    3. **How can these data inform practices that are currently working?**
    4. **How can these data inform the professional development and practices needed to move forward?**
    5. **What are the specific action steps in moving forward?**

The group seeks to identify connections between what needs to change and what is working in the school environment support systems currently in place.

For example:

School Climate Improvement Action Steps

School Climate Topic Area	Professional Development Practice Implications		
	What practices are currently working?	What professional development and practices are needed to move forward?	What are the specific action steps in moving forward?
Safety	*Students feel safe in the school.*	- *Support for improved classroom management* - *Revised discipline policy*	- *Revise the discipline policy to represent more inclusive discipline practices*

School team discussion: Small groups work together to fill in the table below. The left side is a place to identify what is working. The middle column helps identify what specifically is needed to move forward, and the right column provides a space for "action steps" to implement the professional development and practices that are needed. In other words, this discussion helps answer the question, "How can we do better or do things differently?"

Whole Group: After 20 minutes, reporter shares highlights with the whole group.

School Climate Improvement Action Steps: Note-Taking Template

School Climate Topic Area	Professional Development Practice Implications		
	What practices are currently working?	What professional development and practices are needed to move forward?	What are the specific action steps in moving forward?
Engagement			
Safety			
Environment			

Reflecting on the Process—Participant Feedback
(5 minutes)

Please provide feedback on the session. Please detach this sheet from your packet and turn it into the facilitator before you leave today.

What went well about today's session?	What about this process could be improved?

What changed in your thinking after today's session?	What was reinforced by participating in today's session?

What will you and your school or district team do as "next steps" to act on what you discussed today?	Do you have any other comments or feedback to share?