

5.

School Climate and Leadership

In the previous chapter, we posed a number of research-related questions that can be asked to determine a school's effectiveness. In this chapter, we regroup those questions under the categories of school climate and leadership—the final components in our model for improving school and classroom effectiveness (see page 4.)

We recognize that others may group these questions differently, and we encourage you to take a stab at such an exercise. Our purpose is not to determine the critical categories of school effectiveness for all time; rather, it is to be as explicit as possible about the way the data make the most sense for us now.

School Climate

Metaphorically, school climate consists of three weather conditions: an emphasis on academics, an orderly environment, and expectations for success. The questions synthesized from the research provide indicators that can help assess a school's climatic conditions. Because all school participants appear to contribute to and have a stake in a positive school climate, the questions are grouped to indicate each participant's contributions to each "weather condition."

Academic Emphasis: Students

- Do students master the academic work?
- Do students bring books and pencils to class?

- Do students use the library on a weekly basis?
- Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?

Students' mastery of academic work can be determined by report card grades, by questions correct on unit tests, and by the teacher's professional judgment. Not surprisingly, students who bring books and pencils to class usually succeed. Such actions by students reinforce the school's academic emphasis. Frequent use of the school library by students may indicate that students and teachers value the resources of the library, and are thus reinforcing an academic emphasis. The questions also suggest that when students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and controlling classroom behavior, the academic emphasis of the school is enhanced.

Academic Emphasis: Teachers

Instruction

- Is time spent efficiently and directly on teaching academic skills?
- Do lessons start on time and continue without interruptions?
- Is whole-group instruction used?
- Do teachers provide rewards for actual achievement?
- Do teachers praise students for work well done?
- Do teachers regularly give and mark homework?

Planning

- Do teachers plan lessons in advance?
- Do teachers regularly give and mark homework?

Other

- Do teachers expect students to succeed?
- Are staff members willing and available for consultation by children about problems?

Teachers can reinforce an academic emphasis by spending time efficiently and directly on teaching academic skills. This may help student engagement and success, which, according to our model, may in turn enhance student achievement. Planning lessons in advance helps to ensure that lessons begin and end on time. Teachers can bolster an academic emphasis by providing rewards and praise to students for work well done. Homework assignments also appear to be an indicator of academic emphasis. Homework gives a student an opportunity for further practice, thus increasing the student's engagement and increasing the likelihood of improved achievement. The availability of teachers to help students with problems may also signal an academic emphasis.

Academic Emphasis: Principals

Behaviors

- Do teachers and principals support the academic focus of the school by spending most of the school day on instructional activities?
- Does the principal regularly observe classrooms and confer with teachers on instructional matters?
- Does the principal check to see that teachers assign homework?

Structures

- Is course planning done by teacher groups rather than by isolated individuals?
- Do teachers feel their interests are represented by those making decisions?
- Are rewards fairly earned by a large number of students?

Beliefs

- Do principals and teachers believe and expect that students can master their academic work?
- Does the social structure of the school teach those who work and learn there that their actions have some effect?

Principals promote the school's academic emphasis by their own actions, by the organizational structures they put into place, and by their beliefs. Principals of effective schools tend to spend a large proportion of their day on activities related to instruction. Three actions are associated with high student achievement: checking that teachers assign homework, observing in classrooms, and conferring with teachers. Effective principals have found ways to organize their time so that the instructional program receives priority.

The questions also suggest that principals create organizational structures that enhance the school's academic emphasis—for example, having groups of teachers rather than individuals plan courses. In effective schools, teachers feel their interests are represented when decisions are made, although they may not have direct input into the decision. This finding suggests that adequate communication exists in the school. The question of students earning rewards implies that the school organizes reward structures for achieving students, and that achievement is a valued outcome. Principals of effective schools organize and maintain such reward structures.

The research on effective schools highlights the importance of principals believing that students will master the academic content. When the principal actively structures the school's social system around mastery, then it may be more likely that students and teachers feel their actions and efforts have some effect.

Orderly Environment: Students

Perceptions of discipline

- Do students perceive that discipline is unfairly administered?
- Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?

Student participation

- Do students use the library on a weekly basis?
- Do students take care of school resources?
- Have students participated in organizing a schoolwide charity drive?
- Are a high percentage of students named in school assemblies for their participation?
- Do high proportions of students hold positions of responsibility?
- Do students have equal and fair access to academic and cocurricular school programs?

Students, teachers, and principals also contribute to a school's orderly environment, the second component of a positive school climate. The questions concerning this component suggest indicators of effective schools that have a low incidence of violence and vandalism and/or higher-than-expected student achievement.

Student indicators of an orderly environment can be grouped into two clusters: perceptions of discipline procedures, and participation in school affairs. In effective schools, students perceive that discipline procedures are fair and are applied equally to all. Effective schools also elicit high student participation: students take care of school resources, contribute to school-organized charity drives, use the school library, and are involved in class activities and assemblies. These specific indicators correlate with positive pupil behavior in school.

We go beyond these indicators to suggest that schools that enlist students' participation in a wide variety of activities are less likely to have student behavior problems because the students have a stake in the school. If many students interact around school activities outside the classroom, then norms of positive student behavior may be more likely to emerge.

Orderly Environment: Teachers

Instruction

- Do teachers start lessons on time and continue without interruption?
- Do teachers regularly give and mark homework?
- Do teachers provide rewards for actual achievement?

Classroom management

- Are positive models of behavior provided by teachers?
- Does the feedback students receive in terms of rewards and praise outnumber punishments?
 - Are punishments delivered in a way that indicates firm disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and avoiding modeling violence?
 - Does the faculty express punitive or authoritarian attitudes toward students?
 - Do teachers usually handle their infrequent discipline problems themselves?
 - Are teachers available to consult with students about problems?

Teachers can enhance the orderly environment of a school through their skills in instruction and classroom management. In instruction, the teacher's use of time is important; thus one question suggests that teachers who maximize their allocated time by beginning lessons promptly have fewer discipline problems. Teachers who give homework and provide rewards or reinforcement for actual achievement also have fewer discipline problems. As these comments suggest, some indicators of orderly environment also reinforce a school's academic emphasis.

The classroom management questions suggest ways discipline problems should be handled in the classroom. For example, the teacher's own behavior is a model for student behavior. In classrooms with few behavior problems, teachers use punishment but avoid humiliation and violence toward students. Moreover, they do not express punitive or authoritarian attitudes toward students, and they tend to handle discipline problems themselves. Positive rewards and praise generally outnumber negative reinforcements. Teachers with fewer discipline problems also tend to be more available to students to talk about personal and academic problems. It is interesting to note that the two teacher behaviors of instruction and classroom management, which are closely linked to student achievement in our model, also promote an orderly school environment.

Orderly Environment: The Principal*Consensus building for an orderly environment*

- Have teachers and administrators come to a working consensus on the patterns of acceptable behavior for staff, students, and administration?
- Has the principal built shared expectations and strong coordination about school rules?

- Does the principal provide a reliable system of support, appropriate inservice training, and opportunities for staff to coordinate their actions in areas of instruction and discipline?

Delivery of discipline

- Does the principal actively set the tone and focus of the school by observing classrooms, enforcing the discipline code in a "firm but fair" manner, and setting goals for the school that are supported by the staff?
 - Are punishments delivered in a way that indicates firm disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and avoiding modeling violence?
 - Do students perceive that discipline is fairly administered?

The principal's role in creating an orderly environment revolves around creating a consensus about the school rules among staff and students, then administering this consensus in a "fair but firm" manner. In delivering punishment, firm disapproval should be indicated while avoiding humiliation and modeling violence. Students may be the "touchstone" if they perceive that discipline is fairly administered. Thus, consensus building and firm delivery help define the principal's role in creating an orderly school environment.

Expectations for Success*Students*

- Do students feel the school helps them to master academic work?
- Do students believe that luck is more important than hard work?
- Do students believe that they can get ahead without something or someone stopping them?

Teachers and principals

- Do students, faculty, administration, and community feel that their own efforts govern their futures?
- Does the social structure of the school teach those who work and learn there that their actions have some effect?
- Do principals and teachers believe and expect that students can master their academic work?
- Do teachers expect students to succeed?
- Do staff expect students to succeed and achieve?
- Do teachers have high expectations of all students, regardless of race or class?

Expectations for success help reinforce an orderly environment and an academic emphasis in schools. But such expectations cannot be directly observed in behavioral terms. Indeed, this area is usually

assessed by questionnaires that ask students, "Do you believe luck is more important than hard work?" and ask teachers, "Do you think that all of your students will complete high school?" In effective schools, positive answers to these questions generally coincide with teachers starting classes on time or principals observing classes. We assume that there is some interaction between beliefs and behaviors, but we are not sure whether people act because they believe, or act first and belief follows. We suspect it's a little of both.

Students in effective schools perceive that the school helps them master academic work. The teacher's behavior in structuring the classroom, and the principal's leadership in organizing the school, apparently help mold students' perceptions in this way. Such speculation is consistent with research on achievement motivation, which suggests that students can learn to succeed, given the appropriate structure.

We also speculate that academic success leads to enhanced self-concept and a feeling of efficacy on the student's part. Students in effective schools generally believe they can get ahead and that work is more important than luck. Self-concept is correlated with student achievement, and both are significant and measurable outcomes of schooling for us.

Teachers and principals in effective schools express their expectations for success in such a way that students know what is expected of them and believe they can measure up to these high standards. As a social system, the school also communicates its expectations for students by providing rewards for work well done and creating opportunities for student participation and leadership. In their attention to academic programs and discipline procedures, principals set the tone for the school. And in an effective school, both principal and teachers not only believe students can succeed, but model those expectations to the school as a whole.

School Leadership

When reviewing the questions on school climate, we found the principal's importance mentioned in every category. We wondered what specific behaviors on the part of the school leader are associated with an effective school, and we went back to our original questions to search for possible answers. The questions highlighted three processes of leadership that suggest norms for developing a positive school climate. Specifically, school leaders (1) develop positive models, (2) generate consensus, and (3) use feedback to build a positive school climate. In schools succeeding above expectations, these leadership processes ap-

pear to be in place, and they may provide hints about how a school might change if increased student achievement is a valued outcome.

Modeling

We tend to copy the actions, attitudes, and beliefs of people we respect, especially if those people are in positions of authority. Because teachers and administrators hold such positions in a school, their behavior provides important cues to children about what is expected and what is valued there. Let's take a look at how one principal's behavior is perceived by a student hall monitor.

Dr. Black, the principal, is six feet, six inches tall and walks the school's hall with long strides. He makes a definite impression on people, as this passage from a seventh-grader's English composition suggests: "On my way to class, with the halls empty, I was walking behind Dr. Black, who stooped to pick up a piece of paper. He swooped down like an eagle after a field mouse, retrieving the paper without breaking stride. Now, I do the same while thinking of eagles."

Picking up a piece of paper in the hall of a large school is a small gesture, yet it speaks of a person who cares about how the school looks and cares for the people who work and study there. By this one gesture, Dr. Black has modeled a whole constellation of beliefs to the hall monitor. Picking up trash is not seen as a demeaning task but instead is associated in the student's mind with the power of eagles. While most gestures may not be that effective, people in schools do look to respected authority figures for models of appropriate behavior and attitudes. Modeling may be a particularly appropriate way of reinforcing both academic emphasis and an orderly environment.

Let's take a look at the questions that demonstrate the importance of modeling as a leadership process (see Figure 1). We begin by discussing modeling from the perspective of the principal and organize questions to show how modeling can affect a school's climate.

Principals in effective schools model an emphasis on academics by observing classrooms, conferring with teachers about instructional matters, and setting agreed-on goals for the school. "What I do is what I mean," is the way one principal describes his modeling. "If I'm not in those classrooms, then the teachers begin to feel I don't care about the academic program. From observing classrooms, I know the staff's teaching patterns. I know what is being taught. There's less time teaching holiday facts and more time spent on reading and math skills than when I first began in this position. I believe the emphasis of the curriculum changed partly because of our teacher-principal conferences after classroom observations."

Creating and maintaining an orderly environment is enhanced by

Figure 1. Modeling.**The Principal's Role***Modeling for an Academic Emphasis*

Does the principal actively set the tone and focus of the school by observing classrooms, enforcing the discipline code in a "fair but firm" manner, and setting goals for the school that are supported by administration, staff, and students?

Does the principal regularly observe classrooms and confer with teachers on instructional matters?

Does the principal emphasize academic standards?

Modeling for an Orderly Environment

Are punishments delivered in a way that indicates firm disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and avoiding modeling violence?

Is the building maintained and decorated to provide pleasant working conditions for students?

Is the principal perceived by students and faculty as modeling expectations of fair and equal treatment?

Do high proportions of students hold positions of responsibility?

The Teacher's Role*Modeling for an Academic Emphasis*

Do teachers provide rewards for actual achievement?

Do students bring books and pencils to class?

Are staff members willing and available for consultation by children about problems?

Does teacher behavior, such as helping students on the teacher's own time, indicate that the school's children and the profession of teaching are valued?

Modeling for an Orderly Environment

Are positive models of behavior provided by teachers?

Does the faculty express punitive or authoritarian attitudes toward students?

Do teachers start lessons on time and continue without interruption?

Do teachers praise students for work well done?

Do teachers structure the classroom environment to permit students to succeed?

the principal's modeling of appropriate behavior for staff and students. This modeling behavior is exemplified in the procedure for determining punishments, the frequency of those punishments, the perceived fairness of the punishments, and the equity with which the punishments are administered to different groups in the school population. Maintaining a well-decorated building where conditions for students are pleasant is another way to demonstrate or model an orderly environment. A clean building suggests order. Modeling by the principal may create an "environmental press" where being orderly is the easiest thing to do.

One way to enhance an orderly environment is to ensure that the school enlists students' participation, not only in the classroom but through having a large proportion of students hold leadership positions in the school. Through participating, the students have a stake in the school.

Teachers—who are, after all, the leaders in the classroom—also model behaviors and attitudes that affect a school's climate. When teachers provide rewards for actual achievement, when students are required to bring books and pencils to class, when teachers are available for consultation outside of the classroom, then teachers are modeling the importance of a school's academic emphasis. A teacher who begins lessons on time is more likely to maintain order in the classroom. Conversely, if students perceive an authoritarian or punitive attitude being modeled by a teacher, they are less likely to internalize the norms of an orderly environment. Teachers also model, by their own behavior, the school's expectations for success. By praising children for work well done, by teaching so that all children experience success, and by spending time on instruction, the teacher communicates these expectations to students.

Of course, modeling can also work in a negative direction. In some low-achieving schools, for example, or in schools with high incidences of violence and vandalism, observers found that teachers did not, as a group, spend the entire class period on academic content. In the same schools, students perceived that a few students could "get away with" inappropriate behavior: "It was only unlucky if you got caught." Such negative models also communicate clearly to school participants.

The models provided by administrators and teachers are one of the keys to leadership in effective schools. The behaviors of teachers and administrators, as authority figures, communicate what is really valued, what is really important in a school.

Consensus Building

Consensus builds as groups of people behave in consistent patterns. At times, these patterns are explicitly agreed on. Schools maintain consistent patterns for beginning and ending the day, for when it is appropriate to talk to the principal, and for when students and teachers eat lunch. Implicit patterns also build, evolving because people begin to behave in a particular way—homework isn't given on weekends, certain groups occupy "their table" in the lunchroom, students don't carry books to classes. Thus, each organization builds consensus patterns, each of which may help or hinder the achievement of the organization's goals. In effective schools, consensus is built around the school climate factors of academic emphasis, orderly environment, and expectations for success. The questions in Figure 2 point to leadership processes that

Figure 2. Consensus Building.*Consensus Building for an Academic Emphasis*

Is course planning done by groups of teachers?

Do inexperienced teachers consult with experienced teachers?

Do teachers have extensive contact with a limited number of students in several aspects of their education?

Is there little differentiation among students or in the instructional program provided for them?

Do principals and teachers believe and expect that students can master their academic work?

Consensus Building for an Orderly Environment

Have teachers and administrators come to a working consensus on patterns of acceptable behavior for staff, students, and administration?

Has the principal built shared expectations and strong coordination about school rules?

Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?

Do students perceive that discipline is unfairly administered?

Does there appear to be a working consensus on how school life is organized?

Are there structured opportunities for staff and administration to develop and reinforce consensus?

Consensus Building for Success

Does the social structure of the school teach those who live there that their actions have some effect?

Do students, faculty, administration, and the community feel that their own efforts govern their future?

Do teachers have high expectations for all students, regardless of race or class?

Are there provisions for school outings?

Do a large number of students participate in assemblies?

Do high proportions of students hold positions of responsibility?

Are there out-of-class activities that bring students and teachers together to build toward a common goal?

Does the social structure of the school and classroom provide opportunities for students to practice leadership?

may assist in building consensus and developing a positive school climate.

Building consensus for an academic emphasis requires that teachers have time to meet and plan course content together. New teachers need an "old pro" to introduce them to formal and informal school rules and procedures. A consensus emphasizing academics can be destroyed in a few years if new teachers don't understand that students are expected to do their homework in this school and that it's appropriate to require and

enforce that students bring books and pencils to class.

The next two questions suggest that a differentiated academic program may have a detrimental effect on creating consensus. In effective schools, there is little differentiation among students' programs. Further, effective schools design schedules that give teachers extensive contact with a limited number of students in several aspects of their education. Ironically, in building an academic emphasis, according to the above criteria, the teacher-student relationship may be more important than a vast smorgasbord of course content. The last question in this area suggests that staff and administration must hold expectations that all students can master the academic content.

In building a consensus for an orderly environment, the idea of a "working consensus" should be emphasized. The staff and administration need to periodically review patterns that promote or disrupt the school's orderly environment. Is a different group of children showing up late for class? Is there a trend in cutting class? Building consensus also means enforcing rules in a consistent manner, so students generally agree that the enforcement is fair and equitable. Arbitrary and inconsistent enforcement of a school's rules leads staff and students to think that luck is a more valued commodity than following the rules.

Students in effective schools feel that their actions have some effect. They believe that if they study, they will get better grades; they know that if they cut school, their parents will be notified. Consensus in this area is likely to bring success in school and a healthy self-concept. School leaders help build this consensus by hundreds of decisions every day.

Consensus can occur only if people interact with one another, however. Thus, success can be fostered by providing for school outings and assemblies and creating opportunities for many students to hold positions of responsibility. Students are likely to be more successful and to have more of an investment in school if they are involved in activities outside the classroom. The idea of student involvement, as described in Chapter 2, takes on additional meaning here. Effective school leadership analyzes patterns of student involvement and opportunities for students to formally exercise responsibility and then seeks improvement in those patterns.

Consensus building is a leadership activity. School leaders in schools with fewer incidents of violence and vandalism than would be expected were able to form a consensus between administration and faculty about both the focus of the instructional program and the disciplinary policies and procedures. It is interesting to note that students were not necessarily involved in developing either consensus. Rather, when students perceived a fair, firm, and consistent consensus

on academics and discipline, school outcomes were better than expected. Similarly, Rutter et al. (1979) found a correlation between better student attendance and achievement and teachers who felt their views were considered important by the administration even when they themselves had no actual say in administrative decisions.

Feedback

The school, like all organizations, provides feedback to participants about the acceptability of their behavior. Through feedback, participants learn what is really valued by the organization. For example, most schools have rules about being late for class. Despite such rules, however, in one school almost a third of the students were consistently late for class. Teachers who used to start their classes on time gave up. The students complained when sanctions were imposed and claimed they were imposed inconsistently. After a while, everyone adapted to the situation by starting their classes later. Students understood the feedback the organization provided—it's not important to the school that students get to class on time. The feedback led teachers to understand that students would be late and nothing could be done about it. Another, more subtle, message is that the leadership in this school may not value what happens in the classroom enough to design ways to help get the students to class on time. And the result, of course, was that student involvement, coverage, and success decreased. If eight minutes are lost from each period in an eight-period day, by the end of a 180-day school year, students and teachers will have lost 11,520 minutes or 1,920 hours of time allocated for instruction. No wonder student achievement suffers.

The questions synthesized from the research (see Figure 3) suggest areas where effective school leadership provides feedback that supports a school climate in which academics are emphasized, the environment is orderly, and success is expected.

Both principals and teachers provide feedback that reinforces a school's academic emphasis. Positive feedback to students for a task well done is associated with better student outcomes. It appears obvious that teachers should praise students for work well done, display student work, and regularly give and mark homework. Yet that is not always the case. In many of the ineffective schools covered by case studies, observers found that students were rewarded for incorrect answers or, when they answered correctly, received no reward. Similarly, Rutter et al. (1979) found at least three times as many negative reinforcers as positive ones in the school environment.

Principals provide feedback that supports an academic emphasis by checking to see if teachers give homework, conferring with teachers

Figure 3. Feedback.

Feedback for Academic Emphasis

- Do teachers provide rewards for actual achievement?
- Do teachers praise students for work well done?
- Do teachers praise students' work in class?
- Is student work displayed on walls?
- Do teachers structure the classroom environment to permit students to succeed?
- Do teachers regularly give and mark homework?
- Does the principal check to see that teachers give homework?
- Does the principal regularly observe classrooms and confer with teachers on instructional matters?
- Do teachers and principals support the academic focus of the school by spending most of the school day on instructional activities?
- Do teachers feel their views are represented in decision making?

Feedback for an Orderly Environment

- Do students perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior?
- Does the faculty express punitive or authoritarian attitudes toward students?
- Do teachers usually handle their infrequent discipline problems themselves?
- Are punishments delivered in a way that indicates firm disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and avoiding modeling violence?
- Is the principal aware of staff punctuality?

Feedback That Builds Expectations for Success

- Are rewards earned fairly by a large number of students?
- Does the feedback students receive in terms of rewards or praise outnumber punishments?
- Do high proportions of students hold positions of responsibility?
- Does the social structure of the school and classroom provide opportunities for students to practice leadership?
- Is inservice training provided that encourages self-reflection and skill building in areas promoting equal opportunity?
- Do students believe that luck is more important than hard work?
- Do students believe that they can get ahead without something or someone stopping them?

about instructional matters, and representing teachers' views in the decision-making process.

Students' perceptions of faculty and administration agreement on school rules indicate feedback that reinforces an orderly environment. This feedback avoids humiliation, violence, and authoritarianism, while indicating firm disapproval of misbehavior. Congruence on these matters requires school leaders who are willing to monitor and develop

consensus about the way a school operates; when staff punctuality is monitored by administrators, we assume such consensus is developing.

Feedback that builds expectations for success is communicated through rewards and leadership positions for students. When rewards are earned by large numbers of students, when students hold many positions of responsibility, then this feedback supports a climate of success. And when students believe that their actions and decisions can have an impact on their world, success may foster an improved self-concept.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed leadership and school climate indicators associated with better school outcomes. The indicators suggest three norms of a positive school climate: an orderly environment, an emphasis on academics, and expectations for success. When grouped another way, the indicators also suggest the three leadership processes of modeling, consensus building, and feedback, which support a positive school climate. Many specific indicators associated with a positive school climate and effective leadership processes are similar to those that lead to student involvement, success, and coverage. Thus, leadership processes and school climate provide one way of understanding what makes a school effective and suggest places where change may significantly affect school outcomes.