Proven and Practical Approaches to Understanding and Improving Your School Climate and Culture for School Safety and Achievement

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How Would You Like **Your** Children to be Treated in School?

How about your *Grandchildren?*

From John W. Whitehead

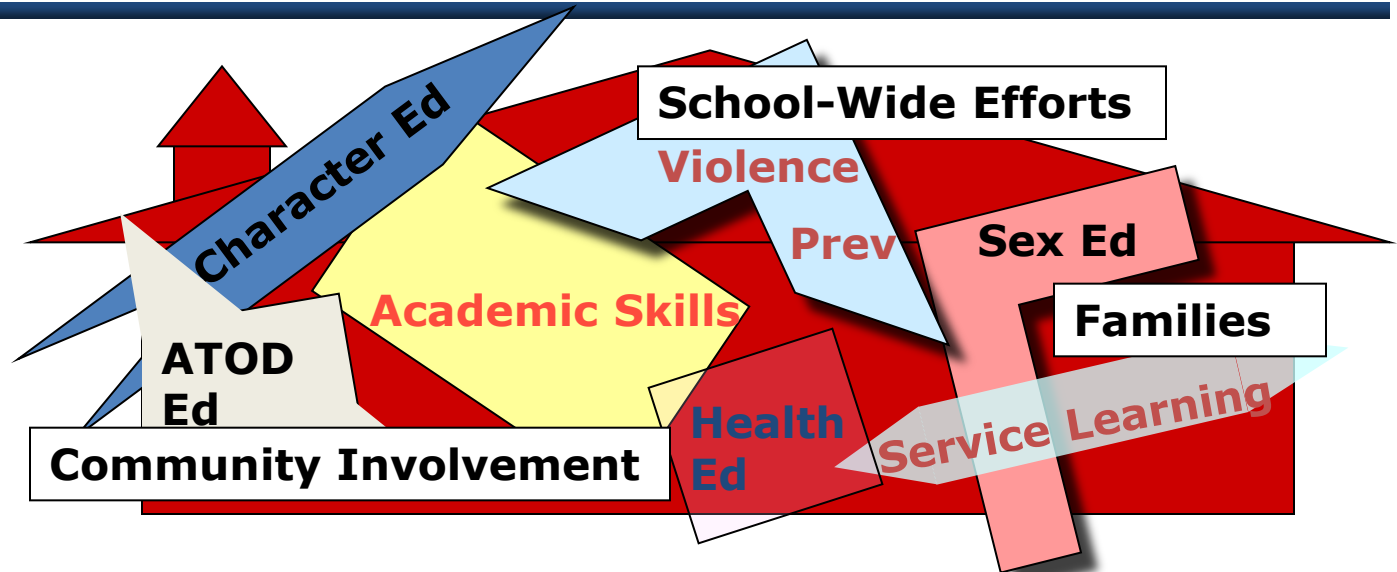*Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see.*

So…..

What messages are we sending when we send children into less than optimal schools?

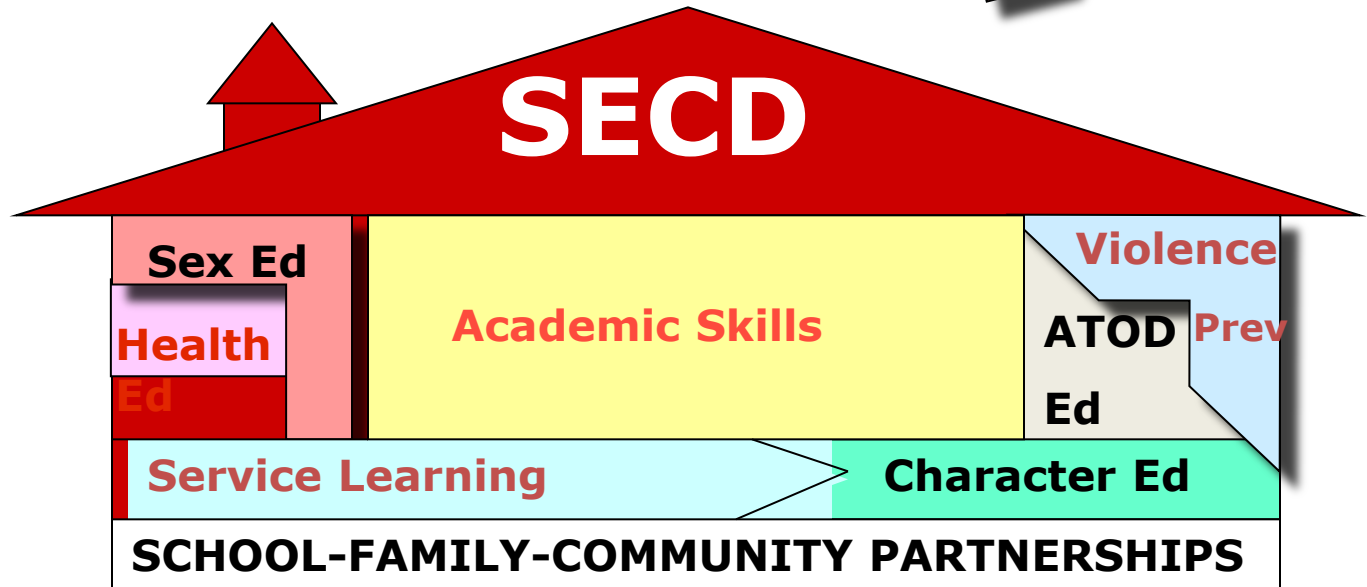# What is Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD)?

- a set of **skills and dispositions/essential life habits**

- that can be **built developmentally** if we do so with intentionality, focus, and continuity, and

- **schools are the place** where most children can be reached systematically,

- because the same set of skills and habits ultimately **mediate academic, civic, and workplace success**

- and it relates to moral and performance character!

Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD):
A Coordinated Framework Provides Synergy

Programs without a Common Framework

Character Ed

School-Wide Efforts

Violence

Prev

Sex Ed

Academic Skills

Families

ATOD Ed

Health Ed

Community Involvement

Service Learning

A Common Framework Provides Synergy

SECD

Sex Ed

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Health Ed

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Prev

Ed

Service Learning

Character Ed

SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
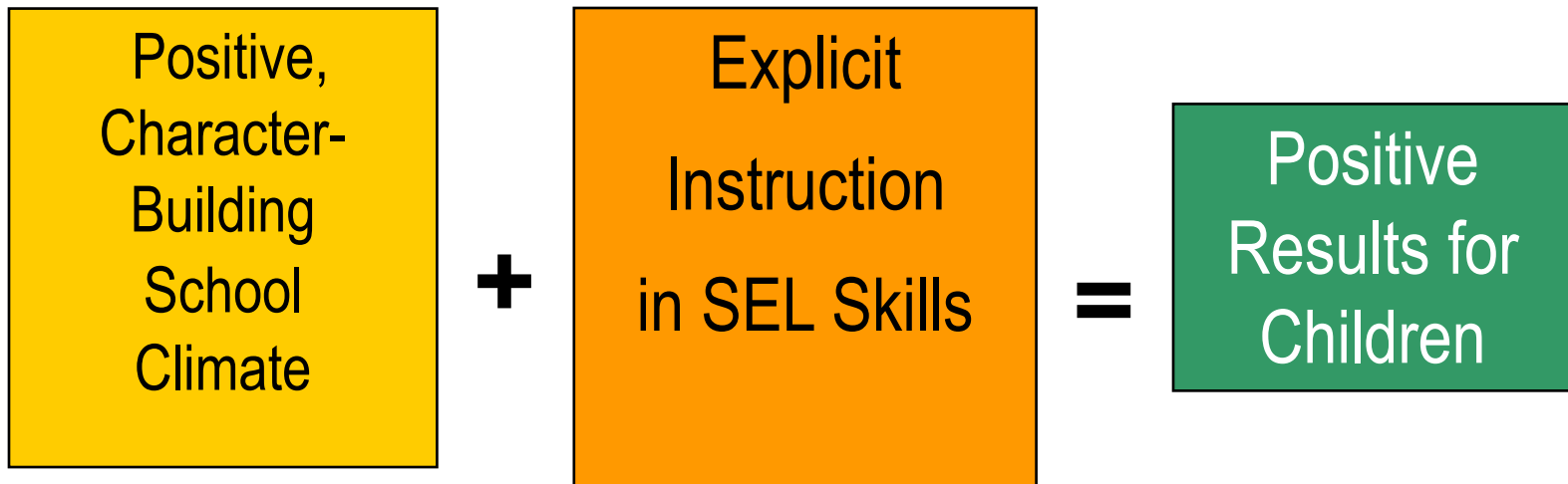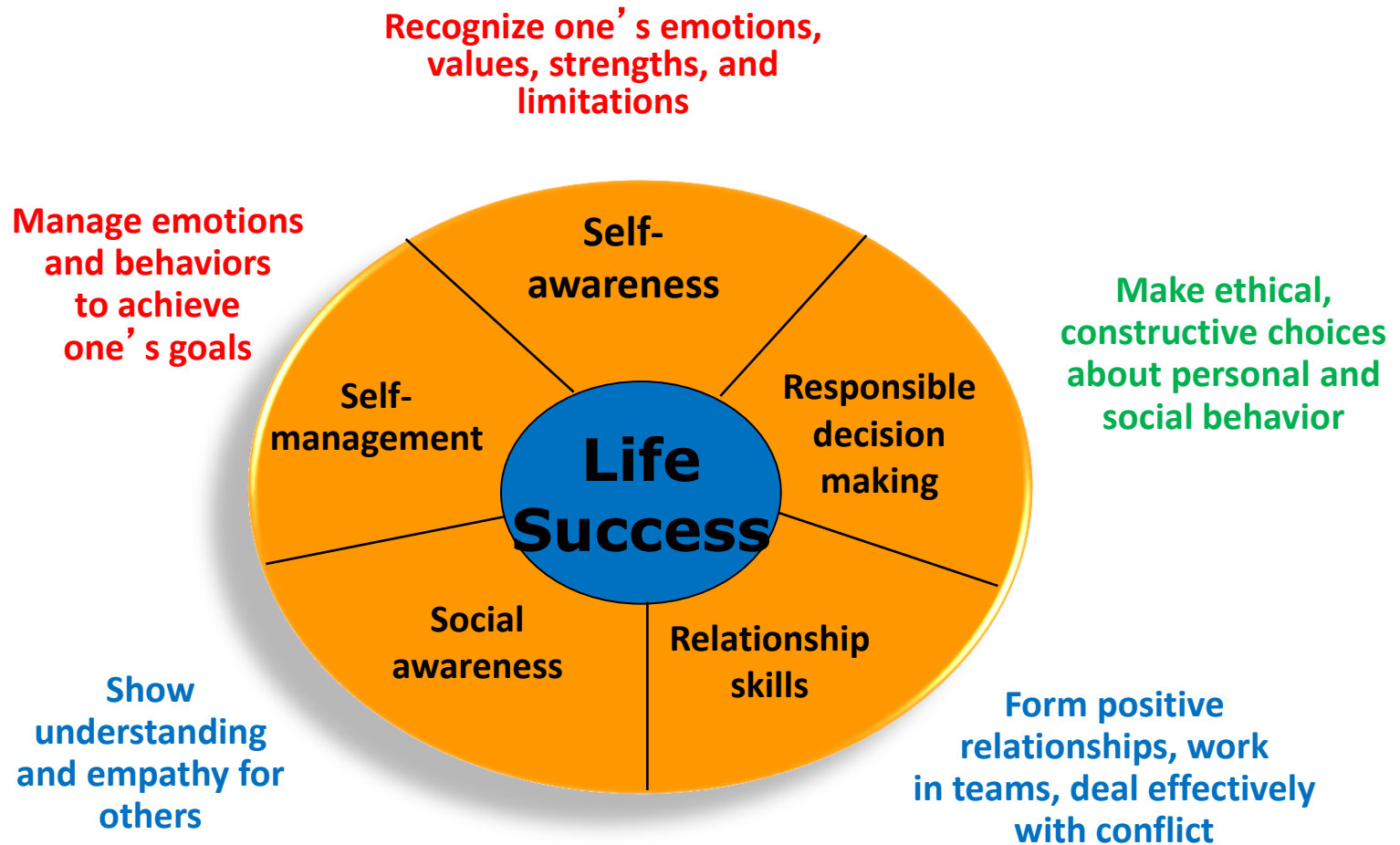
How Does SECD Work?

SECD is an evidence-based strategy that integrates the intellectual, emotional, and social facets of learning. It works through two related approaches:

| Positive, Character-Building School Climate | **+** | Explicit Instruction in SEL Skills | **=** | Positive Results for Children |

What Skills are Needed for Success in School and Life/Participatory Competencies?

Recognize one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations

Manage emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals

Make ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

Self-awareness

Self-management

Life Success

Responsible decision making

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Show understanding and empathy for others

Form positive relationships, work in teams, deal effectively with conflict

Benefits of SECD

Good Science Links SECD to the Following Student Gains:

- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
- 10-11 percentile-point gains on standardized achievement tests

And Reduced Risks for Failure:

- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

Source: Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*. (available at www.casel.org) and M. Berkowitz & M. Bier, *What works in character education.* (Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership, 2006) (available at www.characterandcitizenship.org.)

Paths to Success in School and in Life:

Success Requires a Confluence of SECD and Classroom and School Environment
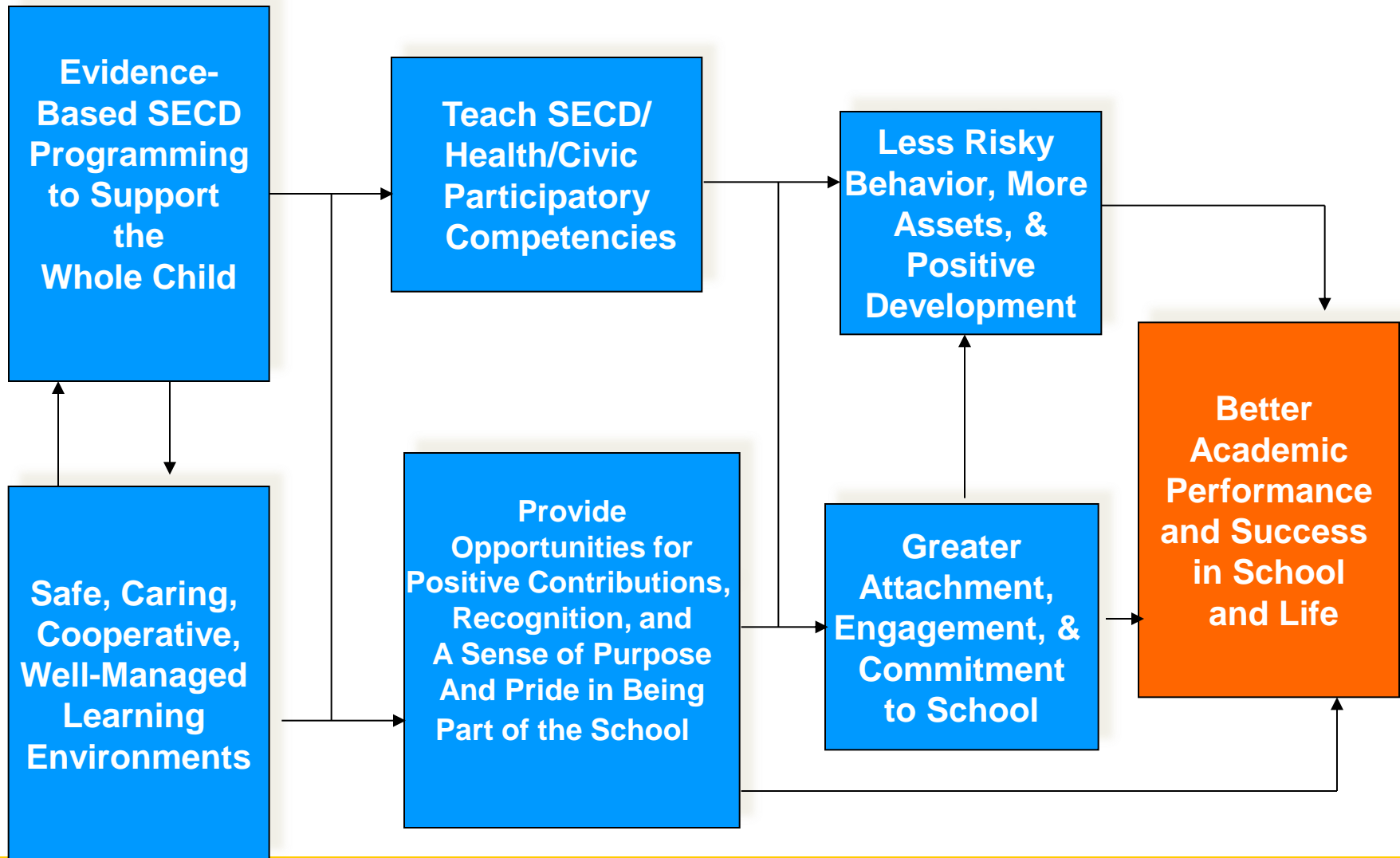
Successful 21st Century Schools Understand and Emphasize That:

Systematic, comprehensive, and effective approaches to school-wide SECD are an essential component of all students' academic and life success

How to Get Unjumbled and Move towards Schools of Character and Academic Accomplishment: Six Lessons Learned from DSACS for School Policy

- *Climate and Culture Assessment, Feedback, Planning*
  - Climate Assessment of Students, Staff, Parents
  - Identification of other indicators and data gathering procedures to contribute to assessment and ongoing evaluation
  - Data Review and 8-week Planning Cycle Worksheets
- *Infrastructure Development and Support*
  - Work from and with existing climate, discipline, character, SEL, etc. teams
  - Help teams learn how to work and problem-solve, obtain administrative support, and achieve and celebrate success

More Lessons Learned for School Policy

- *School Identity Clarification, Integration, Social Marketing*
  - Identify core values, essential life habits, themes, what the school stands for; consider Laws of Life-based interventions
  - Unjumble the school house developmentally in support of the core; prune before you plant
  - Integrate core elements throughout the curriculum and report cards
  - Articulate the role of SECD in reaching goals and the scope and sequence in assuring all students will improve SECD skills in systematic, continuous, coordinated ways
- *Promote Student Voice and Engagement in Learning and the Life of the School and Community*
  - Systematically build and provide instruction in SECD skills, complement with service learning, student government, participation opportunities
  - Set powerful norms for respectful relationships in classrooms and elsewhere
  - Greet students, recognize absences and life events, and ensure all have a positive connection with staff or peer mentors

More Lessons Learned for School Policy

- *Connect to Existing Mandates*
  - Show how SECD is essential to meeting existing mandates, including:
  - Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying/Violence Prevention Policies, ATOD Policies, etc.
  - School and District Goals
  - Effective implementation of Core Curriculum Content Standards
  - Expected/Mandated Behaviors of School Professionals and their Accountability Systems
- *Connect to Those Who Are Walking the Walk*
  - -- those implementing other whole school models (CASEL/SEL; CEP/NSOC; Responsive Classroom; Social Norms)
  - -- value your SECD colleagues and share and steal shamelessly

College, Career, Life Ready

The Essential Role of School Climate in Reaching the Goals of Education & Preventing HIB

"There is … powerful evidence that school climate affects students' self-esteem and self-concept. School climate also colors school-based risk-prevention efforts. Effective risk-prevention and health-promotion efforts are correlated with a nurturing school climate. It also promotes academic achievement. As a result of these findings, fostering socially, emotionally, and physically safer schools has become a primary focus of the U.S. Department of Justice and virtually all state education departments." (Cohen, 2006, p. 212-213.)

The climate of the school is the key determinant of student engagement, prevention of HIB, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students for tests of life.

From Cohen, J. (2006). Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being. *Harvard Educational Review, 76* (2), 201-237.

ASCD Whole Child/NJCCC Climate

Healthy	Safe	Engaged	Supported	Challenged	Sustainability
Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.	Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.	Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.	Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults.	Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.	Schools implementing a whole child approach use collaboration, coordination, and integration to ensure the approach's long-term success.

Parameters of Climate Analysis

- Overall Composite Scores for Students, Staff, Parents
- Subgroup analysis within surveys: gender, ethnicity, staff position, grade level
- Comparisons of Staff-Student-Parent perceptions on parallel scores
- Comparisons over time
- Special indicators and mandate/goal or intervention-linked items (e.g., Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying; Closing Achievement Gaps; Program Skill Display, such as caring, empathy, manners, consideration, leadership; *note the special role of Respect*)

Staff Perceptions of Support For Parents and Staff: Composite Scores

Staff perceptions of SUPPORT AND CARE FOR PARENTS (how respectful teachers and students treat parents in the school environment) were reported to be **slightly positive**.

Support for Parents | **3.57**

Staff perceptions of SUPPORT AND CARE FOR AND BY STAFF (how caring and supportive teachers treat their students, how comfortable students are to talk to their teachers about problems; how respectfully staff members treat one another, how supported by the school the teachers feel, and how respectful parents are to teachers) were reported to be **slightly positive**.

Support for Staff | **3.73**

Staff Perceptions of Student Climate: Composite Scores

Staff perceptions of STUDENT RESPECT (how respectful staff and fellow students perceive students at that school to act in the school environment, including in their interactions with fellow students (i.e. teasing) and their teachers) were reported to be **slightly negative**.

Student Respect | **2.45**

Staff perceptions of STUDENT FRIENDSHIP AND BELONGING (how inclusive, cooperative, welcoming and friendly students interact with one another in the school environment, how respectful staff and fellow students perceive students at that school to act in the school environment) were reported to be **neutral**.
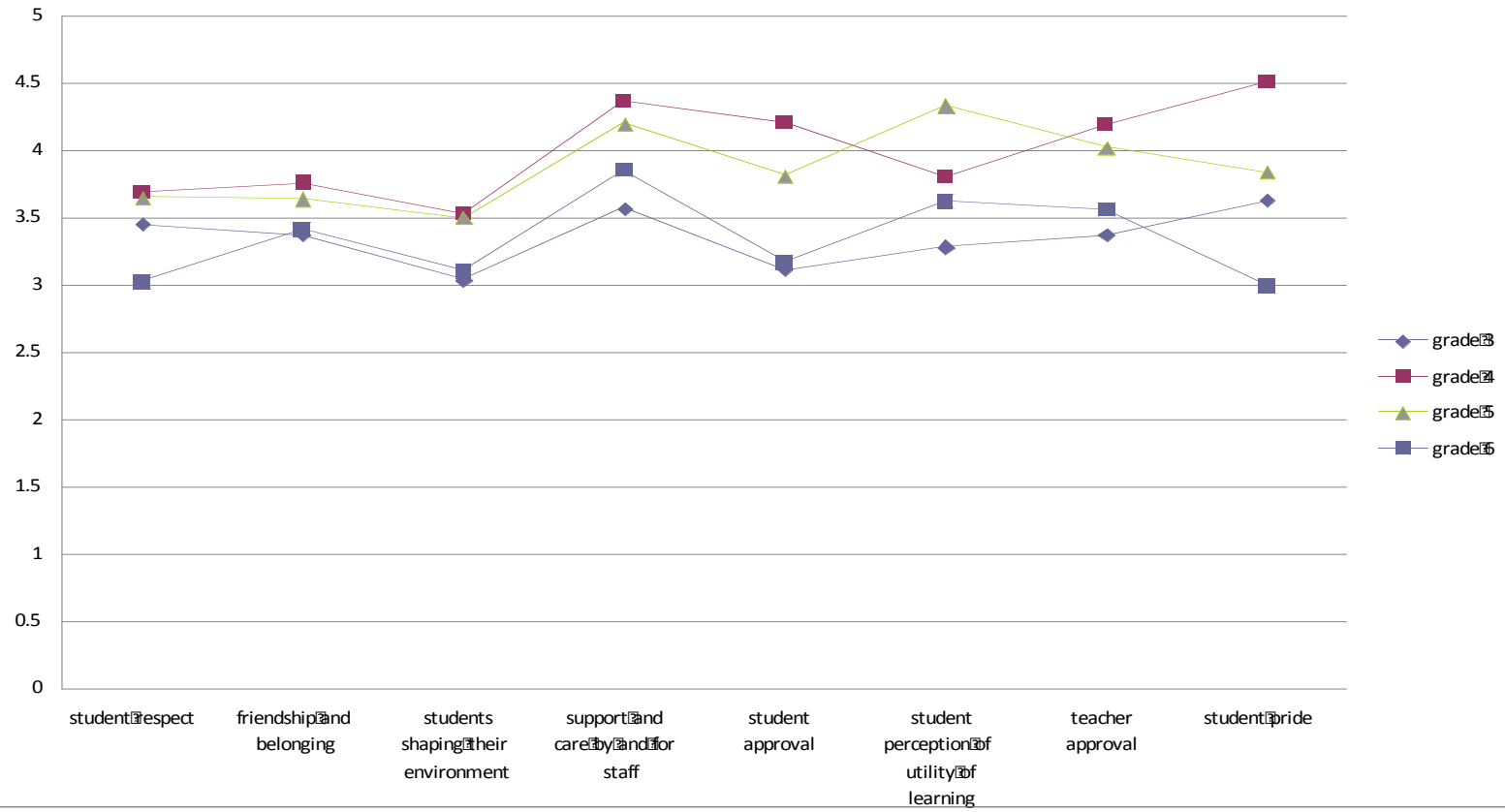
Friendship/ Belonging | **3.01**

Staff perceptions of STUDENTS ABILITY TO SHAPE THEIR ENVIRONMENT (how involved students are in solving school problems, improving the school environment and solving their interpersonal conflicts effectively) were reported to be **slightly negative**.

Students Shaping Their Environment | **2.61**

Bruno Elementary School Students by Grade 2008

Categories (x-axis): student respect, friendship and belonging, students shaping their environment, support and care by and for staff, student approval, student perception of utility of learning, teacher approval, student pride

Legend: grade 3, grade 4, grade 5, grade 6

Student perceptions of **STUDENTS ARE BULLIED** ("Students are often bullied or teased in my school") **MEAN = 2.56**
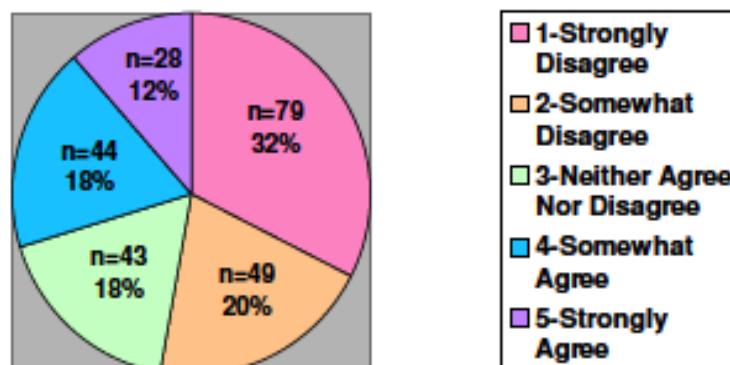
Legend:
- 1-Strongly Disagree
- 2-Somewhat Disagree
- 3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 4-Somewhat Agree
- 5-Strongly Agree

Pie chart values: n=79 32%, n=49 20%, n=43 18%, n=44 18%, n=28 12%

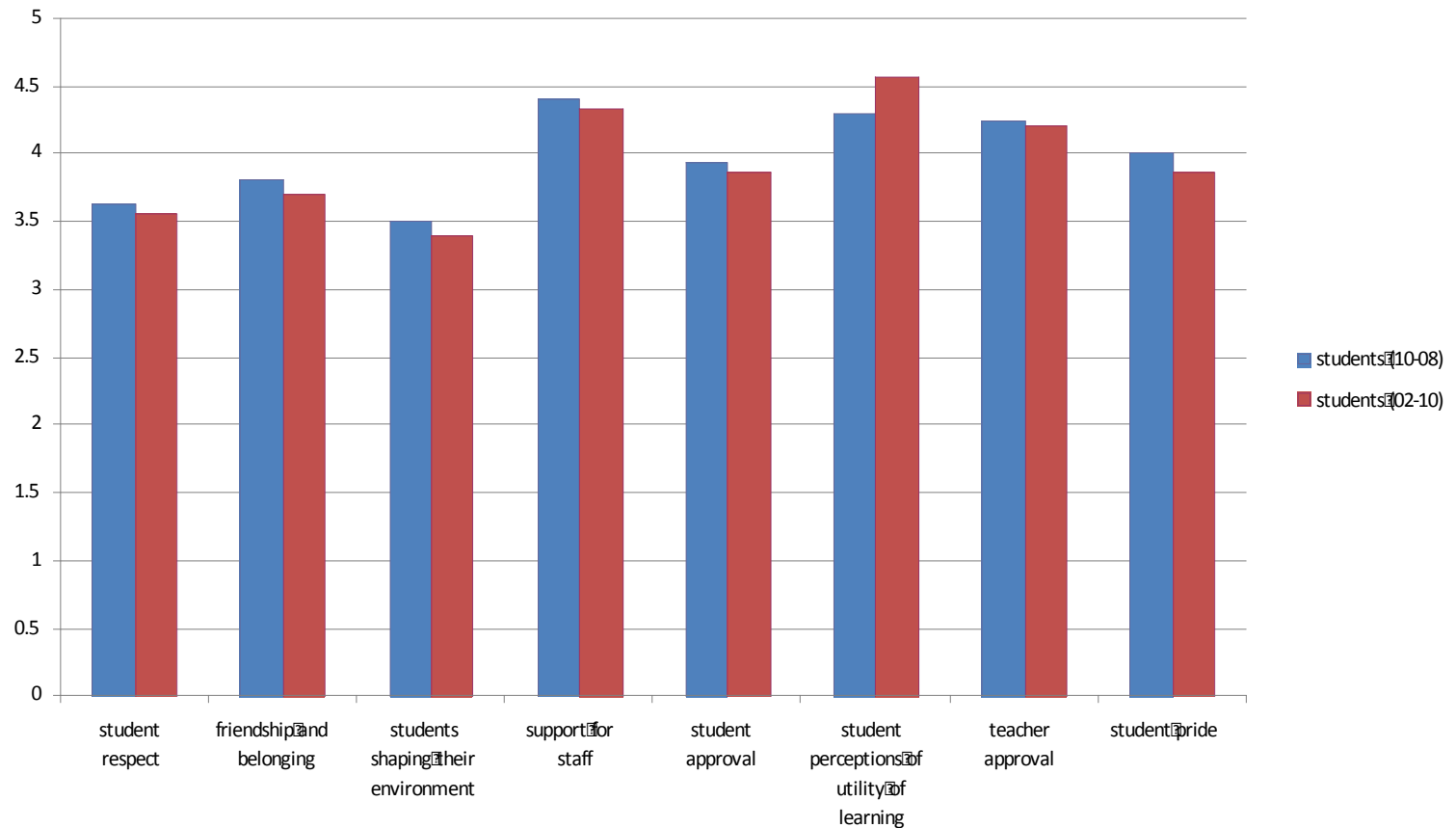| 1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree	4-Somewhat Agree	5-Strongly Agree
n=79 (32%)	n=49 (20%)	n=43 (18%)	n=44 (18%)	n=28 (12%)

Student perceptions on **LEARNING TO DEAL WITH BULLYING** ("In my school, students learn how to deal with bullying and teasing") **MEAN = 4.11**
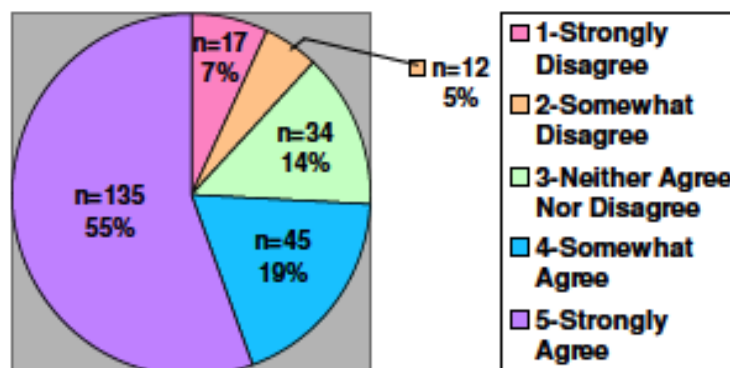
Legend:
- 1-Strongly Disagree
- 2-Somewhat Disagree
- 3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 4-Somewhat Agree
- 5-Strongly Agree

Pie chart values: n=17 7%, n=12 5%, n=34 14%, n=45 19%, n=135 55%

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree	4-Somewhat Agree	5-Strongly Agree
n=17 (7%)	n=12 (5%)	n=34 (14%)	n=45 (19%)	n=135 (55%)

Erin M Bruno Elementary School Students
October 2008 and February 2010

Category	students (10-08)	students (02-10)
student respect	3.63	3.55
friendship and belonging	3.80	3.70
students shaping their environment	3.50	3.40
support for staff	4.41	4.33
student approval	3.93	3.86
student perceptions of utility of learning	4.30	4.57
teacher approval	4.24	4.20
student pride	4.00	3.86

students (10-08)
students (02-10)

Guiding Questions for Data Review

1. What are your school's **strengths**?
2. What is your school doing that makes these areas strong?
3. What are your **surprises** from this survey?
4. What results did you think would be different?
5. What **practices** do you think led to these results?
6. Do you notice **patterns** that stand out (e.g., grade level, ethnicity, gender)?
7. What are your school's **challenges**?
8. What is your school doing systematically in each area of the SECD Logic Model- student attachment/contributions/engagement, positive recognition, SECD skill development, classroom climate improvement, to reach **all** students with "no alibis, no exceptions, no excuses"?

DSACS Data on
Bully-Climate- Voice Connection

- Data from Years 3 and 4 of the DSACS project, the first years in which we collected anonymous data on students' perception of bullying.

- We examined the relationship between the degree of bullying in school and the extent to which students felt they were being given useful strategies to handle bullying, and their perception of the school climate. The overall data set represents 115 schools and 48 districts, and 48,000 students, across the full range of DFG's in NJ, across the entire state geographically.

- Across all data sets for both years, for disadvantaged schools vs. others, and for elementary, middle, and high schools, the finding were remarkably consistent.

Key Findings

- Bullying is related to the climate of the school and is most strongly and significantly related to the **respect that students feel in the school**, especially among their peers.

- Where there is a respectful environment, bullying is less likely to exist in schools.

Key Findings

- The extent to which students feel they are truly learning strategies to cope with HIB in their schools is most strongly related to the:

  extent to which they perceive teachers as being *caring and supportive to students and to one-another*, and

  secondarily to extent to which students feel they are *involved in shaping their school environment in positive ways*.

- Students appear to find HIB prevention and intervention messages valuable when staff members are seen as genuinely caring and when students are engaged in the school.

Essential Programmatic Steps

- Increasing Youth Voice, Engagement, Genuine Participation

- Integrating SECD Skills/Character Themes into Academic Instruction

Best Practices for Fostering Youth Engagement and Building Students' SECD

- **Meaningful, Participatory Student Government**
- ***Service Learning-- Lions-Quest International***
- **Feedback/Sharing Opportunities**
- **Open Forums for School Problem Solving**
- **Staff/Student Committee Involvement**
- **Having a Voice/Diversity Monitoring**
- **Buddies, Mentors, and Tutors**
- **Opportunities for Reflection**
- ***Opportunities for Identifying and Developing one's Laws of Life***

Research Confirms Long-Held Good Sense

- *To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.* -- Theodore Roosevelt

- *We are going to ask our children not just to talk but to act, serve, and live in accordance with a set of higher values and with a buoyant optimism.--* R. Sargent Shriver

- *Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.* -- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Small Steps Toward a Great Journey:
Becoming a School-Focused Coordinator of SECD and Supportive Culture and Climate

You Cannot Effectively Advocate for What You Do Not Show: The Courage of your Character Convictions

"Don't let what you

cannot do interfere

with what you can do."

John Wooden

"The children are waiting."

Ted Sizer