

Spring 2007

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Featured Article

"The Adult Lives of At-Risk Students"

The Roles of Attainment and Engagement in High School

National Center for Education Statistics

Author: Jeremy D. Finn

For a copy of the article: e-mail request to info@perspec.com

Did you know...?

- Student achievement research done by Kathleen Cotton found that about half of the respondents concluded no difference between the achievement levels of students in large and small schools...
- Also, students in large schools had a large group of active participants at one end and a large group of students who did not participate in extracurricular activities. Small schools had fewer students who did not participate in anything.

Keeping the Emphasis on Education

How controlling school climate can increase academic achievement

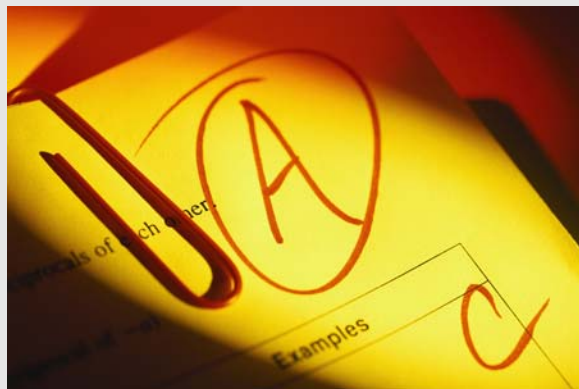
It is a known fact that creating a positive learning environment and school climate will benefit students, parents, and the surrounding community. Though the word 'climate' can take on many meanings, an article from *e-Lead: Leadership for Student Success* describes it as, "...the sum of all perceptions and emotions attached to the school, both good and bad, held by students, faculty, administrators, parents, and the community at large." This may sound like an easy task to regulate and enforce, but it rarely receives the kind of attention needed to actually make a change.

Schools facing large budget-cuts and low enrollment might think they have a greater challenge when trying to implement an atmosphere

more conducive to learning. The fact is that with a few simple improvements, as slow moving as they might be in the beginning, a change for the better will ultimately be the end result.

1. Equilibrium is a necessity.

Students have many opportunities available to them regarding after school activities, but the importance has seldom been on academic achievement. The key is to create a **structured balance** between homework and extracurricular participation. Priding students on more than just a winning basket or creative art project will improve both their self-esteem and aide in raising the school's climate appearance.



Reference: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

- Nationally, 66 percent of 10th-grade schools had at least one unacceptable physical or structural condition related to cleanliness, vandalism, and/or disrepair.
- Nationally, most schools were located in neighborhoods that were generally perceived to be clean and safe.

Reference: National Center for Education Statistics

- 47% of teachers said they rarely read education-related blogs...
- 73% of teachers using the internet said it has enormously affected the way they teach...

Reference: Teacher Magazine

Questions and Answers

Karin Chenoweth, author of *It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools*, and principal Barbara Adderly of M. Hall Stanton Elementary School in Philadelphia answer questions regarding the drastic reform of school climate that occurred within MH Stanton Elementary. An excerpt is as follows:

"Q: What was done to change the culture and achieve such success, especially in so short a time?

A: (by Adderly) 'Believing that all children can learn at high levels. Knowing what the data tells you and reviewing that data on an ongoing basis. Using the data to design your professional development for teachers...'"

To read more, [click here](#).

(free registration may be required)

Reference: *Education Week*. "Academic Success in Unexpected Schools." 2007 (May)

Word of the Month

This May, schools across the U.S. are focusing on the word **Respect**.

- Readings, speakers, and activities

2. Surround students with success.

Placing enthusiastic and intelligent staff in the leadership roles can offer an immediate change for the school climate and educational experience. People who enjoy coming to work and teaching will most likely make their surroundings more enjoyable and give the student a more pleasurable day at school. Leaders could also be given the opportunity to take on the role as mentor for certain students that are not making the grade.

3. Be aware of specific problems.

Just as schools differ in size, diversity, surrounding population, etc., they too will differ in needs. Administrators need to be aware of the common problems specific to their school as it relates to the current school climate. An example would be the issue of bullies. Bullying, in some areas, has been a much larger problem than most adults believe it to be. This would be a main target area to focus on and improve for that specific school.

Information is best gained from the students themselves. By getting information straight from the source, it allows for faster research and better results. This research can **guide a district's future** based on data received and information learned. Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. provides information and services, which will allow you to plan and make informed decisions based on **data** relating to student, staff, parent and community opinions, concerns and perceptions about the district's school climate.

References:

Creating a Learning-Centered School Culture and Climate. E-Lead: Leadership for Student Success. May (2007). www.e-lead.org

Cohen, Jonathan, and Terry Pickeral. "How Measuring School Climate Can Improve Your School." *Education Week*. May (2007)

Pros and Cons of School Blogs

Administrators try to communicate



The new communication phenomenon taking over schools can only be attributed to their introduction to blogs. Short for "Web logs", they were created in the 1990s as the internet became a place where

communication was more readily accessed and responded to. Today, hundreds of educational administrators are logging on to write about current issues facing schools; the

will be implemented to raise student's awareness

- For more information on how to bring the 'Word of the Month' to your classroom, [click here](#)

Reference: [GoodCharacter.com](#)

Useful Links

[Michigan Education Story.](#)

News and analysis for Michigan schools

[American School and University](#)

A publication devoted exclusively to the business of managing educational facilities

[Education Commission of the States](#)

Aims to help state leaders identify, develop, and implement sound education policy

[LookSmart](#)

A search engine for articles from a variety of educational journals—for free!

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hope is to gain better insight into the minds of their readers, both fast and effectively.

Although blogs have been around for a good 15 years, they are just now entering the educational system. With the help of James Farmer, founder of [Edublogs](#), his Australian based web community is home to over 70,000 education-related blogs.

The most widely documented purpose for using this form of internet communication has been to gain feedback from people of all sorts about a plethora of topics. Teachers and administrators find it especially helpful because they can generate large school based discussions in a matter of hours. A required reading book too controversial? A problem with students using cell phones in class? A professional dilemma that needs advice? All can be answered and discussed, depending on what the author decides. Key components regarding safety are what seem to bring more school officials to the growing blog community, but only if precaution is used. Anonymity is available when needed, the 'comment' option can be turned off or deleted at any time, and each blog is only as detailed as the blogger allows it to be.

Problems have occurred because it is such an open form of communication, which some administrators are having trouble with. It seems that the more personal the blog, the more readers it gains. This style of writing may not always be effective in getting the message across if, for example, a principal simply wants to educate its local constituencies about recent events. The most important thing to remember is that good judgment must be used in every situation; you never know who is reading the information posted. Another issue is that topics and discussions must be updated frequent enough to keep audiences interested.

Ultimately, it seems that blogs are dependent on word of mouth and the efficiency of school administrators to learn the new technology. In our experience conducting surveys for school districts, information can help implement better resources and help to seek out more proficient ways to communicate. Surveys can offer objective evaluations on how effective programs have been in accomplishing their goals.

Archer, Jeff. "Leader's Blogs Offer Candid Views on Life in Schools: Principals, district chiefs are venturing into the world of online postings." *Education Week*. May (2007)



We want your feedback!

Send us a quick e-mail with comments or questions about the e-newsletter.

Email kshoop@perspec.com

Did you receive the Educational CD-ROM?



We have developed a resource for school districts that outlines the services Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. offers. If you are interested in receiving the CD-ROM, please e-mail Katie at kshoop@perspec.com and we will be happy to send it to

you and anyone else in your district who might be interested.

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