

Ohio School Climate Guidelines

GUIDELINE 1 –Operational Principles For Local Schools that are Grounded in Best Practices for Academic Achievement and are Espoused by the Community Produce System Effectiveness

Best practices for academic achievement includes promoting student connection to school, personal growth and development for all members of the learning community, parent engagement as essential partners, and orderliness in the environment. A mode of operation or operational framework that is grounded in sound, evidence-based child development practices has the potential for maximizing academic success and staff retention and minimizing conflict and discord among staff and students. The operations of the school include classroom instruction, food services, transportation, record keeping, and administration. Fair and effective school-wide disciplinary policies and procedures are a key component of school operations as they serve to model, promote and uphold the community’s values in all school environments. An effective way to determine how local schools operate daily is by joining the expertise of school leaders with the community philosophies and attitudes of the community-elected School Board.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks:

Benchmark A: A stakeholder group meets a minimum of four times a year to monitor the District’s progress and lend support for the establishment of safe, supportive learning environments.

1. Identify, meet with, and engage representatives from the following groups to serve on the stakeholder group: local emergency responders, social and health services, faith-based groups, parents, students, faculty, and district administrators.
2. Identify and present research-based best practices for removing barriers to learning to the stakeholder group.
3. Clearly define roles and responsibilities of each partner for assisting in the enhancement of the learning environment.
4. A subcommittee of the Stakeholder Group reflecting representatives of key partners (see Guideline 2) meets monthly to review progress, learn from achievements, identify and address new needs and priorities, and to work on sustainability.

Benchmark B: Establish a professional development agenda for school administrators that includes the roles of principals, superintendents, and district administrators in forming, improving, and sustaining effective school-community partnerships.

1. Provide technical assistance and training materials to principals, superintendents, district administrators, and school board members that demonstrate the contributions of a positive school climate and strategic, solid community partnerships to school improvement, especially improved learning and academic achievement.
2. Survey school administrators and school board members to identify training needs, interests, and opportunities.
3. Coordinate training for school board members, district administrators, and building task forces (Guideline 1: Benchmark C) about the conditions that relate to safe and supportive learning environments:
 - a. School organization (leadership, policies, procedures, job satisfaction)
 - b. Reducing teacher turnover
 - c. Reducing student turnover
 - d. Instructional methods and classroom management
 - e. Safety and security of facilities including buildings, grounds, transportation, playground equipment, visitor procedures
 - f. Availability of support services for students, families, and school staff
 - g. Community commitment to education
 - h. Student involvement in meaningful services
 - i. Student behaviors such as tardiness, truancy, expulsion, and suspension

Benchmark C: The District School Board has established core standards for safe and supportive learning environments consistent with the Ohio School Climate Guidelines and adopted a district plan to align curriculum, student supports, professional development, policies and resources to these standards consistently across all schools in the district.

1. Identify sound theories of child development, incorporating approaches that demonstrate beneficial effects on children's learning.
2. Conceptualize a coherent, unifying framework to promote positive development of all students.
3. Integrate, where applicable, all elements of school safety and security into the identified framework to ensure comprehensiveness in approach.
4. Present the framework to the stakeholder group (Guideline 1: Benchmark A) for review, feedback, and modification.

Benchmark D: The Superintendent has reviewed recommendations regarding the removal of barriers to learning that exist within each school building and has established a task force within each building to develop a data-driven, research-based Building Plan for achieving a dynamic, safe and supportive learning environment.

1. Establish a timeline for completion of building assessments (Guideline 3: All Benchmarks) and submission of recommendations.
2. Integrate recommendations into the District’s Continuous Improvement Plan to enhance the conditions in each school building in the district. The Plan includes district-level review of:
 - a. District policies and practices that support safe and supportive learning and the alignment of building policies/practices to them;
 - b. Training needs and interests of all school administrators.
3. Submit the Continuous Improvement Plan to the Board for approval that includes: a mission and vision, measurable goals, implementation objectives, and performance indicators.
4. After community input and adoption by the local Board, publicize the Continuous Improvement Plan to the community.
5. Train each building task force in ways to implement the plan within their respective buildings.

Benchmark E: Efforts to improve public relations between the school and community are conducted routinely to build a stronger connection between the school and the community.

1. Convene a community forum annually to hear concerns and share results about the school enhancement efforts.
2. Prepare and submit an annual report to the District School Board and the community that includes information about student progress.
3. Establish community service opportunities for youth and provide community recognition of contributions.
4. Collaborate with community agencies to provide family support services and adult learning opportunities, enabling parents to more fully participate in activities that support education.
5. Offer the school’s meeting space for community activities such as adult education, recreation, and culturally-enriching opportunities.

GUIDELINE 2 – School-Community Partnerships Enable the Provision of Comprehensive Services for Students and Staff

Schools have a lead role in shaping the future of a community because of their responsibility to educate our youth. Research supports that this immense responsibility is influenced, however, by factors beyond the walls of the school buildings. Often, the only cost-efficient, effective way to remove those barriers to academic achievement is through

successful, ongoing collaboration with community institutions, groups, individuals or parents. All such school-linked partnerships are developed with a clear plan regarding the proper roles, functions, and missions of Ohio's schools; and with due recognition that some health and social service programs are best provided in community settings in close consultation with parents and families. Community partners include businesses to help schools align education programs with the realities of the 21st century workplace; community and faith-based services to address the non-academic barriers to learning; local emergency responders to prepare school staff to react efficiently and effectively to school emergencies; youth development organizations to increase academic learning time in the non-school hours; and volunteers to enrich the learning environment through mentoring and tutoring.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks:

Benchmark A: School staff-personnel are responsible for developing effective working relationships with community-based youth development organizations, social-health service agencies, and other community resources.

1. Develop consensus among the school improvement team and other staff on how youth development organizations, faith-based institutions, and social-health service agencies will contribute to school improvement.
2. Assess the needs, programs and services, and aspirations of existing student support staff, ensuring that they serve as co-leaders of new partnerships.
3. Develop procedures and protocols with teachers regarding how youth development specialists, faith-based leaders, and social-health service providers can support their work with students.
4. Develop position descriptions that include responsibilities for strategic school-community partnerships needed as determined by school improvement plan.
5. Provide training and technical assistance to perform the functions of the job.
6. Identify staff to work with prospective partners to inventory school-owned and operated and community-owned and operated programs and services.
7. Dedicate staff to form a program and resource coordination team, aiming to eliminate and prevent fragmentation, duplication, and competition and ensuring that the school does not get involved in services and programs that detract from its primary missions and functions.
8. Develop formal partnerships with qualified, specially selected youth development organizations and social-health service providers.
9. Develop protocols and procedures for communicating, coordinating, and collaborating, including protocols and procedures for securing parents' permission and involvement with community partners.
10. Focus on resource sharing to maximize opportunities and ensure sustainability among the school-community partners.

11. Ensure that school-based prevention programs and community-based programs are aligned.
12. Convey the school's philosophy to all partners who work with students that families are to be supported (not interfered with) in their work with children.

Benchmark B: Partnership Agreements (Memoranda of Agreements) have been established with local businesses to facilitate career and workforce development through service learning opportunities, including graduating from high school and seeking post-secondary vocational and career education; allocation of human and financial resources for school programs; and encourage family-friendly workplace policies that allow parents time to be involved in their child's school.

1. Distribute information to community businesses about school programs that facilitate student employability.
2. Recruit community business members as school volunteers and mentors.
3. Establish specific service-learning opportunities for youth that make academics relevant to the workplace.
4. Encourage business commitment to making public and private investment in the types of environment and workplace policies that are proven to result in greater success for children and families, specifically family-friendly employee benefits that allow for parent participation in children's school activities.
5. Recruit business sponsorship and engagement in special programs such as after prom activities, community-fundraising.
6. Provide on-going training on best practices for service-learning providers in order to promote positive youth development.

Benchmark C: Partnership Agreements (Memoranda of Agreements) are on file related to the establishment and implementation of a continuum of options for students and staff and their families.

1. Identify local resources and meet with local providers to outline a plan for a continuum of options for students', families' and staff needs based on the district or school continuous improvement plan.
2. Based upon outcome of this discussion, prepare written documents outlining roles and responsibilities for identification/referral/and follow-through; sign and date by each party.
3. Inform school staff and families regarding cultural, recreational, academic, and other services and resources that serve families within the community.
4. Secure written parental permission prior to making referrals for all additional services.

5. Programs and services for children with special needs use the least restrictive intervention and work with parents to support and strengthen their capacities to help their children succeed in school.

Benchmark D: Partnership Agreements (Memoranda of Agreements) are on file with local emergency responders that relate to the establishment and implementation of an Emergency Response Plan for each school building as directed by SB No. 1 in 1999.

1. Identify community based first responders noting locations, phone numbers, and contact information.
2. Ask each agency to participate in planning a comprehensive and coordinated first response.
3. Require each school building to establish a school-based Emergency Response Team to prepare the school for and manage operations in the event of a crisis.
4. Prepare written, signed and dated agreements between specific school principals and local emergency responders that outline roles and responsibilities for identification/referral/ and follow-through of emergency school-community response.
5. Communicate the plan to all staff and families.

GUIDELINE 3-Regular, thorough Assessment and Evaluation Result in Continuous Improvement

An effective, safe and supportive learning environment supports the mission and continuous improvement plan of the school and the school district. Planning a safe and supportive learning environment begins with needs assessments to identify gaps in current practice, policies and procedures, as well as existing resources. These needs assessments drive the development of the school and district continuous improvement plan, evolving into an evaluation of the long-term success or failure of various school-based programs. A set of indicators measure the success of the program, including academic proficiency, suspensions and expulsions.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks

Benchmark A: A “walk-through” or audit of buildings, facilities, grounds, and transportation has been conducted.

1. Develop a facilities review checklist consistent with best practice.
2. Meet with local emergency responders to assist in the safety review of facilities and procedures for mitigating crisis and to adequately prepare and respond to crisis.

3. Check for all items on the checklist such as whether:
 - a. Classrooms and doors can be locked from the inside;
 - b. Permission slips to treat or move students in the event of crisis have been obtained;
 - c. School grounds and buildings are well-lit, video monitored, entrances/exits accessible for persons with handicaps.
4. Include maintenance staff and the Crisis Response Team in the walk-through.
5. Identify good locations for staging areas in the event of crisis.

Benchmark B: Indicators of student academic and behavioral data, including reasons for suspensions and expulsions, are analyzed and used to make data-informed decisions.

1. Compile archival data and look at trends and relationships among the following indicators to student achievement data:
 - a. Percent of students with 95 percent attendance rate or better;
 - b. Percent of youth involved in organized community service activities;
 - c. Percent of youth involved in regular physical activity;
 - d. Percent of students graduate from high school;
 - e. Percent of high school graduates who continue their education;
 - f. Percent of youth who do not graduate from high school who do not earn a GED by age 20;
 - g. Number of violent offenses on campus; characteristics of repeat offenders
 - h. Number of expulsions, suspensions, characteristics of repeat students placement in alternative schools;
 - i. Reasons for suspensions and expulsions;
 - j. Participation rates in school nutrition programs.

Benchmark C: A review policies and procedures related to school climate has been conducted that addresses such factors as student and staff disciplinary actions, hiring new staff, maintaining facilities and grounds, conflict resolution between students and staff and staff and other staff, organization and development of instructional teams.

1. Create classroom/school atmosphere and practices that convey a warm, welcoming and caring school environment.
2. Screen all new instructional and support staff thoroughly prior to employment for criminal history.
3. Provide opportunity for students and parents/caregivers to have input into the disciplinary consequences for negative behavior such as fighting, bullying, class disruptions, and poor performance.

4. Distribute to students and families/caregivers as well as staff the disciplinary rules and consequences.
5. Enforce discipline rules firmly, fairly, and consistently.
6. Provide opportunity for students and parents/caregivers to have input into the way positive behavior such as cooperation, caring, helping, encouragement, and support are acknowledged.
7. Maintain school grounds, buildings and busses, with lots of light and color to create a pleasant working and learning environment.
8. Keep class size small enough to afford time for teachers/support staff to show a genuine interest in students' well-being.
9. Engage teachers in collaborative planning, assessment and reflection.
10. Specify roles for program planning for non-teaching personnel.

Benchmark D: Conduct a resource assessment to determine the types of programs that currently exist that support the safe and supportive school learning environment.

1. Compile the number of school-community partnerships that focus on school enhancement.
2. Compile the number and type of prevention programs available through the school and through the community to identify and eliminate duplication of efforts and resources.
3. Compile the number and type of other resources that are offered to students and families through other community and faith-based organizations, such as early childhood programs, before and after school programs, social services providers.

GUIDELINE 4 – High-Quality Staff Development and Administrative Support Leads to Effective Program Implementation

A school is a workplace for teachers, food service workers, support staff and administrators. Continuing workforce development leads to optimal application of best practices in teaching and child development when the child is in the classroom, in the cafeteria, on the playground, or the bus. This understanding translates into a school-wide method of operation that enhances student connection to school, class participation, and ultimately success.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks:

Benchmark A: Building administrators have a written staff development plan that includes training in child development, brain development, school safety, and identification of non-academic barriers to learning.

1. Staff learn best practices for enhancing the academic success and positive behavior of students from one another through modeling and practice of effective teaching methods, regular coaching, and constructive feedback from colleagues.
2. Teachers participate as an active, responsible member of the professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices pursuing opportunities to grow professionally, and establishing collegial relationships to enhance the teaching and learning process.

Benchmark B: Building administrators have a written policy/procedure manual for providing employee assistance that is consistent with the district policy.

1. Building Administrators espouse the philosophy that a healthy workforce leads to a healthier environment for students.
2. Employees are encouraged to participate in the educational activities of their own children who may be attending other schools.
3. District policies and procedures for resolving conflicts, concerns, and grievances are clearly conveyed to all staff on an annual basis.
4. District health and wellness benefits are clearly conveyed to staff on an annual basis.
5. A procedure is in place for periodic performance reports for all staff.

Benchmark C: Policies and procedures have been developed to effectively improve communication and resolve conflict among staff, staff and administration, staff and families, and staff and students.

1. Train staff in conflict management and dispute resolution.
2. Convey policies and procedures to all staff upon hire and on an annual basis.
3. Incorporate a grievance procedure into the conflict resolution policy.

Benchmark D: Training and technical assistance is available to assist teachers in connecting children with non-academic barriers to learning with community resources such as school-community coordinators, after school providers, leaders of faith-based agencies.

1. Train staff in factors that contribute to academic success and those that act as a deterrent.
2. Establish a principal-led intervention assistance team.
3. Encourage teachers to assist other teachers in this process.

GUIDELINE 5 –Addressing Real and Perceived Threats to Safety and Security Enables Students to Focus on Learning and Teachers to Focus on Instruction

School safety is a growing concern for communities. A coherent, feasible, sustainable plan that is practiced in concert with local emergency responders enables the school to prevent and/or manage a crisis situation effectively. Students cannot focus on learning if they perceive threat from a peer, an adult, a natural disaster, or someone outside the school. Actions to eliminate, minimize and/or buffer real or perceived threats to safety include recognizing and addressing the pervasiveness of bullying behavior; securing grounds, facilities, and transportation with necessary equipment and procedures to prevent unauthorized access; updating security technology to maximize safety; and practicing the emergency response plan routinely.

Benchmark A: School buildings are periodically re-assessed for safety and security.

1. School administrators and local emergency responders routinely conduct walk-through assessments to ensure that all entrances other than maintenance are securely locked, hallways are well-lit, video monitors are strategically placed, visitors are greeted and escorted appropriately, and classroom doors and windows can be locked from the inside.
2. Compare results of periodic assessments to the first walk-through assessment conducted (Guideline 1: Benchmark A) to monitor continuous improvement and to maintain optimal safety and security.
3. Securely lock, routinely service, and stock school busses/transportation vehicles in the event of a crisis.

Benchmark B: A communication system between local emergency responders and each school building is established and well-maintained.

1. An unlisted school phone number is available for emergency call-out in the event of crisis (an open line that is protected from heavy calling during a crisis).
2. An all hazards approach is used to respond to crisis.
3. An incident command system is used to respond to crisis.
4. School prevention plans and crisis response procedures are practiced in conjunction with local responders.
5. Periodic coordination meetings are conducted with the school response team and community-based first responders.
6. Classrooms are enabled with telephones, intercoms, or two-way radios.
7. A two-way radio system is used to communicate emergencies between schools and local first responders.

Benchmark C: A school crisis response team has been established, trained in roles and responsibilities, and practice drills have been conducted.

1. Select a School Incident Commander to facilitate school crisis response team training and actual crisis initiatives.
2. Organize an incident command team comprised of a personnel leader, logistics leader, public information officer, safety officer, incident log scribe, and operations support personnel leader.
3. Organize emergency operations support teams around student release, care team, maintenance, first aid, and food service.
4. Identify multiple hazards that pose significant threats to schools and routinely conduct practice drills on these threats.

Benchmark D: Classrooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums and other places where students gather are well-stocked with emergency supplies in the event of a prolonged shelter-in-place/lockdown.

1. Prepare and store classroom emergency bags in a secure location.
2. Train teachers/staff and provide quick reference guides to facilitate timely, effective response.
3. Collect and store enough food and first aid supplies for a minimum of three days.
4. Collect and store search and rescue equipment in the school emergency kit that is used by the crisis response team.
5. Remind parents of students with special medical or emotional needs to prepare emergency kits for placement in the school nurse's office and or classrooms.

Benchmark E: Policies and procedures are in place regarding positive ways to prevent violence, resolve conflict and effectively deal with bullying, harassment, and violent acts.

1. Integrate conflict management and dispute resolution across curricula and at each grade level.
2. Train staff and students in bullying and harassment and a mechanism is in place for students to report bullying behavior.
3. Use discipline and programs for students who engage in bullying behavior as teaching rather than punishment.

GUIDELINE 6 –A Student’s Sense of “Belonging” in the Classroom Encourages Classroom Participation, Positive Interactions, and Good Study Habits

Because children spend six or more hours in the classroom, teachers become significant in children’s lives. Research supports that when the teacher nurtures a sense of belonging in the classroom, students engage more readily, relate positively with peers and demonstrate good study habits. Likewise, parents of children who are welcomed and involved in the establishment of the classroom environment are more likely to attend parent teacher conferences, monitor study at home, and convey concerns about student progress. A caring classroom is encouraged by improving students’ ability to listen respectfully to others; providing opportunities to build self-confidence; putting respect and responsibility into everyday practice; encouraging parent involvement.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks

Benchmark A: Instructional and support school staff have been trained on the importance of high standards for student learning of desired content and a parallel importance of individual learning style, the learning process, and the learning environment.

1. All school staff members (building and district level) have a common understanding of child development is and how it contributes to academic success.
2. Teachers understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline, as they relate to the Ohio Core Curriculum Content Standards, and design developmentally appropriate learning experiences, making content meaningful to students.
3. Teachers understand and employ a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies, promoting higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills of all learners.
4. Teachers use an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior, creating a supportive, safe, and respectful learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
5. Teachers understand, use, and interpret multiple assessment strategies to evaluate and advance the performance of all students and to determine program effectiveness.
6. Teachers demonstrate an understanding of how children develop and learn and provide opportunities, supporting developmental needs of all students.
7. Teachers understand that children learn in diverse ways and adapt and modify instruction, accommodating the learning needs of all students.
8. Teachers use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques, fostering the use of inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interactions.

9. Teachers understand instructional planning, and designs long- and short-term plans that incorporate subject matter knowledge and reflect grade-level curriculum expectations.
10. Teachers work cooperatively with providers of out-of-school learning time programs to help improve academic achievement for students.

Benchmark B: Specialized training, technical assistance, and printed and electronic resources are available to school staff on effective ways to maximize each students' sense of safety and security and to support the identification and referral of students in need of extra help.

1. A staff resource center is available to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of best practices for academic instruction, classroom management, and safe and supportive learning environments.
2. Up-to-date resources on research-based practices are collected and archived for quick reference and referral.
3. Up-to-date telephone and resource directories are compiled and distributed to instructional and non-instructional support staff.

Benchmark C: Students experience a warm and caring school climate.

1. Students are greeted by name when they enter the school or classroom each day.
2. Beginning and/or ending each day with a brief period of time for students to reflect on what they have learned recently and what they might want to learn next.
3. Allowing opportunity for students to have input into the development of classroom rules.
4. Engaging in a discussion with each student about the kinds of learning environments that have been most and least successful for them in the past and this information will be used to guide instruction.

Benchmark D: Students are provided opportunities to develop positive behaviors.

1. The school curriculum provides structure for the application of child development theory across subject areas.
2. The local school board adopts policies and programs that develop positive student behaviors.

GUIDELINE 7 –Engagement of Parents and Families in School-Home Learning Partnerships Maximizes the Potential for Effective Instruction and Student Learning

Parents and families are genuine partners in their children’s education and home environments support and reinforce school-related learning, healthy development, and appropriate behavior. Parents and families are the most important teachers of children, and children spend much of their out-of-school time with them. Thus, partnerships with parents and families are a practical necessity. In fact, parent and home supports for learning, healthy development, and success in school are essential to academic learning, healthy development, and success in school. Shared expectations for learning and behavior between educators and parents help students, at the same time benefiting both educators and parents. Furthermore, parents are able to provide information that helps teachers better understand and teach their children.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks

Benchmark A: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
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1. The school has a parent-family coordinator.
2. The parent-family coordinator recruits parents to serve as a leadership and advisory team; and this team develops a plan to organize and mobilize parents in support of their children and the school.
3. The parent-family coordinator and the team assess parents’ needs, aspirations, and wants (e.g., homework clubs in the non-school hours at the school and in the community; safe places for their children to play during the non-school hours).
4. Teachers use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis, seeking to facilitate two-way interaction through each type of medium.
5. Opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering information such as student strengths and learning preferences are provided.
6. Provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.
7. Mail report cards and regular progress reports to parents. Provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed.
8. Disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals, and include parents in any related decision-making process.
9. Conduct conferences with parents at least twice a year, with follow-up as needed. These should accommodate the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, and the need for child care.

10. Encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise.
11. Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis.
12. Translate communications to assist non-English-speaking parents.
13. Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure.
14. Provide opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and other administrative staff.
15. Promote informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact.
16. Provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between the school and the family.
17. A space or place for parents (e.g., a lounge, a parent-family resource center) is created at the school.
18. The school recruits parents as volunteers or as part-time employees to reach out to parents who are not involved in their children's education.
19. The school recruits parents as volunteers or as part-time employees to assist teachers and principals with students with special needs (e.g., language needs, special learning needs, behavioral challenges).

<p>Benchmark B: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.</p>

1. Link parents to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families.
2. Reach out to all families, not just those who attend parent meetings.
3. Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community's cultural and religious diversity.
4. Provide accessible parent/family information to support parents and families with training, resources, and other services.
5. Encourage staff members to demonstrate respect for families and the family's primary role in the rearing of children to become responsible adults.
6. On-going training on best practices positive child development is available for parents and families.
7. Resources are made available for parents/families needing equipment, books, and other materials necessary to improve the child's learning experience.
8. Give parents opportunities to meet to exchange ideas about how to support the teaching in school and how to raise their children.
9. Help parents learn how to organize the morning routine and homework routines to minimize conflict.
10. Communicate to parents the importance of having positive times with their children.

11. Provide parents with opportunities to contribute to the classroom and/or school on a regular basis.
12. Create a welcoming climate for parents in the school by displaying student artwork and other projects near entranceways.
13. Set up time for family instruction or family projects, when parents and students can work together in appropriate ways.

Benchmark C: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

1. Seek and encourage parental participation in decision-making that affects students.
2. Inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.
3. Provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers.
4. Regularly assign interactive homework that will require students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class.
5. Sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assessments. Involve parents in setting student goals each year and in planning for post-secondary education and careers. Encourage the development of a career plan for each student, where parents are full partners.
6. Provide opportunities for staff members to learn and share successful approaches to engaging parents in their child's education.

Benchmark D: Parents and other caregivers are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

1. Ensure that office staff greetings, signage near the entrances, and any other interaction with parents create a climate in which parents feel valued and welcome.
2. Survey parents regarding their interests, talents, and availability, then coordinate the parent resources with those that exist within the school and among the faculty.
3. Ensure that parents who are unable to volunteer in the school building are given the options for helping in other ways, at home or place of employment.
4. Organize an easy, accessible program for utilizing parent volunteers, providing ample training on volunteer procedures and school protocol.
5. Develop a system for contacting all parents to assist as the year progresses.
6. Design opportunities for those with limited time and resources to participate by addressing child care, transportation, work schedule needs, and so forth
7. Show appreciation for parents' participation, and value their diverse contributions.
8. Educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources.

9. Ensure that volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.

Benchmark E: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

1. Provide understandable, accessible, and well-publicized processes for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.
2. Encourage the formation of PTAs or other parent groups to identify and respond to issues of interest to parents.
3. Include parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, and ensure adequate training for such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform initiatives, safety, and personnel. Where site governance bodies exist, give equal representation to parents.
4. Provide parents with current information regarding school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
5. Enable parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data.
6. Encourage and facilitate active parent participation in the decisions that affect students, such as student placement, course selection, and individual personalized education plans.
7. Treat parental concerns with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions.
8. Promote parent participation on school district, state, and national committees and issues.
9. Provide training for staff and parents on collaborative partnering and shared decision making.
10. Ensure that parent-teacher conferences and family nights are scheduled at times when parents can attend and participate.

GUIDELINE 8 – Youth Engagement in Forming School Policy and Procedure Integrates An Essential Perspective Into Proposed Solutions

An effective, safe and supportive learning environment encourages youth to offer their perspective on the way the school operates. Youth who know the student body best provide insight that can be used to find effective ways to reduce bullying and other forms of violence. When schools purposefully try to build connections between students and their school, students become committed to education. Students come to class more prepared, exert more effort, work cooperatively with one another, participate constructively in class, increase their attendance rates, complete homework assignments, and increase their academic knowledge and achievement.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks:

Benchmark A: Students are given meaningful roles on school and community committees to learn new skills.

1. Provide service opportunities within classrooms so that, even from the youngest age, students feel that they are making a contribution to the positive functioning of the classroom
2. A cross-section of students (not just student government) are recruited to serve on school and community-based committees alongside adults.
3. Students are allowed to serve on committees in meaningful roles such as recorder, chair, etc.
4. Adults mentor students as coaches, model good communication and conflict resolution skills.
5. Students participate in the construction of class rules, and assist in the fair and consistent enforcement of them.

Benchmark B: Students are recognized for their contributions to community (classroom) service.

1. As a method to encourage service learning, any community (classroom) service effort is recognized as a valuable contribution to the community.
2. Students engaged in long-term service learning roles are given special recognition with a certificate or other sign of satisfactory completion.
3. Students engaged in service learning opportunities are recognized as role models for younger children.
4. Citizenship is encouraged and supported as part of the core curriculum.
5. Students are exposed to local government leaders, the legislative process, and citizen involvement in legislative process.
6. Students are taught about advocacy and encouraged to get involved in a local advocacy initiative, if possible.

Guideline 9 – High-Quality Food Service Supports Improvements in Academic Performance and Behavior.

Nutrition affects students' physical well-being, growth and development, readiness to learn and risk of disease. Children tend to develop unhealthy eating habits early in life and then maintain those habits as they age. Research shows that when students participate in a school breakfast program, it enhances their daily nutrient intake. In addition, improvements in nutrition positively affect academic performance and improve students' behavior. Research on the link between nutrition and cognitive development in children shows that even moderately poor – the type seen most frequently in the United States, can have lasting effects on the cognitive development of children. Inadequate nutrition is a major cause of impaired cognitive development and is associated with increased educational failure among children.

Successful districts reach the following benchmarks:

Benchmark A: A high-quality food service program establishes well-balanced, nutritious meals for children and youth.

1. Schools offer lunch, breakfast, after-school snack, and summer food service programs and students are encouraged to participate.
2. The Child Nutrition Programs are administered by school food service staff that is properly qualified according to current professional standards.
3. All school foodservice staff has appropriate pre-service training and regularly participate in professional development activities.
4. School meals are offered at prices students can afford.
5. Menus are planned with input from students and include local, cultural and ethnic favorites of the students.
6. Menus meet nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, conform to good menu planning principles, and feature a variety of healthy choices that are tasty, attractive, of excellent quality, and are served at the proper temperature.
7. School food service staff uses food preparation techniques to provide school meals that are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. They offer healthy food choices that include lean meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or non-fat milk.
8. School meals are marketed to appeal to all students, who are encouraged to choose and consume the full meal.
9. School meal participation rates are approximately the same for paying students as for students eligible for full and reduced price meals.
10. Food safety is a key part of the school foodservice operation.

Benchmark B: The school community has a commitment to nutrition and physical activity.

1. Parents, students, school food authorities, school boards, school administrators, and the community are all involved in developing a local school wellness policy that addresses healthy school nutrition environments, nutrition education and physical activity.
2. Healthy eating and physical activity are actively promoted to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community.
3. Educate parents about the availability of and convenience for school breakfast, lunch, snack and summer nutrition programs.
4. Educate students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community about the positive impact of healthy eating and physical activity on cognitive functioning.
5. Schools consider student needs in planning for a healthy school nutrition environment. They ask students for input and feedback, and listen to what they have to say.
6. Students receive positive, motivating messages about healthy eating and physical activity throughout the school setting.
7. Schools promote healthy food choices and don't allow advertising that promotes less nutritious food choices.
8. Schools work with a variety of media to spread the word to the community about a healthy school nutrition environment.
9. Nutrition education and physical activity are included in the school's daily educational program from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.
10. Administrators support the development of healthy lifestyles for students, and establish and enforce policies that improve the school nutrition environment. They address issues such as the kinds of foods available on the school campus; mealtime schedules; dining space and atmosphere; nutrition education; and physical activity.
11. School staff, students, and parents are a part of the policy-making process and support a healthy school nutrition environment.
12. School foodservice staff is part of the education team and participate in making decisions and policies that affect the school nutrition environment.
13. A community task force meets regularly to promote the availability of school breakfast and summer nutrition programs via public agencies, nonprofit groups working with children, neighborhood associations and churches.

<p>Benchmark C: Assist families to access free and/or affordable community food sources</p>
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1. Schools work with a variety of media to inform parents and the community of the availability of meals and snacks in the Summer and Afterschool Snack Program.
2. Access to free school meals is simplified by schools participating in the Direct Certification process.

3. Information about other food sources such as WIC, Food Stamp Program and Second Harvest is available for parents.

Benchmark D: Schools establish and enforce policies regarding food options during the school day.

1. All foods and beverages that are available at school contribute to meeting the dietary needs of students by meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
2. School policies include nutrition standards for food and beverages offered at parties, celebrations, and social events.
3. If foods are sold in competition with school meals, they include healthy food choices offered at prices children can afford.
4. If a la carte foods are available, they include a variety of choices of tasty, nutritious foods and beverages, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or non-fat dairy foods.
5. If foods and beverages are sold in competition with school meals, they are not more highly marketed than the reimbursable school meals.
6. There are appropriate restrictions on students' access to vending machines, school stores, snack bars, and other outlets that sell foods and beverages, if these options are available. For example: no access in elementary schools, no access until after the end of the school day for middle and junior high schools, and no access until after the end of the last lunch period in senior high schools.
7. School staff does not use food as a reward or punishment for students. For example: they don't give coupons for fast food meals as a reward for an "A" on a class project or withhold snacks as punishment for misbehaving.
8. The school encourages parents to provide a variety of nutritious foods if students bring meals or snacks from home.
9. Educate parents about quick, healthy breakfast foods to serve children before school.

Benchmark E: Schools provide a positive dining environment that encourages a pleasant eating experience.

1. Meal periods are scheduled at appropriate times; schools do not schedule tutoring, pep rallies, club and organization meetings, and other activities during meal times.
2. Meal periods include at least 30 minutes for lunch and 20 minutes for breakfast for students to eat and socialize.
3. There are enough serving areas so that students don't have to spend more than eight minutes waiting in line.
4. Dining areas are attractive and have enough space for seating; tables and chairs are the appropriate size for the students.

5. Systems such as grab-and-goes, kiosks, outdoor dining, cafés and scatter systems are explored as additional creative, innovative dining opportunities.
6. Recess for elementary grades is scheduled before lunch so that children will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat.
7. Schools encourage socializing among students, and between students and adults. Adults properly supervise dining rooms and serve as role models to students.
8. Creative, innovative methods are used to keep levels appropriate – no “eat in silence,” no whistles, no buzzing traffic lights.
9. Facility design (including the size and location of the dining/kitchen area, lighting, building materials, windows, open space, adequate foodservice equipment for food preparation and service, and food and staff safety), is given priority in renovations or new construction.
10. Hand washing equipment and supplies are in a convenient place so that students can wash their hands before eating.
11. Drinking fountains are available for students to get water at meals and throughout the day.
12. Schools use an accounting system that protects the identity of students who eat free and reduced price school meals.
13. Schools provide nutrition education as an integral part of curriculum and school environment.
14. Students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 receive nutrition education that is interactive and teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors.
15. Nutrition education is offered in the school dining room and in the classroom, with coordination between school foodservice staff and teachers.
16. Students receive nutrition messages throughout the school that are consistent and reinforce each other.
17. Nutrition is integrated into core curriculum areas such as mathematics, science, and language arts, as appropriate.
18. The school is enrolled as a Team Nutrition School and conducts nutrition education activities and promotions that involve students, parents, and the community.