

COMING BACK TO CLIMATE: LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST




This checklist provides school leaders with strategic practices organized into the three priority areas from [Coming Back to Climate](#): Driving Equitable Outcomes, Creating Leadership Routines, and Choosing the Right Starting Point. In each area, leaders will find specific actions to take, and questions to ask, to achieve meaningful climate outcomes in schools. We recommend reviewing this document in its entirety to identify which outcomes and actions to prioritize.

DRIVING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

Gathering climate feedback once or twice annually has value, but students are only truly heard through nurturing relationships and shared decision-making. Driving towards equitable outcomes requires leaders to commit to continually building agency and understanding among students and community stakeholders in order to address current and historical disenfranchisement.




Acknowledge and respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and racism

- Identify students and families who may need additional support during this time
- Create small group or 1:1 spaces to check in with students and/or families about their experiences and needs
- Keep the current sociopolitical and racial context at the forefront of conversations with stakeholders by incorporating questions that name race
-  **Ask:** *Who is responsible for engaging and supporting families who are historically disadvantaged? What trends and distinctions exist across grade bands, from classroom to classroom, among stakeholder groups?*




Create a climate council

- Prioritize diverse membership in the climate council by ensuring the group is reflective of staff and students across differences
- Share climate data with students and staff to encourage them to create climate goals
- Establish distributed leadership for the climate council by including staff, students, and community members as co-leaders and meeting with them regularly and acting on their ideas
-  **Ask:** *Does the climate council represent different types of staff in our building as it relates to years of experience and roles in the building? Are the voices of other stakeholder groups represented? What barriers might be preventing more stakeholders from engaging in the climate council? What resources does the climate council need to be successful?*




Share the research base

- Identify key messages and research to share with stakeholders
- Review climate school improvement goals with stakeholders and name where specific strategies are based in research
-  **Ask:** *What headlines from [Coming Back to Climate](#) would be most compelling to our community? Do community members see the connection between strategies and school improvement goals?*



Equity requires dialogue


- Provide regular opportunities for stakeholders to engage with climate through principal chats, speaker series, professional development, etc.
- Identify staff who might be interested in taking on a leadership role
-  **Ask:** *Do stakeholders have opportunities to ask questions or share experiences in a safe environment? Have we supported diverse members from the climate council in facilitating engagement opportunities for our community?*

CREATING LEADERSHIP ROUTINES

School leaders are continually analyzing and reflecting on data to identify what is going well, what needs to be adjusted, and developing a plan to ensure the success of students and staff. Bringing climate data into continuous improvement cycles signals an investment in conditions for learning within existing schoolwide structures, and provides you with the opportunity for increased distributed leadership amongst stakeholders. Involving students in the continuous improvement process is a powerful strategy to develop student agency and strengthen trust between educators and students.




Complement benchmarks with formative checks

- Collaborate with staff and students to identify key climate indicators for each quarter
- Encourage teachers to regularly collect examples of student voice through exit tickets
- Invite staff to present their climate data during staff meetings or professional development sessions
-  **Ask:** *What bite-sized climate indicators do we need to see movement in to reach our big goals? What formative assessments are teachers using to reflect on their climate practices? How are teachers reflecting on their formative climate assessment data?*



Discuss climate data in hiring, coaching, and observations

- Review current hiring practices to identify alignment with climate goals
- Invite staff and students to select and/or develop interview questions for new staff
- Incorporate climate data into informal observations
-  **Ask:** *What does the current hiring process say about the values and priorities of the school? How am I providing opportunities for staff to observe strong climate practices in action?*



Include climate data in community milestones

- Include climate data in town halls, parent events, and other community meetings to create frequent opportunities for stakeholder reflection and engagement
- Identify a public space (in person and virtual) where climate data can be posted and shared
- Publicly celebrate growth in climate data



Ask: *How frequently do stakeholders engage with climate data?
Is climate data publicly updated in a way that is easy to understand?
Does every staff member have a chance to contribute to the climate goal?*



Name climate as a budget investment

- During budget season, hold listening sessions for stakeholders to reflect on climate trends from the current school year, and identify future needs



Ask: *What does our current investment say about our theory of action as it relates to school climate?*

CHOOSING THE RIGHT STARTING POINTS

School climate can be assessed whether school is taking place virtually or in person. In the midst of COVID-19 and renewed attention to racism, schools are responsible for collecting additional data on the wellbeing of students and families. Leaders must identify a few inquiry-based starting points to use to take meaningful action.



Prioritize safety

- Collect observational survey data to identify when students feel physically and emotionally safe



Ask: *How can we check on students' perceptions of safety, fairness, and expectations between major climate benchmarks? (see [Exit Tickets](#) tool)
Ask students: What actions signal belonging and safety in a virtual environment?*



Apply an equity lens

- Incorporate questions that apply an equity lens and create the opportunity for authentic student voice to be shared in data meetings with stakeholders
- Identify trauma-informed practices that can be applied in classrooms
- Review the current student discipline policies with students and staff and identify areas for change



Ask: *In examining our climate data, what trends and distinctions exist across grade bands, from classroom to classroom, among stakeholder groups?
How do our mental health professionals and partners contribute to our climate strategies?*