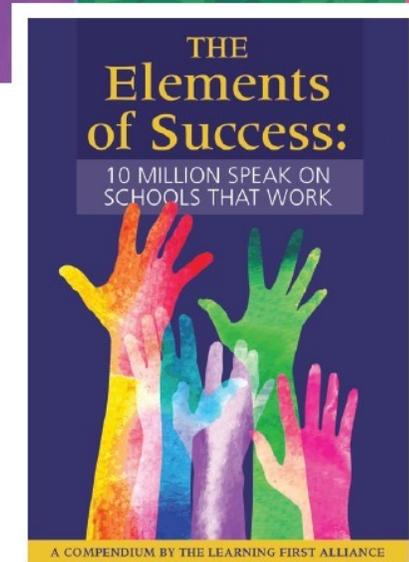


Relationship-Oriented School Climate



What do successful schools look like? There is no one answer. Each successful school reflects the beliefs and character of its community, and each addresses the needs of its students in its own way. However, in *The Elements of Success: 10 Million Speak on Schools That Work*, the Learning First Alliance identifies six elements common to all successful schools. Members of the Alliance, who represent more than 10 million educators, parents and local policymakers, agree these are the factors needed for a school to perform at a high level and help all students succeed, while understanding these elements don't look the same in each school. How they are achieved and integrated depends greatly on context.

One of these elements is a relationship-oriented school climate.

What does that mean? Successful schools play close attention to school climate and culture. These schools are safe, welcoming and respectful to all. They create a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, where students, staff, families and community members feel connected to both the school and each other.

There are several attributes common to school climate in successful schools, including:

- **Supportive learning community:** Successful schools establish and enforce norms for conduct and behavior that allow all students and staff to feel safe, connect to the school and want to teach and learn. Everyone – the principal, faculty, staff and students – is expected to be respectful of, listen to and look out for one another. While there are high expectations for both learning and behavior for all, individual differences and abilities are recognized, attended to and celebrated.
 - **Supporting positive behavior:** Successful schools have comprehensive plans for reinforcing positive behavior and addressing violations of the school's norms and rules. These schools have orderly and focused classrooms, where teachers, in consultation with students, set clear rules, routines and equitably enforced behavioral expectations. They have mechanisms for early identification and intervention in situations where conflicts might arise. Successful schools aim to keep students in school, working to ensure all students learn from their behavior.
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- **Valuing and using data:** Successful schools study data about student outcomes, student needs, instruction, professional learning, school climate, communications, family and community engagement and community context. They use what they learn strategically in setting goals, measuring progress and making changes in behaviors when needed. These schools give educators access to professional learning that supports their understanding and use of data. They ensure families and other stakeholders have access to and understand what the data means. In this work, they adhere to principles for protecting and guiding the use of students' personal information, identified by the education community in an effort led by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the Data Quality Campaign.
 - **Culture of college and career readiness:** Successful schools recognize student success in pre-K–12 schools is not an end but a step in the lifelong learning process. Because they understand the need for postsecondary education and ways their formal education helps prepare them for successful careers, students in successful schools set goals for their life after high school graduation, making school more relevant and purposeful.
 - **Culture of collaboration:** Successful schools embrace collaboration. They promote productive, cooperative relationships between teachers, administrators and other staff. They also recognize the importance of teachers working in collaboration and encourage a sense of collective responsibility for students' academic, social/emotional and career development, where teachers, school counselors, principals and other specialized staff all play important roles. They engage all stakeholders, including students, teachers, families and community members, in decision-making.

Successful schools achieve these attributes of school climate in many different ways, with educators, parents and local communities working together to develop programs to meet their specific goals based on their unique strengths. But while implementation strategies vary, a relationship-oriented school climate can be found in all successful schools.

Of course, just because a school has a relationship-oriented school climate doesn't mean that it will thrive; it is a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in success. For example, a school with such a climate that lacks a strong teaching force or family and community engagement will struggle. True success requires all six elements of successful schools:

- Focus on the Total Child
- Commitment to Equity and Access
- Family and Community Engagement
- Distributed Leadership
- Strong, Supported Teaching Force and Staff
- Relationship-Oriented School Climate

To learn more and read the full report or executive summary, visit <https://learningfirst.org/elementsofsuccess>.

Learning First Alliance Members

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; AASA, The School Superintendents Association; American Federation of Teachers; American School Counselor Association; Consortium for School Networking; Learning Forward; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Education Association; National PTA; National School Boards Association; National School Public Relations Association