School Climate Plan 2025

FAIRFIELD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fairfield Public Schools
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Overview
District School Climate Plan

A positive and inclusive school climate is essential to fostering student well-being, academic success, and strong community partnerships. In alignment with the Board of Education School Climate Policy (Policy 5131.911) and the new state legislation, Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sec. 10-222aa through 10-222jj, this plan outlines the structures, practices, and accountability measures required to promote safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments. The components described herein reflect both the statutory requirements and the district's commitment to continuous improvement in addressing school climate, ensuring that every student, staff member, and family experiences a culture of respect, belonging, and shared responsibility.

School Climate Policy (BOE School Climate Policy - Revised and Adopted 6/24/2025)

The new school climate legislation, inclusive of Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sec. 10- 222aa–Sec. 10-222jj, establishes the following necessary components:

1. School Climate Policy
   Administrative Regulations on School Climate
2. District-level school climate coordinator
3. School Climate Specialist at each school
4. School Climate Committees
5. School Climate Survey
6. School Climate Improvement Plan
7. Training requirements
8. Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response Policy

During 2024-25 the Fairfield Public Schools established a new District School Climate Committee. The District School Climate Committee was represented by approximately 30 members consisting of parents, a Board of Education member, administrators, ECC staff, elementary staff, middle school staff, and high school staff.

The School Climate Committee adopted the state model climate surveys except for revisions to two questions on the elementary student survey. The School Climate Committee adopted the state school climate improvement plan template in totality. The School Climate Committee also made minor revisions to the state model forms related to the management of challenging behavior, including the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form, Challenging Behavior Investigation Form, Challenging Behavior Response Process Notification Form.

Mission, Goals, and Vision of a Graduate

MISSION

The mission of the Fairfield Public Schools, in partnership with families and community, is to ensure that every student acquires the knowledge and skills needed to be a lifelong learner, responsible citizen, and successful participant in an ever-changing global society through a comprehensive educational program.

LONG TERM GOAL

Fairfield Public Schools will ensure that every student is engaged in a rigorous learning experience that recognizes and values the individual and challenges each student to achieve academic progress including expressive, personal, physical, civic, and social development. Students will be respectful, ethical, and responsible citizens with an appreciation and understanding of global issues. Student achievement and performance shall rank among the best in the state and the nation.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Fairfield Public School students will:

1. Achieve and exemplify mastery of the FPS Academic Expectations;
2. Perform at high levels in regard to Social and Civic Expectations;
3. Develop into responsible citizens who exhibit ethical behavior;
4. Acknowledge, explore, and value the importance of diversity;
5. Develop a healthy personal identity and self-reliance;
6. Demonstrate strong motivational persistence to learn;
7. Exhibit an inquisitive attitude, open mind, and curiosity;
8. Acquire an understanding and appreciation of other cultures;
9. Understand international issues and demonstrate the skills needed to participate in a global society; and
10. Acquire knowledge of the following areas of study: science; technology; mathematics; language arts; social studies; literary, visual, and performing arts; world language; unified arts; health and physical education.

VISION OF THE GRADUATE



The fulfillment of the mission, for all students, PK-12+, demands our ongoing commitment to realize the Vision of a Graduate.
All students will be:

- Innovators
- Communicators
- Collaborators
- Critical Thinkers
- Responsible Citizens
- Goal Directed- Resilient Learners
- Guided by Learning Principles

In order to achieve the Mission of the Fairfield Public Schools and fulfill for every student the Vision of the Graduate, the educators are committed to the following Learning Principles:

1. Learning involves teachers and students who are passionate learners.
2. Learning celebrates the belief that all learners are capable of success and growth.
3. When learners develop this mindset of belief in their own capacity and in the significance and value of their work, then they are more able to overcome challenges, solve problems, thrive, and celebrate growth.
4. Learning explores the creation of meaning and the extension of knowledge through its application to relatable real-world conditions.
5. Learning encourages academic and social risk taking and open communication in a safe community.
6. Learning inspires self-assessment, reflection, and continuous adjustment and adaptation.

When learners develop this mindset of belief in their own capacity and in the significance and value of their work, then they are more able to overcome challenges, solve problems, thrive, and celebrate growth.

Connecticut School Climate Standards

1. The school district community has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to *all* challenging behavior.

2. The school district community adopts policies that promote:
    a) a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
    b) a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community.

3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
    a) promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students.
    b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities.
    c) address barriers to teaching and learning; and
    d) develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.

4. The school community creates a school environment where *everyone* is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.

5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion. (Fairfield Public Schools Board of Education, 2025)

Restorative Practices

Related to all matters of student discipline, the Fairfield Board of Education ("Board") requires district staff to make every effort to correct student challenging behavior through school-based resources and to support students in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school climate and avoid challenging behavior.

For most behaviors, schools should minimize the use of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, recommendations for expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement to the extent practicable while in compliance with state statutes, local ordinances, and mandatory reporting laws. It is the goal of the Fairfield Public Schools and the Board that the juvenile and criminal justice systems be utilized rarely to address all forms of challenging behavior.

All challenging behavior procedures and responses shall ensure due process and be enforced fairly and consistently, and in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, gender

identity or expression, age, or disability.

For the school year beginning July 1, 2025, the Board adopts this “Restorative Practices Response” policy to be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior or student conflict that is nonviolent and does not constitute a crime. This policy shall not include the involvement of school resource officers or other law enforcement officials unless the behavior or conflict becomes violent or criminal (Fairfield Public Schools Board of Education, 2025).

Restorative Practices (5144.12 - Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response) and research-based system-level practices that focus on:

a) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community,
b) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior,
c) and ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

Tiered Response

The school climate policy defines a specific subset of challenging behavior that requires districts to respond with certain tiered interventions (referred to hereinafter as "tiered response incidents"). Pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 10-222hh(b)(6), a tiered response (as detailed in the table below) is required for an incident of challenging behavior that meets any of the following criteria:

a) requires temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students to reduce the likelihood of injury;
b) indicates a credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others; or
c) results in an injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid (or less severe injuries caused by the same person on more than one occasion, as verified by a school nurse or other medical professional). The law goes on to provide that, if a district determines that conduct meets the above criteria, school climate improvement plans must include the following responses:

Occasion Number - Tiered Response Incident	**Tiered Intervention Required**
First Offense	Principal must notify the parents/guardians of each student involved in a manner that complies with FERPA.
Second Offense	Principal must invite the parent/guardian of involved students to a meeting (virtual or in person) to discuss supports and interventions applicable to each student - including, but not limited to, restorative practices.
Multiple subsequent Offenses (or single	Principal must notify the parents/guardians of involved students of other resources for supports and interventions, including, but

incident that causes severe harm)	not limited to the following: the 2-1-1 Infoline Program; services/programs available through the Behavioral Health Partnership, established through C.G.S. Sec17a-22h: or other resources for professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

In addition, for tiered response incidents, there must be a meeting between an administrator and the school employee who witnessed the incident. The purpose of the meeting, which must occur within two days of the incident, is to determine the supports and interventions required to address the needs of students and school employees, although supports and interventions for special education students must be determined by the student's Planning and Placement Team (PPT). In addition, protocols and supports must include a process by which a teacher may request a behavior intervention meeting.

Assessing School Climate Using Multiple Measures

“School climate survey” means a research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees, and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan.”

School Climate Survey for the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and biennially thereafter, the school climate committee for each school shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.” (Fairfield Public Schools Board of Education, 2025)

Prior to climate survey administration parents/guardians will receive one-week prior notification electronically from the Fairfield Public Schools regarding the administration dates of the climate surveys, the content of the climate surveys and their right to opt their child(ren) out from participating in the climate survey. Parents / Guardians may opt their child out of participation in school climate surveys by sending a request in writing to their child’s school.

In addition to the biennial administration of the school climate survey, the district will utilize multiple measures to assess and monitor school climate. These measures include district attendance data, findings from school climate improvement plans, social-emotional learning (SEL) programming data, discipline data, restorative practices data, and other relevant sources. Collectively, these data points will support the ongoing evaluation of school climate and guide the development of targeted strategies to promote safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

School Climate Improvement Plans

Per Public Act. No. 24-45, the statewide Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Collaborative was tasked with designing a School Climate Improvement Plan. In accordance with Public Act No. 23- m167, a School Climate Improvement Plan means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

In response to Public Act 23-167, which significantly modified existing school climate legislation and policy, the Fairfield Board of Education adopted its revised School Climate Policy (5131.91) and its new Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response policy (5144.12) on June 24, 2025.

The Board believes: “All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success. Implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to achieving these goals. This policy sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of planning and preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation, and serves to actualize the Connecticut School Climate Standards. The Board recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments. 5131.911(a)

School Climate Roles and Responsibilities

School Climate Coordinator
For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the superintendent of schools for each school district, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, shall serve as the school climate coordinator for the school district.

The **school climate coordinator** shall be responsible for:

1. Providing district-level leadership and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;

2. Collaborating with the school climate specialist for each school to develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior,

including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the district student handbook;

3. Collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and

4. Meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to: by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices, propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan, and assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

School Climate Specialist
For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10- 145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices, and is designated as the school climate specialist by the school principal, shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The **school climate specialist** shall be responsible for:

1. Leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment;
2. Implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;
3. Scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. Leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Committee:
For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, each school climate specialist shall include members on the school climate committee who are diverse, including members who are racially, culturally, and linguistically representative of various roles in the school community.

Membership of the school climate committee shall be annually reviewed and approved by the school climate specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator.

The **school climate committee** shall consist of:
1. The school climate specialist;
2. A teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes;

3. A demographically representative group of students enrolled at the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. Families of students enrolled at the school; and
5. At least two members of the school community, as determined by the school climate specialist.

The **school climate committee** shall be responsible for:

1. Assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the school climate survey data;
2. Using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan;
3. Assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan;
4. Advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community;
5. Annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form to the school community.

Challenging Behavior

Challenging Behaviors Forms Challenging Behavior Reporting, Investigation & Notification Forms (Word Format)

(These forms replace the Bullying Investigation Forms)

Challenging Behavior Reporting Form

Any of the following people can complete the form to report incidents of challenging behavior: students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in Fairfield Public Schools and school employees.

Challenging Behavior Reporting Forms can be completed electronically, in writing or orally with assistance from the school climate specialist.

Every student, parent or guardian, and school employee who completes the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form will receive a copy of the Response Process(es) Notification Form describing the action steps taken within 3 school business days after an assessment has been completed.

The school climate specialist will provide confirmation of receipt of the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form to the individual who completed the form within 3 school business days, and the behavioral assessment will be finalized within a reasonable period of time.

Investigation Form

This form is to be completed by the school climate specialist within a reasonable amount of time.

Pursuant to the Federal Education Confidentiality Law (FERPA) students, parents or guardians, and school employees that completed the Challenging Behavior Reporting form cannot receive a copy of the Investigation Form but will be provided with a copy of the Response Process(es) Notification Form after an assessment is completed.

Response Process(es) Notification Form

The school climate specialist will complete and submit this form within 3 school business days after an assessment has been finalized and submit it to the student(s), parent(s) or guardian(s), and/or school employee(s) who completed the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.

The steps that may be taken to address future instances of challenging behavior that may be described in the Response Process(es) Notification Form include:

a) utilization of restorative practices
b) the completion of a school-based threat assessment
c) safety plan for student(s) involved in the instance of alleged challenging behavior student support services

The above referenced forms do not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any waiver rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits a challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the student and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, one cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR PREVENTION: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES RESPONSE
5144.12

Training and Professional Development

Training for school year commencing July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, Fairfield Public Schools shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding (5131.911(h):

a) Social and emotional learning;

b) School climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
c) Restorative practices.

Such resources and training may be made available at each school and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in any such training offered by the District. The school climate coordinator shall select and approve the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

Fairfield Public Schools shall also require all school employees to participate in annual training that addresses the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior. This training will be determined by the District School Climate Committee and the school climate coordinator in collaboration with school climate specialists.

The Fairfield Public Schools shall in its discretion allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.

The Board shall adopt and allocate adequate resources to support the Connecticut School Climate Policy and adhere to state regulations set forth in Public Act 23-167.

Definitions

“Bullying” means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

“**Connecticut school climate policy**” means the school climate policy developed, updated, and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended by this act, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of planning and preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation.

“**Challenging behavior**” means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

“**Cyberbullying**” means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive, and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone, or other mobile electronic devices, or any other electronic communication.

“**Electronic communication**” means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical system.

“**Emotional intelligence**” means the ability to perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, understand and identify emotions, and manage emotions in oneself and others.

“Effective School Climate Improvement” is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

1. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;
2. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices, and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;
3. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;
4. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to

educate the whole child;
5. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and
6. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:
    a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
    b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
    c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
    d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
    e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

"Evidence Based Practices" in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

"**Mobile electronic device**" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game, or a digital video disk or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

"**Positive Sustained School Climate**" is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes: 1. Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe; 2. People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively; 3. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision; 4. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and 5. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

"**Restorative practices**" means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

"**School climate**" means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.

"**School climate improvement plan**" means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all

members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

"**School climate survey**" means a research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees, and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan.

"**Social and emotional learning**" means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

"**School environment**" means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions, or programs that occur outside of a school sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions, or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

"**School-based Threat Assessment**" means an evidence-based systematic process used to prevent violence, help troubled teens, and avoid over-reactions to challenging behavior.

"**School community**" means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school, and school employees.

"**School employee**" means a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator, or coach employed by a local or regional board of education, or any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public school, pursuant to a contract with a local or regional board of education.

"Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

References and Resources

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