

FROM THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPPER MERION AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT JANUARY 2026

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Classroom Climate and Culture

January is an excellent time to reset or refresh. Students have spent almost two weeks in an unstructured environment. Although students are excited to see their friends and teachers, returning after break can feel like another “first day” of school. A mid year reset may be beneficial for the classroom climate and culture. It is great to have a fresh start where the climate of the classroom feels like a new beginning; especially for students who struggled academically, behaviorally, or emotionally during the first half of the school year. Climate is the mood of the classroom. It encompasses the relationships, teaching, learning, and belonging. Culture focuses on how teachers show what they value in the classroom.

Teachers can do the following to reset the climate and culture in the classroom:

- **Reconnect.** Prioritize building community that centers belonging. Re-establish the social bond that students may have lost while they were away.
- **Reboot.** Check in with students to make sure everyone feels included. Continue to build trust through norms and expectations.
- **Remodel routines and transitions.** This helps students to feel safe.
- **Renew.** Hang new decor or a poster that represents a fresh start.
- **Resolutions.** Have students share educational resolutions or intentions for the second half of the school year.

THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMM

Rebuilding relationships with students in the new year is just as beneficial as building relationships in the beginning of the academic school year.

New Year Challenge: 2 X 10 Strategy

Pick two students a day over the next 10 days to check in with (rebuild). Spend 2-5 minutes talking to them about anything other than school.

JANUARY APPRECIATION

1/19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance
(MLK Birthday 1/15)

1/27 International Holocaust
Remembrance Day



STUDENT VOICE

“I am part of Stage Crew. This is where I can be myself and not pretend in school. I know a lot of people in that group, no matter what grade. But what makes it fun is our Director, Mr. Mikelonis!”

-Noah, Middle School (8th grade)



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In too many classrooms, a ‘good day’ is quietly defined by how compliant students were. Were they quiet? Did they follow directions right away? Did they stay in their seats? But what if we shifted the measure? What if we focused less on how still or silent students were, and more on how seen, heard, and safe they felt? Because a room full of quiet students isn’t necessarily a room full of engaged ones, and following the rules isn’t the same as being well.

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