Climate and Culture Action Team

Preparing schools for successful transitions

PURPOSE

This document was created to support schools in caring for current communities while preparing thoughtfully for future transitions. It is intended for principals, staff, families, community members, and district leaders.

VISION FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

When climate and culture are prioritized throughout school reorganization, we emerge from the process stronger, more united, and ready to provide thriving learning environments now and in the future.

- Students, staff, and families feel **informed, supported, welcomed, and connected** throughout the transition.
- Staff have the **clarity, time, support, and opportunities to collaborate** needed to successfully navigate change.
- Current school communities remain **strong and valued** while future communities are thoughtfully prepared.
- Receiving schools build on their **existing strengths** while creating meaningful opportunities for new students, families, and staff to belong and contribute. The history, unique contributions, and strengths of sending schools are recognized and celebrated.
- New school communities begin with **trust, clarity, confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging,** recognizing that a strong culture develops over time.

Guiding Commitments

- Students remain at the center of decisions.
- Families receive timely, clear, and honest communication.
- Staff receive clarity, support, and opportunities to collaborate.
- Current school communities continue to be valued throughout the transition.
- Welcoming practices should build on the strengths of the receiving school, while considering strengths of sending school(s).
- Culture develops through relationships, shared experiences, and consistent practices over time.

1. Prior to the Announcement

September-October 2026 | Prepare thoughtfully while maintaining focus on the current school year

CLIMATE AND CULTURE FOCUS

Prepare clear, coordinated communication and anticipate support needs without creating unnecessary disruption or speculation.

STUDENTS & FAMILIES	STAFF
District will: ● prepare an initial family FAQ and identify a clear contact for questions, by anticipating common questions about timelines, attendance areas, start/end times, transportation, programs, student supports, and next steps. ● provide information on how and when decisions and information will be shared consistently across schools and district channels. ● consider how student and family questions will be gathered after an announcement. ● protect normal school routines and continue celebrations, events, and learning experiences.	District will: ● prepare a staff FAQ and a clear communication sequence for the announcement. ● provide HR timelines and processes for staffing decisions prior to or right when recommended plans are announced. ● identify who will answer questions related to staffing, operations, student services, and transition planning. ● prepare leaders to acknowledge uncertainty and respond consistently. ● avoid asking staff to begin extensive transition work before decisions and assignments are known.

2. Immediately Following the Announcement

October-November 2026 | Provide clarity, stability, and opportunities to ask questions

CLIMATE AND CULTURE FOCUS

Reduce uncertainty through timely communication, visible leadership, and opportunities for questions while maintaining calm and stability in schools.

STUDENTS & FAMILIES	STAFF
Students/Families need: ● the initial announcement to be clearly communicated with each student's assigned neighborhood school and provide families with a simple way to confirm this information. ● the process and deadlines for registration for neighborhood and school of choice. ● an initial FAQ and timeline, as soon as possible. ● regular updates, including what information is still being developed and when it will be communicated. ● reassurance that students will continue to receive strong instruction, care, and support throughout the 26-27 school year. ● a place/avenue to ask questions to guide future communication. ● talking points to support their children through the process. ● opportunities to help with communication and plans for supporting students and school throughout the remainder of the year. (Partner with PTO, parents, SAC and ambassadors to help with support)	Staff need: ● information before or at the same time as broader public communication whenever possible. ● regular opportunities for staff questions and updates. ● clarification on timelines, and points of contact. ● leaders to acknowledge the range of emotions staff may experience and provide appropriate support. ● to protect instructional and planning time by limiting meetings to what is necessary and keep the focus on the students and work for the current school year. ● to be provided with age-appropriate talking points to support students through the process.

3. Transition Planning Guidelines: Sending School

January-August 2027 | Support changes with care and clarity

CLIMATE AND CULTURE FOCUS

Honor the current community, prepare students and staff for what comes next, and provide meaningful closure when appropriate.

STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Students/Families need:

- opportunities to ask questions and seek clarity.
- to be able to honor the school community through celebrations, traditions, or reflection when a school is closing or changing significantly, throughout the remainder of the year.
- information with summer/fall orientation and welcome opportunities.
- to know how student support and services will continue.
- empathy and support. Students feed off adult reactions and emotions. Parents/guardians should work with school staff to support students through the changes with a consistent and caring approach.
- to be able to ask questions and provide feedback throughout the transition process.

STAFF

Staff need:

- to partner with receiving school to help communicate opportunities and information to support the transition.
- clear information about assignments, timelines, and transition expectations as early as possible.
- to remain focused on current students through the end of the school year.
- opportunities to share student information, effective practices, and important routines with receiving staff.
- time and compensation for transition meetings to support students on IEPs, 504s, ELD plans, etc.
- time and compensation for packing, moving, transition tasks, and collaborative planning.
- clarity on what to pack, how to move their room, what role facilities will play, who is responsible for common areas, packing, moving, etc. (Library, work rooms, etc.)
- clarity for how the school will be utilized in the future, to help with moving/packing decisions.

Consider:

- Recognizing staff contributions and provide meaningful closure when appropriate.
- Providing support for staff whose roles or work locations are changing.
- Providing opportunities to celebrate current school and its history, as appropriate, depending on site and how it will be used in the future.

4. Transition Planning Guidelines: Receiving School

January-August 2027 | Welcome new students and staff while building on existing strengths

CLIMATE AND CULTURE FOCUS

Help new students, families, and staff feel welcomed and prepared. Build on the receiving school's established culture, systems, and strengths while remaining open to thoughtful improvements and broader changes that reflect the needs of the evolving school community.

STUDENTS & FAMILIES	STAFF
Students and families need: ● information about dates for tours, orientation, and clear information about schedules, routines, expectations, programs, and supports. ● opportunities for new students and families to contribute ideas over time. ● opportunities to actively participate in any big changes. If just two communities are largely being combined, intentionally plan shared experiences and opportunities for student voice. Ex. New or updated mascot or logo redesign, etc. ● to know class placement process, schedules, before and after school activities, family involvement opportunities, etc. ● opportunities for 'meet the teacher' or welcome events prior to the school year starting. ● to be involved in culture building activities. Ex. Use student ambassadors, buddies, or other welcoming practices to start the year. Utilize receiving school's families to be part of transition events for both students and parents/guardians. ● transition events and culture-building activities that engage both new and returning students, strengthening relationships and building one cohesive school community.	Staff need: ● to be provided access to key information, systems, routines, and resources. ● collaborative planning time with grade-level, department, and/or support teams. ● to utilize mentoring or teaming systems when helpful. ● opportunities to share new staff perspectives while maintaining clarity about established expectations. ● dedicated time to build relationships, establish shared norms and align essential practices. ● time and compensation for joint professional learning and planning sessions to build a positive staff culture and align best practices. ● to determine if key systems need to be redesigned (instructional practices, behavior systems, schedules, etc.) based on their scenario and how it affected their specific staffing. ● opportunities for new staff to participate on teams and committees, including leadership roles, as appropriate.

Any receiving school gaining students through boundary changes should retain its existing name. School leadership may engage the community in considering changes to the mascot, colors, school mottos or other elements of school identity, if desired.

5. Conditions for Success

District and leadership considerations that support effective implementation

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many of these conditions extend beyond the scope of the Climate and Culture Action Team. They are included because district decisions, timelines, and resources directly shape the experience of students, families, staff, and schools and directly impact the climate and culture of current and future school communities.

STUDENTS & FAMILIES	STAFF
Students and Families need the district to: ● keep the current school year strong and stable while future planning occurs. ● coordinate communication so families receive consistent information from schools and the district. ● provide enough lead time for families to understand the registration/school of choice process, transportation, programs, and supports. ● provide families with start/end times for schools, and any other relevant information that will help them determine where their children will register. ● allow relationships and belonging to develop through ongoing experiences rather than relying on one event. ● gather feedback after the transition and adjust supports as needed.	Staff need the district to: ● protect instructional time and current student needs when scheduling transition work. ● provide staffing information and role clarity as early as possible. ● allow staff to have an opportunity for input on their role, prior to staffing decisions being made. ● offer adequate time for collaboration, packing, moving, classroom setup, and system alignment. ● be thoughtful about when transitioning staff are asked to participate in receiving-school planning. ● provide support for staff experiencing uncertainty, reassignment, or loss of position. ● use days prior to the school year for site specific needs. ● Provide release time strategically to support the transition, while allowing each school the flexibility to determine how that time is best used to meet the needs of its staff. ● recognize that strong culture develops over time and does not need to be completed before the first day.

Core Reminders

- Maintain the strength of current school communities while thoughtfully preparing future communities to begin with clarity, confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging.

- This Climate and Culture document provides overarching guidance for supporting school communities through the transition process. Because the results of the work of the Comprehensive Planning Committee and BOE was not completed when this document was developed, the framework is intentionally broad and designed to support a range of transition scenarios.

- As plans are finalized and approved, schools may benefit from additional guidance, resources, and strategies tailored to the unique needs of their communities and transition models.

- Staff at highly impacted sites will need time and compensation to effectively transition and set schools up for success in the 27-28 school year.

- Identifying a singular point of contact leading the transition process from November through August.