

A school principal's role is essential when building a positive school climate. A principal assesses the conditions and creates a plan to support growth. Creating a positive school climate is a school-wide collaborative effort to design and implement strategies, practices and interventions for promoting positive social and communication skills.

This learning guide is designed for use by instructional leaders and learning communities, or as a self-paced study to explore school-wide behavioural supports.



This learning guide is intended to be used after viewing the video clip [Developing a Positive School Climate](#).

Big idea: The principal is critical in implementing change in a school community. At Anne Fitzgerald School, the principal had a strong desire to ensure a safe and caring environment for her students, staff and families. To accomplish this, the principal recognized a need to proactively address challenging behaviours.

Key understandings:

- A positive school climate is nurtured by the school leadership team and developed intentionally based on what the school needs.
- It is necessary to target the roots of the behaviours and understand why they are occurring.
- Building a sense of community and capacity among school staff is essential in creating a successful inclusive school community. The expertise of a multi-disciplinary learning team is invaluable in supporting teachers.
- There are a number of elements that contribute to challenging behaviour in students, such as limited communication skills, poor motor skills, poor social skills, difficult home life, low academic skills, medical issues and developmental disabilities.
- Engaging the support of an emotional behaviour specialist has proven to be effective in strengthening teacher and parent management skills, improving children's social competence and emotional regulation, and reducing behaviour challenges.
- Challenging behaviours decrease profoundly once the cause is understood.
- Implementing positive behaviour supports in schools reduces challenging behaviours and increases the development of social, problem-solving and self-control skills.

Questions for discussion:

- What are universal, targeted and intensive/individualized supports?
- How do you begin to develop a positive school climate? Who is involved?
- How can you apply elements from the Positive School Climate video into your own school context?
- What strategies promote prosocial behaviours?
- What is the role of the principal? The teachers? The emotional behaviour specialist? Others?
- How do we nurture our understanding of inclusion, where all children are welcome and belong – no matter what?

For more information:

Alberta Education (2007). *Positive Behaviour Supports in Alberta schools: An intensive and individualized approach*. Retrieved from <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inspb1/html/introduction.html>

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