

SCHOOL CLIMATE LAW IN CONNECTICUT AND SELECTED STATES

A PRESENTATION FOR THE
SCHOOL CLIMATE TASK FORCE

September 15, 2016

OVERVIEW

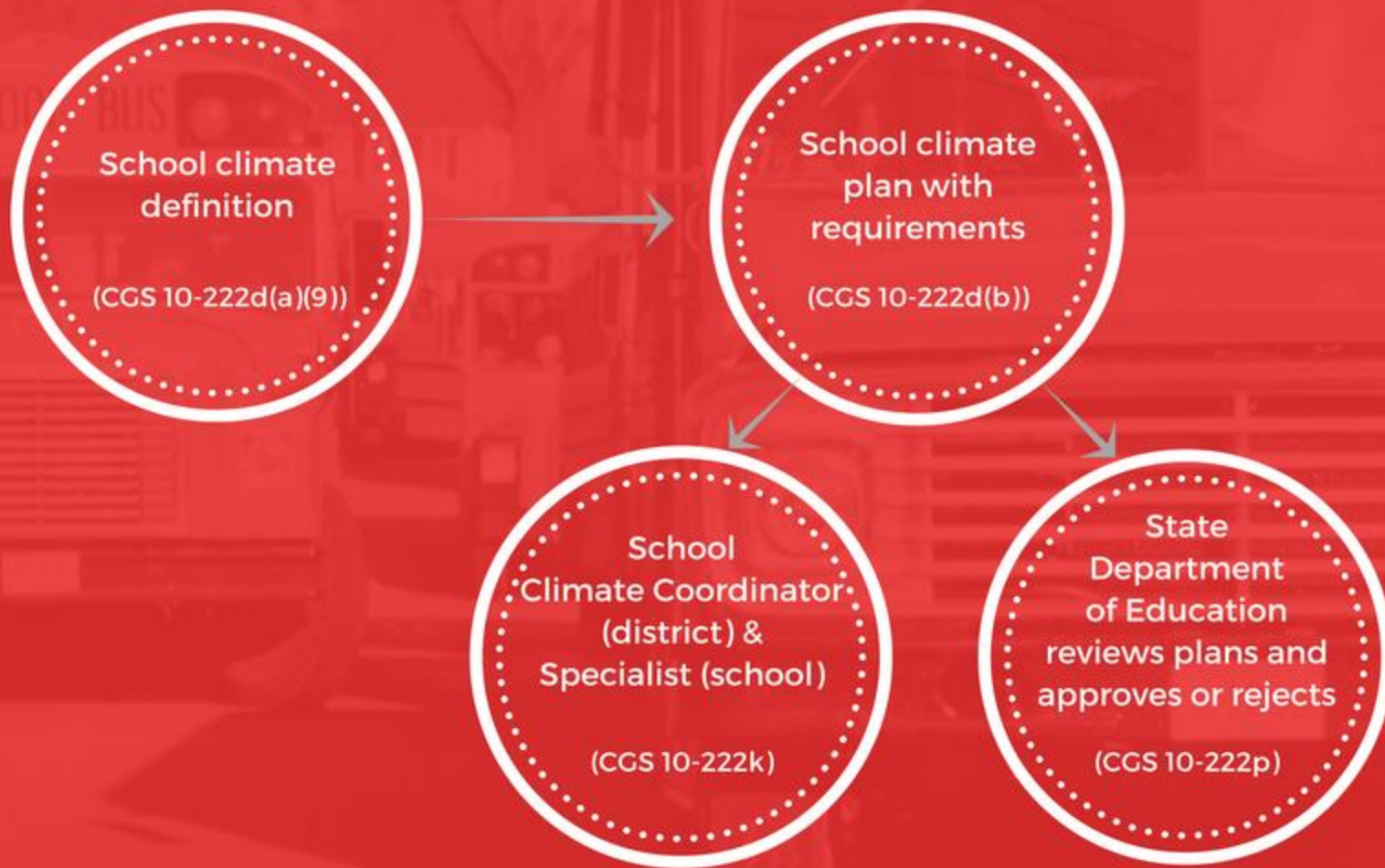
Connecticut law

- School climate definition
- School climate plan
- Local actors
- State agency role

Other definitions and metrics

- National School Climate Council
- California
- District of Columbia
- Illinois
- Massachusetts
- West Virginia

CONNECTICUT OVERVIEW



"SCHOOL CLIMATE" AS DEFINED IN CONNECTICUT

CGS 10-222d(a)(9)

THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF SCHOOL LIFE
WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE QUALITY OF
RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BETWEEN AND AMONG:



STUDENTS

&



ADULTS

SCHOOL CLIMATE PLANS

Must include 18 specific items:

- Three specifically address reporting or making complaints about bullying
- Seven address investigations of complaints and related follow-up
- Seven address policies, procedures, and strategies
- One addresses annual employee training



LOCAL ACTORS

DISTRICT SCHOOL CLIMATE COORDINATORS

- Responsible for implementing the district's school climate plan
- Coordinate with school climate specialists at each school in their district
- Provide data and information to SDE about bullying

SCHOOL CLIMATE SPECIALISTS

- Principal or principal's designee
- Investigate or supervise investigation of bullying reports
- Collect and maintain records of bullying reports and investigations

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Reviews school climate plans for compliance with state law
- Approves or rejects plans within 30 days
- When necessary, provides notice and explanation of denial (district has 30 days to revise and resubmit)





OTHER SCHOOL CLIMATE DEFINITIONS AND METRICS

- Information from the National School Climate Council, as well as four states and the District of Columbia
- Each state uses "school climate" in a different context
- Means to measure school climate vary greatly



NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE COUNCIL DEFINITION

"School climate"

- is based on the patterns of people's experiences of school life
- reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organization structures that comprise school life

CALIFORNIA

- Accountability plans must include school climate as measured by pupil suspension rates and pupil expulsion rates (Cal. Educ. Code Sec. 52066)
- No definition of "school climate"



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Pilot project for select schools, three domains of school climate:

- engagement, including cultural and linguistic competence, relationships, and participation;
- safety, including emotional safety, physical safety, bullying and cyberbullying, substance abuse, and emergency readiness and management; and
- environment, including physical environment, instructional environment, physical health, mental health, and discipline (DC Code 38-2602(b)(27)(E))

Measurement:

- Must conduct annual surveys of parents, students, and teachers on the three domains

ILLINOIS

Required school report card must include measures of the school environment, including:

- Percentage of students with less than 10 absences in a school year
- Percentage of teachers with less than 10 absences in a school year for reasons other than professional development or other permitted leaves
- Three-year average of the percentage of teachers returning to school from the previous year
- Number of principals the school has had in the previous six years
- Two or more indicators from any state- selected or - approved school climate survey
- Combined average of teachers rated as proficient or excellent in their most recent evaluations (105 ILCS 5/10-17a)

No definition of school climate

MASSACHUSETTS

"Safe and Supportive Schools"

Schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive whole-school learning environment that

- enable students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well being and
- integrate services and align initiatives that promote students' behavioral health (including social and emotional learning), bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and similar initiatives

MASSACHUSETTS

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

- Each school and district must conduct a student survey, at least once every four years, to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying
- State Department of Education develops the survey, and results are submitted to the department for analysis
- Department must make findings available to school officials (MGL 71 Sec. 37O (I))

A grayscale background image of a desk with various school supplies. A ruler is visible in the upper right, and a pen is in the lower right. Papers and a folder are scattered on the desk surface.

WEST VIRGINIA

- School climate reference is embedded in a school leadership initiative law.
 - School climate reflects strong leadership that develops shared beliefs and values among the staff, high expectations for all, and a safe, orderly, and engaging environment
 - School leaders must have the authority, resources, and flexibility to affect school outcomes (WVC 18-2-36)

QUESTIONS?

For more information, see OLR Report 2016-R-0169,
School Climate Definitions in Other States.

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