

## Chapter Seven: Using the Tools Activity

### Identity Safe School Planning Preparation Form

NOTE: Questions have been adapted from the Identity Safe and Inclusive School Program Guide (Cohn-Vargas, 2016).

#### Identity Safe School Vision

LIST YOUR SCHOOL'S VISION BELOW

#### Questions to Address During Data Analysis:

Use these questions when developing surveys and analyzing data that have been collected:

#### School Climate and Culture

1. What are the main goals and concerns of students?
2. How do the different ethnic groups and other diverse student populations describe their sense of belonging and liking of school? What is being done for those who don't?
3. What actions has the school taken to promote diversity and intercultural understanding, and awareness of gender identity and sexual orientation? What has been the impact of those activities?

4. What are the areas on campus, or on the way to and from school, where students feel safe? Where do students feel unsafe?
5. Do any students describe being subjected to physical or verbal bullying, cyberbullying, and teasing? If so, what have they described? Is any bullying or harassment based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, or sexual orientation?
6. How do students describe the way school administrators and staff respond when they witness or experience teasing, bullying, or are subjected to violence?
7. Do the students feel adults care about them and will listen and help when they have problems? What supports are in place for student emotional well-being?
8. How do the adults feel at school? What are their major concerns?

## Academic Program

1. What strategies, methodologies, and programs support student achievement, and what is the impact of the efforts?
2. Do students believe they have the academic support they need? Do they feel their teachers express high expectations and motivate them to achieve their goals?
3. Do students find the curriculum challenging and motivating? Do they see themselves represented in the curriculum?
4. How are students placed in courses? Are large numbers of one racial group found in advanced or higher-level courses? If so, what is being done to diversify and increase access?
5. Are students advancing and progressing to meet grade-level standards, including those who are receiving remedial or tutoring services? What is offered to them?

6. Who is identified for special education? Is any one ethnic group overrepresented in special education courses? What services are offered? How is the special education program working to help students progress academically?

## Behavior and Discipline

1. Do any students have attendance problems? Are there any patterns of absence among a particular ethnic group, income level, or language group? Can you discover why certain students do not come to school? What has been done to address attendance problems, and what has worked?
2. Do discipline policies and procedures align with the school's vision and mission? Are the policies being implemented as intended? Are the policies and procedures effective in preventing and addressing all forms of violence and student conflict?
3. What are the policies and practices to address bullying, social exclusion, and intolerance? What has been the impact of these efforts?
4. How are behavioral norms, expectations, and school rules presented to students? How are they implemented?

5. How are students taught prosocial skills, character education, and empathy? What is the impact of these efforts?

## Questions to Guide the Process of Setting Goals

Once you have analyzed data and determined areas of growth, select from the questions below—which are drawn from each of the identity safety principles—as you begin a process with your group for setting goals.

**Principle One:** *Colorblind teaching that ignores differences is a barrier to inclusion in the classroom.*

1. What alternatives to colorblind teaching will be incorporated that do not contribute to stereotyping students?
2. What will ensure that students of all backgrounds achieve at high levels while feeling that their identities are not invisible? How will you help students find their voice and deeply understand the content of your curriculum?

**Principle Two:** *To feel a sense of belonging and acceptance requires creating positive relationships between teacher and students and among students with equal status for different social identities.*

1. What will be done to enhance each student's sense of belonging?
2. What specific strategies will be used to ensure that teacher–student relationships are positive and nurturing?

3. How will positive student–student relationships and equal status be encouraged and monitored?
4. How will conflicts be addressed?
5. How will educators learn about and incorporate trauma-informed practices?
6. What behavior management strategies can ensure that student consequences and mistakes offer learning opportunities and ways to repair harm done? How can the growth mindset and learning from mistakes become part of the fabric of school life?

***Principle Three:*** *Cultivating diversity as a resource for learning and expressing high expectations for students promotes learning, competence, and achievement.*

1. How will educators help students learn to value their own identities and create acceptance?
2. How will the growth mindset be taught and practiced?

3. How will you ensure educators are continually reflecting on and communicating high expectations?
4. How will educators work to develop challenging curriculum for students of all backgrounds and at all academic levels?
5. How will students and staff learn about implicit bias, microaggressions, and stereotype threat? How will everyone develop skills to respectfully call one another out when these situations occur and work to reduce the negative impacts? What new efforts can be incorporated?
6. How will staff become aware of and incorporate the power of counter-narratives?

***Principle Four:*** *Educators examine their own social identities to feel a sense of identity safety and convey that feeling to students, creating an identity safe environment for them.*

1. How will educators deepen their understanding of their own identities as well as their power and privilege?

2. How will you work to create identity safety for staff?

3. How will educators build trust with one another?

4. Are opportunities for equalizing status and honoring diverse voices of staff prevalent within the school community?

***Principle Five:** Social/emotional safety is created by supporting students in defining their identities, refuting negative stereotypes, and countering stereotype threat, giving them a voice in the classroom while using SEL strategies.*

1. How can equity-focused SEL be promoted in ways that promote prosocial development of the students?

2. How can all students learn to work cooperatively and become self-motivated, independent learners?  
How can a growth mindset culture be cultivated?



**Principle Six:** *Student learning is enhanced in diverse classrooms by teaching for understanding, creating opportunities for shared inquiry and dialogue, and offering a challenging, rigorous curriculum.*

1. What teaching practices can be added to enhance engagement in school?
2. Thinking of specific ethnic and racial subgroups, what goals do we have for improving our effectiveness and how will that manifest in student learning?
3. What are ways to ensure that all students find their voice and deeply understand the content?
4. What strategies will support student autonomy, agency, and confident academic identity?

**Principle Seven:** *Schoolwide equity flourishes for everyone in identity safe schools where the climate, the structures, practices, and attitudes prioritize equity, inclusion, and academic growth for students from all backgrounds. Leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence; attend to student needs; address racism, bias, and privilege; and serve as the architects of ongoing change.*

1. What operational infrastructure will sustain the positive changes?

2. What are the plans for professional development to build capacity of all adults on campus to create identity safe environments?
3. What barriers exist that hinder some students from becoming engaged or achieving? What steps will be taken to remove the barriers?
4. What existing resources support English Learners, those with mental health needs, and students with disabilities? How do you help those who bully or repeatedly harm others transform behavior? What needs to be added?
5. What parent involvement and educational opportunities will enhance participation and increase their inclusion in the school?