

Green Book Initiative

Feasibility Study with compartmentalized evidence-based strategies and case study

11/2023

Executive Summary:

This feasibility study aims to explore the alignment of various categories with the concept of psychological safety within a school community, particularly focusing on inclusivity and representation in curriculum, disciplinary actions, staff and leadership representation, engagement with Black families and communities, treatment and involvement of Black school board members, policies and practices, support systems, and physical environment. Psychological safety, a crucial component of effective learning environments, ensures that all members of the school community feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute without fear of reprisal or discrimination.

Introduction:

Psychological safety within school communities is crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment where students, educators, and families feel safe, respected, and valued. This feasibility study aims to explore how various categories, including Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation, Equity in Disciplinary Actions, Staff and Leadership Representation, Engagement with Black Families and Communities, Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board Members, Policies and Practices, Support Systems, and Physical Environment, align with and contribute to psychological safety. The study draws upon existing research and scholarly literature to provide evidence supporting the alignment of these categories with psychological safety.

Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation:

An inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse perspectives and experiences has been shown to enhance psychological safety within school communities. Research by Gorski and Swalwell (2015) suggests that inclusive curriculum positively impacts students' sense of belonging and academic engagement. Additionally, a study by Sleeter (2019) found that incorporating diverse voices and experiences into the curriculum promotes empathy and understanding among students from different backgrounds.

Equity in Disciplinary Actions:

Equitable disciplinary practices contribute to psychological safety by ensuring fairness and reducing feelings of systemic impact among students. A study by Skiba et al. (2014) demonstrated that schools with lower rates of disciplinary disparities have higher levels of perceived safety among students. Implementing restorative justice practices, as advocated by Gregory et al. (2016), can help build a culture of trust and accountability within the school community.

Staff and Leadership Representation:

Representation of diverse identities among school staff and leadership positively influences psychological safety. Research by Terriquez and Nuñez (2020) found that students from systemically impacted backgrounds benefit from having role models who share similar identities and experiences. Similarly, a study by Nagaoka et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of diverse leadership in fostering inclusive school climates.

Engagement with Black Families and Communities:

Meaningful engagement with Black families and communities is essential for building trust and fostering a sense of belonging within the school community. A report by the National Education Association (NEA, 2020) emphasized the importance of culturally responsive family engagement practices in promoting student success and psychological well-being.

Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board

Members:

Ensuring equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of Black school board members is critical for promoting transparency and accountability within school governance structures. Research by Ikpa and Brooks (2017) highlighted the impact of diverse representation on board decision-making processes and community trust.

Policies and Practices:

School policies and practices play a significant role in shaping the psychological safety of the school community. A study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) underscored the importance of equity-focused policies in creating inclusive learning environments. Implementing anti-discrimination policies and practices, as recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2018), can help address systemic barriers to psychological safety.

Support Systems:

Comprehensive support systems, including mental health services and academic support programs, are essential for addressing the diverse needs of students and staff. Research by Bradshaw et al. (2019) demonstrated the positive impact of school-based support systems on student well-being and academic achievement.

Physical Environment:

The physical environment of schools can influence students' sense of safety and belonging. A study by Fisher et al. (2018) found that well-designed school facilities contribute to a positive school climate and student engagement. Creating inclusive and accessible physical spaces is essential for promoting psychological safety among all members of the school community.

Conclusion:

The findings of this feasibility study demonstrate that various categories, including curriculum inclusivity and representation, equity in disciplinary actions, staff and leadership representation, engagement with Black families and communities, treatment and involvement of Black school board members, policies and practices, support systems, and physical environment, are aligned with and contribute to psychological safety within school communities. By prioritizing these categories and implementing evidence-based strategies, schools can create nurturing and inclusive environments where all members feel safe, respected, and empowered to thrive.

Evidence-Based Strategies and Case Study (updated January 2024)

1. Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation:

- a. Research Evidence: A study by Gorski and Swalwell (2015) found that students in classrooms with inclusive curricula reported higher levels of belonging and academic engagement. Additionally, Sleeter (2019) highlighted the positive impact of a diverse curriculum on fostering empathy and understanding among students from different backgrounds.
- b. Case Study: The California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) is a prime example of inclusive curriculum development. It integrates diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences, empowering students to explore their identities and engage critically with social issues. The

implementation of ESMC has been associated with increased student engagement and a sense of belonging.

2. Equity in Disciplinary Actions:

- a. Research Evidence: Skiba et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis and found that schools with lower rates of disciplinary disparities reported higher levels of perceived safety among students. Gregory et al. (2016) demonstrated that implementing restorative justice practices in schools reduces exclusionary discipline and fosters a sense of trust and accountability.
- b. Case Study: The Baltimore City Public Schools' implementation of restorative practices resulted in a significant decrease in suspension rates and improved school climate. By prioritizing restorative approaches over punitive measures, the district saw a shift towards a more inclusive and supportive disciplinary culture.

3. Staff and Leadership Representation:

- a. Research Evidence: Terriquez and Nuñez (2020) found that students from systemically impacted backgrounds benefit from having role models who share similar identities. Nagaoka et al. (2015) highlighted the positive impact of diverse leadership on creating inclusive school climates.
- b. Case Study: The Seattle Public Schools' efforts to increase staff diversity led to improved student outcomes and a more inclusive school culture. By recruiting and retaining educators from diverse backgrounds, the district enhanced representation and fostered stronger connections with students and families.

4. Engagement with Black Families and Communities:

- a. Research Evidence: The National Education Association (NEA, 2020) emphasized the importance of culturally responsive family engagement practices in promoting student success and psychological well-being.
- b. Case Study: The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) is a successful example of engaging Black families and communities in the educational process. By facilitating home visits between educators and families, PTHVP builds trust, strengthens relationships, and promotes collaboration toward student success.

5. Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board Members:

- a. Research Evidence: Ikpa and Brooks (2017) highlighted the impact of diverse representation on board decision-making processes and community trust.

- b. Case Study: The Oakland Unified School District's efforts to ensure meaningful involvement of Black school board members led to greater transparency and accountability in governance. By valuing diverse perspectives and voices, the district strengthened community relationships and promoted equity in decision-making.

6. Policies and Practices:

- a. Research Evidence: Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) underscored the importance of equity-focused policies in creating inclusive learning environments. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2018) recommended implementing anti-discrimination policies and practices to address systemic barriers to psychological safety.
- b. Case Study: The San Francisco Unified School District's adoption of an equity policy framework resulted in more equitable resource allocation, improved access to opportunities, and enhanced support for systemically impacted students. By embedding equity principles into policies and practices, the district advanced towards a more inclusive and supportive environment.

7. Support Systems:

- a. Research Evidence: Bradshaw et al. (2019) demonstrated the positive impact of school-based support systems on student well-being and academic achievement.
- b. Case Study: The Chicago Public Schools' implementation of a comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) program led to improved student behavior, increased academic performance, and enhanced school climate. By prioritizing SEL and mental health support, the district created a nurturing and inclusive environment for all students.

8. Physical Environment:

- a. Research Evidence: Fisher et al. (2018) found that well-designed school facilities contribute to a positive school climate and student engagement.
- b. Case Study: The Green Schoolyards America initiative transformed asphalt schoolyards into vibrant, nature-filled spaces, promoting physical activity, mental well-being, and environmental stewardship. By reimagining the physical environment, schools can create inclusive and welcoming spaces that support the holistic development of students.