

Section 2 Physical Environment

SD Toolkit for Engaging Parents and Families

The types of tools contained in section 2 will assist schools in creating a welcoming, safe, and support physical environment. This is essential for the academic success of students. Physical environment can encompass everything from the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds, to the school entrance, to the condition of the school common spaces, and into individual classrooms.

Physical Environment

[How Family Friendly Is Your School Survey](#) - A quick survey on welcoming school environment

[Click here for the American Institute of Research](#)

AIR is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations that is research based.

☑Remember! Section 1 of the toolkit contains a comprehensive Family Friendly Walk Through that has a variety of checklists, educator and parent surveys, and report forms.

Physical Safety

Listed below are a variety of sites containing a wealth of resources and information related to school climate and culture. These sites are used frequently in the field of family and community engagement.

[National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#)

[Safe Havens International](#)

[National School Climate Center](#)

[12 Dimensions of School Climate Measure](#)

[Community Matters](#)

[South Dakota Department of Public Safety](#)

[Boys Town](#)

[South Dakota Department of Social Services Prevention Programs](#)

☑ Designate an empty locker. You may identify it by painting it blue. This can be used by students to anonymously submit positive praises or reports of wrongdoing, such as bullying, to school administration. School counselors and administrators check the locker frequently and take action.

[Click here for teaching tolerance](#)

This site offers several different resources available to educators dealing with several different types of issues, it has magazine articles video dealing with today's issue.

[Personalized Handshakes](#) - here is a youtube video that shows a school principal who has developed a personal handshake for every student in his classroom

[Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#) -A Guide for Counselors, Teachers, and Administrators

[Click here for a graphic on improving school culture](#)

8 strategies for improving school culture



Hawthorne Elementary School, Principal Patti Pannell has incorporated the [The Circle Courage and Positive Psychology](#) by Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern. The Circle of Courage and Positive Psychology identifies four universal needs of all children: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. When these needs are met, children grow and thrive. Hawthorne Elementary has displayed the Medicine Wheel in the school's foyer with cut outs of each students hand with their individual goal for the school year.



Hawthorne Elementary School, Principal Patti Pannell, has created a national flags representing the many different nations of students who attend Hawthorne Elementary.

[Click here for suggestions on classroom arrangements](#)

Classroom arrangement ideas to promote an optimum learning environment

[Click here for ways-to adjust physical space](#)

Suggestions for classroom arrangements for autistic students

[Click here for Literacy rich environment](#)

Ideas on creating a Literacy based classroom

[Click here for spreading smiles](#)

Classroom suggestions for creating positive learning environments

[Click here for activelearningspace.org](#)

Ways to change the classroom environment to enhance students to become active learners

[Click here for classroom key](#)

Ideas for classroom desk arrangements

[Click here for ways to keep your school safe](#)

Several articles pertaining to school safety and ideas on how to implement them in your school.



Iroquois Elementary School teachers came up with a plan to help young bus riders get on the correct bus. This plan also helps teachers match the bus and child correctly during a very busy time of the day, especially at the beginning of the new school year. They purchased cow tags used to identify which calf belongs to which cow, and instead of using them on cows and calves, they put them on the younger students' backpacks and matched the colored tag with the correlating color of the bus they ride to and from school. This helps everyone during that crazy time at the end of the day.



The lights are on. The field is quiet. On the sidelines stand 39 girls. The clock turns 12:01, the whistle blows and the girls take the field. It's the official start of the season and a night of Midnight Madness.

A tradition was started 4 years ago in Tea Area High School Girls Soccer. On the first official day of practice the girls get together for a full night of practice, team bonding, one-on-one sessions and fun.

The team practices for an hour or two and then they migrate to the gym for an overnight. It's a perfect time for the girls to bond, to learn about each other, what they hope to get from the season, and also what the coaches expect from the girls. They watch movies, play games, eat junk food and plan for the season. At 5am, they disband and often go, without coaches, for a team breakfast. This is a tradition the older girls look forward to and the incoming girls wait for with anticipation. As a coach, I too look forward to Midnight Madness and the opportunities it presents. We set out 4 years ago to build a program. I believe we are on the right track.

Winning is amazing but don't that define you, be a champion on and off the field. Make those around you better.

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6 WAYS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Build relationships. Kids don't care what you know until they know that you care.

Set clear expectations. Agree on a basic set of behavioral expectations for your entire school and communicate those expectations to all students and staff all the time.

Teach processes. When you want students to do something, teach them the steps it will take to get there, and repeat them until students have internalized the process.

Praise students for good choices. Compliment the specific behaviors you are looking to reinforce.

Keep things small. Kids are going to make mistakes. Avoid escalating small mistakes into big confrontations. Take a few minutes away from the situation, if necessary, so you can respond calmly, instead of in the heat of the moment.

Be patient. It takes time for students to master new behaviors and social skills. Think about it in terms of sports. You're not going to get upset because the first time you pitch to a kid, he strikes out. You're going to keep pitching over and over again.