School Climate Improvement Toolkit: Facilitation Guidance and Editable Worksheets

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# Facilitation Guidance

This toolkit is designed to engage the members of a district team in collaboratively selecting one high-leverage school climate activity, planning its implementation, and identifying expected outcomes. The toolkit activities require thoughtful facilitation to ensure that all participants are actively engaged and that the resulting implementation and monitoring plan addresses the unique district context. Following are, first, some general tips for facilitators and, then, specific guidance for facilitating each step in the modules. The editable worksheets for each step are also included at the end of this guidance document.

## General Tips for Facilitators

To get started, facilitators should review all steps for each module and determine where to start. While the five modules flow, one from the other, in a logical order, the facilitator, possibly in consultation with the team, should determine the best starting point. For example, if the work of sorting through potential climate improvement activities (Module 1) has already been done, the team could move directly to Module 2, in which they would define the rationale for that choice of high-leverage activity. The facilitator should not assume, however, that all team members have the same level of understanding; thus, a module, or even a step in a module, should not be skipped without careful consideration.

Facilitators should also consider how to use the driving questions, examples, and worksheets for each step to lead productive conversations. The examples for Demo Unified School District, in particular, are designed to highlight key ideas for each step and should be reviewed carefully in advance. While there is a general procedure outlined in each step, the facilitator will still need to plan the structure of the activity. Do team members need to work through every worksheet or could some be filled out in advance? Would it be helpful to have team members work in pairs before having a full-group conversation? How will the time available be best used to reach the intended outcome for that step? Having the next step in mind when structuring an activity can help ensure that the different phases of the work flow seamlessly into each other. Knowing what will come next is helpful in leading discussions.

Using visual displays, such as PowerPoint slides or a chart of driving questions, instructions, or examples, can support dialogue and increase the likelihood that an activity will be successfully completed. The facilitator can also determine if all team members should receive a copy of the toolkit or if having a copy of the worksheets and the examples of completed worksheets is sufficient. The facilitation guidance that follows for the steps in each module lists the materials the team members must have if they don’t already have the full toolkit.

For the work to proceed successfully, it is essential for the facilitator to create a safe environment for discussion, especially if people with different background information are part of the team. Setting norms with the help of the team can be an effective way to ensure that all participants have the same expectations about the way the team works and can prevent unnecessary conflicts.

Minimally at the end of each module, the facilitator should lead the group in a conversation about what information needs to be communicated to whom and in what format. Instructions and an example of a completed communication plan are located in appendix A; a communication plan template is the last document in the editable worksheets. Rather than just sharing a completed worksheet (e.g., the rationale or the implementation plan) with stakeholders, help the team construct a message that conveys the importance of the completed worksheet, tailoring the message in appropriate ways for different stakeholder groups, such as the school board, school staff, or parents. Also help team members consider the best format (e.g., newsletter, assembly, slide presentation) for communicating information and how messages and formats might differ for different stakeholder groups.

## Facilitator Guidance for Modules

Each of the five modules has one or more steps. For each step, the guidance below provides the outcome, a rough estimate of the required time, the necessary materials if participants don’t have a copy of the full toolkit, and some facilitation notes. The worksheets for each step follow and can be customized for use.

### Module 1: Exploring School Climate Services/Activities/Programs for Potential Impact

Depending in part on whether some information is gathered in advance for step 1.1, and in part on the ease with which participants are able to reach agreement about the relative benefit and impact of different school climate activities, services, and programs (hereafter referred to simply as activities), the Module 1 process of selecting a high-leverage activity should be completed in 1—4 hours.

#### Step 1.1: Listing School Climate Activities

*Outcome:* A list of *all* activities related to school climate that are written into existing district plans.

*Approximate Time:* Less than 1 hour

*Materials:* Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 1.1 and Worksheet 1.1: School Climate Activities. Current Title I Plans, California Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and/or other existing district plans that integrate school climate activities.

*Facilitation Notes:* Because this is the first session, describe the purpose of the group and provide an overview of the process for completing all five modules. State the outcome for this step and describe the activity. The key to step 1.1 is understanding that school-climate-related activities may be found in many places in district and site plans and, thus, may not yet be part of a coordinated improvement effort.

#### Step 1.2: Exploring Highest Impact Activities

*Outcome:* Identification of one or more activities that are expected to have the greatest impact on improving school climate.

*Approximate Time:* 30 minutes–2 hours

*Materials:* Completed Worksheet 1.1 from step 1.1 and electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 1.2 and Worksheet 1.2: Highest Impact Activities.

*Facilitation Notes:* Explain to participants that in Module 1 the team will be narrowing its focus from the full range of school climate improvement activities to one activity on which participants will focus for the remainder of the process. In this intermediate step, the team moves from the complete list of school-climate-related activities found in district plans to selecting three that they believe would have the greatest impact on school climate in terms of benefit (reach and expected impact) and effort (ease of implementation and sustainability). Note that, as mentioned in the procedure for step 1.2a, the facilitator might lead the team in considering if they should focus on some specific element of a program or strategy rather than the overall program or service listed in a plan. These types of discussions are what may make this step take longer.

#### Step 1.3: Selecting a High-Leverage Activity

*Outcome:* Identification of one high-leverage activity that will likely have the greatest impact on school climate.

*Approximate Time:* Less than 1 hour

*Materials:* Worksheet 1.2 completed in Step 1.2 and Figure 1: Benefit/Effort Matrix.

*Facilitation Notes:* There are several key points the team should be aware of in completing this activity:

* Creating detailed implementation and monitoring plans for one activity does not mean other school-climate-related activities will not be implemented. This step is about choosing the activity for which they will *first* create implementation and monitoring plans.
* While there may be good reasons to choose the activity that is the higher benefit and lower effort, teams should not shy away from discussing activities that may take greater effort, especially if there is a compelling and urgent need for this activity.
* Particularly for activities that require high effort, this step is a good time to revisit the possibility of narrowing the focus further to a pilot with a small group of schools or focusing on a particular aspect of a program.

### Module 2: Defining the Rationale for the High-Leverage Activity

The single activity in Module 2 should not be skipped. The rationale is foundational for further work in the toolkit.

#### Step 2.1: Defining the Rationale for the High-Leverage Activity

*Outcome:* Articulation of the rationale for selecting the activity and development of a context-informed implementation plan.

*Approximate Time:*2–3 hours

*Materials:* Electronic or hard copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 2.1 and Worksheet 2.1: Creating a Rationale for a High-Leverage Activity; data or information that shapes how the activity will be implemented, such as survey data or an identified need statement from the existing plan(s).

*Facilitation Notes:*Emphasize the importance of being explicit about the rationale for the high-leverage activity. When the high-leverage activity was selected in the course of step 1.3 as the focus for this work, the decision was made in response to a set of conditions, needs, and situational constraints. But these factors may not have been explicitly articulated at the time, and team members may have different understandings about *why* the activity was chosen and, equally importantly, how it should be implemented given the context that led to it being selected. Use the example to highlight the context, needs, and situational constraints in Demo USD’s rationale for their choice of the positive discipline program in three of four middle schools. Possibly contrast Demo USD’s choices with the participants’ district or consider other choices the district might have made (e.g., all four middle schools) and what might have changed that decision. Then, ask questions that help participants become clear on why the particular high-leverage activity they chose is important and articulate the factors that shape implementation. This is the point to unearth the assumptions and hunches that led this activity to be chosen as the one high-leverage activity the team will initially focus on. Use this rationale throughout the subsequent modules to refocus the team.

### Module 3: Defining Successful Implementation of High-Leverage Activities

In Module 3, the focus is on identifying key stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the high-leverage activity and describing what each group will do to ensure successful implementation. The total time for this module will vary depending on the complexity of the high-leverage activity. If there are several stakeholder groups and a lot of implementation steps, the module could take as long as 3 to 4 hours.

#### Step 3.1: Identifying Relevant Stakeholder Groups for Implementing the Activity

*Outcome:* Identification of stakeholder groups that will be most directly involved in implementing the high-leverage activity.

*Approximate Time:* 15 minutes

*Materials:* Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 3.1–3.3 and Worksheet 3.1–3.3: Implementation Plan.

*Facilitation Notes:* The task in step 3.1 is to identify those who will have key roles in implementing the high-leverage activity. Review the procedure for this step for specific suggestions of stakeholder groups that might be involved in implementation. Note that these groups do not include the recipients of the program or service but those who are responsible for implementing. Most often, students will be recipients but it is possible, especially at the high school level, that students would have some responsibility for implementation. Time could be saved if the facilitator listed all the possible stakeholders who might be involved in implementation in advance. The team could then select which ones are most directly involved in implementation.

#### Step 3.2: Defining Successful Implementation for Stakeholder Groups

*Outcome:* Multiple implementation descriptors for each stakeholder group responsible for carrying out the activity.

*Approximate Time:* 2–3 hours

*Materials:* Completed Worksheet 2.1: Creating a Rationale for a High-Leverage Activity. Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 3.1–3.3 and Worksheet 3.1–3.3: Implementation Plan.

*Facilitation Notes:*Identifying key implementation tasks for different stakeholder groups is one of the foundational activities in the toolkit. The facilitator has the important role of ensuring the implementation descriptors are clearly articulated. In leading this important step, consider the following:

* This step is about implementation *descriptors* or *tasks*, not *outcomes*. Use the procedure and figure in step 3.2 to help clarify the difference for team members. Implementation descriptors outline what people need to do as part of successful implementation. Outcomes quantify the expected benefit or change that will occur as a result of this implementation.
* The descriptors should reflect the district context. How will the unique context of the district shape implementation? For a variety of reasons, not all districts or schools will implement an activity in the same way. Refer to the rationale, which should name the particular district factors and needs that should inform implementation.
* These descriptors should also reflect any planned variation that will be tested. For example, several schools might implement differently in an effort to see which strategy might work best in a particular context, such as a different grade span, or using different professional learning experiences. Any variation in implementation should be intentional and explicitly described so it can be monitored to see if the different approaches produce the desired outcomes.

Use the rationale (worksheet *2.*1) and the procedure, example, and figure from step 3.2 to clarify concepts and drive discussion.

#### Step 3.3: Developing an Implementation Plan

*Outcome:* An implementation plan that includes descriptions of evidence that the activity is being implemented as planned, and of who will collect information and how often.

*Approximate Time:* 1 hour

*Materials:* Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 3.1–3.3 and Worksheet 3.1–3.3: Implementation Plan.

*Facilitation Notes:* In this step, it will be important for the team to understand the purpose of monitoring implementation, as opposed to collecting data on outcome measures. Implementation monitoring is not to ensure compliance, but rather to document if the high-leverage activity is being implemented according to the plan and, if not, what changes are occurring and why. The information yielded from the monitoring will inform regular conversations on whether the activity is being implemented as intended, how implementation has varied, and whether any mid-course corrections need to be made.

### Module 4: Identifying Data/Metrics to Measure High-Leverage Activity Outcomes

In Module 4, the focus shifts to the potential benefits or outcomes expected to result from successful implementation of the high-leverage activity. Over the three steps in this module, the team will select a small set of metrics and well-defined targets to determine, in time to make mid-course corrections, if the anticipated benefits of the activity are being realized. This module could be done in a single meeting of 2 hours or less if metrics have already been selected, and the main task is indexing these measures to the high-leverage activity as it is being implemented now.

#### Step 4.1: Articulate Expected Benefits of the High-Leverage Activity

*Outcome:* Description of the anticipated benefits of the high-leverage activity.

*Approximate Time:* 30 minutes or less

*Materials:* Completed Worksheet 2.1: Creating a Rationale for a High-Leverage Activity. Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 4.1–4.2 and Worksheet 4.1–4.2: Expected Benefits and Supporting Metrics for High-Leverage Activity.

*Facilitation Notes:* In this step, participants create a general list of the expected benefits of successful implementation of the high-leverage activity.This step is separate from the selection of metrics (step 4.2) and setting targets (step 4.3) because it is not uncommon for districts to use only the required measures and, as a result, possibly miss some important outcomes in their monitoring protocols. Stating the anticipated benefits in this step ensures a more comprehensive monitoring plan. Team members may need to see the rationale to remember the set of issues this activity is intended to address. It may also be helpful to review the difference between implementation descriptors and outcome descriptors (figure 2 in step 3.2*)*.

#### Step 4.2: Identifying Metrics for Expected Outcomes or Benefits

*Outcome:* Selection of metrics for outcomes associated with the high-leverage activity.

*Approximate Time:* 1 hour or less

*Materials:* Electronic or paper copies of Figure 3: School Climate Domains, Subdomains, and Data Sources for Measures on School Climate Data Profile;Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 4.1–4.2; and Worksheet 4.1–4.2: Expected Benefits and Supporting Metrics for High-Leverage Activity. Also have available copies of local plans, such as a Title I plan or the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) for California districts, for reference.

*Facilitation Notes:* The goal of this activity is to select a measure or evidence source for each of the anticipated benefits or outcomes listed in the previous step. The state or a funder may have required measures that must be used and these may already be described in a plan. California districts can also consider using the metrics listed on the School Climate Data Profile (figure 3). An example of a data system, the School Climate Data Profile, that could be used in both steps 4.2 and 4.3 can be found in appendix B. Reviewing the subdomains and the related measurement sources in figure 3, as well as the examples, suggestions, and questions posed in the procedure, could give team members ideas for how to assess whether the anticipated benefits have been achieved.

#### Step 4.3: Outcome Monitoring Plan: Measures and Frequency

*Outcome:* Construction of an Outcome Monitoring Plan that includes selected outcome metrics, baseline data, and growth goals.

*Approximate Time:* 2 hours or more depending on how much information has been collected in advance

*Materials:* Electronic or paper copies of the completed Worksheet 4.1–4.2: Expected Benefits and Supporting Metrics for the High-Leverage Activity and Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 4.3 and Worksheet 4.3: Outcome Monitoring Plan.

*Facilitation Notes:* Building the outcome monitoring plan will take less time if the facilitator has collected baseline data, where available, and other goals or measurable outcomes from existing plans to serve as a starting point. Follow the procedure in step 4.3, reminding participants to be sure to write measurable outcomes that provide sufficient information in a time frame that would allow for using data to inform mid-course corrections if necessary and to ultimately judge if the expected benefits of the high-leverage activity have been realized. To save time, this may be an activity in which team members can break into pairs or small groups to write measurable outcomes. The pairs could then share their work with the full group for editing.

### Module 5: Aligning Implementation and Outcomes

The single step in Module 5 involves pulling together the implementation plan from Module 3 and the outcome monitoring plan from Module 4 into a single planner to coordinate implementation of the selected high-leverage school climate improvement activity.

#### Step 5.1: Developing a High-Leverage Activity Implementation and Monitoring Planner

*Outcome:* Creation of a planner that can be used to systematically guide implementation and monitoring of the high-leverage activity.

*Approximate Time:* 2 hours depending on the complexity of the high-leverage activity

*Materials:* Completed Worksheet 3.1–3.3 and the completed Worksheet 4.3. Electronic or paper copies of Demo Unified School District Completed Worksheet 5.1 and Worksheet 5.1: High-Leverage Activity Planner.

*Facilitation Notes:* It will be helpful to review the example with the team prior to starting Worksheet 5.1. Point out how implementation steps and collection and analysis of measurable outcomes are listed chronologically for ease of use. Consider how color and text formatting is used in the example to provide clarity. Text or rows could be colored, italicized, or bolded to emphasize tasks that relate to a stakeholder group such as parents or for a person or group responsible for an action. In the example, key words in each action step are in bold. Use text formatting and color to make roles and responsibilities clearer to those who will be using the planner. Those who are coordinating implementation of the high-leverage activity might keep the complete version of the planner, while representatives of stakeholder groups responsible for implementing only portions of the activity could get a simpler planner that includes only the actions for which they are responsible.

Be sure that this high-leverage activity planner is not an end in itself. Discuss with the team when they will next meet and how this planner will be introduced to those responsible for implementation and monitoring.

# Editable Worksheets

Worksheet 1.1: School Climate Activities

**School Climate Activities (Step 1.1)**

List the school-climate-related activities, services, and programs from existing district plans. Note that, for example, in California’s LCAPs, activities could be located under goals that may not be directly related to school climate.

Worksheet 1.2: Highest Impact Activities

Select three activities (including services or programs) that will improve school climate when implemented effectively. For each, describe the reach, expected impact, ease of implementation, and sustainability.

| School Climate Activities (Step 1.2a) | Benefit (Step 1.2b) Reach | Benefit (Step 1.2b) Expected Impact | Effort (Step 1.2b) Ease of Implementation | Effort (Step 1.2b) Sustainability |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity 1:** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Activity 2:** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Activity 3:** |  |  |  |  |
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Worksheet 2.1: Creating a Rationale for a High‑Leverage Activity

**High-Leverage Activity/Service:**

**Rationale (Step 2.1):** Describe the conditions, needs, and contextual constraints that prompted choosing this action. Explain how the unique context in the district and/or in schools involved will shape implementation. Try to address questions like, “Why these schools or these teachers or these students?”

Worksheet 3.1—3.3: Implementation Plan

**High Leverage Activity/Service:**

**Identified Stakeholder Groups (Step 3.1):**

| Describing Successful Implementation for Stakeholders (Step 3.2) | Evidence of Successful Implementation (Step 3.3) | Who Will Collect Evidence (Step 3.3) | When/How Often (Step 3.3) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What successful implementation will look like for** | **What evidence will tell us how we are doing:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **What successful implementation will look like for** | **What evidence will tell us how we are doing:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **What successful implementation will look like for** | **What evidence will tell us how we are doing:** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Worksheet 4.1—4.2: Expected Benefits and Supporting Metrics for High-Leverage Activity

**High-Leverage Activity:**

| Expected Benefit(s) of High-Leverage Activity (Step 4.1) | Supporting Metrics  (Step 4.2) |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

Worksheet 4.3: Outcome Monitoring Plan

**High-Leverage Activity**:

| Metric | Baseline | Measurable Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- |
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Worksheet 5.1: High-Leverage Activity Planner

**High-Leverage Activity**:

**Year:**

| Implementation & Outcome Tasks | Target | Who/When |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fall: August — November |  |  |
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| Winter: December — February |  |  |
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| Spring: March — May |  |  |
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| Summer: June — July |  |  |
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Worksheet A1: Communication Plan

**Information to be shared:**

| Audience and Message | Format for Communicating, Date | Coordinator of Communication |
| --- | --- | --- |
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|  |  |  |