

PART II

Building Safer Schools from the Inside Out

PART TWO OF THIS BOOK DETAILS A DIFFERENT YET complementary approach to creating safer schools, but then goes further. It offers readers the chance to understand the importance of school climate: how climate not only enhances school safety but sets the stage for effective learning and success, not just in school but throughout life.

Chapter Four introduces our inside-out approach to safer schools, which places students at the center of all efforts to improve school safety because they are in the best position to do so. Not only are they the primary targets and aggressors, they are the bystanders who by default are the “first-responders,” and whose action or inaction has a profound impact on each act of mistreatment. The chapter includes a discussion about how to harness students’ power by identifying the social groupings and cliques of their world and taking proactive steps to build a network of positive relationships between them. It also compares and contrasts the impact of rules and norms on human behavior, identifies three norms that impede efforts to reduce the mistreatment discussed in Part One, and sets the stage for enlisting students to change those norms.

Chapter Five expands on our complementary inside-out approach by looking more deeply at the context in which those norms exist. It explores the very nature of “school climate” and why it is important to school safety, citing recommendations from the U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education. To help schools use this powerful strategy, Chapter Five discusses five determinants of school climate, and shows how one state has adopted climate benchmarks to support and guide educators to bring climate out of the realm of theory and into practice. The chapter includes ten Keys to a safer school climate, a more comprehensive framework that schools can use to assess and guide their school safety efforts. The final section of the chapter shows how climate is a cornerstone of efforts to create schools that are both high-achieving and safe. It articulates the double-win of climate: how it improves both physical and emotional safety *and* supports the social-emotional learning needed to balance the current emphasis on academic achievement, which equips students for success not just in school but throughout life.