

Overview of the REL Mid-Atlantic and Pennsylvania Department of Education Partnership

Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic

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PDE-REL Partnership:

Using data to foster supportive learning environments and social-emotional wellness in Pennsylvania schools

The need

- Student and educator mental health challenges have increased
- Students of color and students experiencing poverty face a higher risk of social-emotional and mental health challenges

Addressing the need

- Support PDE in strengthening the data system on school learning environments
- Support Intermediate Units, districts, and schools in using data to improve school learning environments

Current projects to support social-emotional wellness



Making school climate survey data useful

- Assess psychometrics of elementary climate survey
- Approach to scoring and aggregating information from the surveys, including thresholds
- Assess climate perceptions during pandemic



Building an evidence base for statewide strategy

- Statewide logic model describing the initiatives and key players that support social-emotional wellness
- Planning guide to support Intermediate Unit Leads to plan, monitor, and assess programming with local educational agencies (LEAs) in their regions



Improving the usefulness of school safety data

- Present information about the historical purpose of OSS Safe Schools data
- Engage stakeholders in community conversations about the data most useful to collect and why
- Use information from community conversations to inform safe schools data

School Climate in the Wake of COVID-19

Study aims to refine climate surveys, improve scoring, and examine changes during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Assess the validity and reliability of the elementary school climate survey
- Assess climate perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Improve scoring and score reports provided to schools
 - Scoring approach that is valid, reliable, and understandable to stakeholders
 - Provide information useful to schools for decision-making



Study uses OSS's Pennsylvania school climate survey, which covers three domains

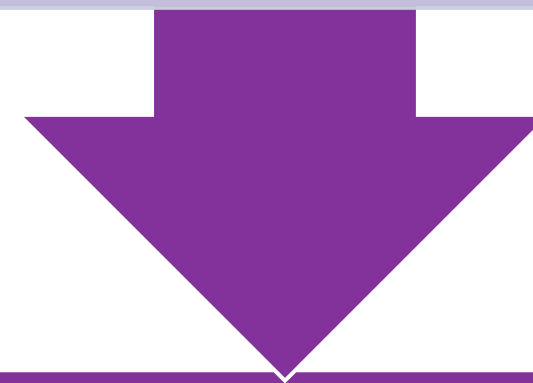
Domain	Definition	Example Item
Social-emotional learning	The respondents' perceptions of students' social and problem-solving skills	"Students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry" (all respondents)
Safe and respectful school climate	The respondents' perceptions of students' and teachers' physical and emotional safety	"Students in my school treat each other with respect" (all respondents)
Student support and academic engagement	The respondents' perceptions of how much students are listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school	"My teachers really care about me" (Student respondents) "I really care about my students" (Teacher respondents)

Source: www.paschoolclimate.pa.gov/home

How did school climate change with pandemic disruptions?

COVID-19 pandemic brought widespread disruptions both in school (e.g., remote and hybrid learning) and out of school (e.g., increased isolation; anxiety)

Academic growth lagged, and gaps by race and school poverty have widened (Lewis et al., 2021)



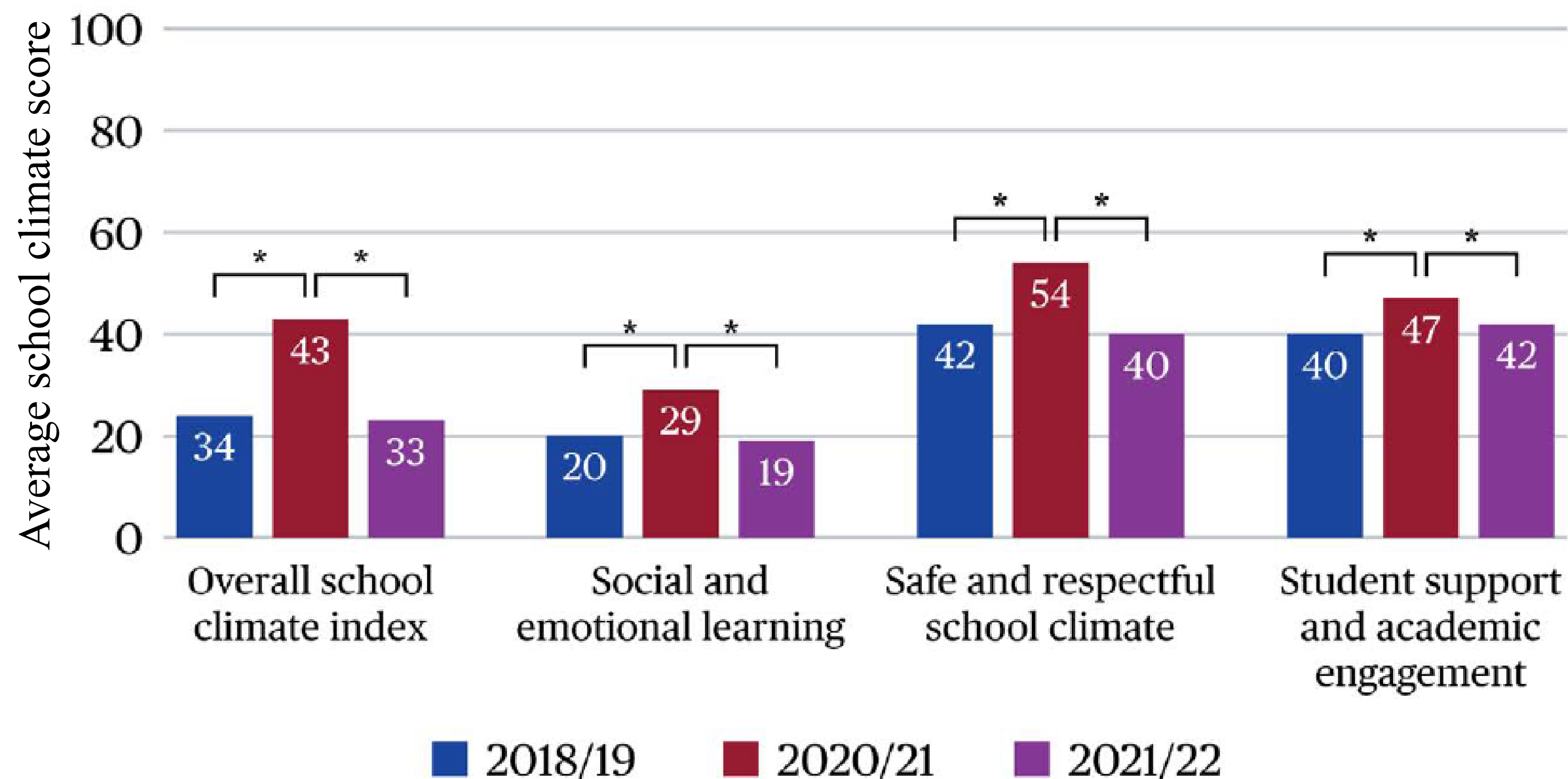
This study explored how school climate scores changed during the pandemic

Research literature is *sparse* on how pandemic has affected school climate (as measured by surveys), though school leaders have reported increases in disruptive behavior following pandemic school closures (NCES, 2022)

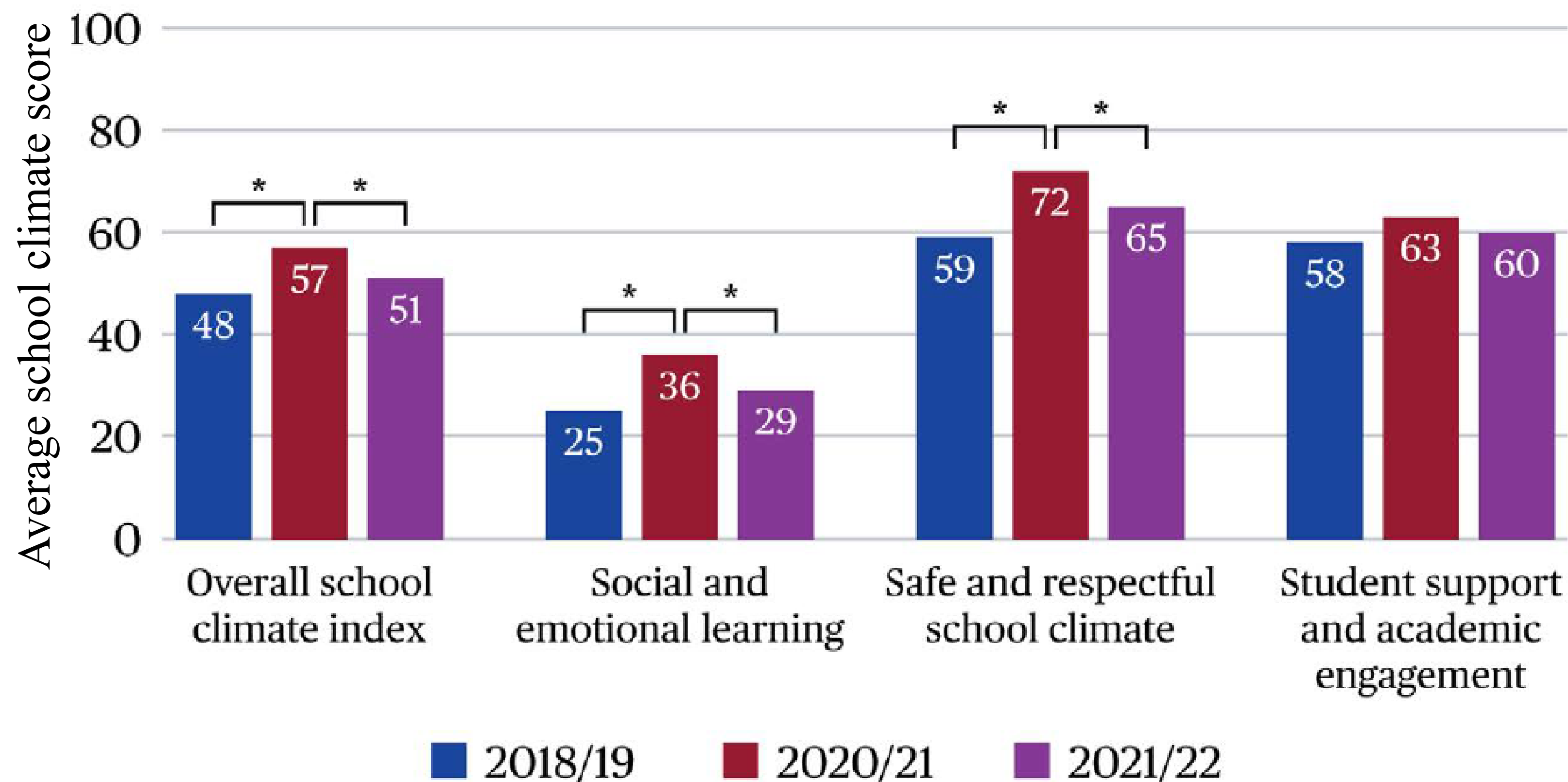
Compared change from 2018/19 to COVID-affected years (2020/21 and 2021/22)

- Exclude 2019/20 due to fact that some schools took survey before March 2020 and some after, so the year represents both pre-COVID and COVID-affected schools
- Caveat: samples small, not representative of state (more white students, less urban):
 - Teacher sample (elementary, middle, and high): 28 schools
 - Student sample (middle and high): 18 schools
- Used a larger sample of schools that took survey in 2018/19 and 2021/22 (52 schools in teacher sample, 30 in student sample) to check that patterns for those years were similar to the main analysis sample

Students' perceptions of a positive school climate increased from 2018/19 to 2020/21 and decreased from 2020/21 to 2021/22 for all domains and the overall index



Teachers' perceptions of a positive school climate increased from 2018/19 to 2020/21 and decreased from 2020/21 to 2021/22 for two domains and the overall index.



Discussion of school climate survey findings and next steps

- To what extent do these findings resonate with your experience? To what extent do they surprise you?
- How might these findings inform your work?
- What additional questions do these findings bring up for you?
- What do you use to capture school climate (this survey or other surveys or data)?
 - Have you used that information to inform decisions?

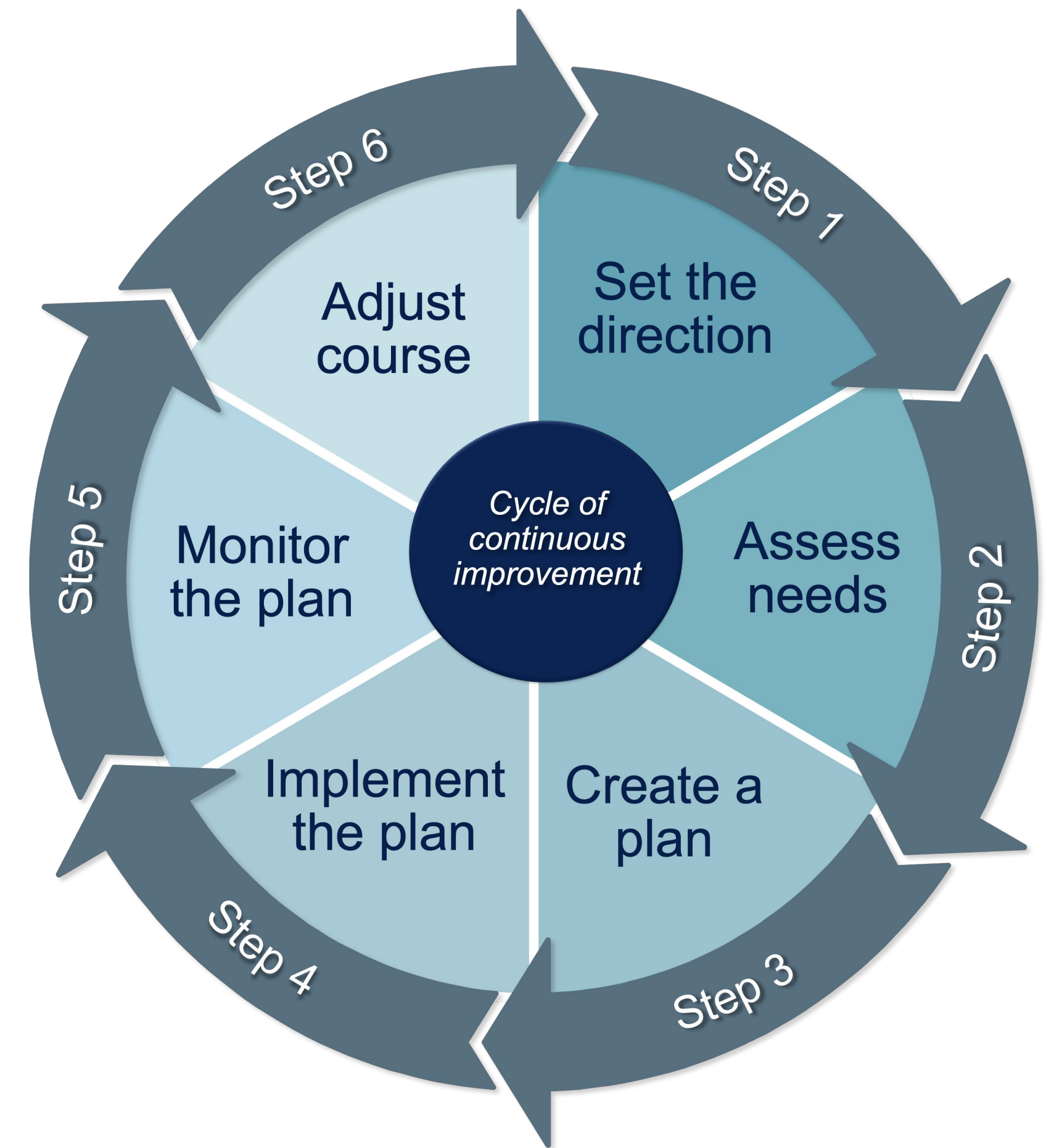
Supporting IU planning on social-emotional wellness

Pennsylvania Partnership: *Social-Emotional Wellness*

- Focused on strengthening the work of Intermediate Unit SEW Leads to plan and deliver social-emotional wellness supports to districts and schools
- Collaboratively developed a planning guide to support IU SEW Leads:
 1. Strategically plan, using a data-informed approach and awareness of evidence-based strategies
 2. Partner with district and school leaders to assess data and discuss strategies
 3. Leverage available resources in the school and community
 4. Connect with and learn from other IU Social-Emotional Wellness Leads
- Ultimately, the guide provides resources for IU SEW Leads to work with districts statewide to use data and evidence-based strategies to boost student and educator social-emotional wellness



Planning guide supports a flexible approach

- The tools and resources outlined in the planning guide align with PDE's Accelerated Learning framework, to promote a consistent and familiar approach for IU Leads, districts, and schools
- The guide is structured to be a “menu” of tools, informational resources, and reflection questions
- IU Leads can choose to use all or some of the guide and tailor resources to best support districts and schools in their region



Planning guide includes tools, informational resources, and reflection questions

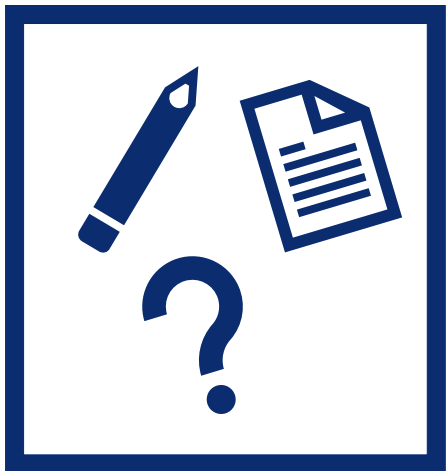
IU SEW Leads may use some resources in their own planning and other resources to design and deliver supports with districts. Guide resources come in several forms:

-  **Tools:** Worksheets to organize information about SEW needs and supports within and across the catchment area
-  **Informational resources:** Short documents with SEW guidance to use when planning and delivering supports to districts
- ? **Reflection questions:** Questions for self-reflection or to use in conversations with districts and other IU SEW Leads

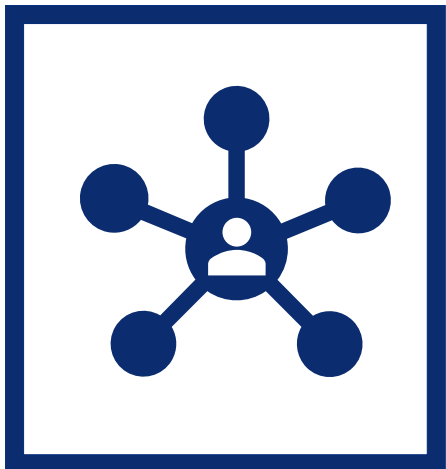
Planning guide pilot underway



Phase 1 Pilot: Beginning in 2024, the 11 Regional Social-Emotional Wellness Leads test the planning guide with Districts in their catchment areas.



Collaboratively Finalize: The first pilot group will provide feedback and suggest changes to the tools, resources, and reflection questions in the guide.



Phase 2 Pilot: In the fall, the remaining IU SEW Leads will implement the planning guide with support from the Regional Leads and the REL team.

Community conversations about school safety data

Are the state's school safety data accurate and useful?

- Safe Schools legislation, initially passed in 1990s, requires schools to collect information about all discipline incidents resulting in suspension or expulsion and report it to PDE each school year
 - Principals and local police chiefs must agree on the information in the reports.
 - This safety information is available publicly online for every school in Pennsylvania
- OSS recognizes that many factors influence the Safe Schools data that are reported, and that there may be inconsistencies in the data based on how schools and local law enforcement track and report data
- Community conversations to gather perspectives on school safety
 - To hear from the broader school community about school safety priorities

What do *you* think should be included in school safety data?

1. What school safety topics are most important to you?

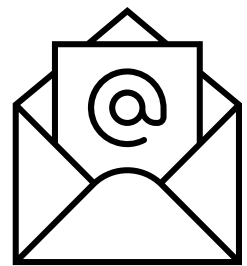
- What information do stakeholders use to determine if a school is “safe”?

2. Why is it important to collect information about school safety?

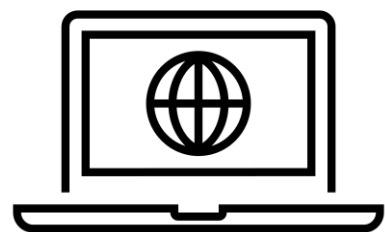
- How can this information help improve school safety?

Thank you!

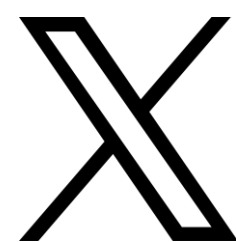
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