


Washington Student
Leadership

*Principal-led, student-centered
programs for 50 years
1956-2006*

Spring 2006
School Climate

The *Leader*



*School climate is the atmosphere
that the students and faculty create
at school. It is the level of respect
among students, among teachers
and between students and teachers.
The climate equals the level of
commitment and dedication each
group brings to the school.*

**Maria Mendoza,
Bothell HS, Junior**

The Leading Questions

- What does a positive school climate look like, sound like and feel like?
- How would different student and adult groups describe your school climate? Who are they and what would they say?
- Who are the least served students at your school? How could you serve them?

School Climate

Caring enough to ask the question: "How can I make things better?"



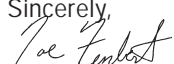
Recently I plunked down in a chair in Kathy Tully's office, the new principal at White Pass Elementary. I had just facilitated a game on the playground with 60-plus primary students. It took me a moment to string a few coherent sentences together because my head was spinning with the energy from the kids. I was excited about what had just happened on the playground and wanted to share the story with Kathy. I planned on staying just a minute, yet the conversation wandered into other stories about what good things were happening for kids at the school. I left fifteen-minutes later feeling like I had just had a pleasant conversation in a friend's living room. School climate. It takes many forms.

This issue of *The Leader* focuses on school climate. Two questions guided our research: What is school climate? and How can student leadership programs help create a positive one?

School climate is like other grand concepts such as love, friendship, or trust. Mousing words about the importance of school climate is just an echo bouncing down an empty hall. Specific actions make a school climate. Gestures of understanding, acts of kindness, and events of celebration are positive things that student leaders can create at their schools.

Kathy Lech, ASB Adviser at Pioneer MS, Steilacoom S.D., shared a story about her student leaders taking a stand for school climate. In a span of a week, three separate acts of graffiti defaced the school's bathroom walls. The student leaders did not like what was happening at their school. They put out an ultimatum to students that the final dance of the year (scheduled for Friday) would be canceled if the guilty people were not found. On Thursday, two of the three graffiti artists had been turned into the administration. The student leaders had been working on the dance for two months. Kathy and the principal encouraged the students not to cancel their dance; they had gone above and beyond the call of duty in helping. To the students, more important issues were at stake. They wanted to keep to their word. They wanted the graffiti craze to stop. They wondered why kids were defacing a place they loved. They didn't have the dance. The school climate was tested. Students faced the question: "What type of school do we want?" A school based on integrity was the answer.

Perhaps the simplest definition of school climate is to care enough to act.

Sincerely,

 Joe Fenbert, Editor

What Can I Do Today?

Ideas generated by the WASC Board to improve school climate

- Sit at a new lunch table each day.
- Plan activities like car shows, freestyle skate battles and comedy competitions that bring in non-mainstream groups.
- Fulfill your responsibilities so you can then help others fulfill their requirements.
- Put a spotlight on those who normally would not be in it.
- Place new students on the assembly planning committee.
- Provide assistance! So many students go unheard or unhelped.
- Smile at people walking down the hall.
- Greet students every day at the doors welcoming them to school.
- Reach out to the students putting up a negative front.
- Make a conscious effort to have direct interaction with students around you.
- Be a role model.
- Exhibit trust in communication between administrators and students.
- See the invisible kids and go ask them personally to help or for their opinion.
- Join clubs together for leadership projects and social events.

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Director
 Susan Fortin, susanf@awsp.org
Editor
 Joe Fenbert, joef@awsp.org
Production Support
 Jim Garner, Charlene Victorson, Jan Phillips
Office
 Cispus Learning Center
 2142 Cispus Road, Randle, WA 98377
 Phone: 360-497-5323 FAX: 360-497-5324
 www.awsp.org



Washington Student Leadership

In the Spotlight

Lori Leach Morgan MS, Ellensburg S.D.

"She has tons of leadership experience and nobody does a better job than her because she is so devoted and so into leadership," commented Taneum Barnbrick, ASB President at Morgan MS, at an assembly honoring her adviser, Lori Leach—the 2005 Middle Level Adviser of the Year. Lori began her leadership journey as the ASB President from Cheney HS attending the Mt. Adams Leadership Camp session in 1979. After starting her teaching career, Lori continued to involve herself in Washington Student Leadership programs. "She has filled almost every role possible in our program," said Director Susan Fortin. "She served as a CheerLeadership staff member and now is an assistant director. She has served as staff on our middle level camps as well as teaching the adviser workshop. She is a facilitator for our Middle Level Regionals and once or twice a year we ask her to help us conduct a custom workshop training." When asked why she continues to involve herself in student leadership, Lori said, "I guess I just never grew up; it's too much fun working with the kids."



Thanks for being a part of the Washington Student Leadership family.

The World Famous Pike Place Fish Market Crew Teach 47 Schools at Sonics Leadership Day

Flying fish, energized students and meaningful concepts were on hand at the Sonics Leadership Day on February 28 at Key Arena. Over 700 middle level and high school students and their advisers and principals participated in the event sponsored by Washington Student Leadership, the Association of Washington School Principals and the Seattle SuperSonics.

The keynote speakers were the crew from the world famous Pike Place Fish Market. The Market Crew highlighted concepts from their internationally acclaimed book, Catch: A Fishmonger's Guide to Greatness. School groups met after the keynote to discuss how these concepts could be applied to a school.

Pete Winemiller, vice-president of Service Development for the Seattle Sonics, concluded the event by moderating a discussion. After the Leadership Day, schools attended the Sonic's game.

Concepts from the Fish Crew's Catch applied to school climate

Choose Your Attitude

The fish guys are aware that they choose their attitude each day. They choose to make it a great day! One of the fish guys said, "When you are doing what you are doing, who are you being? Are you being impatient and bored, or are you being world famous? You are going to act differently if you are being world famous."

As it relates to school: As a leadership team, who do you want to be while you do your work? How does your individual and collective attitude impact your success?



Play

The fish guys have fun while they work, and fun is energizing. They are serious about their work without taking themselves too seriously.

As it relates to school: Does your leadership team approach projects as fun or as a task to be done? How does your ability to "have fun" impact the success of a project and how your "customers" view it?

Be Present

The fish guys are fully present at work. They don't let distractions destroy the quality that is present in each moment.

As it relates to school: How can you be present for each member of your team and for all members of the school?

Make Their Day

The fish guys include the customers in their good time. By engaging their customers they create energy and goodwill.

As it relates to school: You've chosen to be a student leader. Who are your customers and how can you engage them in a way that will make their day? How can you be a stronger leadership team by making each other's day?

I think school climate is the way the school feels when you walk into it. Is it welcoming? Is it fun? Is everyone in the school connected? Does it feel safe?

Brittany Barkow, Mt. View HS, Junior

It's Not About Us

Interview with Rebecca Thompson

ASB Adviser, Bethel JH, Bethel S.D.

How do your students promote a positive school climate?

It starts in the fall with my students understanding themselves. I use a lot of teambuilding and self-awareness activities so they can see the strengths they have to offer the whole school. Before we start generating ideas, I ask them to look at our leadership class and determine which groups of people are not represented. I remind the students that everyone in the school needs a voice. Even if the students might not engage in an event on their own time, we try to cater to all students by planning activities that catch the interest of specific groups of students. Some students come into leadership class for selfish reasons. I work hard to help them see the value of serving others. By the middle of the year I see these same students getting excited about planning activities that they have nothing to gain from, other than the pleasure one gets from seeing other people happy.

What type of activities do your students think of?

We very seldom plan exclusive activities. Everyone is involved. For instance this week we are celebrating the end of WASL testing week by moving the testing tables out into the courtyard for a barbeque. We are working with the PTA and having live music. But one area where we are a bit exclusive is with our school assemblies. We choose students to be involved in activities and competitions based on school spirit. Teachers and other students nominate them. We even video tape our assemblies and watch for kids in the crowd that are showing a lot of spirit. Our assembly activities tend to run smoother because we have the chance to go over directions with the students before the assembly and no students are overwhelmed by being put on the spot.

What else contributes to your success?

We work hard at staff buy-in. Not all teachers want to chaperone a dance but many are willing to lead an activity based around a hobby. None of my student leaders play chess, but we had some students interested in playing so the librarian hosted them. One year we had a rocket club because it was something a science teacher was really into. We look for win/win situations.

Tell me more about looking for win/wins.

The concept comes from the book The 7 Habits of Highly Successful Teens by Sean Covey. After the students learn the concept, we spend the year celebrating win/wins through a paper chain that decorates the room. Students are encouraged to talk about their win/wins then add them to the chain. For example, our karaoke night was not well attended, but then a student pointed out that the kids that did attend had a chance to sing a lot of songs, which would not have happened with a huge crowd. It's also just little stuff. We like to decorate the halls with all the students' names and the students like to see their names in the hall. Little things go a long way. Students also start to see the big picture and how things are interrelated. We offer a new student breakfast midway through the year because we have a lot of kids coming and going. At a dance, the student leaders noticed that one of the kids at the breakfast felt comfortable enough to dance with them. I ask the student leaders to be visible but approachable.



A GIFT: (from left) ASB President Reggie McDuffy, Tiffany Cadwell and Kassidy Chamblin attach a treat to an inspirational quote for students taking the

Soundtracks

Form the team so the team can serve

Rebecca builds positive relationships among the students in her leadership class. Once they feel like they belong, it is easier for them to take the social risk to help other students connect to something positive at the school.

Objectives:

To recognize how messages in music comfort, teach and help you grow. To look at key moments in your life that have influenced who you are and what you have learned.

Materials:

5"x5" paper, art supplies, CDs, CD burner

Timeline:

One week outside of class to complete the assignment. One class period for presentations.

Task:

Imagine your life is being made into a movie. It could be a movie from childhood to the present or it could be about where you are now. Create the soundtrack to that movie by coming up with ten songs. For each song selected, include the reason(s) you chose it as well as the time period in your life the song represents. Each song should represent a certain time period or event in your life. After you have chosen your songs, design a CD cover for your soundtrack. For extra credit, you may burn a copy of the songs to play in Leadership class on a project day.

Process:

On the due date, you will meet in small groups to share your soundtracks. Each person will share three songs and why they are important. Grading will reflect effort and reflection.

We Have Spirit, Yes We Do!

Alternate ideas on the ever elusive school spirit

By Karen Skoog

ASB Adviser, Eastside Catholic HS

School spirit. Probably the most frequently used phrase around student body election time. Students talk about increasing school spirit through attendance at games, wearing school colors and yelling in the stands. But, instead of seeing these things as school spirit, let's step back and look at *what* it takes to get students to a game wearing their school colors and screaming loudly. The "what" is your real school spirit. Attendance at games may show school spirit, but it is not in and of itself school spirit.

School spirit is feeling emotionally and socially safe

Why do kids go to the games and other school sponsored events? Some students go because they love the sport or activity, but most go because they want to spend time with friends, outside of the classroom. They like each other so they want to spend time together. Since their connection is through school, some of the positive feelings they have about each other gets transferred to the school creating school spirit. Seems really basic.

If you want to increase school spirit at your school, the main question to ask is: "Do the students like hanging out together? Does one group of students disrespect another group? Is there a culture of put-down humor in the halls? Are there people sitting alone day after day—the kids no one wants to work with? If the answer to these questions is "yes," it makes perfect sense for students to not want to hang out together. Nobody wants to spend time at an after hours event with someone who makes you feel lousy.

If, as a student leader, you really want to increase attendance at your school events, you need to start with letting your classmates feel that they matter and that they are safe. You need to learn names of students outside of your own group and say "hi" to them in the hallways. You need to invite those sitting alone to join you. You need to enlist your friends and the other student leaders to take the social risk of stopping some of the negativity in the hallways. Lift people up and don't let others bring people down. Students who feel emotionally safe in their schools like their schools. They enjoy being with their classmates and they look forward to spending time together outside of school. This is where school spirit starts.



BRING A FRIEND: *The improvement in school spirit at Eastside Catholic began with a requirement that students in leadership class must attend nine school events per semester. Now, a sea of supporters wearing orange "Pump It Up!" t-shirts greet all students whether they are in drama, choir, or sports.*

School spirit is publicly valuing all students in your school

What do the assemblies and posters around your school communicate? It is important to value and celebrate all the activities in your school. Assemblies are one of the few times your entire school is together. This is your one chance to publicly demonstrate what kind of school you want to have. This is your media. Do you use assemblies to make fun of the freshmen? Do you set-up students in class competitions for the enjoyment of those in the stands, possibly embarrassing someone? Do you just highlight athletics and ignore drama?

Schools need to celebrate the accomplishments of the jazz band, the local rock band and speech and debate as well as the football team. Posters can celebrate both the basketball team and the choir as it goes on tour. You can make goody bags for the students in the drama production as well as the athletes. And, win or lose, the efforts of the student athletes and performers need to be celebrated. A winning season may pull a school together, but a weak season should

not break it apart. Student leaders need to communicate through assemblies and publicity that everyone at the school is valued. When people are recognized for their talents and efforts, they show pride in themselves and their school.

School spirit is showing interest in the activities of others

Are your student athletes encouraged to go to the cultural events just like students are encouraged to go to athletic events? School spirit is supporting each student at your school. The auditorium at the spring musical or band concert should be equally full as the stands during athletic competitions.

As a student leader, you can create an atmosphere where people want to go to events because they want to support the people participating. Attend events and bring your friends with you. Take the time the next day after an event to compliment a classmate on his/her effort. Ask your athletic director to talk to the coaches and encourage the athletes to attend events in the music/drama department. Encourage your classmates and fellow officers to be present at events. Invite the quieter students and make a point to talk with them at the event, or sit next to them to get better acquainted.

These three concepts should give you a place to start developing or enhancing your school's spirit. Define the type of environment that will encourage students to want to hang out together. The positive energy that you create in the hallways, the classrooms and during assemblies will spill over to the games, the dances, and other events. A general sense of school pride will be felt by all. As you work to build traditions and leave a legacy, create a school that communicates that everyone matters. Students need to come to school feeling that people are generally glad to have them there. The school spirit generated by a school like this will last long after your high school days are over.

School climate is the answer to the question: Are students enthusiastic about being at school or do they only come because it is required by the state?

Bridget Reilly, Central Valley HS, Junior

Over Six Million Students *Mix It Up* Each Year

Excerpts from the *Mix It Up* Web site: www.mixitup.org

Nowhere on school campuses are the boundaries of group membership more clearly drawn than in and around the cafeteria. "They" sit at those tables and "the ..." hang out over there. Everybody knows where you're *supposed* to hang out. But why does it have to stay that way?

Truth is, things don't have to be how they've always been. That's why Mix It Up decided to support young people who wanted to create change. Mix It Up believes in the power of youth to create and sustain real change. They provide ideas and tools to help students break the walls of division in their schools and community.

What is Mix It Up?

Mix It Up is a project that supports student efforts to identify, question and cross social boundaries within their schools and communities.

- There are three components to Mix It Up:
1. National Mix It Up at Lunch Day
 2. Mix It Up Dialogue Groups
 3. Mix It Up Grants Program

Why Mix It Up?

For many students, social boundaries are a troublesome, daily constant. Although the types of boundaries may vary from school to school, a 2002 Mix It Up survey showed:

- A majority of middle and high school students said that schools were "quick to put people into categories."
- 40% admitted that they had rejected someone from another group.
- One-third said it's hard to become friends with people in different groups.

Who is sponsoring Mix It Up?

The Southern Poverty Law Center (www.tolerance.org) is a nonprofit organization that combats hate, intolerance and discrimination through investigation, litigation and education.

The Study Circles Resource Center (www.studycircles.org) is dedicated to finding ways for all kinds of people to engage in problem solving on critical social and political issues. It provides tools to help people organize productive dialogue, recruit participants from all walks of life, find solutions and work for action and change.

What does Mix It Up hope to accomplish?

Organizers hope students will take a fresh look at their school environments and ask why the barriers that divide groups exist. Social boundaries can create divisions and misunderstandings in our schools. By working to cross these barriers through programs like Mix It Up, students can help create environments with less conflict and fewer instances of bullying, harassment and violence. Students and their teacher allies can help form safe, welcoming schools — places where every student can grow socially and academically. The goal of Mix It Up is to help make that possible.

Student Survey Questions:

Which boundaries are the hardest for students to cross?

1. Personal appearance
2. Athletic achievement
3. Style
4. Race
5. Academic achievement

Where at school do you see the boundaries most clearly?

1. Cafeteria
2. Classroom
3. Bus
4. Recreational activities
5. After-school clubs



THAT'S ME: Students at a leadership workshop sponsored by Columbia HS, White Salmon Valley S.D., break down barriers through an icebreaker. Seven neighboring schools attended the meeting to affirm that meeting together regularly would improve the school climate at each school.

How Socially Healthy is Your School?

Developed by Evonne Hedgepeth, Ph.D., *Lifespan Education*, www.lifespaneducation.com

On a 1-5 scale (one low, five high), rate your school on these indicators of social health.

- ___ Emphasis on competition (versus collaboration)
- ___ Violent rhetoric (in verbal and written communication)
- ___ Elitism (Popular Groups/ Outsiders)
- ___ Disempowerment of students
- ___ Anonymity of students
- ___ Cultural privilege reinforced by the school
- ___ Intolerance of others who are different
- ___ Strict gender role messages reinforced by the school
- ___ Sexual harassment
- ___ Anti-gay harassment
- ___ Total divided by 10 = Average Score ___

School Climate Ideas

By Bridget Reilly
WASC President, Central Valley HS



A positive school climate has been decreasing dramatically in recent years and it is becoming prevalent for students to have negative feelings about their high school experience. To assist in solving this struggle, a student leader's main focus should be making their high school climate as positive as it can be by being a servant to those around them. By student leaders serving the student body, the student body itself will then in turn begin to serve their peers, and the climate will improve.

The WASC Board is working to be a greater asset to schools in achieving a more positive school climate by challenging leadership classes and student councils to do more than the minimum for their school. It may seem impossible to change the climate of an entire school, but it all starts with one student leader who decides to make a difference and exceed expectations. We hope our ideas below inspire you to do great things for your school.

Benefit Dances

Our ASB has held two benefit dances. One was for our local food bank and the other was for the Hurricane Katrina relief. We made a significant amount of money for both and our student body felt good about helping others.

Cayla Ravancho, *River Ridge HS, North Thurston Public Schools*

High Five Hallway

We have a designated portion of the school set off by decorations where all students high five one another as they walk down the hall. Music is played during passing period. The activity promotes community among students who don't typically communicate.

Hot Cocoa Morning

We team with the kitchen staff to provide cups of hot chocolate to students during our winter spirit week. It gives people a warm and fuzzy feeling in the winter and puts everyone in a good mood.

Amanda Pisetzner, *Emerald Ridge HS, Puyallup S.D.*

Climate & Culture Committee

We have a Climate and Culture Committee composed of three representatives from each grade. The club coordinates monthly breakfasts to honor students of the month that have been recognized for academics, attitude or humanity. It also organizes five student forums during the year. Random students are asked to attend and provide the ASB with feedback. Students are asked what the ASB can do to improve the school or their individual learning. Another program called Breakfast with the Principal is a chance for the students and administration to get to know each other. This program helps the principals really know what goes on at our school. All of these activities mold us into a strong school.

Maria Mendoza, *Bothell HS, Northshore S.D.*

Sportsmanship

We had an activity this year to encourage all of our students to be respectful at our game against our biggest rival. We dressed our students with face paint, beads and spirit towels and we made a grand entrance with the school administrators. We got more out of this than just being spirited. There were no negative cheers for the other team, only positive cheers for our team. The power in the room was amazing. Parents and fans were very impressed.

Brittany Barkow, *Mountain View HS, Evergreen S.D.*

Leadership Camp

Every year our leadership class puts on a mini-leadership camp that lasts three days. When students return to school, they are ready and prepared to make a difference in people's lives and be a leader even though they are not in leadership class. The atmosphere at school after camp is the best our school experiences all year.

Improve Our School Forum

In December each year, our school brings 150 random students together to focus on how to improve the school. For three days, staff and students look honestly at our school. Once issues have been identified, plans are created to improve these issues. Everyone walks away with a feeling of responsibility.

Bridget Reilly, *Central Valley HS, Central Valley S.D.*

Spirit Boys

Our school is constantly trying to find new ways to improve school spirit. Students get extremely excited for our pep assemblies thanks to our Spirit Boys. We have a group of boys who promote school spirit by dressing up, hyping up and helping out. They inspire other students to get involved and they help create a warmer climate at our school.

Jane Shin, *Henry M. Jackson HS, Everett S.D.*

No Place for Hate

Our school was one of the first schools in Washington to become an Anti-Defamation League "No Place for Hate" school. This program prevents bias and prejudice from entering schools and communities. To become a "No Place for Hate" school you must organize several diversity-promoting activities. By participating in this program, our school has highlighted different groups, elevating our school climate by allowing more people to feel accepted.

Lauren Clapp, *Mount Si HS, Snoqualmie Valley S.D.*

Academic Grammy Assembly

Every year our leadership class puts on the Academic Grammy Assembly. This event highlights students that typically don't get recognized. It gives students recognition for their academic achievements and it helps promote positive aspect of our school.

Philip Dugaw, *WF West HS, Chehalis S.D.*

Link Program

The mission of our Link Program is to create relationships and connections between incoming freshmen and upperclassmen and staff. We want to use this relationship to raise helpful and informed students who know what type of climate we strive for at Lynden.

Jordan Beanblossom, *Lynden HS, Lynden S.D.*



For You:

Ruth Beckwith, ASB Adviser, Mount Tahoma HS, receives a presentation packet from WASC Board students Grace Pratt, Edmonds-Woodway HS and Jordan Beanblossom, Lynden HS at the Washington Activity Coordinators Association conference. The students, along with WASC President Cody Traub, Kalama HS, were asked to present a small group workshop on the efforts of the WASC Board to redefine student leadership and establish guidelines for the different roles played by school, local and state student leadership organizations.



The Digital Generation:

Students attend a technology meeting sponsored by ESD 113 in Olympia. Dana Anderson, Assistant Superintendent, solicited feedback from students to help shape school policy about the use of electronic communication. (from left) Alyssa Madison and Cayla Ravancho, River Ridge HS; Andy Moreland, Washington MS; Chad Stump, White Pass HS.



Collaboration: Dr. Terry Bergeson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, continues to partner with WASC. Together, the two organizations have successfully implemented the Student 2 Student program, a student-led information initiative designed to teach 9th grade students how to make state graduation requirements relevant to their lives.



**Teambuilding/
Actividades para
Unirse Con Otros
Estudiantes:**

Washington Student Leadership facilitators led teambuilding activities at the opening of a Latino Leadership Conference at Interlake HS sponsored by the Bellevue S.D. and the Eastside Latino Leadership Forum.



Time to Connect:

Renee England and Scott Lampe from Columbia HS organized an interhigh meeting for Stevenson HS, Trout Lake HS, Klickitat Secondary School, Goldendale HS, Lyle HS and Wishram HS. Their efforts inspired the group to officially form a chartered interhigh securing representation on the WASC Board.



Pep Talk:

Taho Kakutani, member of the Pike Place Fish Market Crew, inspires students from Kamiakin JH, Lake Washington S.D. at the Sonics Leadership Day. (from top left) Jeremy Driggs, Alanna Saunders, Andi Croteau, Adviser Jay DeGraff, Jordan Roush and Brady Rusch.

Washington School Principals
Education Foundation
Washington
Student Leadership
2142 Cispus Road
Randle, WA 98377-9305

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