



# National School Climate Center

*Educating Minds and Hearts, because the 3 Rs Are Not Enough*

## Nettle Creek Case Study

### Nettle Creek School Corporation: Lessons of “Digging Deeper”

As the newly appointed superintendent of Nettle Creek School Corporation in July 2012, school climate improvement became the top priority for **Dr. William Doering**. Moving forward with the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) in January 2013, the rich report of student, personnel and parent findings featured several areas of celebration and other areas of challenge when showing perceptions of **safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships and the institutional environment**. Finding effective methods to understand results was imperative to guide practice. He needed a solid system to interpret areas of discrepancy and consensus and guidance of how to prioritize findings to support long-term action planning. “We knew leadership teams needed a flexible system to easily participate in the analysis and take ownership of their climate data,” Doering said. Schools also needed to translate findings into an outline of “learnings” to share with students, extended staff and parents for reaction and input.

### Stepping Back

Nettle Creek School Corporation is located in Hagerstown, Indiana, a small town of about 2,000 residents 60 miles northeast of Indianapolis. Nettle Creek Schools, Hagerstown Elementary School and Hagerstown Jr.-Sr. High School, administered the CSCI for an in-depth look of environment. **Both created school climate leadership teams comprised of two administrators, four personnel members, three parents/guardians and two school board members as community representatives.** Splitting into two groups for their weekly sessions, each school began digging deeper into their climate data. Using NSCC’s report companion worksheets, they:

“We knew leadership teams needed a flexible system to easily participate in the analysis and take ownership of their climate data.” –Dr. William Doering

#### 1) **Created a profile of key areas of strength and need**

Noting the highest and lowest ranked areas of school climate and where student, personnel and parent feedback intersected and disagreed the most

#### 2) **Identified current initiatives that addressed these areas of need**

Discussing how they might expand current efforts and how assessment data would inform this process

### 3) Completed an audit of current practice

Analyzing existing attendance and detention/suspension data for additional ways records could be used in favor of school improvement

#### Devil's in the Detail

Nettle Creek school climate teams had possession of rich, in-depth reports full of overview perceptions across populations, detailed sub-group information and survey item-by-item analysis of individual questions. From profile findings, Hagerstown Elementary parents (grades K-6) felt **Sense of Social Emotional Security (SES) was an area for improvement**. Students (grades 3-6) and staff (K-6) also felt SES was a concern with Sense of Physical Security\* added. Hagerstown Jr. Sr. High School student, staff and parent (grades 7-12) feedback mirrored the elementary school for all three school climate areas. On the upside, **Safety Rules and Norms and Social Support-Adults were overall strength for both schools.**

School Safety Committees had been developed prior to the CSCI to address the Social-Emotional Security issues uncovered by the assessment. The findings validated the ongoing efforts to strengthen school procedures and norms with the CSCI validating school community discipline policies were clearly communicated, understood and successfully enforced throughout both buildings. This was a favorable finding. Norms would expand to explicitly reference bullying behavior and how students could go about safely intervening (if possible) or reporting incidents.

Also prompted by the findings, the School Safety Committee found more work needed to be done to change school safety perception. Since supportive adult relationships were present for both schools, the **Safety and Improvement Committees leveraged this strength to impact SES and Physical Security**. A rough draft of next steps included informal or advisory discussions to review findings with students and completion of NSCC's "hot spot" map to identify where and when bullying incidents took place and how they handled situations. **By identifying the main reasons students were not reporting or going to a trusted adult, Nettle Creek hopes to grow the foundational trust that already exists between students and adults.**

Finally, school climate teams analyzed attendance and detention/suspension records for trends: Were the same students frequently absent or facing discipline issues experiencing or part of bullying behavior? How were these incidents or discipline issues reported? What adult-student relationships existed for these students? From this data they found top incidents were taking place in the hallways after school. When adult intervention did occur, it was

mostly the result of staff presence and not students directly confiding in staff members. The upcoming advisory sessions would be an opportunity to see how student feedback coincided with these trends.

### **Moving On**

School climate improvement work is never “finished”. With plans to administer the CSCI again in 2016, the majority of 2013-2014 is invested in bringing together findings with matched action plans responding directly to critical areas of need.

To learn more about how your school can benefit from the CSCI, visit: [www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php](http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php).

\*School Climate Dimension Definitions