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Buyer's Guide to Safety, Climate, and Student Discipline Products and Services

Helping Schools and School Systems Make Informed Decision
2025

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Introduction

Navigating the world of school safety, climate, and student discipline can feel overwhelming for schools and districts. The market is crowded with a wide variety of products and services, ranging from metal detectors and AI-powered camera systems to restorative discipline programs, mental health resources, and threat assessment consultants. Additionally, the number of third-party vendors offering solutions is growing rapidly, leaving schools inundated with options and struggling to determine which approach best fits their needs.

Compounding this challenge is the fact that most school personnel are not trained in areas like school safety, crisis management, or mental health. Educators are, first and foremost, focused on teaching and learning, not law enforcement or emergency response. As a result, schools often find themselves relying on external experts to guide critical decisions about safety, climate, and discipline, even as they try to evaluate what solutions are most effective for their circumstances.

The stakes could not be higher. Addressing these areas proactively is essential to create schools where students can thrive academically and socially. Effective strategies in safety, climate, and discipline can also help retain staff by creating supportive, orderly, and manageable workplaces. On the other hand, failure to act can result in tragic consequences, including legal liabilities, costly lawsuits, and federal investigations, and yes, even loss of life.

Schools should be preventive, not reactive, by securing resources and plans before the unthinkable happens. However, smaller schools and those with limited budgets and staff face challenges in preparing for and addressing these issues. Their needs are no less critical, but their capacity to act is often limited, making it even more important to invest in tailored, scalable solutions.

This *Buyer's Guide to Safety, Climate, and Student Discipline Products and Services* is here to help. It is designed to cut through the noise, providing practical tools and actionable insights to help decision-makers identify their priorities and choose solutions that align with their goals. Whether you are part of a small private school or a large public district, this guide will help you understand your options, make informed decisions, and create safer, more inclusive, and better-disciplined environments for students and staff alike.

Let this guide be your roadmap to clarity and confidence as you navigate this critical and complex space.

Understanding the Landscape: Key Definitions

- **School Safety:** School safety encompasses both physical security, such as the presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) and surveillance camera systems. It includes implementation of threat assessment protocols and emergency preparedness measures. School safety also incorporates emotional security, including anti-bullying initiatives, mental health support, and cyber safety strategies. Together, these dimensions are designed to create environments where students and staff feel protected from harm and supported in their well-being, ensuring a foundation for learning in a safe and orderly environment. School Safety includes considerations for external as well as internal threats.

- **School Climate**: School climate refers to the overall learning environment and culture within a school. A healthy and positive climate is characterized by quality relationships among students, staff, and families. A healthy and positive school climate is present when a school building is a physical place and environment where people enjoy coming to work and school. A positive school climate fosters trust and a sense of belonging, creating the foundation for both academic success and personal growth.

- **Student Discipline**: Student discipline encompasses the policies, procedures, and practices schools use to manage student behavior while ensuring a safe and orderly learning environment. Effective discipline policies balance accountability with fairness and aim to support both individual students and the broader school community. Restorative practices play a vital role in fostering equity and addressing root causes of behavioral issues; however, these practices should complement, not replace, traditional discipline methods. Students who create unsafe environments for others must be removed when necessary to protect the well-being and learning of the school community. A comprehensive approach to discipline integrates safety and climate concerns and ensures that all students are treated fairly while maintaining high standards of behavior and security.

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There are multiple ways to think about the relationship between school safety, student discipline, and school climate. One approach positions school safety as the foundation, represented as the base of a pyramid, with student discipline building upon it and school climate as the pinnacle. This perspective shows the importance of physical and emotional safety of a school as a prerequisite to effective discipline and a positive climate. These elements together represent the foundation for an effective and successful school.
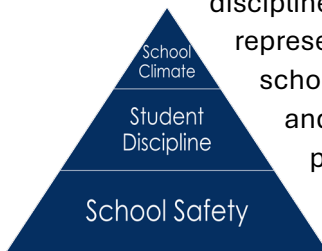
Another way views the elements as interconnected parts of a circle or pie, with components written around the perimeter and arrows indicating their continuous interplay. This approach shows the dynamic and reciprocal nature of these factors, showing how improvements or disruptions in one area inevitably impact the others.
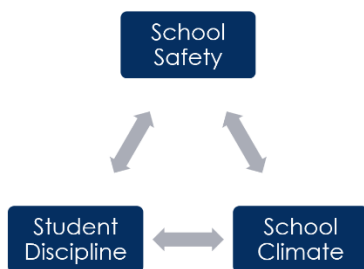
While these perspectives have their merits, I believe the most accurate representation is that of an infinite connection. When any one part—safety, discipline, or climate—falters, the entire cycle breaks, leading to cascading effects throughout the school. Ultimately, it's a matter of interpretation, but regardless of the framework, the interdependence of these elements remains undeniable.

The Interconnections: School safety, climate, and discipline form an infinite connection where each element touches and reinforces the others. When a school lacks physical or emotional safety, its climate inevitably deteriorates, creating an environment where students and staff feel unsupported. This decline disrupts the learning process, making discipline challenges more frequent and harder to resolve effectively. Poorly managed discipline creates safety concerns, allowing behavioral issues to escalate and further damaging the school climate.

Effective discipline policies are essential to address behavioral issues. Restorative approaches should not replace traditional methods. Students who pose a danger to others must be addressed appropriately, and removed, if necessary, to maintain a secure learning environment. Safety is fundamental to a positive climate. Schools are not safe when highly disruptive students are not properly dealt with. This infinite connection demonstrates the need for comprehensive and appropriate strategies that integrate these areas rather than addressing them in isolation. A balance between safety, climate, and discipline creates schools where students thrive academically and emotionally, educators are empowered, and communities place their trust in the educational system.
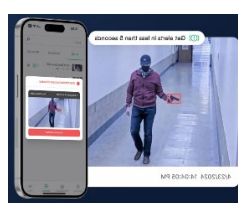
Identifying Your School's Needs

Challenges Across Different Contexts:

- o **Small Schools and systems**: Small schools operate with limited resources, which can make it difficult to implement comprehensive safety, climate, and discipline initiatives. Administrators in these schools should prioritize building strong community partnerships and using local resources to address challenges. Solutions such as cross-training staff, engaging community law enforcement, and seeking grants for safety measures can be effective. By focusing on relationships and clear, policies, small schools can create a safe and supportive environment despite resource constraints.

- o **Medium-Sized Schools**: Medium-sized schools must balance the personalized attention often found in small schools with the complexity of a larger student population. These schools should focus on ensuring consistency in discipline policies and school climate initiatives while addressing diverse student needs. Investing in data-driven approaches (such as using analytics to track behavioral trends) and creating targeted professional development programs for staff can help bridge this gap. Collaboration among administrators, staff, and community stakeholders is key to maintaining a cohesive approach.

- o **Large School Districts**: Large schools and districts face unique challenges related to scale, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, varying policy enforcement across schools, and heightened safety concerns due to larger populations. These systems should consider centralized policy frameworks with local adaptability, ensuring consistency while accommodating the needs of individual schools. Investing in specialized staff, such as restorative practice coordinators or school resource officers with advanced training, can help manage complex issues. Additionally, prioritizing communication channels across schools and leveraging technology for safety and behavior monitoring are essential steps.

- o **Private/Independent Schools**: Private and independent schools often enjoy greater autonomy but face challenges such as aligning safety and discipline

practices with their institutional values. These schools should consider tailoring their approaches to match their unique cultures while maintaining rigorous standards for student safety and well-being. Collaborating with external experts or consultants to evaluate policies and integrate best practices can provide fresh perspectives and ensure robust solutions. Furthermore, engaging families as partners in safety and discipline initiatives is crucial in these tight-knit communities.

- **Self-Assessment Tools**:

Schools should consider implementing self-assessment tools to better understand their current strengths and weaknesses in safety, climate, and discipline practices. These tools might include checklists for evaluating safety readiness, surveys to gauge school climate and culture, and data analyses of discipline effectiveness, such as suspension and expulsion trends. By using these tools, schools can identify gaps, assess equity concerns, and prioritize areas for improvement. Schools should explore various platforms and engage an external contractor to create or adopt self-assessment tools tailored to their specific needs and challenges.

There are several self-assessment tools in the appendix of this document.

Common Problems Schools Face

- **Misaligned or poorly defined roles between school administrators and SROs:** Unclear boundaries and expectations can lead to unsafe and potentially tragic situations, conflicts, or ineffective partnerships. Establishing clearly defined roles through regular training and collaboration is essential

- **Challenges in balancing safety protocols (e.g., metal detectors, cameras) with student trust and engagement:** While security measures are critical, they may inadvertently harm school climate if not implemented thoughtfully. Schools should engage stakeholders to balance safety with fostering a welcoming environment.

- **Lack of clarity in Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with law enforcement:** Ambiguous or outdated MOUs can create confusion during critical incidents. Schools should prioritize reviewing and updating MOUs to ensure mutual understanding and alignment.

- **High suspension/expulsion rates leading to equity concerns:** Disproportionate disciplinary actions often affect marginalized student groups, raising equity issues and undermining trust. Schools should explore alternative strategies like restorative practices while maintaining accountability.

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Recent Data

- **Increased School Violence**: According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 70% of schools reported at least one violent incident during the 2021-22 school year, an increase from previous years. Weapons incidents were also up, with nearly 8% of schools reporting such occurrences

- **Suspensions and Exclusions**: Approximately 2.8 million students received at least one out-of-school suspension in 2021-22. That represents almost 6% of the entire student population in the US.

- **School Climate and Safety Perception:** A survey by NCES indicated that only 55% of public schools strongly agreed that their staff feels confident in handling safety challenges effectively. This lack of confidence correlates with higher suspension rates and an inability to foster positive school climates

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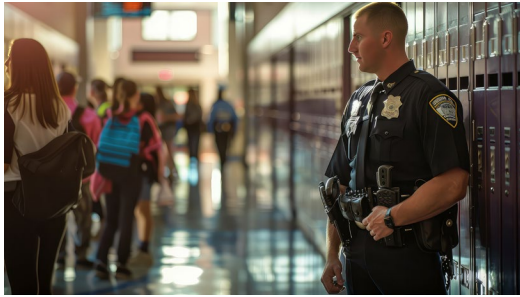
SROs in Schools

School Resource Officers (SROs) remain a topic of debate. Research shows benefits and challenges of their presence in schools. Advocates point to their role in deterring violence, responding to emergencies, and creating positive relationships with students. Critics argue that SROs can contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline and disproportionately impact minority students. A Brookings study showed that the effectiveness of SROs depends on how their roles are defined and executed. The most important factor is a clearly defined partnership between law enforcement and the school or school system. Despite these discussions, public sentiment overwhelmingly supports having SROs in schools. This reinforces the need for well-crafted and executed agreements and collaborative approaches to ensure safety without unintended consequences.

NASRO:

At the end of the 2019–2020 school year, there were approximately 23,400 sworn school resource officers (SROs) in the United States, according to a November 2023 report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice. About 11,500 (49%) of these SROs were employed by local police departments, 7,600 (32%) were employed by sheriffs' offices, and 4,400 (19%) were employed by school district police departments.

During the 2021–22 academic year, approximately 45% of US public schools reported having sworn law enforcement officers who routinely carried a firearm, according to a report published in July 2024 by the National Center for Education Statistics. The report does not indicate how many of those sworn law enforcement officers fit the generally accepted definition of "school resource officer" (See "What is a school resource officer?", above). It also does not indicates how many schools had sworn law enforcement officers who do not routinely carry a firearm (See "Are school resource officers usually armed?", below).

Other Sources:

- A 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, based on a survey of public schools conducted in the spring of 2016, indicated that 42 percent of public schools

reported that they had at least one SRO present at least one day a week during the 2015-2016 academic year.

- A 2020 survey conducted by Audubon Management Consultants, with support from the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), gathered responses from over 2,000 individuals, including SROs, educators, and school security officers. Although the survey primarily focused on the behaviors and roles of SROs, it reflects a significant level of engagement from stakeholders directly involved in school safety. https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/resources/Measuring_the_Strategic_Fit_of_the_School_Resource_Officer_section_1.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

- Additionally, data from the 2015–2016 School Survey on Crime and Safety, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, indicates that 22% of schools had a full-time SRO, while 21% had a part-time SRO. This suggests that a substantial proportion of schools have implemented SRO programs, which may imply a level of support among school administrators and decision-makers for the presence of SROs. https://www.nassp.org/school-resource-officers-and-law-enforcement-in-schools/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

- A poll conducted by Vanderbilt University Medical Center found that approximately 80% of parents believe their children are safer when an officer is present in schools. https://www.wkrn.com/news/local-news/poll-80-of-parents-want-sros-in-schools/

Solutions Framework Proven Approaches:

School Safety:

Comprehensive school safety requires a mix of actionable strategies and effective physical products. Each solution is designed to be utilized before, during and after any school safety incident or threat of an incident.

Crisis response plans: Developing and practicing for emergencies like lockdowns or natural disasters, paired with regular drills with clear role assignments are the foundation of any effective school safety management plan.

Physical products: Schools can and should invest in surveillance systems, access control measures, emergency communication platforms, and other products to enhance security and deter potential threats. Some schools use, or are considering using, metal detectors.

Preparation: Safety audits, vulnerability assessments, and the formation of threat assessment teams help schools consider risks proactively. Collaboration between educators, mental health professionals, and law enforcement is important for all considerations.

MOU Development: Creating clear **Memorandums of Understanding** (MOUs) between schools and law enforcement to define roles, responsibilities, and limits of School Resource Officers (SROs) to avoid overreach or ambiguity.

Safety Audits: Conducting third-party evaluations of physical safety measures (e.g., cameras, entry points, metal detectors) and protocols to identify gaps and ensure preparedness without compromising the learning environment.

School Climate:

A positive school climate encompasses the overall well-being of the school community, both inside and outside the classroom. A thriving climate ensures that students, teachers, and staff work cohesively in an environment that supports academic, emotional, and physical growth.

Extracurricular Activities: Robust extracurricular programs, including clubs, athletics, and arts, foster student engagement, teamwork, and leadership skills. These activities promote a sense of belonging and ownership in the school community, helping reduce behavioral issues and increasing student achievement.

Consensus-Building Leadership: Effective school leadership emphasizes collaboration among administrators, teachers, staff, and students. Consensus-driven decision-making creates shared ownership of goals and policies, leading to trust, respect, and a collective commitment to student success.

Quality Physical Environment: Well-maintained, clean, and functional school facilities are essential for a positive climate. Modernized classrooms, safe hallways, well-lit spaces, and updated libraries or recreational areas impact students' ability to learn and staff morale. Cafeterias, gyms, and outdoor spaces designed for engagement ensure the total physical and mental well-being of students and staff.

Integration of Support Staff: A strong school climate relies on the seamless integration of all professionals, including cafeteria workers, custodians, office staff, and counselors. Their role in maintaining safe, clean, and welcoming spaces cannot be overstated, as their daily interactions with students directly contribute to the overall school experience.

Holistic Well-Being: Total building well-being involves creating a culture of support, where physical safety, emotional health, and academic growth are intertwined. Initiatives like anti bullying programs, peer mentorship programs, staff wellness days, and social-emotional learning reinforce an environment of care and mutual respect.

By addressing the entire school ecosystem, leaders can ensure that everyone—students, teachers, staff, and families—feels valued, supported, and safe. A climate where all elements of the school operate in harmony cultivates a stronger foundation for student success and long-term school improvement.

Student Discipline:

Effective student discipline requires a thoughtful approach that balances restorative practices, accountability, and equity. Restorative practices focus on building relationships, repairing harm, and fostering a positive school climate. However, restorative approaches should not replace traditional disciplinary measures where accountability is needed. Schools must adopt a balanced framework that upholds safety, equity, and positive outcomes for all students.

Restorative Practices: These approaches emphasize repairing harm rather than solely punishing misbehavior. Techniques such as restorative circles, mediation, and conflict resolution empower students to take responsibility for their actions while fostering empathy and reconciliation. Restorative practices can reduce suspensions, build relationships, and promote trust within the school community.

Data-Driven Policy Reform: Schools must use data to regularly analyze discipline trends, identify disparities, and adjust policies to align with student needs. Examining suspension rates, expulsion data, and behavior incidents helps pinpoint areas where interventions are needed, ensuring that disciplinary measures are both effective and fair.

Restorative Practices and Accountability Are Not Mutually Exclusive: Schools should avoid taking an "either-or" stance. While restorative methods are essential to building relationships and addressing harm, they must work alongside traditional disciplinary measures for students who jeopardize the safety or well-being of others. Schools must be firm in holding students accountable for their actions, including temporary, or permanent, removal from the environment, when necessary, to protect others while providing avenues for reintegration and growth.

By integrating restorative practices, data-driven reforms, and equity-centered policies, schools can create fair and effective systems of discipline. The goal is not just to correct behavior but to teach students accountability, improve outcomes, and build a supportive school community where all students feel safe and valued.

Tailored Solutions:

Every school faces unique challenges based on its size, structure, and resources, requiring adaptable solutions to address safety, climate, and discipline.

Small schools, solutions often emphasize resource optimization and close-knit community partnerships to implement cost-effective strategies like staff-led safety audits and restorative practices.

Medium-sized schools, balancing staff capacity and implementing scalable programs—such as clear MOUs with law enforcement or data-driven discipline reforms—can bridge gaps without overwhelming resources.

Large schools and districts, comprehensive solutions like district-wide policy reforms, layered safety protocols, and system-wide professional development ensure consistent implementation while addressing diverse needs across campuses. Independent or private schools, which often operate with more autonomy, can quickly adopt innovative, tailored solutions to improve school climate and safety, while public systems may require careful alignment with existing policies and bureaucratic processes.

By understanding these variations, schools can select the most effective approaches to meet their specific challenges and ensure success for all stakeholders.

Real World Examples:

Implementing effective safety and discipline interventions requires tailoring strategies to the specific needs and capacities of schools of varying sizes. Here are real-world examples illustrating successful interventions across different school sizes:

Small Schools

In smaller educational settings, fostering close-knit relationships and proactive communication is key to preventing violence. For instance, some small schools have successfully implemented peer mediation and counseling interventions, which are more effective in intimate environments where teachers know their students well. These programs, along with strong parent and family involvement, have been instrumental in maintaining safety and addressing issues before they escalate.

How Smaller Schools Prevent School Violence

Medium-Sized Schools

Medium-sized schools often benefit from implementing structured safety protocols and fostering collaboration among staff. For example, Southwestern High School in Shelbyville, Indiana, has been recognized for its comprehensive safety measures. The school equipped teachers with lanyards containing panic buttons to alert police, installed automatically locking doors, and utilized cameras that feed live footage directly to the sheriff's office. These measures have created a secure environment conducive to learning.

Large Schools

Large schools face unique challenges due to their size and population. Fruitport High School in Michigan addressed safety concerns by redesigning its campus with features aimed at mitigating potential threats. The school incorporated curved hallways to limit a shooter's line of sight and concrete barriers for students to hide behind. These architectural changes are part of a $48 million rebuild to enhance safety and have set a precedent for other large schools seeking to improve security through design.

These examples demonstrate that, by tailoring interventions to their specific contexts, schools of varying sizes can effectively enhance safety and create supportive learning environments.

Innovative Approaches to Preventing School Violence

How to stop mass shootings before they start

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Best Practices for Selecting a Vendor/Partner

Selecting the right solution to address school safety, climate, and student discipline is a significant decision that requires careful evaluation. Each area presents unique challenges, and vendors often provide varied, and sometimes overlapping, solutions. Schools must take a strategic approach, assessing their needs and determining what type of solution aligns best with their goals.

School Safety

The school safety space is highly complex and often overwhelming for schools to navigate. With countless vendors offering solutions, schools must first determine their overarching approach to safety. This typically falls into two main categories: **technology-based solutions** and **human-based solutions**.

Technology-Based Solutions

Technology can help "harden the target" by enhancing physical security measures and improving early threat detection capabilities. These solutions include, but are not limited to:

- **Metal Detectors**: Screening for prohibited items and weapons at school entrances.

- **Security Camera Systems**: Monitoring and recording activity across the campus, often with live-streaming capabilities to law enforcement.

- **AI-Powered Screening Technology**: Artificial intelligence tools that analyze video feeds, identify suspicious behavior, and alert security teams in real-time.

- **Protective Devices**: Bulletproof doors, windows, or even bunker-style classroom shields to protect students and staff in active shooter scenarios.

- **Communication Systems**: Integrated emergency alert systems that instantly notify administrators, staff, and law enforcement in the event of a threat.

Consideration: While technology offers significant advantages, it often comes at a substantial financial cost. Schools must also assess the feasibility of implementation, ongoing maintenance, and staff training to ensure the tools function as intended.

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Human-Based Solutions

Human-focused approaches emphasize expertise, training, and proactive safety strategies. These solutions center around prevention and preparedness through collaboration and professional guidance. Options include:

- **School Resource Officer (SRO) Integration**: Reviewing the role of SROs and improving collaboration with school administrators through clearly defined roles and training.

- **Threat Assessment Consultants**: Experts who analyze potential risks and help schools develop prevention and intervention strategies.

- **School Security Expert Analysis**: Specialists who conduct in-depth evaluations of school safety policies, staffing, and procedures to identify vulnerabilities and recommend solutions.

- **Campus Safety Audits**: Comprehensive reviews of a school's physical layout, safety protocols, and emergency preparedness plans to strengthen campus security.

- **Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams**: Trained teams that evaluate concerning student behavior and develop strategies for early intervention and support.

Consideration: Human-based solutions often involve ongoing partnerships, professional development, and training. Schools must be prepared to invest time in building strong systems and relationships to sustain long-term success.

Key Takeaways for School Safety

1. **Assess Your Needs**: Schools should begin by evaluating their safety vulnerabilities and determining whether a technology-based, human-based, or hybrid approach is most appropriate.

2. **Budget and Resources**: Consider both upfront costs and ongoing expenses when selecting solutions, such as maintenance for technology or continued training for staff.

3. **Collaboration**: Strong safety solutions often require collaboration with law enforcement, community partners, and external consultants. Ensure any chosen vendor aligns with existing safety teams and school goals.

4. **Balance is Key**: Technology can play a critical role in enhancing safety, but it should never replace human oversight, relationships, and proactive intervention strategies.

5. **Scalability**: Schools must choose solutions that can scale up or adapt to fit the needs of small schools, mid-sized campuses, or large districts.

By carefully considering their approach, schools can make informed decisions that align with their safety priorities while remaining practical and sustainable.

School Climate

The school climate space focuses on creating positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. Schools looking to improve their climate can choose from a variety of **human-based solutions** and **technology-based tools** offered by vendors and service providers. This section outlines common approaches schools can explore to purchase programs, products, or services that align with their needs.

Human-Based Solutions

These solutions prioritize relationships, inclusivity, and emotional well-being, providing schools with expert-driven services and programs that address the human side of school climate. Options available in the industry include:

- **Professional Development Programs**: Vendors offer tailored training for teachers, administrators, and support staff to promote inclusive classrooms, build strong student relationships, and address cultural competency.

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs**: Comprehensive SEL curricula teach students key skills like empathy, communication, and emotional regulation, improving overall school culture.

- **Climate and Culture Assessments**: Consultants provide evaluation tools to survey students, staff, and families to identify strengths and weaknesses in school climate and recommend action plans for improvement.

- **Leadership Coaching**: Services that train school and district leaders to adopt consensus-building leadership styles and foster collaborative, transparent school governance.

- **Extracurricular Program Development**: Vendors help schools create or expand after-school clubs, arts programs, sports, and leadership opportunities to strengthen student engagement and connections.

- **Whole-School Well-Being Initiatives**: Providers offer strategies to integrate custodial, cafeteria, and administrative staff into climate improvement efforts, ensuring a unified, whole-building approach to student support.

Technology-Based Tools

While human-based programs are at the core of school climate improvement, vendors also offer technological solutions to measure, monitor, and enhance school culture. These tools include:

- **Survey and Feedback Platforms**: Digital tools that collect and analyze climate data through surveys completed by students, staff, and families, offering actionable insights for schools.

- **Behavior and Attendance Monitoring Systems**: Software that tracks trends in student behavior, attendance, and engagement, helping schools identify areas for intervention.

- **Communication Platforms**: Tools that strengthen school-home communication, ensuring families stay informed and engaged with school culture initiatives.

Key Considerations for Buyers

1. **Customization**: Look for programs and tools that can be tailored to your school's specific needs, culture, and size.

2. **Evidence-Based Solutions**: Prioritize vendors that provide proven, research-backed strategies for improving school climate and student well-being.

3. **Scalability**: Ensure the solutions you choose can grow with your school or district, whether you're addressing one campus or implementing system-wide initiatives.

4. **Integration**: Select tools and programs that integrate seamlessly with existing systems, staff workflows, and other school improvement efforts.

5. **Ongoing Support**: Work with vendors who offer post-implementation support, professional development, and tools to measure program success over time.

By understanding the available options in the industry, schools can make informed decisions to invest in programs and tools that foster a positive, supportive school climate. Whether through expert-led services or technology solutions, the right approach can create an environment where students, staff, and families thrive.

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Student Discipline

The student discipline space offers a wide range of programs and tools designed to address behavioral issues while balancing accountability, equity, and school safety. Schools seeking solutions must carefully consider approaches that align with their values and goals. Solutions can generally be categorized into **human-based services** and **technology-based tools**, with a focus on balancing restorative practices and traditional discipline measures.

Human-Based Solutions

These solutions emphasize expert-driven programs and services to address behavioral challenges, improve equity, and promote a positive school culture:

- **Behavior Intervention Programs**: Established frameworks like *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)* and *Conscious Discipline* offer multi-tiered approaches to teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior, while addressing students' social-emotional needs.

- **Restorative Practices Training**: Vendors provide training and implementation support for restorative justice programs, which focus on repairing harm through mediated conversations, accountability, and relationship-building.

- **Discipline Policy Review & Reform**: Consultants analyze existing policies and recommend reforms to improve equity, reduce disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions, and ensure fair outcomes for all students.

- **Alternative Education Programs**: Specialized programs for students removed from the classroom due to persistent behavioral challenges, providing them with targeted academic and behavioral support.

- **Professional Development for Staff**: Training to help educators and administrators consistently apply discipline policies, de-escalate situations, and manage classroom behavior effectively.

Technology-Based Tools

Technology-based tools can enhance a school's ability to monitor and address discipline challenges while ensuring data-driven decision-making:

- **Behavior Tracking Systems**: Software tools that log student behavior incidents, track trends, and generate data reports to identify areas needing intervention.

- **Equity Monitoring Platforms**: Tools that analyze discipline data to highlight disparities by race, gender, or other factors, helping schools address equity concerns.

- **Student Behavior Dashboards**: Platforms that integrate with student information systems to provide real-time insights into behavioral trends and intervention outcomes.

- **Communication Tools**: Systems that streamline communication between schools, families, and support staff to ensure transparency and consistency in discipline enforcement.

Key Existing Programs

Several evidence-based programs are widely available and proven to improve student behavior and reduce disciplinary incidents:

- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**: A tiered framework that promotes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate behaviors. PBIS emphasizes prevention over punishment and focuses on creating a positive school environment.
- **Conscious Discipline**: A comprehensive approach that integrates social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation into a single program. It teaches students to manage their emotions while helping adults model positive behavior and build connections.
- **Restorative Justice Models**: These programs promote accountability by engaging students, staff, and families in conversations to address the root causes of behavior and repair harm.

Balancing Restorative Practices with Accountability

While restorative practices are essential for fostering growth and addressing underlying issues, they should not replace traditional discipline entirely. Students who create unsafe environments for others must be held accountable, including removal from the classroom or school when necessary. Effective programs strike a balance, ensuring that all students have opportunities to learn and grow while prioritizing safety and equity.

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Key Considerations for Buyers

1. **Alignment with School Values**: Determine whether the program aligns with your school's approach to balancing accountability and restorative practices.

2. **Data-Driven Solutions**: Look for tools and programs that include built-in data tracking to measure behavioral trends, equity gaps, and the effectiveness of interventions.

3. **Scalability**: Ensure the program can scale to meet the needs of schools or districts of varying sizes and demographics.

4. **Evidence-Based Programs**: Choose solutions backed by research and proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, improve behavior, and address disparities.

5. **Staff Support**: Consider vendors that provide training, coaching, and ongoing support to ensure staff can implement and sustain the program effectively.

By exploring these options, schools can implement effective discipline solutions that promote safety, equity, and a positive learning environment. Whether through established frameworks like PBIS or cutting-edge technology tools, schools can strike a balance between restorative practices and accountability to create lasting behavioral improvements.

Questions to Ask:

- **Do they provide tailored or one-size-fits-all solutions?**
  It's important to understand whether the vendor offers customized solutions that align with your school's specific needs, culture, and goals, or if their approach is a generic solution that may not address your unique challenges.

- **How do they measure success?**
  Inquire about the vendor's metrics for success. Are they using data-driven outcomes to measure the effectiveness of their solutions? Understanding how they track and report progress is essential for determining long-term value.

- **Can they support policy compliance and legal accountability?**
  Ensure the vendor can help your school maintain compliance with relevant policies and regulations. They should also provide tools and documentation to help mitigate legal risks, especially in the areas of student discipline and school safety.

Red Flags to Avoid:

- **Vendors who overpromise quick fixes:**
  Be cautious of vendors who guarantee immediate results or solutions that appear too good to be true. School safety, climate, and discipline improvements are long-term processes, and anyone claiming otherwise may not have the depth of expertise necessary to address complex issues.

- **Solutions lacking data-driven methodologies:**
  Avoid solutions that do not rely on solid data and research. Data-driven strategies are essential for tracking progress, making informed decisions, and ensuring that interventions are having the intended impact. Without measurable outcomes, it's difficult to assess effectiveness and sustain improvements.

Taking the First Step:

- **Clarify Your Priorities and Reach Out for Expert Guidance:**
  Use this guide to help clarify your school's unique priorities and challenges related to safety, climate, and student discipline. By understanding where you need the most support, you can make more informed decisions on the solutions that are best suited for your school or district.

- **Get a Free Initial Consultation with Prowess Edge:**
  We invite you to take advantage of a free initial consultation or resource review with Prowess Edge. This is your opportunity to discuss your needs with our experts, receive tailored guidance, and begin exploring the most effective solutions to enhance safety, climate, and discipline in your school community.

How to Get Started:

- **Schedule a Safety Audit:**
  Begin by scheduling a comprehensive safety audit to evaluate your current school safety measures and identify areas for improvement. Any qualified person will be able to help. Local police and sheriff departments will usually offer these services free. In fact, if your school or system does not have a relationship with the local police or sheriff's office, you should contact them now.

- **Reach Out for a Consultation:**
  Contact Prowess Edge for a personalized consultation. Whether you're focusing on

enhancing school safety, improving school climate, or refining your student discipline policies, our experienced team will guide you in identifying the best solutions for your specific needs.

Taking these initial steps will set you on the path to creating a safer, more supportive learning environment for everyone at your school.

Key Statistics

Here are some key statistics that could be impactful for schools as they qualify partners and vendors.

School Safety:

School Safety and Violence:

- In 2021, 20% of students reported that gangs were present on their school campuses. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES)

- The U.S. Department of Education found that 6% of students reported being bullied at school in 2021, with the percentage higher among students in grades 9-12. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES)

- A study in 2020 found that 79% of schools reported conducting at least one lockdown drill, but only 42% felt confident in their emergency response plans. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES)

School Resource Officers:

- Approximately 44% of public schools in the U.S. employ School Resource Officers (SROs). (Source: NCES)

- In a 2021 study, 54% of SROs indicated that their main role was student discipline, while 31% said their primary role was preventing violence or school shootings. (Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics)

School Climate:

Impact of School Climate on Academic Performance:

- o Research has shown that schools with a positive climate have a 20-30% increase in student achievement and improved attendance. (Source: National School Climate Center)

- o 80% of students reported feeling more connected to school in a positive school climate, which improves their academic performance and decreases dropout rates. (Source: National School Climate Center)

Mental Health and School Climate:

- o 70% of students surveyed reported that mental health issues like anxiety or depression affected their ability to learn, emphasizing the need for a climate of emotional support. (Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI)

- o In schools with higher levels of school connectedness, students are less likely to experience bullying, substance abuse, and other risk behaviors. (Source: CDC)

Student Discipline:

1. **Discipline Disparities:**

- o Black students make up 15% of the total student population but account for 36% of suspensions and 43% of expulsions. (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights)

- o In 2019, 14% of students were suspended at least once during the school year, with significant disparities based on race, gender, and disability status. (Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES)

Restorative Practices:

- o Schools that implement restorative justice practices see a 10-20% decrease in suspensions and expulsions. (Source: American Psychological Association)

- o Research indicates that restorative practices can reduce recidivism by up to 30%, improving student behavior and reducing repeat offenses. (Source: Restorative Justice Council)

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Resources:

School Safety: Self-Assessment Checklist

Area	Yes	No	Comments
Emergency Preparedness			Does your school have an up-to-date crisis response plan that includes lockdown, evacuation, and emergency drills?
Physical Security			Do you have metal detectors, security cameras, or other safety measures in place?
SRO Presence			Is there an active and well-trained School Resource Officer (SRO) on-site?
Threat Assessments			Have threat assessments been conducted to identify risks on your campus?
Cybersecurity			Are there measures in place to ensure students' online safety and prevent cyberbullying?
Student Mental Health Support			Does the school have accessible resources like counselors for addressing mental health?
Incident Reporting			Is there an anonymous reporting system in place for students and staff to report safety concerns?

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School Climate: Self-Assessment Checklist

Area	Yes	No	Comments
Student Engagement			Are students actively involved in school activities, clubs, or leadership roles?
Inclusivity			Does your school have clear policies on diversity and inclusion?
Supportive Environment			Are students supported by positive relationships with peers, teachers, and staff?
Staff Collaboration			Do staff members collaborate regularly to address student needs?
Community and Parent Involvement			Is there an active partnership between the school, parents, and the local community?
Physical Environment			Is the school facility clean, well-maintained, and conducive to learning?
School Surveys			Are regular climate surveys conducted to gather feedback from students and staff?

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Student Discipline: Self-Assessment Checklist

Area	Yes	No	Comments
Clear Discipline Policies			Are there clear and consistently enforced policies for managing student behavior?
Consistent Actions			Are administrators responding consistently to disruptive students?
Restorative Practices			Does the school implement restorative practices to address behavioral issues?
Suspension/Expulsion Data			Is the school tracking suspension and expulsion rates to identify trends?
Equity in Discipline			Are disciplinary actions equitable, and do they address the needs of all students (including victims)?
Data-Driven Decision Making			Are discipline decisions informed by data (e.g., tracking the root causes of behavioral problems)?
Behavioral Interventions			Are there programs or interventions in place to address chronic behavioral issues?
Collaboration with Law Enforcement			Is there a collaborative approach with law enforcement for managing more serious incidents?

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Quick Self-Assessment Chart for School Safety, Climate, and Discipline

Key Area	Criteria to Assess	Rating Scale
School Safety	Emergency drills, SRO presence, threat assessments, physical security measures, cybersecurity, incident reporting	1-5 (1 = needs improvement, 5 = excellent)
School Climate	Inclusivity, student engagement, staff collaboration, parent involvement, school facility, surveys	1-5 (1 = needs improvement, 5 = excellent)
Student Discipline	Clear policies, restorative practices, suspension/expulsion data, equity in discipline, data-driven decisions	1-5 (1 = needs improvement, 5 = excellent)

How to Use the Checklist and Chart:

Rate the Key Areas: Using the chart provided, rate your school's performance in each key area (school safety, school climate, and student discipline). A rating of 1 indicates that the area needs significant improvement, and a rating of 5 shows that it is being handled effectively. In general, a self-rating of 12 or above is what schools should consider acceptable.

By using this self-assessment, schools can identify their current strengths and weaknesses and take action to make improvements in school safety, climate, and discipline, ensuring a more supportive environment for both students and staff.

Links to Further Resources and Case Studies

To assist schools in enhancing their safety, climate, and discipline policies, we've curated a list of valuable resources and case studies. These materials provide deeper insights, best practices, and proven strategies that schools and districts can use to address their unique challenges.

School Safety Resources

1. **U.S. Department of Education – School Safety and Security**
   A comprehensive guide on creating safer learning environments, including threat assessments, emergency planning, and SRO involvement.
   Visit Resource

2. **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments**
   Offers a variety of resources related to school safety, mental health services, and best practices for crisis intervention.
   Visit Resource

3. **Center for Homeland Defense and Security – School Safety Resources**
   A collection of safety strategies and resources to help school administrators create safer campuses.
   Visit Resource

School Climate Resources

1. **The National School Climate Center**
   Provides research, tools, and guidance for improving school climate, focusing on social-emotional learning and inclusivity.
   Visit Resource

2. **American Institutes for Research – School Climate Improvement**
   Insights on how to improve school climate through social-emotional learning and creating supportive, inclusive environments.
   Visit Resource

3. **The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**
   Offers frameworks and resources to help schools integrate social-emotional learning into their culture and systems.
   Visit Resource

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Student Discipline Resources

1. **PBIS.org – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**
A widely used framework that promotes positive behavior in schools through prevention strategies and effective interventions.
Visit Resource

2. **The National Center for Restorative Justice**
Learn about restorative justice practices that can help resolve conflicts, promote accountability, and rebuild relationships in schools.
Visit Resource

3. **National Association of School Psychologists – School Discipline**
A collection of evidence-based practices for fair and equitable school discipline policies.
Visit Resource

Case Studies on School Safety, Climate, and Discipline

1. **Case Study: Improving School Safety through Threat Assessments**
Learn how a district in Florida improved its school safety protocols by implementing a district-wide threat assessment program.
Read Case Study

2. **Case Study: Restorative Practices in Action**
A Texas school district uses restorative practices to address discipline problems, reduce suspensions, and improve overall school climate.
Read Case Study

3. **Case Study: Creating a Positive School Climate in New York**
A New York City school adopts a social-emotional learning approach, reducing bullying and increasing student engagement.
Read Case Study

These resources and case studies can help guide schools in their decision-making process, identify effective strategies for improving safety, climate, and discipline, and ultimately create a more supportive learning environment for all students.

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Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template for School Safety and Law Enforcement

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between [School District Name] and [Law Enforcement Agency Name]

Effective Date: [Insert Date]
End Date: [Insert Date or "Ongoing"]

I. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a collaborative partnership between [School District Name] and [Law Enforcement Agency Name] to enhance school safety, improve school climate, and address student discipline issues through joint efforts. The goal is to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and staff, while defining roles, responsibilities, and procedures for intervention when necessary.

II. Scope of Collaboration

This MOU outlines the responsibilities of both parties to improve safety and discipline within schools. The partnership will focus on the following areas:

- **School Safety**: The law enforcement agency will assist with threat assessments, emergency preparedness, and response protocols.

- **Student Discipline**: The law enforcement agency will work in conjunction with school administrators to address issues of disorderly behavior, disruptive activities, and potential criminal offenses.

- **School Climate**: The law enforcement agency will contribute to efforts that promote inclusivity, mutual respect, and emotional well-being within the school environment.

III. Responsibilities of [School District Name]

- **Define Clear Roles**: Clearly define roles for school administrators, staff, and SROs (School Resource Officers), ensuring appropriate intervention and communication protocols.

- **Training and Professional Development**: Provide regular professional development opportunities for school administrators and staff on school safety, conflict resolution, and restorative practices.

- **Incident Reporting**: Establish clear guidelines for reporting incidents that may require law enforcement involvement, including non-emergency disciplinary issues that escalate into legal concerns.

IV. Responsibilities of [Law Enforcement Agency Name]

- **Provide an SRO**: Assign a qualified School Resource Officer to the school(s) covered by this MOU.

- **Ensure Compliance**: Ensure that the SRO follows all applicable laws, school policies, and district rules while on campus.

- **Assist with Threat Assessments**: Collaborate with school administrators to assess safety risks, conduct drills, and respond to potential threats.

- **Ensure Cultural Sensitivity**: Ensure that the SRO is trained in cultural competency, conflict de-escalation, and adolescent development to foster positive relationships with students.

- **Emergency Response**: Respond swiftly and appropriately to any serious incidents or emergencies, including but not limited to active threats, criminal activity, and natural disasters.

V. Expectations for Collaboration

- **Regular Meetings**: School administrators and law enforcement officials will meet regularly (at least quarterly) to discuss ongoing issues, review MOU compliance, and address new concerns as they arise.

- **Clear Communication**: Both parties agree to maintain open, transparent communication and work collaboratively to resolve issues in a timely manner.

- **Annual Review**: An annual review of this MOU will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership, identify areas of improvement, and update the terms as needed.

VI. Confidentiality and Legal Compliance

Both parties agree to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including student privacy laws (such as FERPA), in the sharing of information. Confidentiality regarding student records and information will be maintained, except when required by law.

VII. Duration of Agreement

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This MOU will remain in effect from the **Effective Date** until the **End Date**. Either party may request modifications or termination of the agreement with written notice at least 30 days in advance.

VIII. Signatures

The undersigned agree to the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding:

[School District Name]
Signature: _____
Name: _____
Title: _____
Date: _____

[Law Enforcement Agency Name]
Signature: _____
Name: _____
Title: _____
Date: _____

This template can be customized to fit the specific needs of your school district and law enforcement agency. It ensures that both parties have clearly defined roles and responsibilities to create a safer, more supportive school environment.