

# School Climate, SEL, Resources, and Student Voice--Empowerment



## **Congressional Briefing School Violence, Safety, and Well-Being:**

### **A Comprehensive Approach**

March 23, 2018 from 2:00-4:00 pm.  
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2200  
Washington, DC

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# Two Visions About What Our Schools and Society Should Be



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- One vision believes that the path for lasting safety comes from welcoming, caring, and supportive schools
  - focuses on school climate, social emotional learning, and community-- in addition to great academics.
  - also advocates for humane social supports, community linkages to resources for those students struggling with mental health, family and societal obstacles.



# Alternative Vision of School Safety

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- Another vision is a restrictive and punitive reaction to the mass shootings in schools that aims to protect students from mass shootings
  - based on tools and ideas that originate in law enforcement,
  - prison architecture and security measures
  - military strategies



# Evidence Supporting Either of These Visions?

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- This is not only a philosophical and societal debate
- There are decades of large-scale studies conducted all over the world that strongly support schools with positive climate and support for SEL



# Comprehensive Reviews Covering Hundreds of International Studies, and Large-scale Epidemiological Studies Show:

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- Schools with positive school climate and integrated SEL foci have significantly reduced
  - Isolation
  - Verbal bullying
  - Physical bullying
  - Sexual harassment/ assault
  - Cyberbullying
  - Negative relationships between students and between students and teachers
- And have decreased student/ teacher reports of:
  - Weapons use, being threatened by a weapon, and seeing or knowing about a weapon on school grounds



# Positive Climate Lowers Rates of Victimization With Vulnerable Groups All Over The Globe.

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- Homeless, foster care, and group home students
- Military and Veteran connected students
- LGBTQ students
- Immigrant groups-- including refugees
- Girls --surrounding sexual harassment (multiple countries)
- African American, Native American, Latinx-- in USA
- Jewish, Arab, Christian, Bedouin, Druze, Ultra Orthodox-- in Israel
- Different subgroups in Chile, Taiwan, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, France, and Cameroon

# Large-Scale Intervention Studies Show That Integrated SEL and Climate Is Associated With Higher:

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- Well being
- Empowerment
- Connectedness
- Better academics grades and testing (specifically math, reading, writing, and sciences)
- Reduced social inequality by closing the achievement gap

# What About SEL, Climate, and Resources for Weapon Behavior Reduction?

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- Using *Monitoring and Welcoming school Methods* to combine SEL, Climate, Local Community Resources, and Threat Assessment surrounding student and teacher reports of weapon behaviors on school grounds?

# Combining SEL, Climate, Community Resources, and Threat Assessment Using Student Voice

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- In a recent 7 year study (2017) conducted in 145 CA Schools (over 100,000 students), a combination of Climate/ SEL/ Community interventions resulted in:
  - 55 % reduction in gun carrying on school grounds
  - 37.5% reduction in knives, guns, clubs or other weapons in injury or threats with a weapon of injury
  - 40% reduction in seeing a weapon on school grounds
  - 44% reduction in gang affiliation and participation

# National Public Health Strategy Focusing on Education, Climate, SEL and Reducing Weapons



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- Mapping and Monitoring, and Welcoming Methods, focus on using valid and reliable local data with:
    - Student voice and empowerment
    - Teacher voice and empowerment
    - Staff voice and empowerment



# Example of Public Health Approach

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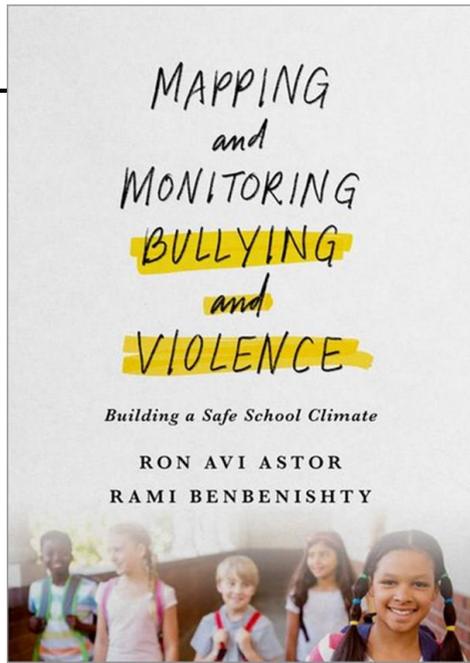
- In climate improvement surveys 20-30% of CA students say they have seen a weapon on school grounds (*each year for the past 20 years*)
  - We have that data in CA for almost every school every year. The strategy of weapon reduction and prevention starts with student voice, knowledge and suggestions
  - Schools with high rates are identified and given extra resources needed to improve climate, improve SEL, link to community resources
  - Local voice of students, staff and parents are used to make safer and more welcoming school
  - Has been done at scale in Israel, Chile, CA as examples.

# Climate, SEL and Threat Assessment in Alternative Schools: Post Suspension or Expulsion for Threats with Firearms



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- How does this impact climate for all students if student expelled or if kept in school?
  - What happens to students expelled or sent to alternative schools? What is SEL/ climate and weapon experience like there? Who monitors these issues after suspension or expulsion or RJ?
  - What happens when a student who is at risk graduates? What are the linkages to supportive organizations? Especially if history of multiple weapons and threats are present?
  - Better articulation of supports over time for students with severe mental health issues that are also obsessed with weapons and may have access to weapons

# Oxford University Press



**Mapping and Monitoring Bullying and Violence** is a guidebook for district and school education leaders and professionals to reduce incidents of violence and bullying and enhance students' well-being. Written in a step-by-step format, the text is designed to assist in collecting and making better use of data on non-academic issues in schools, such as reports of victimization, weapon and drug possession, theft of personal property, suicide ideation, and other areas. The authors advocate an ongoing monitoring approach that involves collecting information from multiple audiences about what is taking place in and around schools. One part of this process is mapping, which gives school leaders, students, and staff members a visual record of areas of the campus considered safe, alongside those that students view to be places where they might encounter bullying, harm, or trouble. Other common parts of such systems are surveys among students, educators, and parents. The authors include practical examples of how to design such a system, gather current information, analyze and display the data, share it with different audiences, and use it to find solutions. Ultimately, this timely guidebook is a must-have for social workers, educators, psychologists, counselors, nurses, and others working to improve safety in schools.

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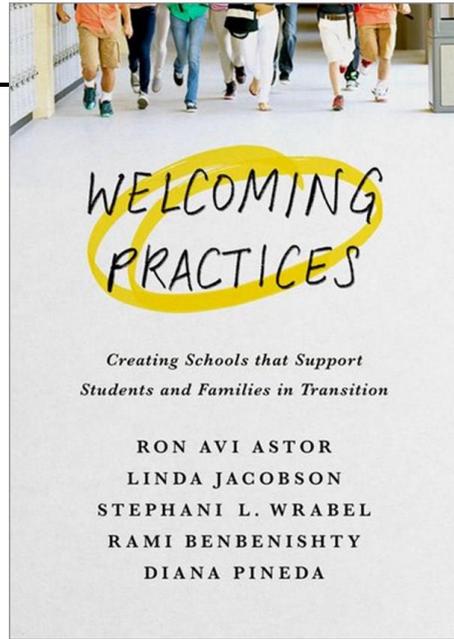
Paperback | 120 Pages

9780190847067

**Ron Avi Astor, PhD, MA, MSW**, is Stein-Wood Professor of School Behavioral Health at the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work in the University of Southern California. His work examines the role of the physical, social-organizational, and cultural contexts in schools related to school violence (e.g., sexual harassment, bullying, school fights, emotional abuse, weapon use, and teacher/child violence), and has documented the ecological influences of the family, community, school, and culture on different forms of school violence. Currently, Dr. Astor is applying knowledge gained from these prior studies to improve climate in military-connected schools.

**Rami Benbenishty, PhD, MSW**, is Professor at the Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work in Bar Ilan University. His main area of academic focus is the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children in community normative settings (such as schools) and in out-of-home placements (such as foster homes) and residential care. Dr. Benbenishty is an advocate for children's rights in Israel and around the globe.

# Oxford University Press



Students change schools for a variety of reasons, and some students change more often than others -- a reality that can leave them feeling emotionally disconnected and often academically at risk. **Welcoming Practices** summarizes the research on school transition and makes a case for why schools need to do a better job of welcoming new children and families and following up with them over time.

Arriving at a moment in history in which schools are increasing attention on students' social and emotional development, this book captures the innovative practices that some institutions are using to connect with new students and provides practical strategies that all schools can use to make both students and parents feel a part of the school and community. The book discusses how to use technology to improve families' experiences in their new schools, provides strategies appropriate at the school and district levels, and gives schools suggestions for practices that are best suited for younger students as well as for those at middle and high school levels.

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**Linda Jacobson** is an award-winning education writer and editor whose coverage spans the early-childhood years through the transition into college or a career. In addition to reporting, she has worked with researchers, think tanks and nonprofit organizations to translate complex education topics for average readers. Her experience also includes organizing professional development conferences for journalists and advising writers on covering education issues.

**Stephani Wrabel, PhD, MEd**, is an Associate Policy Researcher at the RAND Corporation. Her research interests include student mobility and schools serving highly mobile enrollments, the design and effects of federal and state accountability policy, military-connected students and schools, and the quality, accuracy, and use of data to inform policy and practice.

**Rami Benbenishty, PhD, MSW**, is Professor at the Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work in Bar Ilan University. His main area of academic focus is the safety, welfare, and well-being of children in community normative settings (such as schools) and in out-of-home placements (such as foster homes) and residential care. Dr. Benbenishty is an advocate for children's rights in Israel and around the globe.

**Diana Pineda, MSW, MHA**, is the Project Director for Welcoming Practices. Previously, Pineda was the project manager for Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools based in San Diego. Pineda had worked with the USC Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families as a project manager for a study that educated and empowered veterans and families through the use of technology. She is coauthor of several health research articles and co-author of the Pupil Personnel Guide for Supporting Students from Military Families. Pineda is also an adjunct lecturer at USC and consults as a Problem Solving Therapy (PST) trainer. She earned a psychology degree from the University of California, Irvine, and Master's degrees in social work and health administration from USC.

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Thank You!

# Additional Links to Resources

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- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/21/opinions/guns-in-schools-opinion-astor/index.html>
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/03/07/590877717/experts-say-here-s-how-to-prevent-the-next-school-shooting>
- [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-our-nations-schools-could-help-students-in-an\\_us\\_5a3777c3e4b0e1b4472ae7ed](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-our-nations-schools-could-help-students-in-an_us_5a3777c3e4b0e1b4472ae7ed)
- <https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence>
- <https://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/reducing-the-threat-of-gun-violence-and-promoting-school-safety-through-connectedness-community-and-support-ron-avi-astor/>
- <https://casel.org/>
- <https://www.schoolclimate.org/>
- <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/national-commission-on-social-emotional-and-academic-development/>
- Welcoming practices: Creating schools that support students and families in transition. <https://goo.gl/S9a1XP> (discount code ASFLYQ6)
- Mapping and monitoring bullying and violence: Building a safe school climate. <https://goo.gl/XUFB1M> (discount code ASFLYQ6)
- <http://www.aera.net/Education-Research/Issues-and-Initiatives/Bullying-Prevention-and-School-Safety/Bullying-Prevention>