A positive school culture and environment reflects a supportive and fulfilling environment, learning conditions that meet the needs of all students, people who are sure of their roles and relationships in student learning, and a culture that values trust, respect, and high expectations. Consulting with various stakeholder groups to employ school improvement strategies that impact the positive school culture and environment is critical. Stakeholder groups more proximal to the school include teachers, students, and families of students, volunteers, and school board members. Broad stakeholder groups include early childhood providers, community colleges and universities, social services, and business partners.

Stakeholders play a key role in school performance and addressing equity. Consulting various stakeholder groups is critical in formulating a statement of vision, mission, values, goals, and employing school improvement strategies.

Describe how the school addresses building a positive school culture and environment ensuring all stakeholders are involved.

Information obtained through the Insight Survey (Teachers), Parent Survey, and Youth Truth Survey (Students) will be used to help maintain and improve the Culture and Environment of The Great Southwest Middle School.

In our Parent Survey, there was a major concern about the lack of communication between the school and the families. As quoted from the survey, “Teacher communication has had issues with specific teachers not responding to emails.” Parents also gave specific praise to our front office support staff specifically for being eager and willing to assist parents with their concerns. To address these concerns we will reinforce the 48-hour time window expectation for teachers to respond to parental inquires. Bi-weekly Focus reports will be generated to monitor that FOCUS updates are taking place on a regular basis. In addition, our teachers will contact parents of potential failures quarterly. Our front office staff works together as a family unit. To ensure the closeness and positive attitude of this particular group, we have instituted a monthly breakfast time for our front office staff. Once a month they are treated to a 30-minute duty free, relaxing breakfast with each other in the principal’s office. This simple gesture has fostered good will and helped to maintain a positive working environment amongst our front office staff and has motivated them to provide the very best customer service possible.

Our Youth Truth Survey identified a glaring issue with our students and the way in which they feel that their teachers care about them individually. In the response to the survey item, “How many teachers try to understand what your life is like outside of school?” Our school wide response was 2.18 with 1 = none 3 = some and 5 = all. The same students felt that the majority of their teachers felt as if they could actually receive a good grade if they tried, with a rating of 4.17 on the same scale. Often times teachers feel so overwhelmed with instruction, especially in an atmosphere in which they are teaching on two separate platforms simultaneously that we attempted a subtle approach to help bridge the teacher-student relationship piece. We intentionally incorporated our SEL, Social Emotional Learning in a manner in which our teachers work directly with their own students. Which naturally infuse conversations concerning activities that are outside of their curriculum creating a more personal environment. We are expounding on the Attitude Gap book study from last year to help foster the concept that every student has the ability to learn. It is not so much as an achievement gap but an attitude gap or separation between how the students and teachers feel toward each other. To this end, we will offer professional development on Culturally Relevant Teaching to help teachers bridge the gap students have identified.

The teacher Insight survey revealed tremendous growth in the Evaluation Process which moved from 3.9 to 4.9 in one year while Academic Opportunity was at a low with a rating of 3.7, up from 3.2 for the previous year. As an administrative team, we will conduct walkthroughs together and compare results collaboratively at least once a month. Our individual goal amongst our administrative team will consist of at least 5 informal observations per week with relevant and timely feedback provided to teachers. Time is built-in to our weekly administrative meetings to discuss our individual informative observations. This year our teachers have academic planning time to allow departments to collaborate and plan for rigorous instruction and assessments. If an adequate number of substitutes can be found, we will also include various teachers to participate in classroom walkthroughs and allow new teachers the opportunity to visit other classrooms.