

# DEVELOPING SOFT CLIMATE: A ROADMAP FOR FLN MODEL SCHOOL

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## Abstract

*In the rapidly evolving educational landscape, the concept of "soft climate" within schools is emerging as a critical factor for fostering a conducive learning environment. Students are the key elements of our teaching learning process. The school climate must be designed in such a way, where holistic development of the students can be achieved. The health and wellbeing, positive behavior, attitudes and higher level of educational performance of the students is highly dependent on the qualities of school climate. The FLN Model School initiative aims to provide a comprehensive framework for enhancing foundational literacy and numeracy skills among young learners. Central to this initiative is the cultivation of a soft climate that nurtures students' cognitive and emotional development. FLN Model School is a model for all the other schools which is well equipped with Hard Climate such as TLM and other learning kits, puppets, game materials like Ludo, puzzle game, model of fruits, carom board, Table and chair etc. for the students. This influences the students for active participation in the teaching learning process. Along with the good Hard Climate if the Soft climate is inculcated in the school premises, then definitely the holistic development of the children will be contemplated. Thus, the purpose of the present article is to promote Soft climate in FLN Model School which will positively work as a role model for all other schools. This will provide an overview of the strategic steps necessary to achieve this goal, offering insights into best practices and the potential challenges involved in implementing such a transformative approach to school climate.*

**Key Word:** *Soft Climate, Hard Climate, FLN, NEP 2020, Model School*

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## Introduction

In the context of modern education, the physical and psychological environment within which students learn is increasingly recognized as a crucial determinant of academic success. Beyond the conventional focus on curricula, instructional methodologies, and standardized assessments, there is a growing understanding that the "soft climate" of a school—comprising its culture, interpersonal relationships, and overall emotional atmosphere—plays a pivotal role in shaping students' educational experiences. This paper presents a detailed roadmap for developing a soft climate within the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Model School, an initiative designed to enhance foundational skills in early learners. The roadmap outlines strategic actions aimed at fostering a nurturing, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environment conducive to holistic learning.

The early years of child especially 0-8 years is most significant period in the developmental process, and during this period the foundation for holistic development and future learning of the children are set up. Children's strong foundations in the early years have an ever-lasting impact on their development which is considered to be critical inputs in improving their enrolment and participation in formal schooling.

Students in the school can strengthen their social as well as emotional well-being by developing the skills to recognize and control emotions, by learning to achieve goals, by learning to appreciate the perspectives of their peers, by establishing and maintaining constructive relationships and making responsible decisions. Policies and practices which support the students' developmental skills for improving social and emotional well-being can surely help to

meet their psychological needs. Creating Soft Climate like a healthy and supportive school environment will definitely strengthen students' social and emotional well-being.

For a soft and healthy school climate involvement of Teachers, Students, Parents, Community members and Administration in a supportive way is highly essential. This supports the students in nutrition education, shared values of healthy eating habit, sustainable environmental practice and active living. A sound body and sound brain help in improving better academic performance, attendance along with developing socio emotional behavior of the students. The school climate is like a commitment where students learn to be the best version and make them as an ideal citizen. Thus, it is a joint responsibility of Teachers, Community and administration to make the school climate healthy and sustainable for the holistic development of students.

## **Background of Developing a Soft Climate for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**

### **Model Schools**

The creation of a soft climate in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) model schools stems from the need to provide young learners with an environment that fosters effective learning during their formative years. A "soft climate" refers to an educational environment that is nurturing, supportive, and conducive to the holistic development of children, particularly in their foundational years. The focus on such a climate has emerged as a response to several educational challenges and global shifts in understanding child development.

#### **i. Global Recognition of Early Childhood Education:**

**Importance of Foundational Skills:** Globally, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy skills as essential building blocks for lifelong learning. Research indicates that children who do not acquire these basic skills in the early years struggle to catch up later in their educational journey, leading to high dropout rates and poor academic performance.

**UNESCO and UNICEF Initiatives:** Organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF have emphasized the need for quality early childhood education that includes not just academic learning but also the emotional and social development of children. These organizations advocate for learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive.

#### **ii. Educational Challenges in Developing Regions:**

**Low Literacy and Numeracy Rates:** In many developing countries, a significant percentage of children struggle with basic literacy and numeracy skills, even after several years of schooling. This issue is often compounded by overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers, and lack of resources, leading to a stressful and ineffective learning environment.

**Socio-economic Barriers:** Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often face additional challenges such as malnutrition, lack of access to early childhood education, and a lack of parental support. These barriers make it difficult for them to succeed in traditional school environments.

#### **iii. The Role of School Environment in Child Development:**

**Psychosocial Development:** Educational psychologists have long emphasized that a child's environment plays a crucial role in their cognitive, emotional, and social development. A soft climate in schools includes positive interactions between teachers and students, an atmosphere of mutual respect, and emotional safety, all of which are critical for effective learning.

**Stress-Free Learning:** Research shows that children learn better in environments where they feel safe, valued, and understood. Stress and anxiety can significantly hinder cognitive functions, including memory and concentration, making it harder for children to learn foundational skills.

#### iv. Educational Policies and Frameworks:

**National Education Policies:** Many countries have begun to incorporate the concept of a soft climate in their educational policies. For example, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong emphasis on the importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and recognizes the need to create a supportive and stimulating learning environment in FLN model schools.

**Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Governments and NGOs are increasingly focusing on training teachers to create and maintain a soft climate in classrooms. This includes training on child psychology, positive discipline, and the use of play-based and child-centered teaching methods.

#### v. The Concept of FLN Model Schools:

**Purpose of FLN Model Schools:** FLN model schools are designed to serve as examples of best practices in the area of foundational literacy and numeracy. These schools aim to demonstrate how a well-structured, supportive learning environment can significantly improve the learning outcomes of young children.

**Integration of a Soft Climate:** In FLN model schools, the development of a soft climate is not just an add-on but a central component of the school's philosophy. The curriculum, teaching methods, classroom management, and even the physical environment are all designed to create a space where children can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

#### vi. Empirical Evidence and Best Practices:

**Case Studies and Pilot Projects:** Various case studies and pilot projects around the world have shown that schools with a soft climate report higher student engagement, better academic performance, and improved student-teacher relationships. These findings have encouraged the replication of such models on a larger scale.

**Parental and Community Involvement:** Successful FLN model schools often involve parents and the community in creating a supportive environment for children. This holistic approach ensures that the soft climate extends beyond the classroom and into the child's broader social environment.

The development of a soft climate in FLN model schools is a response to the growing recognition of the importance of the early years in a child's education. By creating nurturing, supportive, and inclusive learning environments, these schools aim to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to develop the foundational literacy and numeracy skills necessary for future success. The focus on a soft climate reflects a broader shift towards child-centered education, where the well-being of the child is placed at the center of all educational efforts.

### FLN Model School

NEP 2020, in its curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4, has focused on the age range of 3-8 as the Foundational stage of school education. The competencies of children at Foundational stage create a base for the life-long learning. Due to the critical importance for the development of children of foundational stage, NEP 2020 has recommended safe, free and high-quality education for this foundational stage. Children generally learn better in play-way methods by using concrete materials. In this context, schools need to be well equipped with material resources.

The purpose of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy program according to NEP 2020 is by the end of class III, all the students must attain the competencies of foundational literacy and numeracy by 2026-27. Various programs have been implemented throughout the nation from the last two years to achieve the goal of FLN. In this context, in Odisha supplementary materials for students and teachers have been prepared; also capacity building program for teacher and resource groups have been arranged, IEC materials have been structured for the awareness of community members on FLN program and in each block one school has been selected and converted into FLN Model School where all the resources of FLN are displayed and utilized by all the stakeholders. The FLN Model schools need to be

strengthened with several local specific and toy-based objects which can be effectively used by the students and teachers throughout the block for achieving the goal of FLN.

The objective of strengthening FLN Model School is (i) to equip the FLN Model school with Learning Outcome Based local specific materials and toy-based materials; (ii) to use the materials of FLN Model Schools by different stakeholders for attainment of FLN competencies of students of class I, II and III.

## **What and Why Soft Climate? (Understanding Soft Climate)**

The Learning Outcome Based materials, toy-based materials and other TLM, e-content, classrooms, library, laboratory, playground etc. constitute the Hard Climate of FLN Model School. A Soft Climate refers to healthy and supportive school environment which instills inculcation of values, open communication, respect and tolerance, physical and emotional safety, active participation, fostering curiosity and learning, increased self-esteem, fostering innovation and creativity, preparation of life, problem solving, valuing diversity, self-discipline, goal-oriented, punctuality, responsible, friendliness, patience, balance, good listener, calm mind set etc. Hard climate is always not enough for the holistic development of the students. In a school where there is a sound soft climate, students can develop and enjoy the spirit of cooperation, appreciation, tolerance, accommodativeness, give and take, sharing responsibility which will ultimately foster the personality and holistic development of the students.

As FLN Model school is a model for other schools of the concerned block the quality of soft climate needs to be included as an experimental basis to produce ideal students. It has observed that the school timing consists of 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and most of the students reach to the school half an hour before the reach of teaching staffs. The students are engaged in different activities by themselves. Sometimes indiscipline may also be seen which creates stressful situation for both teachers and parents. For the critical situation inculcation of soft climate is necessary. The quality of soft climate not only helps for school environment but also this is necessary for leading a peaceful and successful life in family and society. In present day scenario, people are facing various challenges and the children's life becoming stressful. Due to lack of proper guidance and lack of emotional well-being, lack of values things are getting worse and students are unable to deal with challenges. Thus, it is high time soft climate need to be included on priority basis from foundational stage in FLN Model School on experimental basis. So that in future all other schools will follow the pattern of inclusion of Soft Climate.

## **The FLN Model School Initiative**

The FLN Model School initiative is a strategic effort to enhance foundational literacy and numeracy skills among early learners. This initiative recognizes that a robust soft climate is essential for the effective implementation of FLN programs. A well-developed soft climate fosters an environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to learn, thereby enhancing their ability to acquire critical foundational skills.

## **Developing Soft Climate in FLN Model School- The Roadmap**

By adopting various strategies for developing Soft Climate in FLN Model Schools, the purpose of making balanced personality of child can be possible. This depends on combine efforts of Teachers, Students, Community Members and Administration.

- **Content Based / LO Based Training to Teachers**

Content based or learning outcome-based training to teachers must be included each year by which they will be reoriented with the latest changes and get updated; also this will help them for better classroom transaction. Content clarity of teachers greatly influences the students and they develop a positive attitude for teachers.

- **Orientation on Soft Skills to Teachers**

Orientation on Soft skill to teachers allows them to interact and work more effectively with students and their colleagues. Priority should be given on professional development opportunities focusing on soft climate components, such as relationship-building, classroom management and SEL. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to create inclusive and supportive classroom environments. Qualities of Soft skills for teachers must be included leadership, communication, stress management, adaptability, teamwork, change management, proactiveness, problem-solving, professionalism, inclusivity, cultural competence, time management, social and emotional intelligence, positivity, resilience, creativity, confidence, patience, goal setting and reflectiveness. The above qualities of a teacher significantly help in developing Soft climate in the FLN Model schools. Even implementation of mentoring and coaching programs can be made to support teachers in applying soft climate principles in their classrooms.

- **Community and Family Involvement**

**Strengthen Family-School Partnerships:** Engage families as partners in the educational process, providing them with resources and opportunities to support their children's learning at home. Regular communication and involvement in school activities should be encouraged.

**Community Involvement:** Collaborate with local organizations and community members to support the school's soft climate initiatives. Community involvement can provide additional resources, mentorship, and real-world connections for students.

- **Observation of Special Days**

Close-mindedness is a problem in present scenario which leads to stunted growth. Teaching of Cultural differences may develop tolerance among students for co-existing with mixed people from different cultural backgrounds. Making compulsory to the celebration of festival will increase rational thinking and develop positive attitude among students. Indians must have to take as pride in glorifying their culture because of its wide spectrum. The schools must celebrate Independence Day, Republic Day, Mother's Day, Teacher's Day, Grandparents Day, Children's Day, Holi, Diwali, Christmas, Raksha Bandan and Thanksgiving. Apart from these, Pollution Control Day, Yoga Day and other occasions which contribute to special awareness need to be organized in School. Schools must instill the essence of festivals in Children employing song, dance, stage acting, poem recitation etc. in front of their parents and grandparents which will boost the self-esteem of Children.

- **Developing Positive Attitude towards Hereditary Occupations**

Co-curricular activities like role play and game relating to hereditary occupations such as weaving, carpentry, goldsmith etc. need to be instilled in Schools. So that Students will develop a sense of positive attitude towards the hereditary occupations which ultimately helps them in choosing their career in future. This will inculcate professional values and ethics among students.

- **Respect for Cultural Diversity**

Respecting Cultural diversity imbibes in students a feeling of respect and mutual understanding for someone from other cultural background. This also creates a feeling of brotherhood across the diverse cultures. In order to develop a sense of respect for cultural diversity, activities like role-playing, sports events, debate and speeches, exhibitions etc. need to be organized in schools, so that curiosity and appreciation will be developed among students.

- **Promotion of Joyful Environment**

Now-a-days both parents and teachers are very careful about the percentage in examination of their child. In this regard a stressful situation arise which ultimately affect to the students. Examination is becoming a challenge for students. Likewise, students in other aspects also remain in stress which needs to be managed in early years. Thus, administration should take initiative to make burden free examination pattern where and when the students happily face examination. Teachers should create a joyful environment for the student for stress management.

- **Proper Utilization of Time**

Students in leisure time engage in other activities, sometimes indiscipline may occur. In that situation, when students are coming to the school before teachers, then different activities should be done by engaging community members. Generally, the schools start with morning assembly. The situation before the reach of the teachers should be rightly managed. For that Mantras and Bhajans should be played in school premises when the students enter to

schools. Community members and some students need to be assigned for that activity. This will create a serene environment and help in developing a positive mind set among students.

- **Inculcation of Soft Skills among students**

In the world of learning, it is significant to apply students' soft skill which aims to improve their ability to solve problems, proficiency in self-skills and also be able to manage self-potential (Satriawan et al.,2020). Soft skills play a significant role in the success of students' learning and career. There was a positive result in students' soft skills on their character education (Ratnawati, 2016). Thus, soft skills of student can be developed through educational as well as environmental activities (Muqowim, 2012). Developing soft skills in learner through the use of PBL (problem-based learning) experiences infused throughout the curriculum (Nenkekser and Windy, 2004).

- **Assessment and Feedback:**

**Regular Climate Surveys:** Conduct regular surveys to assess the school climate from the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents. Use the results to identify areas for improvement and celebrate successes.

**Responsive Adjustments:** Be prepared to make adjustments to the school's strategies based on feedback and changing needs. Continuous improvement should be a key component of the roadmap.

For developing soft climate in FLN Model School, the most important aspect is to inculcate soft skills among students. The soft skills help in fostering a disciplined and responsible citizen. Various Soft skills like open communication, respect and tolerance, team work, leadership, active participation, empathy, fostering curiosity and learning, increased self-esteem, creativity and innovation, valuing diversity, preparation of life, self-discipline, punctuality, patience, responsibility, friendliness, patience, balance, good listening, calm mind etc. should be inculcated among students for their peaceful, balanced and successful like in future. These soft skills should be instilled since foundational stage. Some of the activities for enhancing soft skills among students are group and pair work for developing team spirit, communicate and work with others, helping and caring people, creative writing and creative art, brainstorming activities, group project work, time table for routine activity, play logic puzzle game in group, debate, speech and extra mural talk for better communication and active listening, use of small talk conversation card, gardening, interactive discussions, praise them when they are on time, encouragement, congratulate on their progress, prayers, yoga etc.

If the soft skills are rightly inculcated among students, they can develop adaptability and adjust anywhere.

## Challenges and Considerations

While the development of a soft climate is essential, it is not without challenges. These may include resistance to change, limited resources, and the need for ongoing professional development. Schools must be prepared to address these challenges by fostering a culture of continuous improvement, securing necessary resources, and maintaining a long-term commitment to the vision.

## Conclusion

Developing a soft climate within FLN Model Schools is a strategic priority that can significantly enhance the effectiveness of foundational literacy and numeracy programs. By creating a nurturing, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environment, schools can empower students to achieve their full potential. The roadmap outlined in this paper provides a comprehensive guide for school leaders, educators, and community members to work together in building a school climate that promotes holistic student development and academic success. All soft skills help the student to interact effectively and for solving problem, thus it must start at early age. For all these a serene soft climate must be developed in FLN Model Schools. As FLN Model Schools are very active in these years, these needs to be implemented on experimental basis for getting desired outcome. It is on high demand among the teachers and community members to enhance all the good qualities in students and develop them as a responsible citizen in future, who will respect to their parents, teachers and others. The FLN Model schools need to be designed in that perspective by which the society can be benefited. The dream of creating an ideal society can be fruitful if all the stakeholders will perform their duties and responsibility.

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