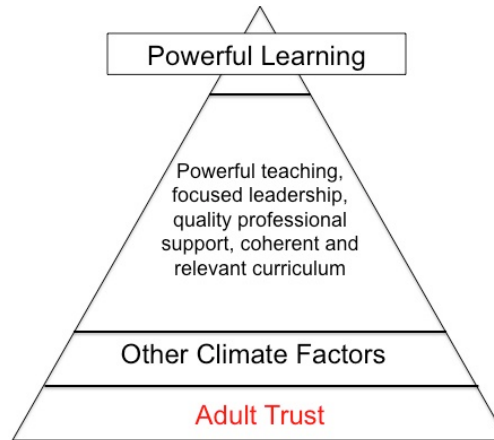


# Hurricane Sandy, Climate Change, and Lessons for School Reform

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## Presentation Notes



Climate experts overwhelmingly agree that hurricane Sandy, one of the most damaging storms in recent history, was intensified by global warming.

While a few people still question whether climate change has been affected by people, one thing we can be certain of is that school climate is produced entirely by people. It is not a product of natural forces—just humans.

Poor school climate can have a devastating impact on student outcomes. The good news is that it can be improved much more quickly and inexpensively than fixing global warming.

Key questions we will consider in this interactive presentation:

- What is school climate? (support, connections, safety, and engagement)
- What is the impact of poor school climate? (low student academic outcomes; low social, emotional and moral growth; high incidence of harassment and violence; high dropout rates; high teacher and administrator turnover)
- What affects school climate? (lack of support from district office, top-down mandates and lack of autonomy, poor teaching conditions, dysfunction, and lack of trust among adults)
- What can be done to improve school climate? (Focus: strengthening trust among the adults)

*The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else.*

*If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative.*

*If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.*

Roland Barth. "Improving relationships within the schoolhouse," *Educational Leadership*, 63(6), 8-13, 2006.

### Stories from the field

How schools and districts have built trust, improved school climate, and achieved better outcomes for students:

- They define what trust looks like, then commit to it, and monitor it over time
- They recruit and select educators that are committed to trust and teamwork
- They engage in "crucial conversations"
- They embrace "reciprocal accountability"

### Final thought:

School climate matters. Just like hurricane Sandy, a harsh school climate can have devastating effects on student outcomes. In fact, no school can perform well, much less turn itself around if it is struggling, without positive climate. School climate begins with healthy, trusting adult relationships. When educators define how they will get along with one another and pay attention to other factors that impact climate, they have a real opportunity to create great schools where all students learn.