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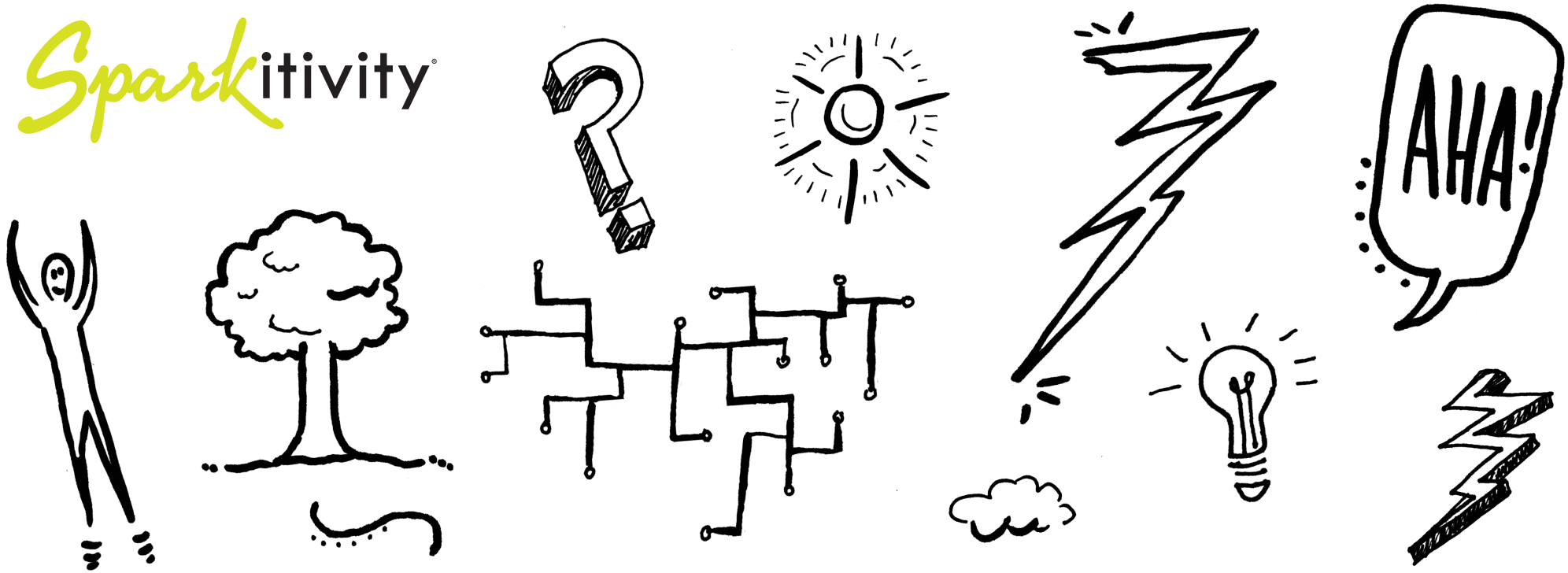
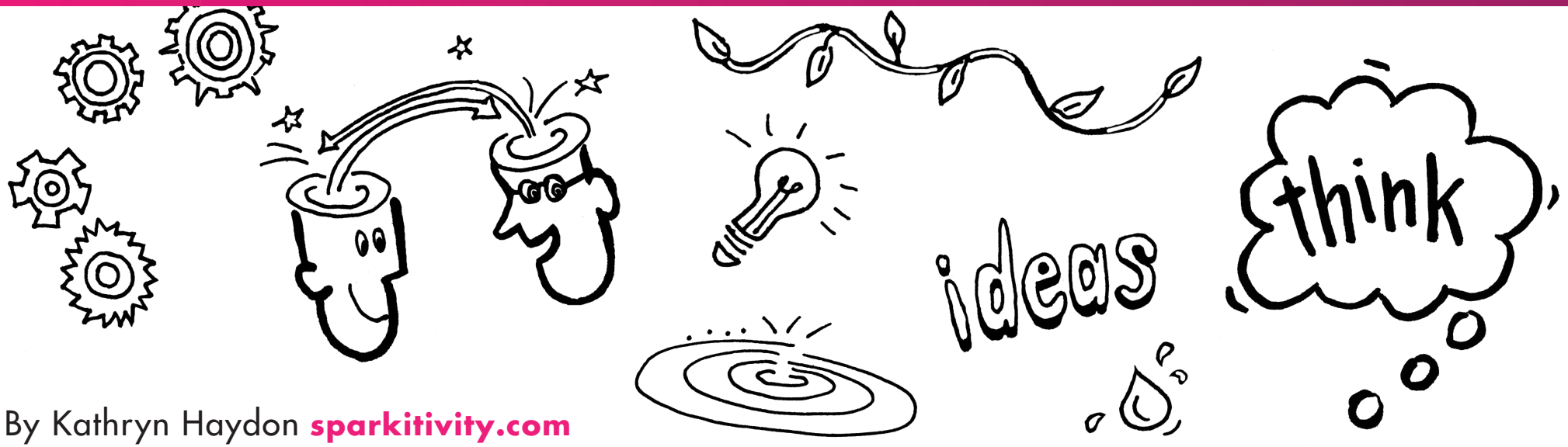



# Climate Check Tool




By Kathryn Haydon **sparkitivity.com**

# Sparkitivity Climate Check Tool for Schools

You already know that creativity is important. Not only does it lead to self-knowledge and satisfaction(1), but it is a life super-skill.

These are the top three job skills needed for 2020 and beyond:
1. complex problem solving
2. critical thinking
3. creativity(2)

Since creativity is complex problem solving that involves critical thinking, it is accurate to say that creativity is all three of the top three skills needed!

But you are focused on the present, on educating your students *today*.

Creativity is essential to this goal, too.

**When individual student creativity is nurtured daily, the result is engaged learners who experience healthy academic and personal growth.**

How can you ensure that your school climate supports the creative growth of students (and faculty, administrators, and parents, too)?

How can you spark positive change even when there may be some who cling to outdated traditions or resist anything different?

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Innovative schools function like healthy ecosystems. To support creative growth, they must have healthy climates. Teachers set the tone for the classroom, but they are heavily influenced by the overall climate set by administrators.

**How well does your school's climate support student and teacher creativity?**
The answer to this question is a major factor in the ability to sustain a school environment filled with energized teachers who can consistently engage and educate a wide spectrum of students.

**Is your school a healthy, thriving creative learning ecosystem?**
One way to gain insight is to use Sparkitivity's ***Climate Check Tool***, based on Göran Ekvall's seven decades of research on creative environments.(3, 4)

Ekvall is the authority on organizational climate. He found that creativity thrives under the direction of courageous leaders who value the individual creativity of their team members. Ekvall identified ten dimensions that must be present in a climate to fully support individual creativity.

On the Sparkitivity ***Climate Check tool***, we've used the ten Ekvall dimensions plus one additional: meaning. Recent research has stressed the importance of finding meaning in one's work and students need meaning as well as adults.

## How to use the tool:

This tool can be used in several ways. Depending on your goals, you can complete it from the perspective of a student, a faculty member, or a parent. It's easiest to begin with your own experience. Then, print it out again and complete it from the perspective of others in your school community.

Using the chart on page 5, read the prompts for each dimension and rate your response on a scale of 1 to 10, radiating out from the center. Use the center-most circle as 1, the lowest rating, and the outer edge as 10, the

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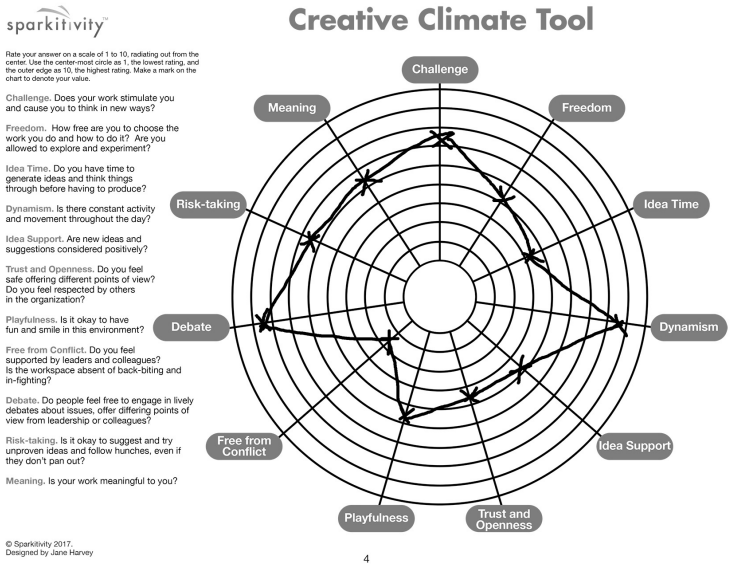
highest rating. Make a mark on the chart to denote your value (e.g., *challenge dimension*: if your work stimulates you and makes you think in new ways all the time, rate it 10. If you never feel challenged, rate it 1.)



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Creative Climate Tool

Rate your answer on a scale of 1 to 10, radiating out from the center. Use the center-most circle as 1, the lowest rating, and the outer edge as 10, the highest rating. Make a mark on the chart to denote your value.

**Challenge.** Does your work stimulate you and cause you to think in new ways?

**Freedom.** How free are you to choose the work you do and how to do it? Are you allowed to explore and experiment?

**Idea Time.** Do you have time to generate ideas and think things through before having to produce?

**Dynamism.** Is there constant activity and movement throughout the day?

**Idea Support.** Are new ideas and suggestions considered positively?

**Trust and Openness.** Do you feel safe offering different points of view? Do you feel respected by others in the organization?

**Playfulness.** Is it okay to have fun and smile in this environment?

**Free from Conflict.** Do you feel supported by leaders and colleagues? Is the workspace absent of back-biting and in-fighting?

**Debate.** Do people feel free to engage in lively debates about issues, offer differing points of view from leadership or colleagues?

**Risk-taking.** Is it okay to suggest and try unproven ideas and follow hunches, even if they don't pan out?

**Meaning.** Is your work meaningful to you?



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After you have rated each dimension, draw a line moving clockwise to connect each of your marks on the chart. The resulting shape demonstrates visually where your climate strongly supports creative growth and where it could be improved.

After you have completed the tool, print another copy and start a fresh exercise. Take on the perspective of teachers, students, or parents. How might they answer? Viewing climate dimensions through their eyes, you will gain a sense of how well individual creativity is supported community-wide. Does your school have a healthy climate for creativity?

**How to move forward:**
Celebrate the dimensions in which your school supports creativity!

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If there are any dimensions with a weak rating, set aside time to generate ideas for improvement. Ask this question:

***In what ways might we be able to improve this dimension for myself and others?***

During the ideation process, be sure not to shut down emerging thoughts with criticism. Let ideas flow first. Write them down even if they seem unlikely or wacky. You never know how one idea might lead to another. Think honestly about what might be needed to create change.Try to come up with at least 10-15 ideas.

Next, choose one idea that is easiest to implement *tomorrow*. It takes practice and perseverance to spearhead a climate shift, but jumping in and getting started sends a signal that work life can be improved.

**Want to go further to build a healthy school climate for creative growth?**

Sparkitivity founder Kathryn Haydon works directly with school leaders who want to create sustainable change that supports individual student and teacher creativity for long-term success. We will customize our strategy to your goals, whether through traditional professional development, a keynote speech to parents, or grassroots innovation.

Please contact Kathryn at inspired@sparkitivity.com or 805-798-1041 to get started!

Sources:

(1) Davis, Gary. *Creativity is Forever*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2004.

(2) World Economic Forum. “The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.” *The Future of Jobs.* January 18, 2016. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/

(3) Ekvall, Göran. “Creative Climate.” In *Encyclopedia of Creativity Volume I, A-H*, edited by Mark A. Runco and Steven R. Pritzker, 403-412. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1999.

(4) Isaksen, Scott G., Kenneth J. Lauer, and Göran Ekvall. “Situational Outlook Questionnaire: A Measure of the Climate for Creativity and Change.” *Psychological Reports 85* (1999): 665-674.

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# Creative Climate Tool

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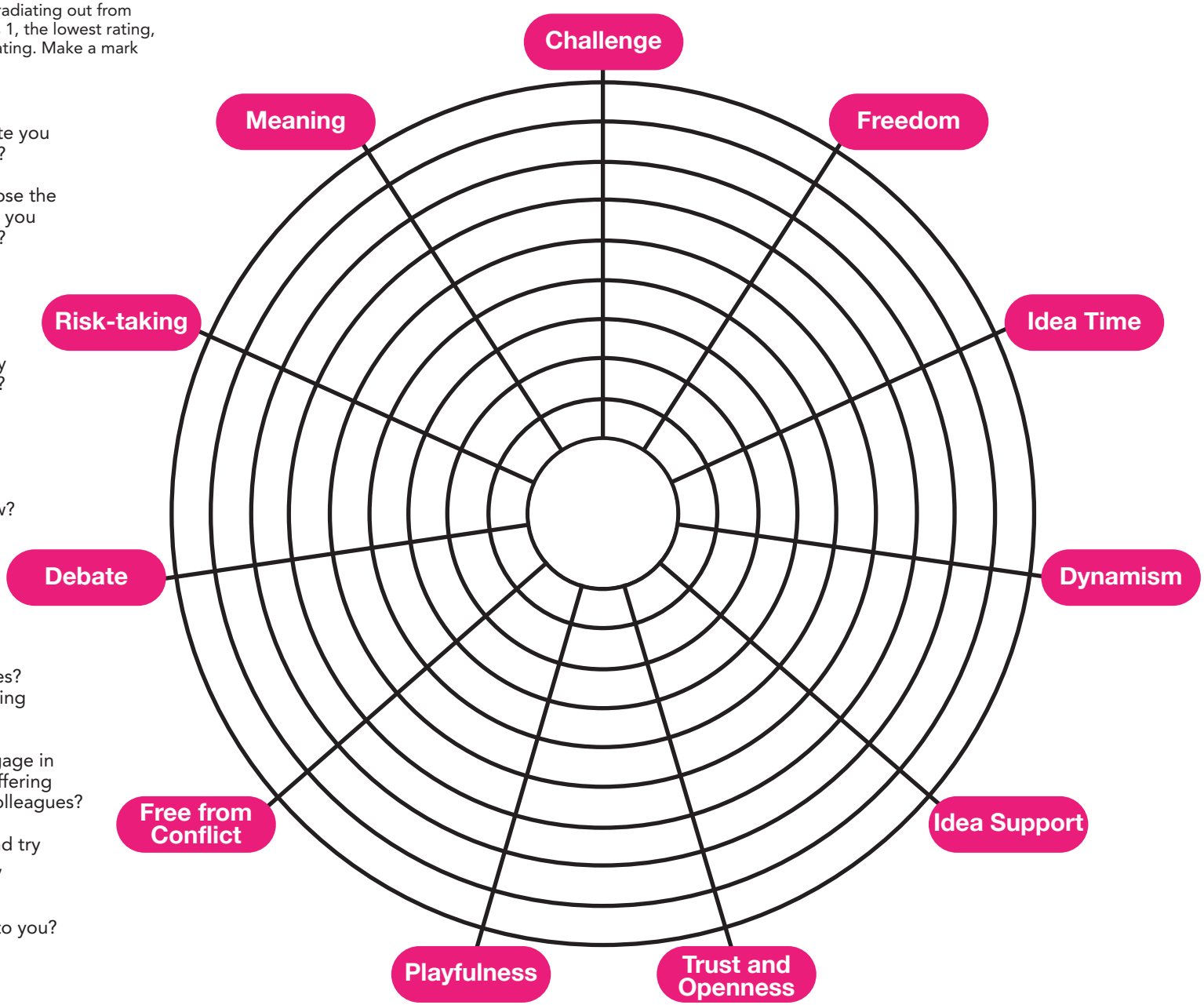


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