

# SURVEY SAYS:

## School Climate Data Can Drive School Improvement.

Tangible and intangible factors help create a safe and enriching environment.



Climate surveys can do more than simply tell whether a school has a positive environment—they can also help educators and policymakers **understand potential root causes of low school performance**, so they can diagnose problems and design solutions that improve student outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

### Why Is This Important?

Positive school climate and positive student outcomes are strongly linked.

- ☀ On average, schools with a positive climate have **higher academic achievement**.<sup>2</sup>
- ☀ Students with higher levels of engagement have **lower levels of depression and drug and alcohol use**.<sup>3</sup>
- ☀ Students in schools with a positive climate have **higher levels of self-esteem**.<sup>4</sup>



### How Do I Get Started?

Well-designed climate surveys produce valid and reliable data.

- ☑ **Some surveys are free**, including the [U.S. Department of Education's ED School Climate Surveys \(EDSCLS\)](#),<sup>5,6</sup> and the [Delaware School Climate Survey](#).<sup>7</sup>
- ☑ Districts and states can use this data to **identify areas for improvement**, as part of a system linking consequences to school performance, or as a way to **present results in school report cards**.



### What Should I Measure?

For school improvement or accountability, consider measures that:

- + **Include aspects that promote students' success**, such as engaging students,<sup>8,9,10</sup> school safety,<sup>11,12,13</sup> positive peer interactions,<sup>14</sup> and supportive student-teacher relationships.<sup>15,16</sup>
- + **Focus on characteristics that a school can influence**, rather than those that are impossible or costly to change, such as students' demographics or physical environment.
- + **Are likely to get a high response rate**, to ensure that results represent the student body. A survey should not be so long that respondents won't take or complete it.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kautz, T., Heckman, J. J., Diris, R., ter Weel, B., & Borghans, L. (2014). *Fostering and measuring skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceii/Fostering-and-Measuring-Skills-Improving-Cognitive-and-Non-Cognitive-Skills-to-Promote-Lifetime-Success.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Voight, A., and Hanson, T. (2017). *How are middle school climate and academic performance related across schools and over time?* (REL 2017–212). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572366>
- <sup>3</sup> Gase, L. N., Gomez, L. M., Kuo, T., Glenn, B. A., Inkelas, M., & Ponce, N. A. (2017). Relationships among student, staff, and administrative measures of school climate and student health and academic outcomes. *Journal of School Health, 87*(5), 319-328. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1136399>
- <sup>4</sup> Brand, S., Felner, R., Shim, M., Seitsinger, A., & Dumas, T. (2003). Middle school improvement and reform: Development and validation of a school-level assessment of climate, cultural pluralism, and school safety. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(3), 570. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ674347>
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *EDSCLS Pilot Test 2015 Report*. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (2019). *ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)*. Retrieved from <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls> on April 4, 2019.
- <sup>7</sup> Bear, G. G., Gaskins, C., Blank, J., & Chen, F. F. (2011). Delaware School Climate Survey—Student: Its factor structure, concurrent validity, and reliability. *Journal of School Psychology, 49*(2), 157-174. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ923290>
- <sup>8</sup> Gase, L. N., Gomez, L. M., Kuo, T., Glenn, B. A., Inkelas, M., & Ponce, N. A. (2017). Relationships among student, staff, and administrative measures of school climate and student health and academic outcomes. *Journal of School Health, 87*(5), 319-328. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1136399>
- <sup>9</sup> Weiss, C. C., Carolan, B. V., & Baker-Smith, E. C. (2010). Big school, small school: (Re) testing assumptions about high school size, school engagement and mathematics achievement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*(2), 163-176. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ873790>
- <sup>10</sup> Voight, A., & Hanson, T. (2012). *Summary of existing school climate instruments for middle school*. San Francisco, CA: REL West at WestEd. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566402>
- <sup>11</sup> Gase, L. N., Gomez, L. M., Kuo, T., Glenn, B. A., Inkelas, M., & Ponce, N. A. (2017). Relationships among student, staff, and administrative measures of school climate and student health and academic outcomes. *Journal of School Health, 87*(5), 319-328. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1136399>
- <sup>12</sup> Brand, S., Felner, R., Shim, M., Seitsinger, A., & Dumas, T. (2003). Middle school improvement and reform: Development and validation of a school-level assessment of climate, cultural pluralism, and school safety. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(3), 570. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ674347>
- <sup>13</sup> Voight, A., & Hanson, T. (2012). *Summary of existing school climate instruments for middle school*. San Francisco, CA: REL West at WestEd. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566402>
- <sup>14</sup> Brand, S., Felner, R., Shim, M., Seitsinger, A., & Dumas, T. (2003). Middle school improvement and reform: Development and validation of a school-level assessment of climate, cultural pluralism, and school safety. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(3), 570. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ674347>
- <sup>15</sup> Voight, A., & Hanson, T. (2012). *Summary of existing school climate instruments for middle school*. San Francisco, CA: REL West at WestEd. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566402>
- <sup>16</sup> Chiu, M. M. (2010). Effects of inequality, family and school on mathematics achievement: Country and student differences. *Social Forces, 88*(4), 1645-1676. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ893859>