

PA School Climate Survey

Positive school climate is linked to improved school engagement and increased graduation rates; fewer discipline problems; less aggression, bullying, and teasing; and better academic performance.¹

The Office for Safe Schools of the Pennsylvania Department of Education offers the PA School Climate Surveys (PSCS) to school entities in the Commonwealth. These free online surveys are intended to provide school teams with data to support improvement efforts. The surveys yield an overall school climate score and sub-scores in three domains which have been shown, through research, to play a role in student learning and development. In addition to overall and domain scores, schools can add customized questions to the PSCS.

Student Engagement and Support	Social Emotional Learning	Safe and Respectful Climate
The Student Support and Engagement scale measures the extent to which students are listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school to realize behavioral and academic goals.	The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) scale measures staff or student perceptions of how well they relate to and support each other.	The Safe and Respectful School Climate scale measures how physically safe students or staff perceive the school to be and how emotionally safe students perceive the school to be.

There are four different school climate surveys that a school may choose to administer: a survey for students, a survey for staff, a survey for caregivers, and a survey for community partners. The student survey is offered in three versions corresponding with the school level: elementary, middle, and high school. Although data are anonymous and cannot be linked back to individuals, the survey has been designed to allow schools to look at how different subgroups of students are experiencing the school learning environment. **This information can be useful for educators who are using multiple data sources to identify and address inequities in their schools.** For more information about the PASCs, visit www.paschoolclimate.pa.gov or contact the Office for Safe Schools (RA-EDSAFESCHOOLSREP@pa.gov).

Survey Validity and Recent Improvements

In 2019, Mathematica conducted an analysis of the PA School Climate Survey which led to refinement of the surveys for the 2019-20 school year and beyond. Several questions were removed from the original surveys and the survey domains were reduced from four domains to three domains. Following these changes, the evaluators concluded that the “staff and middle and high school student surveys are valid and reliable.”² The elementary school student survey required more substantial revisions to improve validity. Specifically, the SEL domain was replaced with a set of previously validated questions comprising the SEL domain of another state’s school climate survey. The parent and community survey subdomains, which did not have discriminant value, were collapsed into one score reflecting overall school climate. PDE anticipates future analyses will be conducted to confirm validity of the improved elementary survey and offer indexed school climate scores for all student surveys. **The evaluators emphasized the importance of schools administering student and staff surveys to all (100%) constituents.** Surveys with response rates of less than 85% should be interpreted with caution, as non-response bias may skew results.

¹ Konold, T., Cornell, D., Jia, Y., & Malone, M. (2018). School climate, student engagement, and academic achievement: A latent variable, multilevel multi-informant examination. *Aera Open*, 4 (4); Wang, C., Berry, B. & Swearer, S.M. (2013) The critical role of school climate in effective bullying prevention. *Theory Into Practice*, 52:4, 296-302, DOI: 10.1080/00405841.2013.829735; Wang, M. T., Selman, R. L., Dishion, T. J., & Stormshak, E. A. (2010). A tobit regression analysis of the covariation between middle school students’ perceived school climate and behavioral problems. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20 (2), 274-286.
² https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/app/Docs/Infographics/PDE_SchoolClimateIndex_Fact_Sheet_v5_508c.pdf

