

School Climate Survey Suite Overview

This document provides a brief overview of why we support the collection of the School Climate Survey (SCS), what the SCS is, and how to collect and use the survey data.

Why collect the School Climate Survey?

We want to provide an opportunity for students, staff, and families to share information on the school's climate as this often provides a sense of urgency for starting the work of School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS). We want to hear from these groups about their perceptions of the climate of the school and have an opportunity to compare this data across these groups and in conjunction with other data sources such as fidelity data and student outcome data.

What is the School Climate Survey?

The School Climate Survey is used to provide a valid, reliable, and brief measure of perceptions of school climate. The survey measures multiple dimensions of school climate. The results of the survey help school leadership teams know if there are areas of the school climate that need to be addressed in their PBIS implementation.

There are four versions of the School Climate Survey available on PBIS Assessment. This includes two student surveys: Elementary and Middle/High School, a staff survey, and a parent survey. Details of each version are provided below.

Elementary Student Survey: Grades 3-6

The survey has 11 items that are rated on a 4-point scale: never, sometimes, often, and always. The dimensions assessed are:

- School connectedness
- School safety
- School orderliness
- Peer and adult relations

Middle/High School Student Survey: Grades 6-12

The survey has 9 items that are rated on a 4-point scale: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree. The dimensions assessed are:

- Teaching and Learning
- Relationships
- Safety

Parent Survey:

The survey has 24 items that are rated on a 4-point scale: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree. The dimensions assessed are:

- Teaching and Learning
- School Safety
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Institutional Environment
- Parent Involvement

Staff Survey:

The survey has 31 items that are rated on a 4-point scale: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree. The dimensions assessed are:

- Structure for Learning
- Staff Connectedness
- Peer/Adult Relations
- Parental Involvement
- Physical Environment
- School Safety

Demographic Data

All of the surveys within the School Climate Survey Suite begin with demographic questions so that the data can be disaggregated to look at specific subgroups. Each survey asks about a respondent's gender identity, ethnicity, and race. Additionally, each respondent will answer a question about their grade level, whether it is the grade of the student or a staff member's primary grade taught.

Additional demographic questions are specific to each survey.

- The student survey for middle and high school students has a question about sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual, gay or lesbian, bisexual).
- The family survey asks whether their student is enrolled in any specialized program (e.g., Special Education, Honors Programs, etc.).
- The school personnel survey asks about a staff member's primary job classification, area taught, years of work experience, and highest degree earned.

If an individual respondent is not comfortable answering a specific question, they can still complete the survey. "I prefer not to answer" is the default response unless changed by a respondent. Additionally, if there are fewer than 5 respondents from a particular subgroup, their data will only be included in the overall scores. This helps maintain the anonymity of respondents.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The School Climate Survey uses the term "gender identity" for all surveys. The elementary student survey includes the options of female, male, and other (as well as the default "I prefer

not to answer” response). However, the middle/high student survey, as well as the family and staff surveys, provides “non-binary, transgender, or other” as an option.

The middle/high student survey also includes an item around sexual orientation. The item asks, “Which of the following best describes you?” Students have the option to choose between heterosexual (straight), gay or lesbian, bisexual, or the default response of “I prefer not to answer.”

These items were included in the School Climate Survey Suite after careful consideration based on data and research showing that LGBTQ students are at an increased risk for short and long-term negative outcomes. Additionally, individuals that identify as LGBTQ have historically not been included as a subgroup for disaggregated data analysis. This has made it difficult to fully understand the extent of problems with bullying and school discipline. Finally, it follows the precedent set by the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

There is a difference between asking about sexual orientation and sexual behavior; the School Climate Survey does not ask any questions about sexual behavior.

If your school or district is uncomfortable with the inclusion of these items as included, there are two options:

- Tell students not to answer the item(s) and the item response will default to “I prefer not to answer.” This will result in an inability to disaggregate the data by the subgroups represented within the item(s).
- Use the paper and pencil version of the survey in order to modify the item. This will require a staff member to enter all of the paper versions of the survey into the data system in order to obtain results and disaggregate the remaining subgroups. (Caution: no other items on the survey should be altered.)

How Do We Collect the School Climate Survey?

The School Climate Survey is typically completed electronically through an online survey available through PBIS Assessments on the [PBISApps website](#). All surveys are confidential when completed through the electronic link. Students typically are asked to complete the survey during a time when the class is in a computer lab. Parents are usually emailed the link for the parent survey and/or computers are made available with the link at parent/teacher conferences or other times when parents are typically at school. Staff surveys are typically completed during a staff meeting and/or the link is emailed out to the staff to complete by a specified date. Any of the surveys can be completed as paper-pencil surveys, although administration in this way is not ideal. These results will need to be entered one-by-one into the survey site in order for all of the data to be compiled for a school.

The surveys typically take 10-20 minutes to complete depending on the survey.

How Do We Use School Climate Survey data?

School Climate Survey data can be examined within a school and/or district’s Data Review process and used for action planning. The completion of the School Climate Surveys meets the needs of surveying parents, students, and staff outlined in Michigan’s Continuous Improvement Process for School Improvement.

For additional information about how the student School Climate Surveys are being used across the country, you can access [“How are Schools Using the School Climate Surveys”](#) which is available on the National PBIS Center’s website.

Additional Resources

The MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center developed a free, online course available through EduPaths for additional information about the School Climate Survey Suite. This 30-minute course can be access through [EduPaths](#) by using the Pathways feature and searching for “An Overview of the School Climate Survey Suite.”

The [School Climate Survey Suite Administration Manual](#) provides additional details about the survey and administration, including copies of the survey items in English and Spanish.

PBISApps also provides a number of resources, including video tutorials, on the [PBISApps Resources page](#).

URLs Used in Document

[PBISApps website](#)

(pbisapps.org)

[“How are Schools Using the School Climate Surveys”](#)

(<https://www.pbis.org/resource/how-are-schools-using-the-school-climate-surveys>)

[EduPaths](#)

(edupaths.org)

[School Climate Survey Suite Administration Manual](#)

(<https://www.pbisapps.org/Resources/SWIS%20Publications/School%20Climate%20Survey%20Suite%20Manual.pdf>)

[PBISApps Resources page](#)

(<https://www.pbisapps.org/Resources/Pages/default.aspx>)

Michigan’s MTSS Technical Assistance Center is funded by the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.