

School Environment Surveys

Parent – Staff – Student

School Environment

What is School Environment?

School Environment-1 – Surveys-3

Sample School Reports

School Environment Surveys Web Site

School environment includes everything within the school from leadership to classroom practices to students' feelings of connectedness. For clarity, it is separated into two categories: (1) **School Climate** – defined as the “affect of the school” and (2) **School Culture** – defined as “the way things are done in the school.”

Why is School Climate Important?

School climate is the affect of the school. Think back to your favorite teacher. What was so special about that person? Was it relationship? Most likely you had a sense of caring and belonging; you felt safe, both emotionally and academically; you felt the satisfaction of learning a lot in that classroom. Of course, climate is more than just the affect of one teacher; it is the whole school experience. Students attending schools with a healthy, positive climate share a sense of belonging, the school as a learning community, competence to succeed, safety, engagement, and personal fulfillment. This is an environment nearly devoid of student problems such as bullying. It is a school “without failure,” a place where all students can learn. Students' sense of belonging is the highest single predictor of student social-emotional and academic behavior.

Schools that have positive, caring climates also have high levels of student academic learning and pro-social/moral student behavior.

Why is School Culture Important?

School culture is the way things are done in the school. This determines the school climate, which directly impacts student learning and pro-social/moral behavior.

Many schools have a competitive culture that relies on strong teacher control with rewards and punishment to promote student learning and pro-social behavior. Students who demonstrate the correct behavior (or obtain high test scores) are singled out and rewarded for their success. These rewards might include extra recess time, coupons to the local pizza parlor, bumper stickers for parents' cars, acknowledgment at an awards assembly, or a trip to the principal's office to dip into the “treasure chest.” Students who do not exhibit the correct behavior are punished by never receiving rewards.

While this might seem to provide quick results (for some students), over time it fosters an unhealthy, negative climate of winners and losers. Such schools often have high levels of discipline problems such as bullying (even with strict no-variance policies) and sub-optimum student achievement.

Many other schools support a collaborative environment where all students share in recognition and feelings of success. There is deliberate effort to catch every student doing something right. It is a learning culture where teachers work together and students cooperate with each other. Parents, staff and students have determined the core values for the school and integrated them into all aspects of the schooling process. Collaborative teaching-learning practices such as class meetings, learning circles, cross-grade groupings, school-home activities, and school-wide activities are common. Student motivation is a result of school staff developing student character through a sense of belonging, students having voice in the schooling process, and students feeling competent in the school setting. Students do the right thing because it is the right thing to do; they complete assignments for their own learning, not simply to satisfy a teacher. Cheating all but disappears.

A collaborative school culture promotes a positive, caring school climate.

Why measure School Culture and Climate?

School climate is the primary determinant of student social-emotional and academic learning. Factors such as students' sense of belonging, autonomy and influence, competence, engagement and safety are the primary predictors of student learning. Regular assessment of these school characteristics as seen by parents, staff and students reveals how the school is doing. The simple question is: ***Are we optimizing our success?***

But, to measure school climate without assessing school culture is like attempting to drive a car without any fuel. How things are done determines the climate of the school. School culture must be measured along with school climate. School culture assessment provides information on the question: ***What school processes are being implemented and to what degree?***

School climate information provides indices reflecting the level of success in developing or maintaining a healthy, caring community; school culture information provides insights on how well school processes are being implemented. Together, this information provides what is needed to proceed with solid data-based planning for school optimization.

School Climate and Culture Surveys for Data-Based Planning

We provide user-friendly web-based student, parent and staff surveys that provide school culture and climate information for data-based planning. There are nine culture factors and 10 climate factors. The surveys are based on over a decade of research. The initial student surveys drew items from surveys developed for use in a Utah state project and by the Child Development Center in California for assessing the Caring School Community[®] program. In 2002 these surveys were modified based on the theoretical constructs comprising The CHARACTER^{plus} Way[®] and Caring School Community The CHARACTER^{plus} Way[®] federally funded research projects. Factor analysis and Q-Sort techniques were used to verify factor validity. Since 2002 there have been three additional updates to refine and add culture and climate factors and to progress into electronically administered surveys. Following are the attributes and advantages of these surveys.

ATTRIBUTES	ADVANTAGES
Easy to use, web-based surveys that take only 10 to 20 minutes to administer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Fast and friendly ★ Can administer to any number of parents, staff or students; no limit ★ Files secure; no loss of data ★ Quickly convert from data files to school reports
Survey students grades 3 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Can survey all students grades 3 – 12 ★ Students in middle school and higher have a longer survey, differences in surveys not perceptible
Assess Nine School Culture factors and 10 School Climate factors	Surveys provide a comprehensive picture of the school's culture and climate. Many factors overlap on the parent, staff and student surveys allowing for meaningful comparisons. See below for a listing of the factors assessed.
Comprehensive School Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ In-depth report providing descriptive statistical data for each group surveyed that includes mean, standard deviation and number of persons surveyed (see below for easy interpretation). ★ Both easy to read tables and interval graphs provided. ★ Reports contain step-by-step guidelines for interpreting data and for using the

ATTRIBUTES	ADVANTAGES
	report in data-based planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ All information and materials needed for effective data-based planning are included in the report. ★ First report includes baseline data for planning; subsequent reports provide pretest and posttest data. ★ Student information broken down by grade level, gender and heritage.
Secure Data	School data are protected by school ID and passwords. Only people with this information have access to the surveys.
Easy to Set Up	Once the school invoice or order form and school information are submitted, the school information is loaded into the system and the school ID and passwords are generated and sent out.

Easy and Meaningful Data Interpretation

Results for all factors are provided in percent positive scores. This allows for a quick and easy view of the school culture and school climate. The mean scores can be interpreted as follows.

Low Implementation of Healthy School Practices Non-Collaborative Culture	Moderate Implementation of Healthy School Practices Moderately Collaborative Culture	High Implementation of Healthy School Practices Collaborative Culture
0	30	70
Percent Positive Factor Means		

Unhealthy Climate	Moderately Healthy Climate	Healthy Climate
0	30	70
Percent Positive Factor Means		

Both the mean and standard deviation need to be considered when interpreting school culture and climate data. The mean shows the typical perception level and the standard deviation provides the amount of agreement among respondents. The selection of implementation strategies may differ based on the homogeneity of the respondents. For example, if staff highly agree on the school culture, a common set of implementation strategies might be most appropriate. However, if there is high

disagreement, different strategies for different groups might be best. Following is the guideline for interpreting the standard deviation.

Agreement	Moderate Disagreement	Disagreement	
0	10	20	Highest
Standard Deviations			

Survey Factors Assessed

Following are the 19 factors assessed. The 10 school climate factors are labeled in black; the nine school culture factors are in rust.

Survey Factor	Survey Type		
	Parent	Staff	Student*
Students' Feeling of Belonging	Yes	Yes	Yes
Students' Sense of School as a Community	Yes	Yes	Yes
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence (Voice)	No	Yes	Yes
Students' Feeling of Competence	No	No	Yes
Students' Sense of School Safety	No	No	Yes
Student Engagement	No	No	Yes
Alcohol and Substance Use**	No	No	Yes
Parent Involvement at School	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parent Involvement at Home	No	Yes	Yes
Parent and Staff Relations	Yes	Yes	No
School Quality	Yes	No	No
Staff Culture of Belonging	No	Yes	No
School Leadership	No	Yes	No

* Grades 3 - 12

** Middle and high school levels only

The Implementation Survey is the staff's perceptions of the school culture and climate based on:

Context

Learning Community

Leadership Support

Process

School Climate

Staff Collaboration

Ten Essentials

Content

Classroom Practices

For more information on surveys, costs and ordering go to [School Environment Surveys Web site](#).