WORKBOOK FOR
IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE &
CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Using your California Healthy Kids & California School Climate Surveys

CALIFORNIA *healthy kids* SURVEY

CHKS

Main Report
MetroTown Unified

CALIFORNIA *school climate* SURVEY

CSCS

Main Report
MetroTown Unified
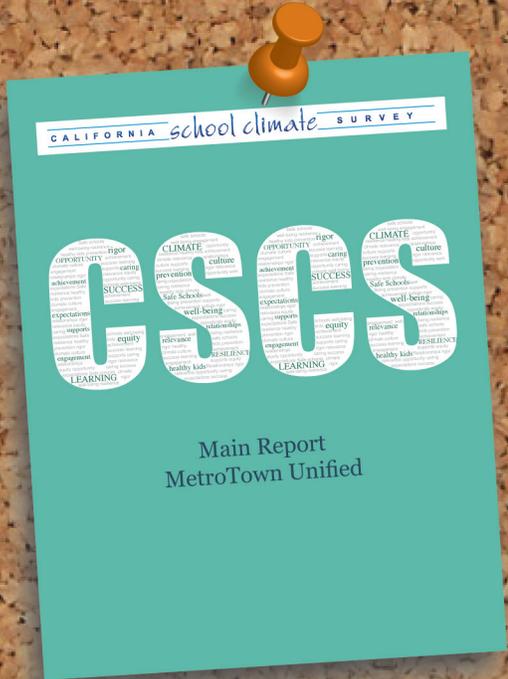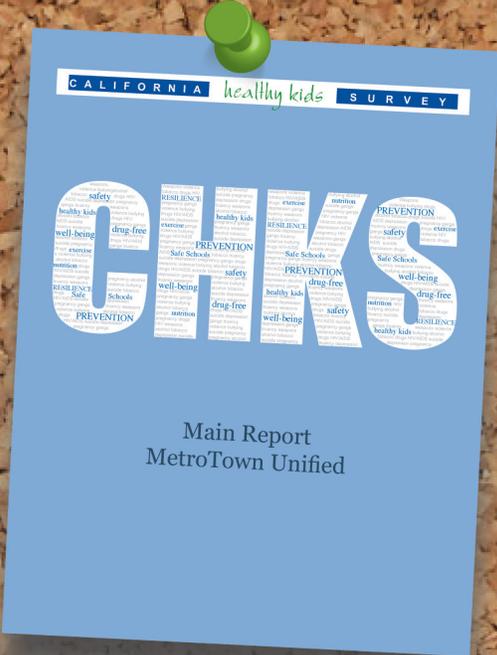
PREFACE

The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) for staff provides schools and districts with valuable data; however, merely having data is not sufficient if it is not being used constructively for developing better schools and helping students to succeed academically. This is the impetus for developing a supplemental resource for the CHKS and CSCS, namely, the *Workbook for Improving School Climate & Closing the Achievement Gap*.

This publication is part of a California Department of Education (CDE) initiative whose goal is to address the persistent achievement gap that plagues so many of our schools. The CDE defines the achievement gap as the disparity between white students and other ethnic groups, between English learners and native English speakers, between socio–economically disadvantaged and non–disadvantaged, and between students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities. The success of this project is directly related to the exciting collaborative effort that brought several CDE offices and divisions together including Learning Support and Partnerships Division, Special Education Division, English Learner and Curriculum Support Division, and P–16 Division.

The Workbook was developed with the recognition that teachers and administrators have a "full plate," and are implementing strategies to address the important needs of their students; therefore, we wanted to provide an easy to use resource that not only offers additional strategies, but also affirms the hard work and effort that many schools and districts have already invested toward improving the success of students.

The CDE recognizes that the achievement gap cannot be closed in one day; but by taking one step at a time toward creating a more positive school climate, we can work together to narrow it.

Sincerely,

Gordon Jackson, Assistant Superintendent
Learning Support and Partnerships Division

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals participated in the development of the Workbook:

Greg Austin, Ph.D.
Program Director
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Rose Owens-West, Ph.D.
Senior Project Director
Comprehensive School Assistance Program,
WestEd

Bonnie Benard, M.S.W.
Senior Program Associate
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Leslie Poynor, Ph.D.
Research Assistant
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Nicole Busto
Graphic Designer
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Linda Rivera
Education Programs Consultant
English Learner and Curriculum Support Division,
California Department of Education

Janet Canning, M.S.
Education Programs Consultant
Special Education Division,
California Department of Education

Jacinto Salazar
Project Manager
Comprehensive School Assistance Program,
WestEd

Hilva Chan, M.S.W.
Education Programs Consultant
Learning Support and Partnerships Division,
California Department of Education

Shadidi Sia-Maat, Ph.D.
Education Programs Consultant
P–16 Division,
California Department of Education

Lisa R. Churchill, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita
California State University, Chico

Sean Slade, M.Ed.
Co–Project Director
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Patt Kearly, Ph.D.
Professor of Special Education
California State University, Sacramento

Sara Truebridge, M.A.
Co–Project Director
Health and Human Development Program,
WestEd

Dona Meinders, M.A.
Project Coordinator
Center for Prevention and Early Intervention,
WestEd

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PURPOSE

This Workbook is a companion resource to the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and California School Climate Survey (CSCS) for staff. Its purpose is to use the data from these surveys to assist local efforts to support and strengthen special education, migrant education, and other educational services for culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students. The Workbook is a practical guide for busy teachers and administrators to foster a positive school climate for staff and students, which in turn promotes positive academic outcomes for all students.

INTRODUCTION

The achievement gap between white students and other ethnic groups as well as between English learners and native English speakers, socioeconomically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities is a pervasive issue in many, if not all, of California's schools (www.closingtheachievementgap.org). The achievement gap is a fact that California simply cannot afford to accept—morally, economically, or socially. We know that all children can learn to the same high levels, so we must confront and change those things that are holding groups of students back.

Towards that effort, in February 2007, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell announced the Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Initiative[1] and charged the California P-16 Council[2] to provide recommendations on what the State can do differently to assist local education agencies in closing the achievement gap.

The P-16 Council identified and recommended that "School Culture and Climate" be an area of focus in addressing the achievement gap. This recommendation was based on the understanding that a school's culture and climate, and ultimately a student's learning and a teacher's teaching, occurs within the context of the values, beliefs, and rituals of the school, community, and larger society. With respect to culture and climate, the P-16 Council specifically recommended that schools and districts 1) provide culturally relevant professional development for all school personnel; and 2) conduct a climate survey.

Following this recommendation a committee was established and charged with revising the existing California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) for staff to include specific questions that relate to the achievement gap. This resulted in the development and addition of CTAG, Special Education, and Migrant Education questions and/or modules to the California Healthy Kids Survey and the California School Climate Survey for staff. Both revised surveys, when used together and wisely, provide valuable information to teachers, schools, and districts so they can address school climate and culture in the context of closing the achievement gap. The development of the CTAG Workbook is in response to support that effort.

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1   CTAG Initiative, a plan to identify ways the state can better assist counties, districts, and schools in closing California's achievement gap.

2   The California P-16 Council is a high level, statewide assembly of educators from preschool, K-12, higher education, business, philanthropy, and community leaders appointed by Superintendent O'Connell and chaired by Dr. Barry Munitz. The Council is charged with developing strategies to better coordinate, integrate, and improve education for preschool through college students.

FRAMEWORK

A Strengths-Based Approach/Framework

Teachers can not teach and students can not learn if either are tired, sick, hungry, distracted, scared, or absent. If we are to close the achievement gap we must recognize that successful teaching and learning cannot occur unless basic environmental supports and opportunities are in place to create positive school climates that meet the developmental needs of teachers and students.

All individuals, both young and old, have basic human needs which include, but are not limited to, the needs for safety, love and belonging, respect, power, challenge and mastery.[1] Longitudinal developmental resilience research finds that three inter-related protective factors (also known as developmental supports and opportunities) together in any single environment—home, school, or community—determine whether these needs are met. The three protective factors are as follows: 1) providing caring relationships; 2) communicating high expectation messages; and 3) providing opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution.[2,3] Michael Rutter, in his classic research into effective schools in high poverty communities, found that "turnaround schools"—schools that were successfully able to narrow the achievement gap for students in high poverty areas were those that created a school climate rich in these three protective factors.[4]

Resilience: It's HOW You Do What You Do

Resilience is the ability for successful adaptation in the face of trauma, adversity, and/or stress. Resilience and youth development, like other strengths-based approaches, is grounded in a theory of change supported by longitudinal developmental resilience research.[5] One of the fundamental lessons to be drawn from resilience research is that schools that create environments rich in the three protective factors are more likely to report high levels of student engagement, school connectedness, better attendance, better performance, and to have lower rates of dropping out, alcohol, and other drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency than other schools. Resilience research goes beyond the WHAT and delves into the HOW.

How vs. What

In many situations, school reform strategies primarily focus on improving academic curriculum, programs, and materials. While such changes are often essential, they are also often not sufficient in themselves. Reform or school improvement efforts, as well as teacher education and practice in

1   Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370-396.

2   Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school and community.* Portland, OR: Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities.

3   Benard, B. (2003). Turnaround teachers and schools. In B. Williams (Ed.), *Closing the achievement gap* (2nd ed.) (pp. 115-137). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

4   Rutter, M. (1979). Protective factors in children's responses to stress and disadvantaged. In M.W. Kent & J. E. Rolf (Eds.), *Primary prevention of psychopathology: Social competence in children* (pp.49-74). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

5   Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we have learned.* San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

general, largely ignore the school climate and the related learning barriers that can impede students' motivation and ability to benefit from any improvements in curriculum, programs, or materials.[6] Too often efforts that focus on curriculum, programs, and materials ignore the role of other information that can be simultaneously communicated in the classroom by HOW the teacher teaches rather than WHAT a teacher teaches. Thus, changing

curriculum, programs, materials, or specific subject content may improve what is taught in a classroom, but may not alter what is learned.[7] In other words: It's not WHAT you do; it's HOW you do it.

At the Core of the Theory

The three inter-related protective factors at the core of the resilience theory are as follows: 1) providing caring relationships; 2) communicating high expectation messages; and 3) providing opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution. In an educational context, the presence of these three protective factors in school are what contribute to creating and sustaining a positive school climate—one that is optimal for fostering resilience—that is, it becomes one that mitigates and buffers the negative effect that trauma, stress, and adversities such as poverty, racism, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and physical and mental illness may have on individuals and taps their resilient nature.[8,9] This, in turn, contributes to the healthy and successful development and emergence of children's and adults' personal developmental competencies and strengths, such as social competence, ability to problem-solve, autonomy (sense of self), and sense of purpose and future. The flow of the theory continues: the enhance-

6   Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Mitchelli, N, M., and Pickeral, T. (2009) *Teachers College Record Volume 111*, Number 1, January 2009, pp. 180–213

Figure 1. School Climate Model
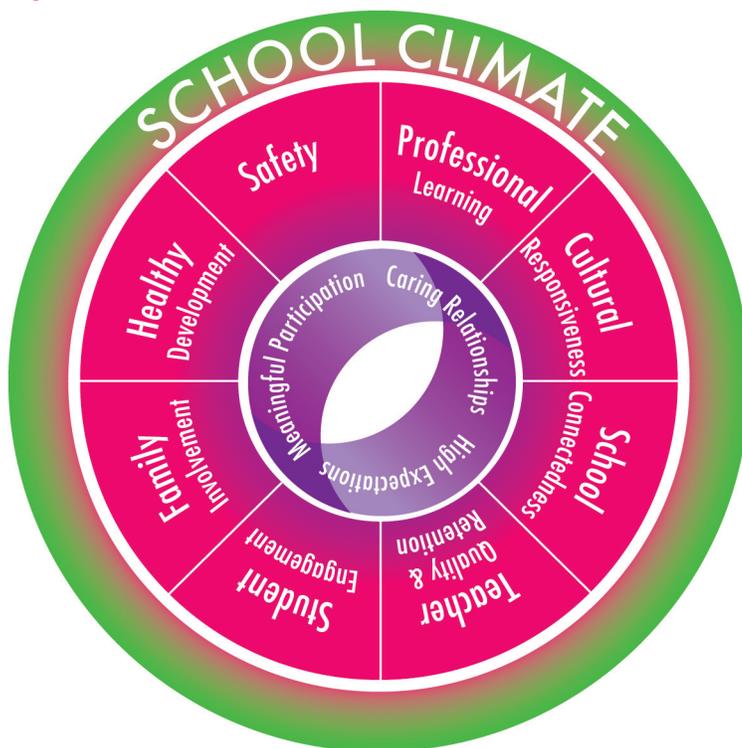
7   Yero, J. L. (2002). *Teaching in mind: How teacher thinking shapes education*. Hamilton, MT: Mindflight Publishing.

8   Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we have learned*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

9   Werner, E., & Smith, R. (2001). *Journey from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

ment of individual strengths contribute to a reduction in their health risk behaviors and an increase in all aspects of their healthy development and life success—physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and morally/spirituality. These are represented by the red sections surrounding the core.

This strengths-based developmental theory of change underlies most effective prevention and educational interventions. Continued research supports the application of this theory not only as it relates to young people from high-risk environments but also to all people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or geographic setting.[10] It is imperative for our young people's healthy development and school and life success, that schools address school climate by providing educational environments that motivate and engage children and adults in meeting their developmental needs in positive ways.

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10   Masten, A. & Coatsworth, D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist*, 53, 205-220.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This Workbook is designed as a strengths-based document to help classroom teachers, principals and other administrators, as well as district personnel to better understand and use the data that is available to them via the CHKS and the CSCS. The overall aim is to help schools improve school climate and close the achievement gap in California by reinforcing areas of strength as well as addressing areas of concern.

Cycle of Action

Just as classrooms, schools, or districts need to look at their processes if their data highlight issues in the school, it is equally important for schools and districts to recognize, acknowledge, and sustain processes that the data indicate are working. Classrooms, schools, and districts that find encouraging results should actively think about strengthening, expanding and promoting what they are doing and seek to replicate their actions.

The process of assessing where you are, maintaining, and then building upon what you are doing, and showcasing what you are doing is a continual process—a cycle of 4 actions:

- » Focus on,
- » Improve,
- » Maintain, and
- » Strengthen.

Settings

Readers are shown how to use results from their CHKS and CSCS Special Reports. They are also provided with a Self-Assessment question to identify needs. They are then offered suggestions or Next Steps on what they can do next. Next Steps are listed for 3 settings:

- » Classroom,
- » School, and
- » District.

Protective Factors

A key part of these Next Steps are the actions or suggestions regarding the Protective Factors. There are 3 principle Protective Factors:

- » CR—Caring Relationships,
- » HE—High Expectations, and
- » MP—Meaningful Participation.

READING YOUR RESULTS

The various CHKS and CSCS Reports display results in table format. Table results show the percentages of respondents answering along a Likert scale. Typically the response options were "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," or even "Strongly Disagree". On the tables that compare specific groups of staff with the general faculty the tables frequently compare those that only "Strongly Agree".

Please be aware that:

» Small numbers of respondents have greater "margin of error"

» The data is just one snap-shot of staff responses

» The results should be used as a starting point for discussion around certain issues/themes

It is up to the reader and each team, school, and district, to decide what the results mean and where they should start along the "Steps" continuum.

However there are some general things people can look for:

» Do more respondents agree (strongly agree/agree) than disagree (strongly disagree/disagree)? (e.g. 70% to 30%)

» Are the responses for a specific group of staff different than the general staff? (e.g. special education staff 50% strongly agree but only 20% for general education staff.)

» Even if % are the same 50/50 there is need for discussion. Such as why do half the respondents "disagree"? Or perhaps specific staff and general staff both indicate that there is (or isn't) an issue.

Whatever the responses, there are steps that each school or district can take to find out more, start discussions and to then:

» Focus on,

» Improve,

» Maintain, and

» Strengthen.

PROCESS

#1 SELECT SUBJECT
- Select an area of interest—Closing The Achievement Gap overall, Special Education or Migrant Education.

#2 SELECT AREA
- Choose a relevant Area of Focus.

#3 LOCATE DATA
- Have your CHKS/CSCS Reports handy.*
- Enter the results from the CHKS/CSCS into the relevant blank Tables in this Workbook.
- If you do not have the results handy answer the Self-Assessment question as a starting point.

#4 DISCUSS RESULTS
- What do your results show?
- Is there something that needs to be looked at further?
- Start a discussion and ask more questions.

#5 CHOOSE SETTINGS
- Select your setting: Classroom, School, or District.

#6 TAKE NEXT STEPS
- Read through the Next Steps strategies.
- Which of the strategies are most relevant/pertinent?
- Which appear to be the most straight forward to address?
- Which appear the most critical to address?

#7 FIND SUPPORT
- Classroom strategies can be implemented easily by individuals or a small team.
- School-wide or district-wide initiatives will need to consider gathering support; such as:
  - Develop a Task-force;
  - Present results;
  - Organize Focus Groups; or
  - Invite input from stakeholders.

#8 IMPLEMENT
- Gather support, start with easy to implement steps.

*District Reports CHKS reports can be accessed at: www.wested.org/cs/chks/print/docs/chks_bsearch.html. CSCS reports can be accessed on the previous website or at: http://cscs.wested.org/reports/search. Alternatively these reports can be accessed through CDE Data Quest: http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest

School Level Reports Ask your school principal if a copy is available at school. If not, your district CHKS coordinator can order a copy from WestEd for a nominal fee.

RELATED REPORTS*

## Basic Reports

All districts receive:

CHKS Main Report

CHKS Key Findings

CSCS Report
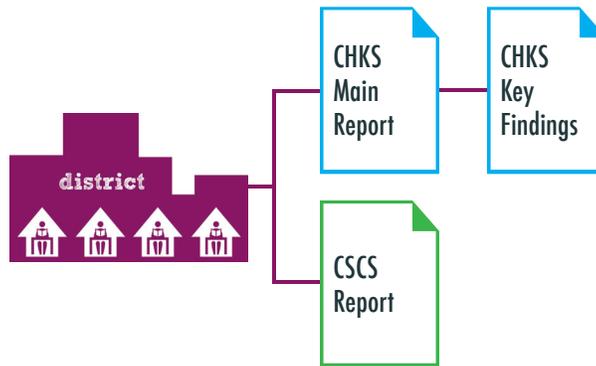
Supplemental Reports

If districts complete Closing the Achievement Gap Module G, they receive:

CHKS CTAG Report

CSCS CTAG Report

If districts receive any of the above Special Reports, they also receive the Workbook:

Workbook CTAG, ME, SE
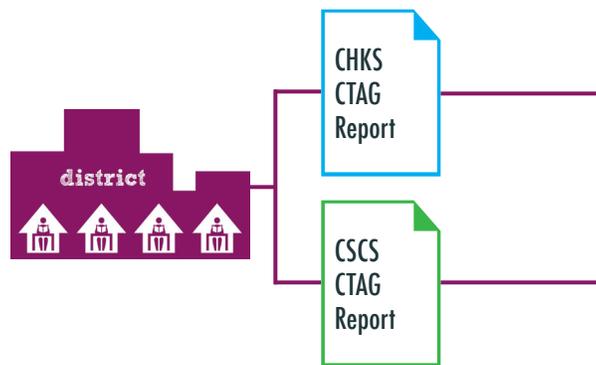
If districts have students/staff involved in Migrant Education, they receive:

CHKS Migrant Education Report

CSCS Migrant Education Report
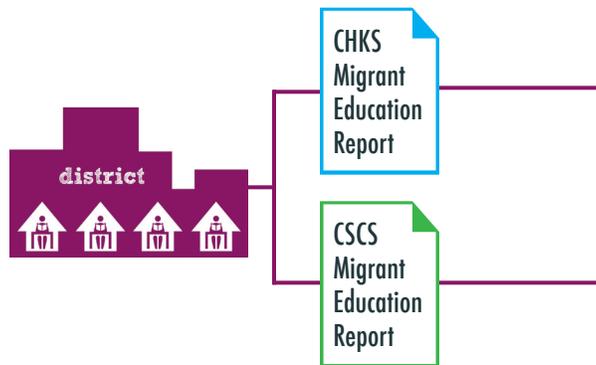
If districts have staff who serve students in Special Education with IEPs, they receive:

CSCS Special Education Report

*School level reports are available from WestEd through the CHKS District Coordinator for a nominal fee.