ASSESSING SCHOOL CLIMATE

The *California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys* (Cal-SCHLS) is one of the most comprehensive and validated data systems in the nation for assessing factors associated with student success in school, career, and life. It consists of three comparable surveys for school students, staff, and parents named, respectively: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), California School Climate Survey (CSCS), and California School Parent Survey (CSPS). The following describes the questions that specifically assess school climate in each survey and across surveys for comparability for the 2013-14 school year.

Cal-SCHLS and LCAP. School climate is one of the eight priorities that districts must address in their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Beyond this, Cal-SCHLS provides data related to five other priorities — pupil engagement, parent involvement, academic achievement, Common Core implementation, and basic core services (school facilities). It also more broadly provides a tool to help fulfill the overarching goal of the LCAP: improving academic achievement by involving stakeholders, including parents, in a data-driven process of enhancing learning conditions, instruction, and engagement and documenting progress. A description of how survey items align with LCAP can be downloaded at cal-schls.wested.org.

California Healthy Kids Survey

The CHKS for middle and high school students consists of a Core Module of key questions that all schools using this data collection tool must administer. Schools can also expand their survey to even better meet their needs by adding supplementary modules or creating a Custom Module of their own questions. The Core Module has been shortened (by 37 questions) and focused more on key variables related to learning.   It assesses school-related attitudes, behaviors, and experiences, including: (1) school safety, violence, bullying, and resilience-promoting developmental supports; and (2) student connectedness to school, learning engagement and performance, attendance, and substance use on school property. An *Inventory of Student Motivation* was added to help gauge academic mindset.

A supplementary **School Climate Module** provides additional data on academic mindset, teacher supports for learning, discipline/order, supports for social-emotional learning, bullying prevention, positive peer relationships, respect for diversity, and the physical environment. Most of these constructs are assessed by existing validated scales. The staff survey contains a companion Learning Conditions module for comparing staff-student perceptions.

A new **Social Emotional Health Module** builds on scales in the existing CHKS Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) and greatly enhances the value of the survey as a comprehensive assessment of student social-emotional competencies, including those identified as key by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Developed by researchers at UC Santa Barbara, it assesses the following factors that contribute to student mental health and well-being, academic success, and career and college readiness: empathy, self-efficacy, and self-awareness (using scales also on the RYDM), persistence, emotional regulation, gratitude, zest, optimism, as well as family and peer supports.

Secondary schools interested in receiving a ***School Climate Report Card***, with a summary School Climate Index score, based on their CHKS Core module data, should call the Cal-SCHLS helpline: 888.841.7536. An example is provided below. To view sample report cards, visit CDE's DataQuest website: http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CSRC/searchname.aspx

California School Climate Survey (CSCS) for Staff

The main focus of the staff survey is the assessment of the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and other school personnel related to the learning environment and supports, academic achievement, and school improvement. The core section consists of 48 questions in scales that assess:

- Academic norms, standards, expectations, and priorities;
- How positive and collaborative is the working environment and how well maintained are the facilities;
- Staff supportive relationships (collegiality) and staff-student relationships;
- Staff and student safety;
- The nature, communication, and enforcement of school rules/policies (including zero tolerance assessment);
- How great a problem student risk behaviors and problems pose for the school and the sufficiency of efforts to reduce them;
- Parent involvement; and
- Availability of health and counseling services.

In addition, staff responsible for providing any services or instruction related to health, prevention, discipline, safety, or counseling are asked 21 other questions about the scope and nature of their programs and services.

Schools can further enhance the value of the survey for guiding school improvement efforts by adding a new short (33 question) **Learning Conditions Module** that provides comparison data to key questions in the supplementary CHKS School Climate Module. This provides a more comprehensive assessment of overall school climate and related student and staff supports. The questions gauge five constructs:
- Support for Learning
- Discipline and Order
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports
- Positive Peer Relationships (anti-bullying related)
- Respect for Diversity

This expanded version is particularly recommended for any district that is administering the CHKS School Climate Module, so that student and staff responses can be compared. For districts monitoring their progress in improving learning conditions, staff data are as important as student. In some respects, it may be more useful, as lower turnover among staff and more stable response rates from year to year add to the reliability of trend data. Because the staff survey no

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longer automatically includes a Special Education Module, adding the Learning Conditions Module does not increase existing survey completion time.

California School Parent Survey

The new parent survey provides a means to confidentially obtain parent perceptions about learning and teaching conditions, school climate, and parent-school involvement and relationships, including whether the school environment is academically challenging, caring and welcoming, participatory, safe, and fair. A major focus is assessing how much parents are involved in the school and their children's education. Positive relationships or ties among students, parents, teachers, and administrators, and the fostering of parental support for education, are key components of effective schools. Many studies show that parent and other family involvement in children's learning is a critical element of student success. This short, 34-item survey parallels much of the content of the CHKS and CSCS for comparability. It can also be customized with additional questions to meet a school's specific needs. The act of asking parents to provide their perceptions of the school is, moreover, in itself a parent-involvement activity. As such, it is a particularly useful tool for data to meeting the requirements and goals of the Local Control Accountability Plan.
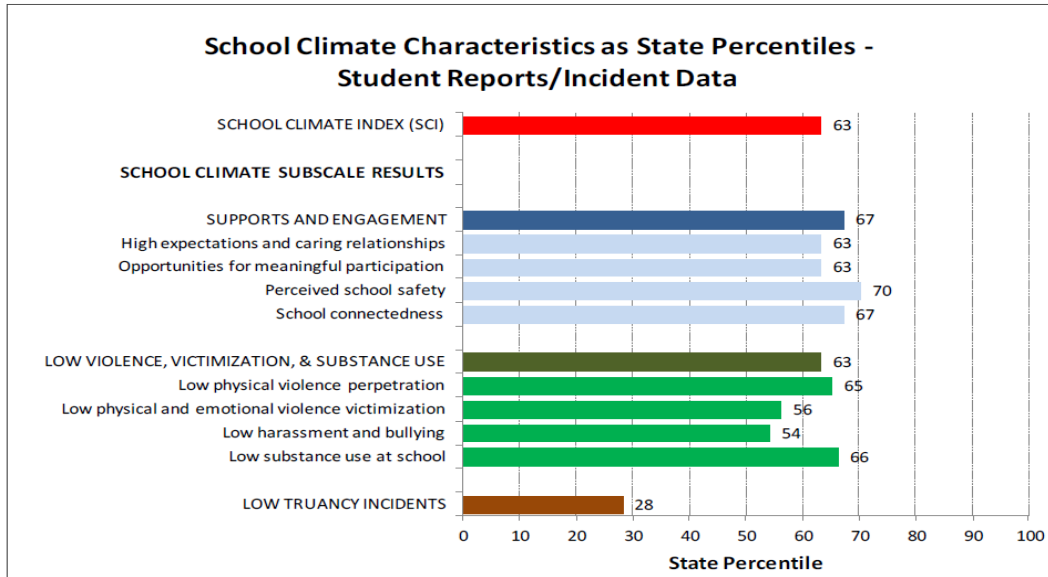
Table 1.
Major School-related Domains and Constructs Assessed by Cal-SCHLS

Variables Assessed Across Surveys	CHKS Core	CHKS School Climate	CSCS	CSCS Learning Conditions	CSPS
School connectedness	✓				
Student learning engagement and motivation	✓		✓		✓
Student performance (grades)	✓				
Attendance (truancy, reasons for absence)	✓		✓		✓
Academic mindset		✓			
Academic rigor and norms — high expectations	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teacher and other supports for learning	✓	✓		✓	
Relationships between students and staff	✓		✓		
Relationships among students	✓	✓			
Relationships among staff			✓		
Parent involvement			✓		✓
Meaningful participation and decision-making	✓		✓		✓
Staff supports			✓		
Perceived safety	✓		✓		✓
Discipline and order (policies, enforcement)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Violence and victimization (bullying)	✓	✓	✓		
Substance use and availability at school	✓		✓		✓
Services and policies to address student needs			✓		
Student social-emotional competencies and health	✓		✓		✓
Social-emotional and behavioral supports		✓		✓	✓
Respective for diversity & cultural sensitivity		✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality of physical environment		✓	✓	✓	✓

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Excerpt from the CHKS California School Climate Report Card

(Custom Service Available for Secondary Schools, on Request)

School Climate Index (SCI)

	Score [A]	State Percentile [B]	Similar Schools Percentile [C]
School Climate Index [D]	317	63	86

School Climate Characteristics as State Percentiles - Student Reports/Incident Data

	State Percentile
SCHOOL CLIMATE INDEX (SCI)	63
SCHOOL CLIMATE SUBSCALE RESULTS	
SUPPORTS AND ENGAGEMENT	67
High expectations and caring relationships	63
Opportunities for meaningful participation	63
Perceived school safety	70
School connectedness	67
LOW VIOLENCE, VICTIMIZATION, & SUBSTANCE USE	63
Low physical violence perpetration	65
Low physical and emotional violence victimization	56
Low harassment and bullying	54
Low substance use at school	66
LOW TRUANCY INCIDENTS	28

Full report cards prepared for Safe and Supportive School grants are posted on CDE's DataQuest website.

TABLES OF SCHOOL CLIMATE QUESTIONS

The following tables list the specific student and staff questions related to school climate assessment that are now included in the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) Core Module and the newly expanded supplementary School Climate Module.

California Healthy Kids Survey

Table Key
* New items for 2013-14
** Used to calculate the School Climate Report Card and Index

CHKS Core Module
Academic Mindset, Learning Engagement, and Related Behaviors

Students at this school are motivated to learn. (level of agreement)*

Inventory of Student Motivation Scale (level of agreement: I try hard to make sure that I am good at my schoolwork; I try hard at school because I am interested in my work; I work hard to try to understand new things at school; I am always trying to do better in my schoolwork)*

Usual grades received in classes

Truancy frequency

Reasons missed school, past 30 days*

School Connectedness Scale**

School Developmental Supports**

Caring Adult Relationships Scale

High Expectations Scale

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation Scale

School Safety, Violence, Bullying, and Substance Use**

Perceived school safety

Frequency of physical and verbal victimization (by type)

Reasons for harassment/bullying

Vandalism, weapons possession, and threatening behavior frequency

Alcohol, tobacco, and drug use on school property; frequency high/drunk at school

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CHKS Supplemental School Climate Module (Level of Agreement)

Academic Mindset and Learning Engagement Scale*

Students pay attention in class.

Students try their best in school.

Students usually follow the rules at school.

Students turn in my homework on time.

Students try to get good grades.

Support for Learning and Academic Rigor

This school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.

Teachers show how classroom lessons are helpful to students in real life.

Teachers give students a chance to take part in classroom discussions or activities.

This school promotes academic success for all students.

My classes are challenging.*

Adults at school encourage me to work hard so I can be successful in college or at the job I choose.

My teachers work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it.

Teacher Support Scale: Teachers go out of their way to help students; Students really enjoy their classes; Teachers help students catch up when they return from an absence; My teachers give me useful feedback on my work.*

Discipline and Order

Students at this school are well behaved.

Respectful & Fair Environment: Adults at this school treat all students with respect; Students treat teachers with respect*; The school rules are fair*; All students are treated fairly when they break school rules.

Discipline Harshness Scale: The rules in this school are too strict; It is easy for students to get kicked out of class or get suspended; Students get in trouble for breaking small rules; Teachers are very strict here.*

Clarity of Rules Scale: Rules in this school are made clear to students; This school clearly informs students what would happen if they break school rules; Students know how they are expected to act; Students know what the rules are; This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.*

Positive Peer Relationships Scale*

Students enjoy doing things with each other in school activities.

Students enjoy working together on projects in class.

Students care about each other.

Students treat each other with respect.

Students get along well with each other.

Social and Emotional Supports Scale*

This school encourages students to feel responsible for how they act.

Students are often given rewards for being good.

This school encourages students to understand how others think and feel.

Students are taught that they can control their own behavior.

This school helps students solve conflicts with one another.

This school encourages students to care about how others feel.

CHKS Supplemental School Climate Module (Level of Agreement)

Bullying Prevention Scale*

Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not tolerated.
If another student was bullying me, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.
Students tell teachers when other students are being bullied.
If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help.
Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

Respect for Diversity Scale

My class lessons include examples of my racial, ethnic, or cultural background.
I have been disrespected by an adult at this school because of my race, ethnicity, or culture.
There is a lot of tension between people of different cultures, races, or ethnicities.
Students in this school respect each other's differences (for example, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation). *
Adults in this school respect differences in students (for example, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation). *
Teachers show that they think it is important for students of different races and cultures at this school to get along with each other. *

Physical Environment Scale

The schoolyard and buildings are clean and in good condition. *
My school is usually clean and tidy. *
The school grounds are kept clean. *

California School Climate Survey of Staff

CSCS Core Module

Learning Environment (level of agreement this school…)

Is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn
Sets high standards for academic performance for all
Promotes academic success for all students
Encourages students to enroll in rigorous courses
Emphasizes teaching lessons in ways relevant to students

Perceived Safety (level of agreement this school…)

Is a safe place for students
Is a safe place for staff

Working Environment (level of agreement this school…)

Is a supportive and inviting place for staff to work
Promotes trust and collegiality among staff
Provides the materials, resources, and training to work with special education (IEP) students

Staff Behavior and Relationships (number of adults at school who…)

Have close professional relationships with one another
Support and treat each other with respect
Feel a responsibility to improve the school

Staff-Student Relationships and Expectations (number of adults at school who…)

Want all students to do their best
Acknowledge and pay attention to students
Really care about all students
Treat all students fairly
Treat all students with respect
Listen to what students have to say
Believe every student can be a success

Opportunities for Meaningful Student Participation (level of agreement school provides/encourages…)

Opportunities to decide things
Equal opportunity for classroom participation
Opportunities to "make a difference" (help others)
Equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular and enrichment activities

Student Learning Readiness and Motivation (proportion of students who…)

Are well-behaved
Arrive at school alert and rested
Are motivated to learn
Are healthy and physically fit

Discipline and Health-related Services (level of agreement this school…)

Clearly communicates to students consequences of breaking rules
Handles discipline problems fairly
Effectively handles student discipline and behavioral problems
Provides adequate counseling and support services for students

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CSCS Core Module

Equity and Respect for Diversity (level of agreement this school…)

Fosters an appreciation of student diversity and respect for each other

Emphasizes showing respect for all students' cultural beliefs and practices

Emphasizes using instructional materials that reflect the culture or ethnicity of its students

Has staff examine their own cultural biases through professional development or other
    processes

Considers closing the racial/ethnic achievement gap a high priority

Professional Development Needs (yes, no, not applicable)

Positive behavioral support and classroom management

Working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups

Culturally relevant pedagogy for the school's student population

Meeting the social, emotional, and developmental needs of youth (e.g., resilience promotion)

Creating a positive school climate

CSCS Learning Conditions Module (Level of Agreement)

Learning Supports

Teachers go out of their way to help students.

Classes challenge students.

Fair, Respectful and Orderly Environment

Adults at this school treat all students with respect.

The school rules are fair.

Students in this school are well-behaved.

The rules in the school are too strict.

It is easy for students to get kicked out of class or get suspended.

Students get in trouble for breaking small rules.

Teachers are very strict here.

Clarity of Rules and Expectations

Rules in this school are made clear to students.

Students know how they are expected to act.

Students know what the rules are.

This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.

Positive Peer Relations

Students enjoy spending time together during school activities.

Students enjoy collaborating on project in class.

Students care about one another.

Students treat each other with respect.

Students get along well with one another.

Social Emotional Supports, Conflict Management, and Bullying Prevention

This school encourages students to feel responsible for how they act.

Students are often given rewards for being good.

This school encourages students to understand how others think and feel.

Students are taught that they can control their own behavior.

This school helps students solve conflicts with one another.

This school encourages students to care about how others feel.

Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not tolerated.

If a student was bullied, he or she would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.

Students tell teachers when other students are being bullied.

If student tells teacher that someone is bullying her/him, the teacher will do something to help.

Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

Respect for Diversity

There is a lot of tension between people of different cultures, races, or ethnicities.

Students respect each others' differences (e.g., gender, race, culture, sexual orientation).

Adults in school respect differences in students (e.g., gender, race, culture, sexual orientation).

Teachers show that it is important for students of different races and cultures to get along with each other.

CSCS Learning Supports Module (for health, prevention, counseling staff) (Level of Agreement this school…)

Discipline, Safety, and Behavior Management

Collaborates well with law enforcement organizations

Punishes first-time violations of alcohol or other drug policies by at least an out-of-school suspension

Enforces zero tolerance policies

Considers sanctions for student violation of rules/policies on case-by-case basis with a wide range of options

Has sufficient resources to create a safe campus

Seeks to maintain a secure campus through such means as metal detectors, security guards, or personal searches

Provides harassment or bullying prevention

Provides conflict resolution or behavior management instruction

Substance Use and Risk Behavior

Considers substance abuse prevention an important goal

Collaborates well with community organizations to address substance use or other problems

Provides effective confidential support and referral services for students needing help due to substance abuse, violence, or other problems (e.g., a Student Assistance Program)

Provides alcohol or drug use prevention instruction

Provides tobacco use prevention instruction

Has sufficient resources to address substance use prevention needs

Youth Development, Social-emotional and Physical Health, and Special Needs

Provides healthy food choices for students

Provides adequate health services for students

Provides opportunities for physical education and activity

Provides nutritional instruction

Provides services for students with disabilities or other special needs (no analog)

Youth Development, Social-emotional and Physical Health, and Special Needs

Fosters youth development, resilience, or asset promotion

Provides character education

Encourages students to care about how others feel

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California School Parent Survey

CSPS (Level of Agreement this school…)*

Learning Environment and Supports

Is an inviting place for students to learn

Has a supportive learning environment for my child

Promotes academic success for all students

Motivates students to learn

Encourages students enroll in challenging courses, regardless of race/ethnicity

Provides quality counseling or other ways to help students with social or emotional needs

Has quality programs for my child's talents, gifts, or special needs

Has clean and well-maintained facilities

Safety and Discipline

Is a safe place for my child

Enforces rules equally for all students

Informs students of rule breaking consequences

How much of a problem in the school are alcohol and drug use, harassment/bullying, physical fights, racial/ethnic conflict, students disrespecting staff, gang activity, weapon possession, vandalism (each problem asked separately)

Parent Support and Involvement

Keeps parents well-informed about school activities

Welcomes parent input and contribution

Welcomes parent input and contribution

Keeps me well-informed of my child's progress

Promptly responds to parent calls and messages

Encourages parent involvement and partnership

Relationships

Has adults that really care about all students

Treats all students with respect

How much of a problem is students disrespecting staff

Opportunities for Student Participation

Provides opportunities for "making a difference" by helping others

Provides opportunities for classroom participation

Provides quality sports, clubs, or other activities to meet my child's needs

Cultural Sensitivity / Respect for Diversity

Promotes respect for all cultural beliefs and practices

Provides culturally appropriate materials

*All questions except those that are problem-related are level of agreement.