



Division of Accountability & Research

Student Climate Survey Executive Summary (2015-2016)

Perceptions of school climate and safety can have a distinct impact on how well students learn. Research indicates that improved school climate can contribute to higher student achievement, higher morale among students and teachers, fewer student dropouts and reduced violence. While school reforms typically focus on student achievement due to external accountability systems, these reforms can be limited when school climate is a negative factor. In order to evaluate Aurora Public Schools students' perceptions of school safety and climate, a survey was administered to students in grades 5-12 in February of 2016. Note that students' perceptions are just that, perceptions, and do not reflect with certainty what is happening in APS schools.

Survey Development

A student climate survey has been administered every year since the spring of 2007. Starting in the spring of 2015, Aurora Public Schools utilized the Conditions for Learning Survey developed by the American Institutes for Research. The Conditions for Learning Survey assesses four core constructs within schools:

- A safe and respectful climate
- Challenge / high expectations
- Student support
- Social and emotional learning

The safe and respectful climate scale measures how physically and emotionally safe students feel. The challenge scale measures how much students perceive that teachers and other adults in the school encourage them to think, work hard, do their best, and connect what they are learning in school to life outside of school. The student support scale measures how much students feel listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school. Finally, the social and emotional learning scale measures students' perception of their peers' social and problem-solving skills.

Survey Participants

The Conditions for Learning Survey was administered to all students in grades 5-12 in February of 2016. Schools had the option of administering the survey on paper or online. Of the 10,942 traditional high school students and 10,929 students from grades 5-8 who were actively enrolled at the beginning of the survey window, 6,811 surveys were completed by high school students and 8,708 were completed by students from grades 5-8. For high schools, this represents an approximate response rate of 62.2%, which was a decrease of 8 percentage points since the inception of a survey in 2007, but an increase of 1.7 percentage points in the high school response rate from the previous year. For students from grades 5-8 this represents a 79.7% response rate, a decrease of 6 percentage points from last year and 2.7 percentage points since the 2007 survey. The total percentage of students responding to the survey over the last few years by level is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Student Climate Survey: Historical Percent Response Rates

Grade Level	Total	2007	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	1 Yr Ch.	10 Yr Ch.
Overall	15,965	76.5%	77.8%	74.3%	67.1%	71.7%	71.0%	-0.7%	-5.5%
High	7,368	71.1%	70.8%	68.3%	57.5%	60.5%	62.2%	+1.7%	-8.0%
Grades 5-8	8,597	82.4%	86.1%	81.3%	79.6%	85.7%	79.7%	-6.0%	-2.7%

Note. Total reflects number of survey responses in 2016. Pickens Technical College surveys aren't reflected in the presented counts/percentages.

In 2016, the distribution of student reported ethnicity reflected an underrepresentation of the Hispanic student group and overrepresentation of the Two+ student group for both high school students and students in grades 5-8. Tables 2 and 3 below provides a distribution of grades 9-12 and grades 5-8 students' ethnicity on the October Count report and as self-identified on the student survey. This over-representation of the Two+ student group is consistent with results from the 2014-15 surveys, whereby students in the Hispanic student group were under represented and students in the Two+ student group were over represented.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Ethnicity High School

	Nat Am	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Nat Haw	Two+
October Count (Grades 9-12)	0.9%	4.9%	19.2%	54.3%	16.5%	0.8%	3.5%
Survey (Grades 9-12)	1.8%	6.4%	16.3%	44.7%	15.1%	0.0%	15.8%
Difference	0.9%	1.5%	-2.9%	-9.6%	-1.4%	-0.8%	12.3%

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Ethnicity High School

	Nat Am	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Nat Haw	Two+
October Count (Grades 5-8)	0.7%	5.0%	18.4%	56.3%	16.2%	0.5%	4.3%
Survey (Grades 5-8)	2.3%	5.7%	14.5%	44.6%	13.4%	0.0%	19.5%
Difference	1.6%	0.7%	-3.9%	-11.8%	-2.8%	-0.5%	15.1%

Survey Results

High School Students

At the district level, overall agreement across the core 44 questions was 64% among high school students (versus 63% in 2015). There were 19 of 44 items (43%) that had favorable agreement rates at or exceeding 65% (compared to 17 items or 39% in 2015). This indicates that overall, students were moderately satisfied with the climate at their schools and results varied little from last year. The subscales measuring challenge, safe and respectful school climate, and student support all had agreement rates greater than 65%, while the scale for social emotional learning had an overall agreement rate of 47%; these results are similar to those from 2015.

Comparisons of agreement to each question from the current year versus last year found six items* with meaningful changes (i.e., changes of greater than three percentage points). Students were more likely in 2016 than 2015 to agree that teachers think all students can do challenging work and to perceive that a counselor had helped them plan for life after high school. Students were also less likely in 2016 than last year to report that students at their school are bullied, teased, or picked on, or bullied specifically because of their characteristics.

Areas of relative strength on the survey (75%+ agreement rates) related to challenge, and included students' perception that they are encouraged to take advanced classes, that their school provides them with information on behavior and discipline policies, that their teachers give them feedback on their assignments and require them to explain their answers, and that they have at least one teacher who makes them excited about the future. Students also reported that they are encouraged to share ideas about what they are studying in class, and that their teachers think all students can do challenging work.

As found in 2015, areas at the district level that showed the lowest agreement rates were questions regarding the behavior of students' peers. Students disagree that other students do all their homework and stop and think before doing anything when they get angry. In addition, nearly half (45%) of students agree that students at their school are often teased or picked on and that students at their school don't really care about each other.

Analysis of district results by race/ethnicity showed few questions had agreement rates that differed by 10% or more between students identified as Black, Hispanic or White. These questions related to academic rigor and to perceptions that rules are applied equally to all students. White students were less likely to report that students are expected to take four years of math, and that more challenging work is assigned by teachers when students already know the material that is being taught, and that teachers treat all students equally.

Grades 5-8

At the district level, there were 23 of 42 items (55%) that had favorable agreement rates exceeding 65% (compared to 21 items or 50% in 2015). The overall agreement across all questions was 66%. This indicates that overall, students were satisfied with the climate at their schools. The subscales measuring high expectations / challenge and student support both had agreement rates greater than 65%. Students at K-8 schools had greater rates of agreement than those at elementary or middle schools, especially on questions related to safe and respectful school climate.

Results were similar to those of last year. Only two questions showed meaningful changes (greater than three percentage points). Fewer students in 2016 agreed that students stop and think before doing anything when they get angry. A positive change was seen in agreement to the question on adults applying the same rules to all students equally, which increased by 3.1 percentage points compared to 2015.

*Note: The result from item #6 from the 2014-15 High School Student Survey was reported inversely in the previous year. The correct agree/strongly agree is 68% and the disagree/strongly disagree is 32%.

Areas of relative strength on the survey (65%+ agreement rates) included all questions related to academic rigor and challenge. These include students' perception that their classes are preparing them for their future, that their school provides them with information on what to expect and behavior and discipline policies, that their teachers assign them homework that helps them learn and require them to explain their answers, and that their teachers think all students can do challenging work. Students also reported that they are encouraged to share their ideas about things they are studying and that their homework helps them learn.

Areas at the district level that showed the lowest agreement rates were questions regarding the behavior of students' peers. Students disagree that other students do all their homework and stop and think before doing anything when they get angry. In addition, over half of students agree that students at their school are often teased or picked on and that students are often bullied because of certain characteristics, such as race, religion, weight, or sexual orientation.

Analysis of district results by race/ethnicity showed no questions had agreement rates that differed by 10% or more between students identified as Black, Hispanic or White.

Conclusions

High School Students

- For the 2016 Conditions for Learning Survey the high school response rate was 62.2% which represents an increase of 1.7 percentage points over the previous year.
- At the district level, there were 19 of 47 items (43%) that had favorable agreement rates of at least 65% and results were very similar to those from 2015 both in terms of level of overall agreement and relative strengths and challenges. Increases were seen for agreement that teachers think all students can do challenging work, that a counselor had helped them prepare for the future, and a decrease was found in the percentage of students reporting that students at their school are bullied.
- Areas of relative strength on the survey include the areas of academic rigor and challenge and student support.
- Areas to be addressed include the social emotional learning environment and how students' perceive their peers social and problem-solving skills.
- Analysis of student responses by race/ethnic groups indicated that White students had more negative views of academic challenge than the African-American/Black or Hispanic students.

Grades 5-8

- For the 2016 Survey the response rate for grades 5-8 was 79.7% which represents a decrease of six percentage points from the previous year. There were 19 of 47 items

(43%) that had favorable agreement rates that had favorable agreement rates at or exceeding 65%. Results were very similar to those from last year's survey.

- Areas of relative strength on the survey include the areas of academic rigor and challenge, and student support.
- Areas to be addressed include a safe and respectful school climate and the social emotional learning environment and how students' perceive their peers social and problem-solving skills.
- Analysis of student responses by race/ethnic groups showed few large differences between African-American/Black, Hispanic, and White students.