



Division of Accountability & Research

High School Student Climate Survey Executive Summary (2014-2015)

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 January of 2015. 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. This year, for the first time, Aurora Public Schools utilized the Conditions for Learning Survey developed by the American Institutes for Research. Previously, APS administered an internally developed survey with items developed with input from principals, students, the Division of Instruction, and the Division of Accountability and 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 secondary students in January 2015. Schools had the option of administering the survey on paper or online. Of the 10,271 traditional high school students who were actively enrolled at the beginning of the survey window, 6,214 surveys were completed. Overall, this represents an approximate response rate of 60.5%, which was a decrease of 10.6 percentage points since the inception of a survey in 2007, but a 3 percent increase in the high school response rate from the previous year. The total percentage of students responding to the survey over the last few years can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Student Climate Survey: Historical Percent Response Rates

Grade Level	Total	2007	2012	2013	2014	2015	1 Yr Ch.	9 Yr Ch.
Overall	13,378	76.5%	77.8%	74.3%	67.1%	71.7%	4.6%	-9.4%
High	6,214	71.1%	70.8%	68.3%	57.5%	60.5%	3.0%	-10.6%

Note. Total reflects number of survey responses in 2015. Pickens Technical College surveys aren't reflected in the presented counts/percentages.

In 2015, the distribution of student reported ethnicity reflected an underrepresentation of the Hispanic student group and overrepresentation of the Two+ student group. Table 2 below provides a distribution of grades 9-12 students' ethnicity on the October Count report and as self-identified on the student survey.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Ethnicity

	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	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%

Survey Results

At the district level, there were 28 of 47 items (60%) that had favorable agreement rates exceeding 60%. This indicates that overall, students were moderately satisfied with the climate at their schools (see report 4.3). The subscales measuring challenge, safe and respectful school climate, and student support all had agreement rates greater than 60%, while the scale for social emotional learning had an overall agreement rate of 46%.

Areas of relative strength on the survey (70%+ agreement rates) 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 believe other students respect students from all cultures and races and that their school is committed to building the strengths of each student.

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 of students agree that students at their school are often teased or picked on, and the majority of students indicated that they did not feel their opinions are valued.

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 students caring about each other, students getting along together, and

students thinking it is OK to fight if someone insults them. On these questions, agreement rates for Black and White students differed by more than 10%.

Conclusions

- For the 2015 Conditions for Learning Survey the high school response rate was 60.5% which represents a 3% increase over the previous year. At the district level, there were 28 of 47 items (60%) that had favorable agreement rates exceeding 60%.
- Areas of relative strength on the survey include the areas of academic rigor and challenge, safe and respectful school climate, 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 showed the general trend of Black students perceiving a less positive school climate than the White or Hispanic students.