



Division of Accountability & Research

Student Climate Survey Executive Summary (2016-17)

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 2017. 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 and Pickens in February of 2017. For the first time, all schools administered the survey online. The survey was available in both English and Spanish. Of the 20,634 students from grades 5-12 or Pickens who were actively enrolled at the beginning of the survey window, 13,408 surveys were completed. This represents a response rate of 65.0%. This is a decrease of 6.0 percentage points from last year and 11.5 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	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	1 Yr Ch.	10 Yr Ch.
Overall	15,965	76.5%	74.3%	67.1%	71.7%	71.0%	65.0%	-6.0%	-11.5%

Note. Total reflects number of survey responses in 2017.

In the 2017 survey, 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 and 2015-16 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)	0.7%	5.2%	18.5%	55.1%	15.4%	0.7%	4.4%
Survey (HS)	0.7%	6.6%	13.8%	48.9%	13.4%	0.0%	16.6%
Difference	0.1%	1.4%	-4.7%	-6.2%	-2.1%	-0.7%	12.2%

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Ethnicity 5-8

	Nat Am	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Nat Haw	Two+
October Count (Grades 5-8)	0.6%	5.3%	17.6%	56.7%	14.9%	0.7%	4.2%
Survey (Grades 5-8)	2.0%	5.5%	13.6%	43.5%	14.6%	0.0%	20.7%
Difference	1.4%	0.2%	-4.0%	-13.2%	-0.3%	-0.7%	16.5%

Survey Results

Overall Agreement Results

Across all returned surveys the overall agreement rate was 67%. This is a two percent increase from the overall agreement rate (65%) from 2015-16. This indicates that overall, students were satisfied with the climate at their schools and results varied little from last year. When examining overall satisfaction by survey form, the overall agreement rate for the high school form is 66% and for the younger grades form is 67%. This indicates that students at younger grades are slightly more satisfied with their schools.

Although grade was an optional reported field, all grade levels (5-12) except grade 7 had an overall agreement rate over 65%. The highest overall agreement rate was for grade 5, with an agreement rate of 71%. The lowest overall agreement rate was for grade 7 (63%).

Across the schools that participated in the survey, overall agreement rates ranged from 86% to 56%. Of the 50 schools (excluding Pickens Technical College) that participated in the survey, 37 schools had an overall agreement rate over 65%.

Scale Agreement Results

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 61%; these results are similar to those from 2016.

For those students who had completed the high school form, the subscales measuring challenge, safe and respectful climate, and student support all had agreement rates greater than 65%. However, the scale for social emotional learning had an overall agreement rate of 49%. This indicates that high school students do not perceive their peers' as having strong social and problem-solving skills.

For students who completed the survey form for younger students, the subscales measuring challenge and student support had agreement rates above 65%. The subscale for safe and respectful climate had an agreement rate of 62%, and the scale for social emotional learning has an overall agreement rate of 59%.

When examining the schools who responded to the survey, 49 of the 50 schools had an agreement rate over 65% on the challenge subscale. On the subscale measuring student support, 43 of the 50 schools had an agreement rate over 65%. The subscales measuring safe and respectful climate and social emotional learning had fewer schools (18 schools for safe and respectful climate and 19 schools for social emotional learning) with an agreement rate over 65%.

Item Agreement Results

Item agreement rates are presented in Table 4. Comparisons of agreement to each question from the current year versus last year found ten items with meaningful changes (i.e., changes of greater than three percentage points). One of these items was in the high expectations subscale and related to students being encouraged to take advanced courses. Three of the items were in the safe and respectful climate subscale and related to students caring about each other and putting each other down. Three more items were in the social emotional learning subscale and related to students giving up easily, fighting and cheating. The item with the largest change was about whether students think it is "ok to cheat". The final three items were in the student support subscale and were about adults being too busy, wishing they went to a different school and teachers helping them after an excused absence.

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 and 2016, 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 two questions had agreement rates that differed by 10% or more between students identified as Black, Hispanic or White. One question related to wishing that students went to a different school. White students were more likely to disagree with this statement (75%) compared to Black students (64%). The other question related to students being expected to take 4 years of science; Black and Latino students were more likely to agree with this statement (58% and 60%, respectively) than white students (48%).

Conclusions

- For the 2017 Conditions for Learning Survey the high school response rate was 64.3% which represents a decrease of 6.7 percentage points over the previous year.
- At the district level, there were 31 of 49 items (63%) that had favorable agreement rates of at least 65% and results were similar to those from 2015 both in terms of level of overall agreement and relative strengths and challenges. Ten items saw meaningful change.
- 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.

Table 4. Item Agreement and 1-Year Change

High Expectations/Academic Rigor/Challenge	2015-16	2016-17	Change
7. My school provides me with information about what I can expect from my courses, special programs, school activities, and school services (Parent-Student Handbook).	79.5%	81.3%	1.8%
8. My school provides me with information about the expectations for school appropriate behavior and discipline policies (Parent-Student Handbook).	83.7%	84.0%	0.3%
40. When students in this school already know the material that is being taught, the teacher gives them more advanced assignments.	62.7%	62.9%	0.2%
42. Students at this school are expected to learn challenging math material to get them ready for high school.	78.4%	78.2%	-0.2%
43. Classes at this school are preparing me for my future.	66.8%	70.5%	3.7%
44. In my classes, we often discuss different interpretations of things we read.	71.7%	73.8%	2.1%
45. Classes at this school are preparing me for my future.	78.0%	80.0%	2.0%
45. Students in this school are expected to take four years of math.	87.9%	89.3%	1.3%
46. Students in this school are expected to take four years of science.	57.9%	57.2%	-0.8%
47. Students in this school are encouraged to take advanced classes, such as honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB), or classes that lead to professional certification.	81.3%	83.6%	2.3%
27. Often connect what I am learning to life outside the classroom.	65.8%	67.4%	1.6%
28. Encourage students to share their ideas about things we are studying in class.	79.9%	82.0%	2.2%
29. Often require me to explain my answers.	87.2%	88.6%	1.5%
33. Often assign homework that helps me learn.	70.3%	71.9%	1.6%
34. Think all students can do challenging school work.	74.2%	76.1%	1.9%
Safe & Respectful School Climate	2015-16	2016-17	Change
12. <i>*Don't really care about each other.</i>	58.9%	62.4%	3.5%
13. <i>*Like to put others down.</i>	64.0%	68.1%	4.2%
14. <i>*Don't get along together very well.</i>	57.8%	58.3%	0.5%
15. Treat each other with respect.	62.3%	64.4%	2.1%
26. Respect students from all cultures and races.	70.1%	75.0%	4.9%
1. <i>*I worry about crime and violence in school.</i>	57.4%	60.2%	2.7%
2. <i>*Students at this school are often bullied.</i>	54.1%	56.5%	2.4%
3. <i>*Students at this school are often teased or picked on.</i>	43.3%	43.7%	0.4%
4. <i>*Students at this school are often bullied because of certain characteristics (for example, their race, religion, weight, or sexual orientation.)</i>	53.4%	55.8%	2.4%
5. <i>*I sometimes stay home because I don't feel safe at school.</i>	87.3%	89.0%	1.8%
Social Emotional Learning	2015-16	2016-17	Change
16. Stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.	36.2%	37.3%	1.2%
17. Do their share of the work when we have group projects.	62.6%	65.9%	3.2%
18. <i>*Give up when they can't solve a problem easily.</i>	56.1%	60.5%	4.4%
19. <i>*Get into arguments when they disagree with people.</i>	35.3%	38.0%	2.7%
20. Do their best, even when their school work is difficult.	64.7%	66.4%	1.7%
21. <i>*Think it's OK to fight if someone insults them.</i>	46.1%	51.1%	4.9%
22. Do all their homework.	34.4%	37.0%	2.7%
23. Try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them.	44.6%	46.4%	1.9%
24. <i>*Think it's OK to cheat if other students are cheating.</i>	60.7%	67.3%	6.7%
25. Try to do a good job on school work even when it is not interesting.	62.5%	65.5%	3.0%
*These questions are negatively worded so agree/strongly agree indicates a negative perception.			

Table 4. (continued)

Student Support	2015-16	2016-17	Change
6. My opinions are valued.	67.1%	68.8%	1.7%
35. <i>*Adults in this school are often too busy to give students extra help.</i>	60.0%	63.5%	3.5%
36. Adults in this school apply the same rules to all students equally.	64.3%	63.0%	-1.2%
37. <i>*I wish I went to a different school.</i>	66.2%	70.1%	3.9%
38. I can get extra help at school outside of my regular classes.	68.6%	69.7%	1.1%
39. A counselor at this school has helped me plan for life after high school.	56.2%	56.2%	0.0%
41. Adults in this school are usually willing to make the time to give students extra help.	74.2%	76.0%	1.7%
41. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student.	69.1%	69.9%	0.8%
42. I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future.	74.7%	77.0%	2.2%
43. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student.	76.3%	77.0%	0.8%
44. I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future.	77.5%	78.1%	0.6%
30. Really care about me.	73.7%	75.8%	2.0%
31. Help me make up work after an excused absence.	63.8%	67.8%	4.0%
32. Give me feedback on my assignments that helps me improve my work.	80.5%	83.2%	2.7%
*These questions are negatively worded so agree/strongly agree indicates a negative perception.			