EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Better school climate has been shown to improve academic performance and positive development, as well as increase engagement in the classroom, and assessing student climate in APS should be considered the first step of a performance management strategy.

- For the current year, overall participation rates were higher than that of the past 3 years (70.3% vs 65.0%, 67.8%, and 63.4% for 2018-19).

- The most under-represented groups were: students classified as NEP, non-ELL students, and students on an IEP.

- Regarding overall student-reported school climate, an increase in school climate in high school grade levels and a decrease in K-8 grade levels were identified, comparing the current and previous school years.

- Rates of subscale agreement generally declined from 5th to 12th grade.
  - Social Emotional Learning saw the steepest grade-level decline in agreement.
  - Across all grades, over 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed to items on the High Expectations subscale (lowest: 11th Grade at 72.4%).
  - Student Support was high for elementary and K-8 schools, but was lower for middle and high schools.
  - Only about half of students agreed that they are safe (emotionally and physically) in or outside of school.

- Students reported very few differences between the current and previous years regarding APS 2020 Strategic plan implementation.
  - An item that asks high school students if they have talked to an adult at school about their plans after high school has shown static change over the past 3 years, with less than two-thirds of students responding in the affirmative on this item.
  - An increased number of students are responding that they are not on track to graduate this year compared to the previous two years.
    - This could be indicative of either (1) students becoming more aware of their Plan or (2) fewer students being on-track to graduate, or both.
  - The number of students who responded with “I don’t know” when asked about their plans following high school decreased from 16% in 2017-18 to 0% this year, indicating that the strategic plan may be helping students to be thinking more about their career plans.
**Introduction**

Most research studies suggest that school climate is positively correlated with academic achievement – that is, aspects of school climate related to safety, teaching and learning, relationship-building capacity, and school environment have been shown to foster greater student achievement when properly cultivated (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). School climate can even be a protective factor for students with less than ideal family environments, moderating the relationship between possible negative burdens the students have and their academics (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2014), and although it may be perceived differently from one student to the next, climate has been argued to be “a measure of community that is thus reflected in the collective experience of students and their interactions with peers and school adults … [and] ought to be researched at the school level” (i.e., in a multi-level model research design) (Wang et al., 2014).

The American Institutes for Research developed the student climate survey that is currently used by Aurora Public Schools (APS). In their report, Osher, Kendziora, and Chinen (2008) state:

- “Enhancing students’ connection to school, their commitment to achieve, and their social, emotional, and civic competencies improves their academic performance and positive development (Greenberg et al., 2003; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Osher et al., in press; Zins et al., 2004)
- Many students experience individual-level barriers to learning (such as social, economic, or health challenges), and the provision of high-quality instruction alone will not improve these students’ performance (Adelman & Taylor, 2000; Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004)
- Students who attend safe schools are more likely to be academically engaged and are less likely to exhibit problem behaviors such as drug use or violence. Students are less likely to drop out of safe schools (Bekuis, 1995; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Greenberg, Skidmore, & Rhodes, 2004; Osher, Dwyer, & Jimerson, 2005)
- Many barriers, including disinterest, lack of knowledge, and lack of resources, prevent educators from addressing students’ social and emotional factors as part of school reform efforts
- What gets assessed gets addressed; measurement of social and emotional development in schools, whether as part of a performance management strategy or not, will tend to increase educators’ attention to the role these factors play.” (p. 4)

In short, survey measurement and analysis is the beginning of a change process. The safety, challenge, support, and social emotional learning aspects of the survey reported within this paper should be used to provide a meaningful start of a performance management strategy in APS schools.
Administration of the Survey

This year marked the 10th iteration of the Student Climate Survey, which has traditionally been administered in the spring. Starting in 2015, APS adopted an instrument that was developed by the American Institutes for Research, the Conditions for Learning Survey (CLS; see Osher et al., 2008, for information on the scale properties and its development). The CLS assesses four core constructs within schools that have been identified as having a positive impact toward students’ academic achievement:

- The **Safe & Respectful Climate** subscale measures how physically and emotionally safe students feel
- The **High Expectations/Academic Rigor/Challenge** subscale 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** subscale measures how much students feel listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school.
- The **Social and Emotional Learning** subscale measures students’ perception of their peers’ social and problem-solving skills

In 2017-18, APS incorporated four new questions to the Grade 9-12 survey which assess student planning (consistent with goals of the APS 2020 Strategic Plan). These were:

1. How often this school year have you talked to an adult at school about your future beyond high school?
2. How often this school year have you talked to your family about your future beyond high school?
3. My plan for the future after high school is (check all that apply): Trade or technical school; 2-year College/Community College; 4-year College; Get a Job; Join the Military; Take a year off and then go to college; Other; I don’t know.
4. I am on track to earn at least one credential (e.g., Advanced Placement (AP) Classes, International Baccalaureate (IB), Digital Badges, Workforce Certificate, College Credit, Internship) that I need to pursue my plan for the future.

In an effort to provide data that can make more meaningful change, it was decided to change the survey window from the spring to the fall in 2017-18. In doing so, results from the climate survey can be utilized to enact changes within the same school year in which the data was collected. For the current year, no changes were made to the survey in order to provide stable comparison data from the two previous school years.

The Conditions for Learning Survey was administered online to all APS students in grades 5-12 (including Pickens) from November, 2019, to January, 2020. In addition,
the survey was available in both English and Spanish to provide equity across the two most common languages in the district.

Student Characteristics

During the survey window, 19,498 students were enrolled in APS schools in grades 5-12 and Pickens Technical College. Of those students, 13,709 students attempted the survey, for a response rate of 70.3%. This represents an increase of 6.9% in the response rate, compared to the 2018-19 school year. This response rate is comparable, albeit slightly lower (1.4%), than the 5-year-prior response rate from 2014-15.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># Attempt</th>
<th># Enrolled</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>13,772</td>
<td>20,318</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>12,501</td>
<td>19,727</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>19,498</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>12,501</td>
<td>19,727</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>19,498</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>19,498</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The response rates of race/ethnicity distinctions were also assessed (see Table 2). As in previous years, marginal over/under-representation differences were noted within surveys taken by students who self-reported as Native American, Asian, Black, White, and Native Hawaiian, compared to official district percentages from October Count. Last year, findings suggested that previous analyses using only self-reported race/ethnicity were not compatible with the federally-assigned distinctions. In other words, when using self-reported data as the comparison, it appeared that Hispanic/Latino students were under-represented and students classified with two or more races were over-represented; however, when using students' federally-assigned race/ethnicity designations, the over- and under-representation statistics for all groups became negligible. This analysis was conducted again this year, and similar results were found. Thus, the previously reported over/under-representation of the race/ethnicity groups appears to simply be an artifact of how students are reporting their race/ethnicity—mainly, it appears that students who are officially classified as Hispanic/Latino classify themselves (i.e., self-report) as multi-racial. Using the federally-assigned designations, the group with the largest representation gap is that of Black students, who participated at a rate 1.1% lower than what would be expected.
Table 2

Distribution of Survey Responses by Ethnicity, Compared to Official October Count Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-R Survey %</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October Count</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference:</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
<td>-13.7%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>+14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-R Survey %</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October Count</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference:</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>+1.5%</td>
<td>-2.0%</td>
<td>-11.2%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>+12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-R Survey %</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verified % *</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October Count</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference **</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>+1.0%</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
<td>+0.1%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
<td>+0.1%</td>
<td>+0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For Difference Percentages, positive denotes an overrepresentation from a group; negative denotes an underrepresentation from a group. * Data come from Federally-defined race/ethnicity student demographics for students who supplied a correct Student ID (n = 13,342). ** Difference score calculated from Student and October Count rows.

Using a similar approach to compare Gender, FRL Status, ELL Status, and IEP Status between survey participant percentages and district percentages during the survey window period, participation equitability was assessed for additional groups of students as well. In general, there was only a slight over-representation of female students (47.9% [actual pct.] vs. 49.0% [survey pct.]), compared to a slight under-representation of male students (52.1% [actual pct.] vs. 51.0% [survey pct.]). Students enrolled in the free meal program were also slightly under-represented (61.9% [actual pct.] vs. 59.6% [survey pct.]). Assessing ELL Status, a larger proportion of students classified as NEP (15.7% [actual pct.] vs. 8.7% [survey pct.]) and students who are not ELL (47.8% [actual pct.] vs. 42.9% [survey pct.]) were under-represented, whereas students classified as FEP (10.2% [actual pct.] vs. 18.2% [survey pct.]) and FELL/PHLOTE (7.7% [actual pct.] vs. 12.0% [survey pct.]) participated at higher rates than would be expected. In addition, students on an IEP were moderately under-represented (13.9% [actual pct.] vs. 10.3% [survey pct.]). Thus, the results of this report are likely to be skewed slightly toward the perceptions of female students, with more moderate skews toward FEP, FELL, and PHLOTE students (in turn, away from NEP and non-ELL students), as well as toward students not on an IEP. Equitability statistics are now available in the Student Climate Survey dashboard, and they can be drilled down to Learning Communities and individual schools.
Survey Results

Results from the Student Climate survey are broken into three sections based on the level of detail of the analysis. First, district-level data are provided with overall results. Second, data was analyzed for Learning Communities (LCs) with analyses conducted both within and among the LCs. Finally, school-level analyses are provided. Also, please note that negatively-worded items were reverse-coded for all analyses.

District (Overall) Results

For each school type, overall agreement was calculated—for items anchored by an agreement scale. Figure 1 shows the overall agreement percentages for both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Notably, although there are slight differences between the two school years, these are not significant ($p > .05$). Analyses were also conducted to see which school types varied from the Total Percentage in Agreement (67%) for the 2019-20 school year. Elementary Schools (71%), K8 Schools (70%), and Middle Schools (65%) were all not significantly different comparing this year to last (all $p_s > .05$)—it should be noted that Pickens only had 6 complete responses in the 2019-20 school year and statistical analyses were not conducted on their data due to the low $n$. However, High Schools showed increased agreement rates, comparing 2018-19 (65%) to 2019-20 (67%), $\chi^2(N = 11,144) = 5.04$, $p = .013$.

![Figure 1. Overall Agreement by School Type and Year](image)

Overall Agreement was also assessed per grade level. In past years, a slight ‘U’ shaped curve was noted to occur across the 5th to 12th grade spectrum—in other words, students’ perceived climate is the lowest from 8th through 10th grade, with a momentary increase at the 9th-grade level. This was similar in the current year, with the exception...
that 10th-grade students also reported higher levels of overall agreement, and thus, the momentary increase was more pronounced in the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, it appears that elementary and middle school grade levels are fluctuating—with 5th-6th-grade students reporting 70.3% overall agreement over the past 3 years and 7th-8th-grade students reporting 64.4% overall agreement in the same time period. High school grades show more fluctuation. With an average of 66.1% overall agreement in high school grades over the past 3 years, 10th-grade students showed the lowest overall agreement rates (64.4%), and 12th-grade students showed the highest (68.0%). Finally, as reported last year, the publisher of the Climate Survey offers a resource for improving student climate (see https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about).

Investigating further into the subscales of the survey, data for the current school year assessed students' (1) Safe & Respectful School Climate, (2) High Expectations / Academic Rigor / Challenge, (3) Student Support, and (4) Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The following two figures show variations in subscale agreement within (Figure 3) and across (Figure 4) each school type. The data are the same, but graphed differently to illustrate these differences. For elementary schools, Safe & Respectful and SEL subscales have lower agreement than High Expectations and Student Support. This was the same for K8 and Middle schools. However, for High Schools, only SEL was lower than the other three subscales. Figure 4 contains the same data as shown in Figure 3, but is reconfigured to highlight changes across grade levels. Safe & Respectful varies, but generally stays within a similar range (between 63% and 71%, excluding Pickens). However, for the other three subscales, there was a general decline.
agreement from Elementary to High School grades that ranges from a 5% decrease (*High Expectations*) to a 17% decrease (*SEL*)—with *Student Support* decreasing 7%.

Figure 5 further differentiates this data for each grade, in which there is an increase in *Safe & Respectful* agreement comparing 5th-8th grades (average: 65.0%) and 9th-12th grades (70.9%), and decreases in agreement from 5th to 11th grades for the other subscales (and a subsequent increase at the 12th grade level). Additionally, the sharp, negative trend of *SEL* agreement is very apparent across grade levels in Figure 5.

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**Figure 3. Agreement by School Type and Subscale**

**Figure 4. Agreement by Subscale and School Type**
In line with last year’s results, the subscale that had the lowest overall level of agreement was SEL. The following item analysis focuses on this area of concern. In addition, there were items in last year’s report from the Safe & Respectful scale that indicated some areas of concern. These items are also included in this report, alongside last year’s data to highlight any changes.

As there were some differences in how elementary and high school students responded, the analysis below differentiates between those groups. Also, because the Safe & Respectful Climate subscale contains items related to safety, the percentage of students who answered strongly and negatively—indicating perceived safety concerns (higher percentages are bad)—are included in Figure 6, below. Of note, in line with last year’s analysis, elementary students have a much greater perceived threat of bullying, crime, and violence in their schools than high school students. Additionally, fewer high school students reported the items in Figure 6 as strongly and negatively, comparing this year to last year. However, this was not entirely the case in regard to elementary school students, as they maintained similar strong, negative agreement levels for Items 2 and 4, showed about a 1% decrease from last year on Item 3, and when asked to respond to “I worry about crime and violence in school”, more elementary students responded strongly and negatively this year (17.64%) compared to last year (15.59%).
Whereas the above figure focused on safety characteristics in the schools, Figure 7, on the following page, contains items from the SEL subscale—items of which the majority have a positive connotation. Thus, the percentage of students who marked “Strongly Agree” to the positively-worded items and “Strongly Disagree” to the reverse-coded items is presented (higher percentages are good). For each of the items on the SEL subscale, they generally decrease throughout elementary and middle school, and then plateau around 9th grade. It should be noted that because these items deal with virtues, older students may have a more nuanced view of morality (e.g., see Kohlberg, 1971) and therefore, may tend to answer less to the extreme. Nevertheless, for the SEL subscale, elementary students overwhelmingly responded more strongly towards each of the items (e.g., strongly disagreed with cheating and arguing; strongly agreed with persistence and integrity). Also of note, there was a considerable increase in the strong, positive responses at the elementary level for each of the SEL items, comparing the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. However, high school student responses did not indicate similar year-to-year increases.
Another aspect of the *Safe & Respectful School Climate* subscale is an item that asks: “How safe do you feel [Outside the school, In the hallways and bathrooms of the school, & In your classes]?” Because this refers to students’ perceived safety, the percentage of responses to “Not Safe” and “Somewhat Safe” are provided in Figure 8 below. Although there is either no difference or a slight decline in the percentage of students who do not feel safe in and out of the schools over the past 6 years, the percentage of students who feel only somewhat safe has changed. Outside of their school, students are reporting decreased perceived safety (the overall negative percentage rate has maintained steady at over 30% of students over the past 3 years).
Additionally, overall, the nearly 50% of all students reported feeling either not safe or only somewhat safe on one or more of these three items.

![Chart showing perceived safety levels by location and year](chart.png)

**Figure 8.** Longitudinal comparison of students' perceived safety in and out of school.

A final set of items asks students about their future plans—in line with the APS 2020 Strategic Plan. When asked how often they have “Talked to an adult at school about [their] future beyond high school”, the reported percentages varied little from the previous two years, and 35% reported having talked 1 or 2 times, 15% reported 3 or 4 times, and 8% reported 5 or more times. The total percentage of students who reported talking to an adult at the school was 58.5%, up from 57% in 2018-19. Students also reported similar year-to-year rates of having “Talked to [their] family about [their] future beyond high school”, with 84.5% reporting having talked at least once to their family (the rate was 83.7% in 2017-18 and 84.4% 2018-19). The percentage of students who disagreed with “I am on track to earn at least one credential that I need to pursue my plan for the future” increased from 13% in 2017-18 to 17% in 2018-19, and has again increased for the current year (17.7%). The percentage of students who responded “Don’t Know” was similar, comparing 2018-19 (21.4%) to the current year (21.5%).
The last item asked students of their plans following high school. Notably, no students responded to the item with “I don’t know” this year, compared to 16% in 2017-18 and 1% last year. Figure 9 illustrates their responses for the past three years. The percentages across most other items varied little in the year-to-year comparisons, with the exception of students who intend to enroll in a 4-year college, which has decreased from 59% 2 years ago to 54% for the current year.
Learning Community Results

Student Climate subscales had some variation—accounting for overall agreement among all subscale items—across the Learning Communities (LCs). Figure 10 illustrates the percent of agreement across the subscales for each of the LCs. In general, the most variation occurred within the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) subscale, followed by Safe & Respectful School Climate subscale, and with the least amount of variation in the Student Support subscale.

![Figure 10. School Climate subscale rates of agreement across Learning Communities.](image)

The following four charts provide scale agreement rates across each grade surveyed, differentiated by Learning Communities. With the exception of high school grades within the Northwest LC, scale agreement rates generally follow similar trends across each grade, although some variations are present. See Figures 11 through 14 to view the grade-level differences by Learning Community for each scale.
Figure 11. Safe & Respectful School Climate subscale agreement percentages by grade level and LC.

Figure 12. High Expectations / Academic Rigor / Challenge subscale agreement percentages by grade level and LC.
Figure 13. Student Support subscale agreement percentages by grade level and LC.

Figure 14. Social Emotional Learning subscale agreement percentages by grade level and LC.
School Results

The rankings of the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed to the subscales is provided below. For comparison, the percentages of agreement across all schools is as follows: Safe & Respectful School Climate (65%), High Expectations (76%), Student Support (70%), and Social Emotional Learning (54%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe &amp; Respectful School Climate</th>
<th>High Expectations / Academic Rigor / Challenge</th>
<th>Student Support</th>
<th>Social Emotional Learning (SEL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Smith 88%</td>
<td>Kenton ES 91%</td>
<td>Kenton ES 85%</td>
<td>Sable ES 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora Quest 80%</td>
<td>Elkhart ES 86%</td>
<td>William Smith 83%</td>
<td>Elkhart ES 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sable ES 77%</td>
<td>Montview 86%</td>
<td>Elkhart ES 83%</td>
<td>Montview 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora Frontier 76%</td>
<td>Yale ES 85%</td>
<td>Yale ES 83%</td>
<td>Peoria ES 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalton ES 75%</td>
<td>Crawford ES 84%</td>
<td>Sable ES 81%</td>
<td>William Smith 74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkhart ES 75%</td>
<td>Lansing ES 83%</td>
<td>Montview 81%</td>
<td>Yale ES 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoria ES 74%</td>
<td>Park Lane ES 83%</td>
<td>Lyn Knoll ES 80%</td>
<td>Paris ES 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista Pk. Prep 74%</td>
<td>Laredo ES 83%</td>
<td>Aurora Frontier 78%</td>
<td>Fulton 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangeview 72%</td>
<td>Sable ES 83%</td>
<td>Crawford ES 78%</td>
<td>Arkansas ES 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tollgate ES 71%</td>
<td>Aurora Frontier 82%</td>
<td>Lansing ES 78%</td>
<td>Park Lane ES 69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools were also ranked according to strategic plan agreement. Only high school students completed items related to the strategic plan. For comparison, the district average agreement was 78%.

Strategic Plan

Aurora Central High School 80%
Aurora West 82%
Gateway High School 75%
Hinkley High School 78%
Rangeview High School 77%
Vista PEAK Preparatory 76%
William Smith High School 76%
Conclusion and Recommendations

Better school climate has been shown to improve academic performance and positive development, as well as increased engagement in the classroom. Assessing student climate in APS should be considered the first step of a performance management strategy. The data presented in this report, although detailed, are mostly aggregated at the district level, and analysis at the school level, necessary for improvement strategy implementation, is not provided. Indeed, one of the limitations of this report is that an in-depth analysis for each of the schools in APS would be too exhaustive for its purposes. However, we would be happy to provide further analysis for individual schools upon request. Nevertheless, these results do provide meaningful benchmarks for the district.

For the current year, the overall participation rates was higher than that of the previous year (e.g., 70.3% vs 63.4% for 2018-19). Similar to last year, student information was verified in Infinite Campus (possible because they supply their Student IDs on the survey), and the over- and under-representation of race/ethnicity classifications were marginal, at best. For the group with the highest amount of under-representation, Black/African American students, the verified (though Infinite Campus) participation rate was only 1.1% lower than their enrollment rate within APS. Additional representation statistics were also reported within Gender, FRL Status, ELL Status, and IEP Status, and the groups most under-represented were: students classified as NEP, non-ELL students, and students on an IEP.

Regarding overall student-reported school climate, an increase in school climate in high school grade levels and a decrease in overall climate in K-8 schools were identified, comparing the current and previous school years (with slight fluctuations present in the other grade level comparisons). Most likely, there are multiple factors that account for these differences (which were not significant), and these differences are not part of the survey data. It is recommended to be proactive with these results and provide schools with resources that will help to improve school climate. Resources are provided here: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scirp/about. Other guides are also available (see https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-technical-assistance/training-products-tools/guides-training-products).

Investigating further into the subscales, rates of agreement generally decline from 5th to 12th grade, and the Social Emotional Learning subscale saw the steepest decline. Across all grades, over 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed to items on the High Expectations subscale (lowest: 11th Grade at 72.4%), implying that they think they are highly encouraged to do well. In addition, Student Support was high for elementary and K-8 schools, but was lower for middle and high schools. These are based on student perceptions, but in general, the results indicate that older students do not feel that they are listened to, cared for, and helped by teachers as much as students in lower grade levels. Only about half of our students agree that they are safe (emotionally and physically) in school. Additional items on the Safe & Respectful
subscale indicated that elementary students have a greater perceived threat of bullying, crime, and violence than high school students. Furthermore, students report higher levels of safety inside their classrooms, followed by in school hallways and bathrooms, and lower levels of safety outside of school.

APS 2020 Strategic Plan results were also reported. In general, students reported very few differences between the current and previous years. An item that asks high school students if they have talked to an adult at school about their plans after high school has shown static change over the past 3 years, with less than two-thirds of students responding in the affirmative on this item. An increased number of students are responding that they are not on track to graduate this year compared to the previous two years. This could be indicative of either (1) students becoming more aware of their Plan or (2) fewer students being on-track to graduate, or both. Finally, the number of students who responded with “I don’t know” when asked about their plans following high school decreased from 16% in 2017-18 to 0% this year, indicating that the strategic plan may be helping students to be thinking more about their career plans.

One final recommendation, in regard to the survey, is to include an item to identify the quality of an individual’s responses. It has been shown that respondent interest, survey length, social contact, and environmental distractions impact the quality of survey research (Meade & Craig, 2012). In effect, a portion of survey participants typically responds to items without regard to the item content. For example, a participant might respond with "Disagree" to all of the items on this survey without reading each item. Responding without regard to the content is referred to as careless responding. In line with Meade and Craig’s (2012) recommended best practices in survey research, for the 2020-21 school year, we should incorporate additional item (i.e., For your response on this item, please select “Neutral”) to gauge careless responses. This item was included in the Admin/PT and Classified Climate surveys for the current year, and we found that 11% and 16% of the Admin/PT and Classified responses, respectively, fit this criteria.
References


