

In the spring, Northwestern Local Schools contracted with the National School Climate Survey Center (NSCC) to administer a school climate survey for our district, collecting valuable information from the perspectives of our staff, students, and parents. For the purpose of this survey, the National School Climate Survey Center defines school climate, as follows:

“School climate refers to the quality of school life as it relates to norms and values, interpersonal relations and social interactions, and organizational processes and structures. The school climate sets the tone for all the learning and teaching done in the school environment, and is predictive of students’ ability to learn and develop in healthy ways. All schools, like all people, have a range of strengths and weaknesses, as well as a distinctive vision for the kind of school they aspire to be.”

This particular survey was designed to measure school climate through four domains and fourteen different dimensions, all based on research. Questions on the survey were designed to measure specific elements of each domain and dimension. See Table 1 for a description of the domains and dimensions measured in this survey.

The initial review of the data was conducted by analyzing the results at the district level. The highest participation rate on the surveys was from the student population; therefore, the district concentrated initial efforts on the results obtained from the students’ perspectives. Based on the results from the students taking the survey, the Teacher-Student Relationships dimension was rated as an area of strength across the district. The parents responding to our survey reported that the dimension of Physical Security is a strength for the district. Our staff identified Support for Academic Learning as an area of strength. Reviewing these strengths help to identify the elements that positively influence our school climate across the district.

The survey results also helped the district to identify areas of focus for the district. According to the student, parent, and staff surveys, it appears that the dimension of Sense of Social-Emotional Security is an area we need to focus on to improve across the district. For this reason, the district is making a collective effort to address the social-emotional security of students.

To start this work, each school building created a Climate and Conditions Committee, inviting parents, students, and staff to help improve school climate in each building and across the district. In the first meeting, the Climate and Conditions Committee reviewed the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programming in each building, identifying areas of improvement from the year(s) prior. In addition, the Committee reviewed the results from the Social-Emotional Security dimension to begin conversations regarding student responses and how the building and district can begin to improve these areas. The goal is to continue these conversations throughout the year as the buildings and district implement new programming and plans.

Our district continues to work through the results of this survey to better celebrate our strengths while also identifying areas in which improvement is needed. Through the efforts of our leadership teams, our PBIS teams, and our Climate and Conditions Committees, each building is developing strategies to help address and positively influence the perspectives of our

students and their social and emotional learning. A positive school climate is very important to our district and we will continue to set it as a priority for our students, our parents, and our staff.

Table 1

THE 14 DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE MEASURED BY THE CSCI

SAFETY: THIS DOMAIN MEASURES PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SAFETY AT SCHOOL, SUCH AS CLEAR RULES THAT ARE BROADLY COMMUNICATED AND EQUITABLY ENFORCED, AND PROTECTION FROM HARM AND HARASSMENT BOTH WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND ONLINE.

- 1. **Rules and Norms** This dimension measures perceptions that the school has rules against physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; and that, overall, the school's rules are reasonable, clearly communicated and equitably enforced.
- 2. **Sense of Physical Security** This dimension measures perceptions that students and adults feel safe from physical harm at school.
- 3. **Sense of Social-Emotional Security** This dimension measures perceptions that students and adults feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion at school.
- 4. **Online Safety** This dimension measures perceptions that students feel safe using and get support for engaging responsibly on social media.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: THIS DOMAIN MEASURES PERCEPTIONS OF HOW TEACHING PRACTICES SUPPORT STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LEARNING, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AS CITIZENS IN A COMMUNITY.

- 5. **Support for Academic Learning** This dimension measures perceptions about teaching practices being supportive, encouraging and constructive; that students have varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; that risk-taking and independent thinking are encouraged; and that success is expected for all students.
- 6. **Social and Emotional Learning** This dimension measures perceptions about teaching that helps students develop skills and attributes that will enable them to succeed in and outside the classroom, in their relationships and in the community.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: THIS DOMAIN MEASURES PERCEPTIONS OF MUTUAL RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCES ACROSS THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY, AND WHETHER RELATIONSHIPS – BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AND AMONG STUDENTS – ARE SUPPORTIVE AND CARING.

- 7. **Respect for Diversity** This dimension measures perceptions about how individual differences, such as race or gender identity, are welcomed and appreciated across the school community.
- 8. **Teacher-Student Relationships** This dimension measures perceptions of supportive and caring relationships between students and teachers.
- 9. **Peer Relationships** This dimension measures perceptions of welcoming, supportive and collaborative relationships among students

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT: THIS DOMAIN MEASURES PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SCHOOL BEING A COMMUNITY WHERE ALL MEMBERS ARE VALUED, INCLUDING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES, AND WHETHER THE SCHOOL FACILITIES THEMSELVES REFLECT THIS, BY BEING CLEAN AND ACCESSIBLE.

- 10. **School Connectedness** This dimension measures perceptions about school as a welcoming place for all where feelings of pride and belonging are cultivated
- 11. **Physical Surroundings** This dimension measures perceptions about the school being a clean, comfortable and well-resourced place to learn.
- 12. **Social Inclusion** This dimension measures perceptions about students with disabilities being full members of the school community.

LEADERSHIP AND EFFICACY (STAFF ONLY): THIS DIMENSION MEASURES PERCEPTIONS AMONG STAFF ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF THE SCHOOL'S LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTRIBUTING TO AN EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING.

- 13. **Administration and Leadership** This dimension measures perceptions about how well the administration creates an effective and equitable environment for teaching and learning.
- 14. **Collective Efficacy** This dimension measures perceptions about attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.