



TO: D.C. State Board of Education Members
FROM: State Board Staff
RE: **Memo on school climate measures**
DATE: May 16, 2022

Summary

This memo accompanies a [Statewide Accountability System Research Chart](#)—developed by the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board) to inform recommended revisions to the STAR Framework/DC School Report Card. Going forward, this resource can be used by State Board members to inform input on the Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE) response to those recommendations during scheduled checkpoints leading up to the July vote on OSSE’s Accountability Amendment. In the interest of transparency and cross-agency continuity, the State Board is sharing with the public this research chart along with the first of a series of memos that highlight information in the chart that is particularly relevant to one or more of the Board’s recommendations.

This first memo presents **the use of school climate in school accountability systems**, with references to SR22-1, community feedback from State Board Accountability Surveys, examples of other states’ implementation, and D.C.-specific context around school accountability. The State Board recognizes OSSE’s challenges introducing such indicators into the 2022 statewide accountability amendment, and therefore offers this information to consider for future accountability amendments and ESSA plans.

SR22-1 Recommendations

SR22-1 recommended that school climate is adopted in the 2023 accountability system in the following ways:

- Student perceptions of school climate should be included as an indicator in the elementary and middle school annual meaningful differentiation formula.
- The front page of the accountability report and dashboard should be designed to highlight indicators like a validated, research-based school climate measure (including student engagement and satisfaction, teacher satisfaction with available support, and family satisfaction)
- A clear definition¹ of school climate should be featured prominently on the school dashboard.

¹ **School Climate** refers to a school’s ability to create a nurturing and challenging environment that typically leads students to strong academic growth in the future. Defined in SR22-1: https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/page_content/attachments/2021-12-09%20State%20Accountability%20Recommendations%20-%20FINAL.pdf



State Board 2021 Accountability Survey Findings

Principals, teachers, and families noted the importance of school climate in the State Board’s 2021 Accountability Surveys. The full collection of reports can be found on the State Board’s Assessment and Accountability Committee’s [webpage](#). Findings included:

- 32 out of 37 principals (90 percent) described school quality as going beyond academic achievement and growth—towards responsiveness to student populations, staff satisfaction, and supporting the surrounding community.²
- School climate indicators were among the top four choices teachers indicated they wanted to see included in the STAR Framework (65 percent).³
- A third (67 percent) of families chose student satisfaction as one of the top three indicators they believed should be part of evaluating a school’s quality/effectiveness.⁴

Research Chart Examples

Currently, there are 12 states⁵ that include school climate in their statewide accountability framework. Examples of its usage are provided below:

- Iowa **includes results of its [Conditions for Learning survey](#)** from students in its accountability [framework](#) (Grades 6–12) (*see page 18-19*) and school report card (see example [here](#)); this survey measures three domains of conditions for students’ learning: Safety, Engagement, and Environment. Iowa plans on expanding the survey to families and educators, although these will be optional.⁶ Iowa uses a formula where points are awarded based on the positive response percentages at the school in their accountability framework.
- New Mexico **embeds scores from the [Opportunity to Learn survey](#)** on its [accountability framework](#) (see pages 6 and 14) and shares scores and results breakdown in the state school report card for Grades 3–12 (see example [here](#)). New Mexico scores surveys by summing the responses for the ten included questions resulting in a score that is then averaged to determine the school’s score.
- South Carolina uses the [SC School Climate Score instrument](#) to measure school climate for its accountability framework (see pages 6-7). South Carolina also uses this survey to provide information on the school report card (example [here](#)) based on surveys that **combines the scores of three (3) teacher perception factors and two (2) student**

² See the STAR Framework Principal Survey Report: https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/page_content/attachments/2021-12-03-FINAL-STAR%20Framework%20Part%201-%20Principal%20Survey%20Report.pdf

³ See STAR Framework Teacher Survey Report: https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/page_content/attachments/2021-12-03-FINAL-STAR%20Framework%20Part%202-%20Teacher%20Survey%20Report.pdf

⁴ See STAR Framework Family/General Public Survey Report: https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/page_content/attachments/2021-12-03-FINAL-STAR%20Framework%20Part%204-Family%20Survey%20Report.pdf

⁵ From the Education Commission’s *50-State Comparison: States’ School Accountability Systems*: <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-states-school-accountability-systems/>

⁶ See Iowa Department of Education Conditions for Learning (CfL) page: <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/every-student-succeeds-act/conditions-learning-cfl>



perception factors. Formulas and survey questions are included in the accountability manual linked above.

- For the list of 12 states that include school climate in their accountability framework, please see the [Statewide Accountability System Research Chart](#).

Additional Context: School Climate in D.C.⁷

When submitting its [state ESSA Plan](#)⁸ in August 2017, OSSE acknowledged that the community expressed interest in including school climate surveys in the accountability framework, but due to issues with data availability and implementation, they did not include surveys at that time. However, OSSE remained open to including them in the future. Around the same time, the [Youth Suicide Prevention and School Climate Survey Amendment Act of 2016](#)⁹ was passed by the D.C. Council. It required OSSE to pilot school climate surveys in schools and develop a plan (to be submitted to the D.C. Council) for implementing the surveys in all schools serving grades 6–12, beginning in school year 2020–21. OSSE has since completed the pilot, with eight participating schools administering a school climate survey. Following the pilot, OSSE provided both a report and plan to the Council on how they would expand school climate surveys across all schools.¹⁰

Since school year 2017–18, DC Public Schools (DCPS) has administered the [Panorama Survey](#) from Panorama Education. The last survey was administered March 1, 2022. The results of the survey are used to measure progress on the Loved, Challenged, and Prepared Index (LCPI) and used to decide on new programs and interventions at schools. Parents and families can view the survey results at www.dcps.dc.gov/surveys, where the school-level response rates and scores are also available (members of the public can view reports from Spring 2018 – 2021)

Ms. Simona Spicciani Gerhardt, a teacher at the former Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, first told the State Board about the [School Climate Assessment Instrument \(SCAI\)](#) at its January 2019 public meeting (this was unrelated to the OSSE school climate survey pilot under the 2016 Act). SCAI was administered at Wilson HS in school year 2017–18 and 2018–19, at the request of then-Washington Teachers’ Union (WTU) President Elizabeth Davis. According to a study by Albert Jones and John Schindler in 2016, achievement scores at the elementary and secondary level were found to be highly correlated to overall mean SCAI score ($r=0.7$).¹¹¹²

The DC Public Charter School Board (DCPCSB) [uses two measures](#) for their School Environment indicator on the [Performance Management Framework](#): student attendance and student re-

⁷ Information for this section was sourced from a State Board memo titled *School Climate Research* from July 2020. See: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18pP6NIw24xrsSemR8RWIFTJG3Opau7PD/view?usp=sharing>
https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/OSSE%20ESSA%20State%20Plan_%20August%2028_Clean.pdf
⁹ <https://lms.dccouncil.us/downloads/LIMS/43405/Introduction/RC23-0113-Introduction.pdf>.

¹⁰ OSSE noted it was not required to administer surveys across all schools after the conclusion of the pilot; OSSE also noted D.C. Code 38-2602 (28 D) did not require us to administer one uniform survey across all schools and it did not provide funding to conduct such work.

¹¹ Jones, A., & Shindler, J. Exploring the school climate: Student achievement connection: Making sense of why the first precedes the second. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, (2016), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1094419>

¹² See the State Board School Climate Research Memo from July 2020 for a full comparison of the SCAI with other school climate survey instruments: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18pP6NIw24xrsSemR8RWIFTJG3Opau7PD/view?usp=sharing>





enrollment at the same school. These are the unified measures for schools serving grades PK–12; there is no school climate survey that all charter schools use.¹³ Parents and families can also look at the [Classroom Assessment Scoring System \(CLASS\)](#) metric for individual charter schools with Pre-K programs,¹⁴ as it is only used in these grades. Although this metric has traditionally been limited to lower grades (K–3), the [UVA Curry School](#),¹⁵ where it was developed, states that CLASS has been validated in over 2,000 classrooms and is doing validation work on upper elementary and secondary versions of CLASS. [Nebraska](#)¹⁶ appears to be the only state that currently uses CLASS in upper elementary (Grades 4–6). [Teachstone](#)¹⁷ lists all states that currently use CLASS, albeit not necessarily in upper grades.

¹³ “2019–20 Performance Management Framework: Policy & Technical Guide,” DC Public Charter School Board, November 2019, <https://dcpcsb.egnyte.com/dl/D8w46opQ22/>, 9.

¹⁴ “School Quality Reports Overview,” DC Public Charter School Board, October 28, 2019, <https://dcpcsb.org/school-quality-reports-overview>.

¹⁵ “Classroom Assessment Scoring System™,” UVA Curry School of Education and Human Development, <https://curry.virginia.edu/classroom-assessment-scoring-system>.

¹⁶ “The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS),” Nebraska Department of Education, April 13, 2020, <https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/the-classroom-assessment-scoring-system-class/#1532724502339-b6e98859-a684>.

¹⁷ “Highlights and Updates from QRIS,” Teachstone, February 20, 2017, <https://info.teachstone.com/blog/highlights-and-updates-from-qr>.

