

ASSESSING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLIMATE: THE NEW CHKS

The *California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys* (Cal-SCHLS) is one of the most comprehensive and validated data systems in the nation for assessing factors associated with student success in school, career, and life. It consists of three comparable surveys for school students, staff, and parents named, respectively: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), California School Climate Survey (CSCS), and California School Parent Survey (CSPS). For the 2014-15 school year, the first major revision of the CHKS survey instrument for elementary schools (5th grade) is being released. This revision is designed to enhance the value of the elementary survey for assessing school climate and stakeholder engagement, and for guiding Local Control and Accountability Plan implementation and improvement. It also aligns the content with the changes previously made to the secondary school instrument.

Cal-SCHLS and LCAP

One immediate impetus for this change was the need to improve the survey as a tool for meeting the requirements and needs of Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) at the elementary level, particularly in regard to assessing school climate, student engagement, and parental involvement, three of the eight state priorities that LCAPs must assess and address. With these changes, it will also help districts fulfill the overarching goal of the LCAP for elementary schools: improving academic achievement by involving stakeholders, including parents, in a data-driven process of enhancing learning conditions, instruction, and engagement and documenting progress. A description of how survey items align with LCAP can be downloaded at cal-schls.wested.org.

Overview to Survey Revisions

In order to expand the value and content of the survey, the decision was made to adopt a modular format like that of the secondary survey. We moved some existing questions into two supplementary modules that assess physical health and social-emotional strengths in order to add questions on school climate and student/parent engagement into the new “Core” module. By so doing, the length of the Core and the time it takes to administer it (an average of 12 minutes online), were unchanged.

The new Core questions primarily focus on assessing academic motivation and persistence, prosocial school behavior, discipline, order, and anti-bullying practices and policies. New questions assessing Opportunities for Meaningful Participation at school were added to improve that scale, which has had a relatively low reliability.

The following table provides a summary of the school-related questions on the elementary CHKS in comparison to the secondary CHKS and the California School Climate Survey for staff (CSCS) and the California School Parent Survey (CSPS). This is followed by a list of all the questions and scales in the elementary CHKS.

Major School-related Domains and Constructs Assessed by the Elementary CHKS and Other Cal-SCHLS Surveys

Variables Assessed Across Surveys	CHKS Student Survey			Staff Survey (all levels)	Parent Survey
	Elem	Secondary Core	Secondary School Climate		
School connectedness	✓	✓			
Student learning engagement and motivation	✓	✓		✓	✓
Student performance	✓	✓			
Attendance (truancy, reasons for absence)		✓		✓	✓
Academic mindset	✓		✓		
Academic rigor and norms — high expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teacher and other supports for learning		✓	✓		
Relationships between students and staff	✓	✓		✓	
Relationships among students	✓	✓	✓		
Relationships among staff				✓	
Parent involvement	✓			✓	✓
Meaningful participation and decision-making	✓	✓		✓	✓
Staff supports				✓	
Perceived safety	✓	✓		✓	✓
Discipline and order (policies, enforcement)			✓	✓	✓
Violence and victimization (bullying)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Substance use and availability at school		✓		✓	✓
Services and policies to address student needs				✓	
Student social-emotional competencies/health	✓	✓		✓	✓
Social-emotional and behavioral supports			✓		✓
Respective for diversity & cultural sensitivity			✓	✓	✓
Quality of physical environment			✓	✓	✓

All three survey instruments may be downloaded from their respective websites: chks.wested.org, cscs.wested.org, and csps.wested.org. A more extensive discussion of how all three surveys can be used for *Assessing School Climate* can be downloaded from the Cal-SCHLS website homepage (cal-schls.wested.org).

LIST OF ELEMENTARY CHKS QUESTIONS, 2014-15

Table Key

* *New items for 2014-15*

^ *Comparable item or variable on CHKS Middle & High School Survey*

Core Module

Academic Mindset, Learning Engagement, and Related Behaviors

Students at this school are motivated to learn*^

Personal Motivation/Persistence Scale*^

Do you finish all your class assignments? When you get a bad grade, do you try even harder the next time? Do you keep working and working until you get it right? Do you do your class assignments even when they are really hard for you?

How well do in schoolwork

School Connectedness Scale^

School Developmental Supports

Caring Adult Relationships Scale^

High Expectations Scale^

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation Scale (expanded scale with new items)^

Home Developmental Supports and Parent Involvement

Caring Adult Relationships Scale (Parent/adult is interested in your school work; ...believes you will do a good job; ...wants you to do your best at school)^

High Expectations Scale^

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation Scale (expanded scale with new items)^

Parent/grownup asks if you did your homework; ...checks your homework;asks you about your school; ...asks you about your classwork grades

School Safety, Violence, and Bullying

Perceived safety at school^ and going to and from school

Frequency home alone after school

Frequency experienced or engaged in physical and verbal victimization (by type)^

Ever teased at school about your body

Weapons possession by self and others^

Discipline and Order

Students at this school are well behaved.*^

Respectful & Fair Environment: Adults at this school treat all students with respect.*^ Students are treated fairly when they break school rules.*^ Students are taught to care about each other and treat each other with respect.*

Clarity of Rules: Students know what the rules are.*^

Prosocial School Behavior Scale*

Do you follow classroom rules?

Do you follow the playground rules at recess and lunch times?

Do you listen when your teacher is talking?

Are you nice to other students?

(Core Module Continued)

Bullying Prevention Scale*

Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not permitted.*^

If I told a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher would do something to help.*^

Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening*^

Substance Use and Other Health Related

Lifetime (ever) use of alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, cigarettes, and e-cigarettes^

(Current use questions deleted because of low frequency)

Perceived health risk of alcohol, marijuana, cigarette smoking^

Did you eat breakfast^

Supplemental Personal, Social, and Emotional Strengths Module

Cooperation and Communication

- Do you get along or work well with students who are different from you?*
- Do you enjoy working together with other students?*
- Do you stand up for yourself without putting others down?*

Self Efficacy

- Can you do most things if you try?*
- Do you try to work out your problems?*
- Are there many things that you do well?*

Self Awareness

- Do you understand your moods and feelings?*
- Do you understand why you do what you do?*
- Do you feel there is a purpose to your life?*

Problem Solving

- Do you know where to go for help with a problem?
- Do you try to work out problems by talking or writing about them?
- When you need help, do you find someone to talk with about it?*

Goals and Aspirations

- Do you try to do your best?
- Do you set goals and then work to achieve them?*

Empathy

- Do you try to understand how other people feel and think?
- Do you feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt?
- Do you try to understand what other people go through?*

Emotional Regulation and Self Control

- I accept responsibility for your actions?*
- When I make a mistake, I admit it?*
- I can deal with being told no?*

Supplemental Physical Health Module

Weight and Exercise

- Perceived weight (too skinny, about right, too fat)
- Doing anything to lose weight
- Days exercised at school during school week
- Ever told had asthma
- When exercising, experience asthma problems
- Frequency watch TV/videos on school days

Physical Safety (outside school)

- Cyberbullying
- Frequency wear seat belt
- Frequency wear helmet