

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Center for School and Campus Safety

Richmond, VA

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Memo No. VCSCS 20-004

MEMO To: Virginia Commonwealth Superintendents
Virginia High School Principals

CC: VCSCS Staff

From: Dr. Nikki Wilcox, School Safety Audit and Climate Survey Specialist

Date: November 1, 2019

Subject: **2020 Secondary School Climate Survey for Grades 9-12**

1. This memorandum reports on the Secondary School Climate survey that will be administered in grades 9-12 between February 3, 2020, and March 27, 2020 by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) at the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). Since 2013, the Secondary School Climate Survey has been a required component of the School Safety Audit, which school divisions are required to submit in accordance with [§22.1-279.8\(B\)](#) of the Code of Virginia. The survey measures student and staff perceptions of school rules and discipline, teacher-student relationships, student engagement in school, and the extent of bullying and teasing at school. The school climate survey is a tool for schools to monitor and improve school climate in order to maintain a safe and orderly school environment conducive to learning.
2. In 2020, the survey will be conducted in each school that has regular education programs for 9th-12th grade students. This includes all high schools as well as combined schools that might include lower grades. Each eligible school will administer the school climate survey to its students, teachers, and staff in grades 9-12.
3. After the 2020 process concludes, participating schools will receive a detailed report of survey results and will be able to compare their results to regional and state averages. Technical information on survey results and interpretation will be made available with the assistance of researchers from the University of Virginia. Results of past surveys may be accessed [here](#).
4. Schools should invite all teachers and staff for grades 9-12 to complete the survey. We recommend that schools survey all eligible students, so that they have the most complete and accurate information about their school. If schools are unable to survey all eligible students, they will have the option of surveying random sample of 25 students for each grade. Schools surveying all eligible students should achieve a participation rate of at least 80%, exclusive of students who

are not able to complete the survey due to handicapping conditions or language barrier. Schools choosing the random sample option must follow a random number procedure (provided to the school through their individualized instruction packet) to select at least 25 students in each grade to complete the survey. Alternates will also be randomly selected so that at least 25 students in each grade complete the survey.

5. The survey is anonymous; participants will not give their names on the survey, and it will not be possible to match survey answers to participant identities.
6. In response to principal requests, the teacher survey has been expanded to include the following staff members who serve 9th-12th grade students: school administrator (principal or assistant principal), school counselor(s), school nurse, school psychologist, school resource officer, school security officer, coach(es), band director, school social worker(s), and others as appropriate. Although participants will be asked to identify their role in the school, their responses will be combined with teachers in school reports in order to protect their identity. A breakdown of results by role will be provided in the statewide report but not in individual school reports.
7. Student and teacher/staff participation is voluntary, but recommended. Parents of students identified for participation in the survey should be advised by a standard letter from their school or division and offered the option of declining to participate. Teachers/staff should be offered the same option. Templates for both letters will be provided in school packets. It is valuable to have a high participation rate, so we ask principals to encourage their teachers and other staff members to participate.
8. The survey will be administered online at school. In response to school requests, the survey period has been moved forward one month. Each school will be required to choose a 3-week period to administer the survey between February 3, 2020, and March 27, 2020. The selection of this 3-week window will be due January 17, 2020.
9. Written instructions for random sampling and survey administration, and additional information about the survey will be made available on the website for the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety at <http://www.dcs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-safety-survey/secondary-school-climate-survey>
10. Every high school principal of schools required to participate in the 2020 Secondary School Climate Survey process will receive an email with further instructions.
11. Questions may be directed to Nikki Wilcox (nikki.wilcox@dcs.virginia.gov), at 804-786-3923 or Shellie Evers (shellie.evers@dcs.virginia.gov), at 804-629-7042 of the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety.