

**Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Division of Public Safety Training
and the
Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (PST-VCSCS)**

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Memo No. VCSCS 23-002

MEMO To: K-12 School Superintendents and Emergency Managers

CC: Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety Staff

From: Donna Michaelis, Division Director, PST-VCSCS

Date: August 26, 2022

Subject: **2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions**

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify school divisions that the 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions will be administered to schools beginning January 9, 2023 and ending February 24, 2023. To reduce survey administrative burden, a partnership between the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) will coordinate the Virginia School Survey which meets both VDOE's legislative requirement, [Item 135.G of the 2023 Acts of Appropriation Act](#), and DCJS's mandate as described in the [Code of Virginia §22.1-279.8.B](#).

The Virginia School Survey is a tool for division leaders and principals to monitor and ensure all students and staff have access to a healthy, safe, and positive environment in which to learn, work, interact, and grow, whether remotely or in-person. The 2022 Virginia School Survey reached over 219,000 students, 20,000 classroom instructors, and 6,000 staff members in schools serving grades 9 through 12. This equates to over 95% of eligible schools participating in the survey.

For 2023, any schools with regular education programs serving students in grades six through eight are required to administer the student survey. All schools are required to invite all students in grades six, seven, and eight to complete the survey.

Schools are also required to administer the survey to all licensed staff (instructional and support personnel) in any public schools serving grades Pre-Kindergarten through eight. The survey may also be administered to non-licensed staff, and may be administered to adults in other educational settings (e.g., alternative or specialty centers) at the discretion of the school division. The survey will be administered to students and adults concurrently.

The Virginia School Survey is anonymous. Participants will not give their names on the survey, and it will not be possible to match survey answers to individual participants. Although teachers and staff will be asked to identify their role in the school, responses will be aggregated in school reports to protect their identity. A breakdown of results by role will be provided in the statewide report but not in individual school reports.

Student and adult participation is voluntary. Parents or guardians of students must be advised of the survey at least 30 days before administration and offered the option of declining their students' participation. Adults may also decline to participate. Schools should strive to achieve a participation rate of at least 80 percent for both the students and adults. Higher response rates translate to a larger survey sample size which more accurately reflects perceptions among teachers, staff, and students. In other words, the more people who complete the survey, the better data you will have to base decisions about individual schools and districts. Conversely, low response rates may mask areas of concern and celebration. For this reason, the random sample option of the survey has been eliminated and schools should offer the survey to all eligible participants. However, as previously stated, individuals have the option to not participate. Collecting quality data is critical given the importance of this survey to schools, divisions, and the Commonwealth.

Schools will receive a detailed report of survey results and will be able to compare their results to division, region, and state averages. To ensure that survey responses remain anonymous, Item-level Snapshots and Measure-Level Reports will not be generated for schools with response rates less than 50 percent and if the number of respondents in each group are fewer than 10. Technical information on survey results will be made available with the assistance of researchers from the School of Education at Virginia Tech.

Beginning in 2023, the survey will be administered in one, 7-week window beginning on January 9, 2023 and ending on February 24, 2023. Schools should work with their division to plan their survey administration during this survey administration period. All surveys are completed online and can be accessed through any device with an internet connection. The Virginia School Survey instrument and complete instructions for administering the survey will be posted on the [Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety website](#) and the [VDOE Working Conditions and Climate Survey page](#). Divisions may also link additional survey questions on local initiatives to the state survey to reduce survey burden. Additional instructions on submitting web links are forthcoming.

In September 2022, school divisions will be asked to notify the Virginia School Survey team via a web form the following information:

- A school division primary point of contact with whom the Virginia School Survey team personnel can communicate updates on survey administration;
- Updated school principal contact information for participating schools;
- If desired, provide web links for additional survey questions; and
- Acknowledge their responsibility to notify parents and guardians at least 30 days prior to their planned survey administration and communicate opt-out procedures.

After the initial web form is completed, school principals will be asked to provide the following to the Virginia School survey team via a web form:

- A school primary point of contact with whom the Virginia School Survey team personnel can communicate updates on survey administration;
- The intended date to begin administering the survey;
- The number of eligible students, classroom instructors, and staff in the school building. This information will be used to calculate response rates; and
- Acknowledge their responsibility to notify parents and guardians at least 30 days prior to their planned survey administration and communicate opt-out procedures.

The Virginia School Survey team, with representatives from VDOE and DCJS, will host a webinar on survey administration in September 2022. At that time, school principals and school points of contact will also receive specific instructions via email. Registration information for the webinar is forthcoming.

Questions about the Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions may be directed to Dr. Nikki Wilcox, School Safety Audit and Climate Survey Coordinator Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, at nikki.wilcox@dcjs.virginia.gov or 804-786-3923 and Dr. Jess Marcon Zabecki, Research Analyst, Office of Research at research@doe.virginia.gov or 804-225-2963.