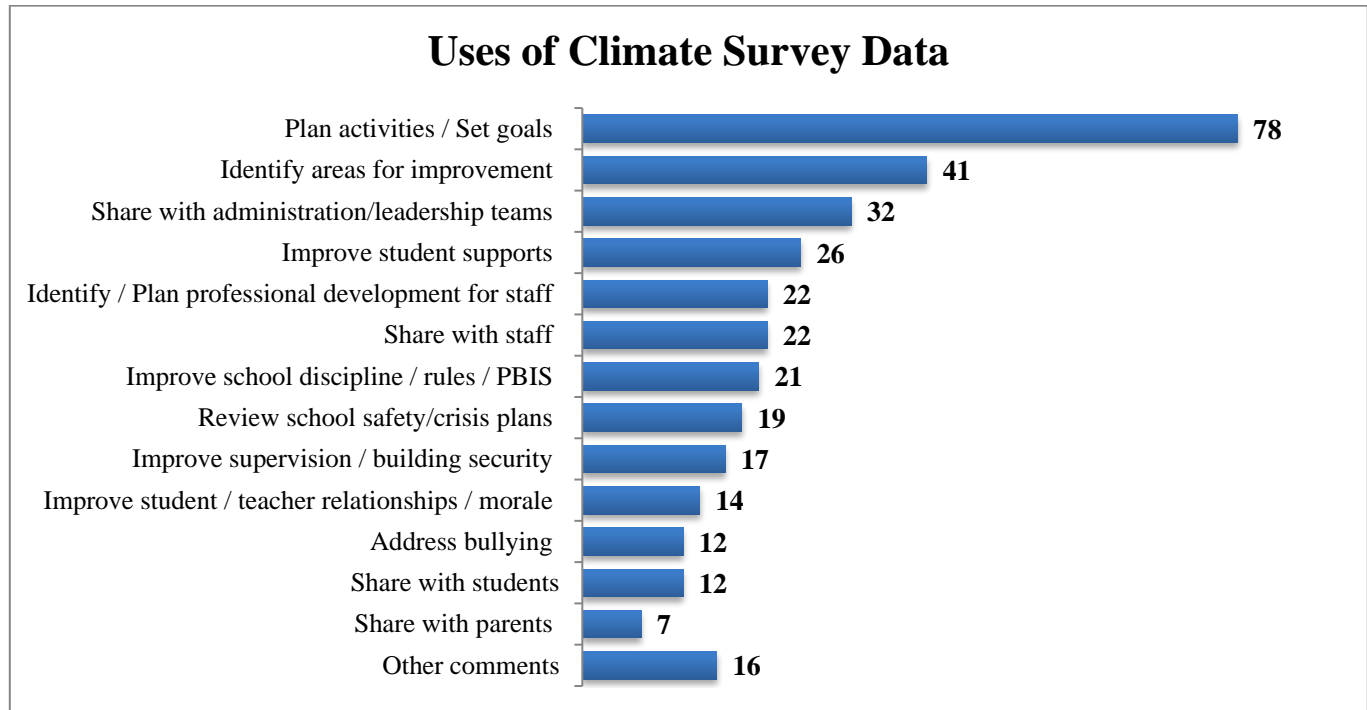


Practical Findings from the Virginia School Climate Survey

How do division and school administrators currently use school climate data?

In 2018, all 322 high school principals were asked for their feedback on the Virginia Secondary School Survey administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Approximately 88% (283) of the principals completed the survey and answered one or more questions. When asked “Please give an example of how previous school climate results were used for school planning or improvement?” there were 168 responses. Principals most commonly reported using the survey report to plan activities and set goals.



Themes from Administrator Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 school and division-level administrators. School and division-level administrator interview responses supported the quantitative results. Administrators indicated they use the school climate reports primarily to review data, inform planning and strategic action plans, and to monitor and evaluate existing efforts. For example, one administrator said, “This gives you the information. This is what your building or your division looks like. Okay, how are you gonna make improvements?” Another similarly noted, “We review the outcomes of the current year and use that as a starting point for planning and visioning the following year. And so from the outset of that model, school climate scores have been a part of that process.” Administrators indicated that they share the results of the climate surveys with stakeholders including the school board, leadership teams, students, and parents. However, some administrators expressed concern about the potential for misinterpretation or misuse if schools were ranked or scored based on their climate survey results.

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey was administered in the spring of 2018 as part of the annual School Safety Audit (§ 22.1-279.8.A) by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) in the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. This project was supported by grant #NIJ 2017-CK-BX-007 awarded to the University of Virginia by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the researchers at the Youth Violence Project of the University of Virginia and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Center for School and Campus Safety at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>.