

# WALKING A FINE LINE

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS IN STATE ESSA PLANS

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***FutureEd***  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

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FutureEd is an independent, solution-oriented think tank at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, committed to bringing fresh energy to the causes of excellence, equity, and efficiency in K-12 and higher education. Follow us on Twitter at @FutureEdGU.

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**School climate and student engagement** have emerged as key elements in promoting academic success. Recognizing this, the drafters of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) required states to include non-academic factors in judging schools' performance. Three-quarters of the states added student absenteeism to their accountability systems as part of the School Quality and Student Success indicator.<sup>1</sup> But in a trend that has received much less attention, 13 states have chosen to gauge school climate and student engagement through annual surveys of students, teachers and parents.

Some states are using the results to gather information to inform school-improvement work. Others are going further, holding schools accountable for the results, despite widespread concern among researchers that these tools were not intended for that purpose and are not reliable enough to determine school quality. What's more, many researchers fear that attaching higher stakes to surveys could tempt schools to manipulate results, further reducing the instruments' value to principals and other school staff.

To evaluate states' use of school climate surveys under ESSA, FutureEd examined state accountability plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education, and interviewed state officials to determine why they chose to hold schools accountable for climate and engagement, what precisely they are measuring, and how they are using the results to calculate a score as part of an accountability rubric used to identify struggling schools. Most of these efforts started in the 2018-19 school year. This report presents our analysis. We conclude with recommendations designed to help state policymakers navigate the challenges of using survey information effectively—and responsibly.

Among our findings:

- Eight states—Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota and South Carolina—have included school climate or engagement surveys as part of the accountability rubrics required under ESSA. Most of them have begun administering surveys to students, and in some cases, teachers and parents. A ninth state, Nevada, initially included a small bonus for school districts that administer surveys but filed amendments earlier this year to remove surveys from its rubric. Most states assign a low weight in the accountability rubric to scores from surveys, with only two states higher than 10 percent.
- Another five states are administering school climate or engagement surveys under ESSA and either reporting the results publicly or requiring their use in struggling schools. While reporting provides a way for families and policymakers to compare schools, these states stop short of factoring the survey results into accountability scores that determine which schools need improvement. California, Delaware and Georgia plan to include survey results in state report cards required under federal law or other reporting

mechanisms. Georgia also plans to use survey input to help schools identified for support and improvement, as will Massachusetts. Nevada, despite backing away from using surveys for accountability, has created an interactive web feature allowing parents to assess school climate and student engagement in each school.

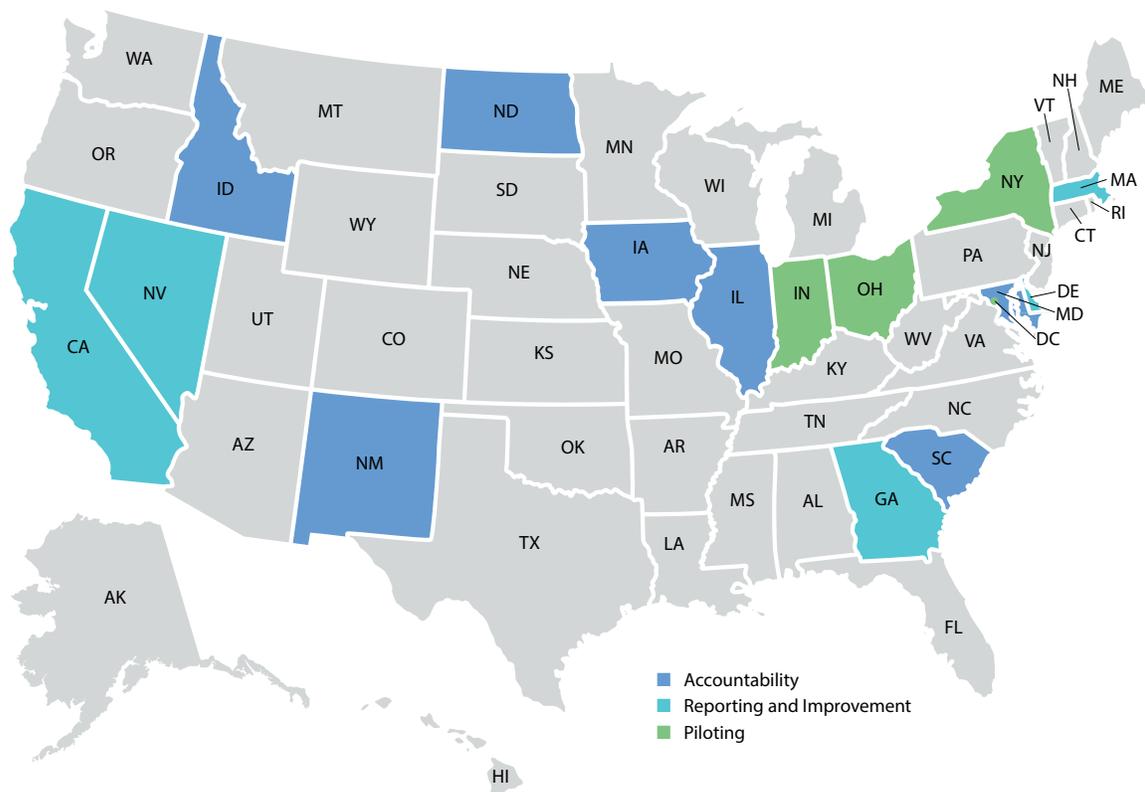
- Three more states—Indiana, New York, and Ohio, along with Washington, D.C.—are piloting or studying surveys, which they plan to use in a variety of ways. Indiana and New York require schools identified as needing improvement to administer the surveys, but don't expect to add the metric to their accountability rubric. Washington, D.C., after several years of piloting, will make a decision on accountability in the coming months. Ohio is studying districts that now use surveys and will consider whether to expand their use.

## What States Are Surveying

The administration of statewide school surveys has been standard in many states for years. Often these surveys began as health and well-being questionnaires, asking students about drug use, smoking and sexual activity. They evolved to ask more explicit questions about the school climate experience, such as bullying from other students, perceptions of school safety, relationships with teachers, or respect for cultural and racial diversity.

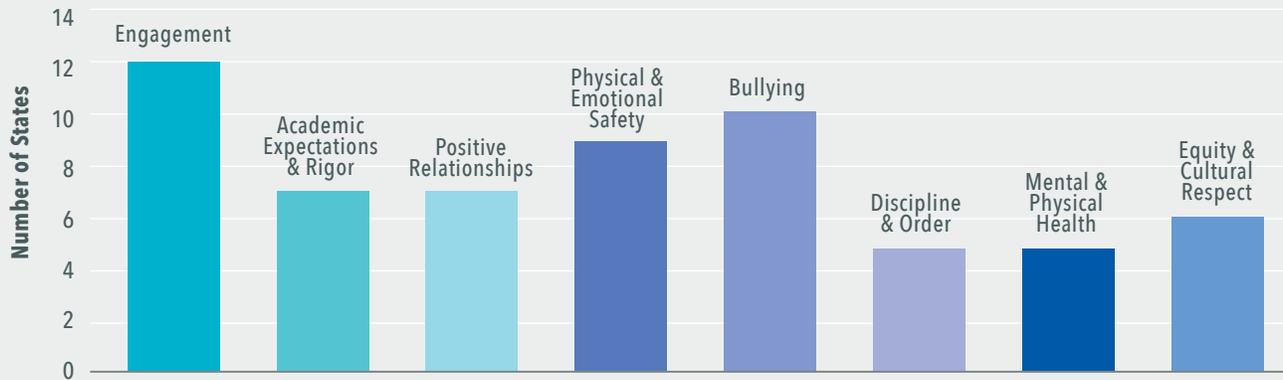
Increasingly, schools are going beyond school climate and asking about aspects of student engagement. That includes whether students believe they can master hard work, how much they value what they're learning, and whether they feel they belong at their school.<sup>2</sup> While school climate typically refers to aspects of the

## States School Climate Survey Use in ESSA



SOURCE: FutureEd Review of State ESSA Plans

## Common Topics in State School Surveys



SOURCE: FutureEd Review of State Surveys

student's learning environment, engagement reflects the degree of student involvement or participation in that environment.<sup>3</sup>

The survey results can illuminate students' sense of belonging at school and their perceptions of themselves as learners, factors that manifest themselves in their willingness to work hard in school and to persevere in the face of academic and social challenges, according to a growing body of research.<sup>4</sup> Schools with positive climates tend to see better attendance, standardized test scores and graduation rates, while those with discouraging climates see weaker outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Teachers, staff and parents are also surveyed in most cases, often with questions similar to those students receive. In Georgia, for instance, the surveys ask staff and students if they feel safe at school, and also ask parents if their children feel safe.

While states are using a range of surveys under ESSA, the surveys have many common elements, particularly concerning aspects of student engagement and school safety.

D.C. and New York are using the U.S. Department of Education's school climate surveys in their pilots. Three states—Idaho, North Dakota, and South Carolina—are using a student engagement survey developed and piloted in 2017 by a firm now known as Cognia, which also sells tests and other products to states and school districts. Other states have created their own surveys. Illinois, for instance, uses the 5Essentials Survey, which is based on research by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. The model focuses on five qualities: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environment, and ambitious instruction.

More than half of the states using surveys for ESSA are starting as early as the 3rd grade, despite concerns that younger students may not understand the meaning of the questions or be unduly influenced by what they think their teachers want to hear. Maryland starts surveying in 5th grade, and D.C. in 7th. Surveys of parents and school staff can start as early as kindergarten, though these results are not always included in accountability calculations.

## Using Surveys for Accountability

Our study of ESSA plans and interviews with education leaders found that states are generally assigning a low weight to survey results within their accountability rubric, a step that can help guard against schools gaming the results. Survey results typically represent between 5 percent and 10 percent of the score each school receives.

### Weighing Survey Data in Accountability Rubrics

State	Weight in ESSA Rubric
Idaho	10% elementary/middle
Illinois	5%
Iowa	18% elementary/middle 8% high school
Maryland	10%
Montana	5%
New Mexico	10% elementary/middle 5% high school
North Dakota	30% elementary/middle 20% high school
South Carolina	10% elementary/middle 5% high school

SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis of State ESSA Plans

The exception is North Dakota, which assigns 30 percent of the overall accountability score in elementary and middle school to surveys and 20 percent in high school. Iowa gives the survey 18 percent of the points in elementary and middle school, but 8 percent in high school.

In all the states examined, surveys are just one part of ESSA's School Quality and Student Success indicator, often called the fifth indicator. Maryland, for instance, assigns 35 percent of each school's score to the fifth indicator, but survey results make up just over a quarter of the score for that indicator; other components include

chronic absenteeism and access to a well-rounded curriculum. Attendance measures are often used in combination with surveys within the fifth indicator. Three states using surveys—Illinois, Maryland and Montana—also include chronic absenteeism, and two states—California and New York—include suspension rates.

States that use the surveys for accountability or for informational purposes in their school report cards have developed a variety of ways to aggregate responses to survey questions into consolidated scores. Three states—Idaho, North Dakota and South Carolina—assess students on behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement, then divide students into three categories: committed, compliant and disengaged. The states award points for the percentage of students who are considered “committed,” averaged across the three domains.

Illinois rates schools solely on their participation on its 5Essential Survey, rather than on survey results. However, the state's report card does include information on how students rate their schools, which allows parents to see how their children's schools compare to others on students' ratings of climate. The information is not part of the state's determination of whether schools need improvement.

Georgia, which uses its surveys for reporting, not accountability, has developed a School Climate Star Rating. Displayed on each school's page on the state report card, the rating combines survey results with student discipline data and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators. New York is planning to develop a similar index, but currently does require that schools submit any information to the state. California requires its schools to report survey findings, but allows them to choose which results to display on the report card.

## Driving School Improvement

Most states using surveys for reporting or accountability also provide resources to help schools use the data to improve their climate and culture. In Iowa, officials used a federal Safe and Supportive Schools grant to develop data toolkits, one for every main topic or domain in its Conditions for Learning survey: physical safety, emotional safety, expectations and boundaries, adult-student relationships, and student-student relationships. The state plans to support specific training on the material for designated schools across the state. In North Dakota, every school has created a strategy map, essentially a strategic plan with goals, objectives and initiatives. Many schools used student engagement within their plans and draw on data from the survey to inform their approach.

In D.C., researchers involved in a pilot program provide schools with reports detailing changes in climate and culture from previous years and concerns that deserve more focus. The work with 18 traditional public and charter schools began in 2016 with a grant from the National Institute of Justice. The goal is to evaluate a framework called Safe Schools Certification that should help schools build their organizational capacity to improve school climate. That includes collecting data, building buy-in from the staff, and creating a diverse leadership team.

“Every school has approached this in a very different way with very different challenges,” says Deborah Temkin, the principal investigator of the project for Child Trends. “The ones who have been really successful are the ones who really embed this into the culture of the school and have a champion who can carry it through.”

The biggest challenge, Temkin says, has been churn among teachers and principals. “The mobility of staff but also the students in this school has made it hard to sustain the initiative. You can’t change school climate in a year.”

New York, another state in a multiyear of a pilot, has created a technical assistance center for teachers and

administrators to find resources about school climate. In the summer of 2019, the state convened a summit where experts addressed struggling schools and districts on such topics as restorative practices and implicit bias.

Delaware is using the data from its teacher survey to assess teaching and learning conditions, which can contribute to poor school quality and teacher turnover; these data are considered in assessing whether students

**“The ones who have been really successful are the ones who really embed [surveys] into the culture of the school and have a champion who can carry it through.”**

-Deborah Temkin, Child Trends

have equitable access to good teachers. New Mexico goes a step further, using input from student and parent surveys as part of its teacher evaluation system. The prompts on the New Mexico surveys for students and parents are aligned with competencies for which teachers are assessed. For instance, the student prompt, “My teacher introduces a new topic by connecting to things I already know,” is linked to “establishing a culture of learning” and “engaging students in learning.”

In Tennessee, where a school climate survey is voluntary, 65 of the state’s 141 districts participated in the past school year, says Kimberly Daubenspeck, safe schools coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Education. The state shares survey results with schools and districts. Schools can also compare their average results to aggregate figures on the district and state levels.

If schools want help devising strategies to address their weaknesses, Daubenspeck’s office will work with them, pointing to problem areas and possible solutions. In many cases, the schools are adopting restorative approaches to discipline or advisories where students meet in smaller settings with teachers. She notes, “Our teachers are definitely wanting more resources to deal with the non-academic needs of their students.”

## Challenges to Using Surveys

The use of surveys to gauge school climate is cost-effective and logistically feasible, but brings with it a variety of challenges, especially when schools are held accountable for results. Chief among them is insufficient evidence that surveys are valid tools for comparing schools. Such evidence is generally not available, especially for measuring student social-emotional development. Two leading researchers in the field, Angela Duckworth and David Yeager, made this point bluntly in a much-cited 2015 working paper on student competencies: “We do not believe any available measure is suitable for between-school accountability judgments.”<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, researchers and educators have identified valid uses for the information generated from surveys for identifying problems and improving schools. By focusing on improvement rather than judging schools, an approach adopted by the CORE Districts in California, states face fewer concerns. Even so, there is still a need for evidence of the validity of survey scores for informing school improvement decisions.<sup>7</sup> Without that, schools could make wrong decisions with adverse effects on teaching and learning.

Another worry is that states could end up diminishing the value of these tools by assigning consequences to survey results. Of particular concern is that attaching stakes to the surveys could encourage schools to engage in behaviors that could improve survey results, such as communicating to students the desired responses.<sup>8</sup> Unlike test scores, surveys record information that is essentially self-reported, which can more easily be manipulated or “gamed,” especially when a school’s rating depends in part on the scores.

Some states that have administered surveys for years chose not to include them within their ESSA plans for this reason. Pennsylvania officials regularly release aggregate numbers from its surveys and share local results with schools and districts. But when it came to including the results in the ESSA’s accountability

rubric or on a public report card, “There was a pretty overwhelming agreement that these were metrics that could be gamed,” state Secretary of Education Pedro A. Rivera told us.<sup>9</sup> He and others worried that the surveys would lose their value for educators if they became part of a high-stakes accountability system. “We didn’t want to disincentivize the collection of valuable data,” he added.

His remarks reflect the recognition among policymakers and researchers that these tools can provide important insight. Researchers in California have found that surveys of school climate and social-emotional development used in a consortium of urban school districts can distinguish among schools. The results there also correlate with other academic and non-academic measures and show promise in informing school improvement.<sup>10</sup> That said, the CORE Districts, which have administered surveys to nearly a million students annually in the past few years, are not using the results for accountability but instead to guide school improvement efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Compounding the problem of using these tools in accountability systems are the biases that can creep into surveys. Researchers point to the potential for “social desirability bias,” with students reporting what they think they should be doing (such as turning in homework regularly or being polite to adults) rather than what they are actually doing. Another form of bias occurs when student responses reflect the characteristics of their friends or the norms of their school; this is sometimes referred to as reference bias. And a third involves students reacting to inherent stereotypes based on gender, race or class.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the need to read and understand the survey questions can exclude students in the early elementary grades and might affect the participation of older students whose proficiency in the language(s) of the survey is limited. Some researchers caution against surveying students in the lower elementary grades because they may not understand the meaning of the questions.

Another challenge is that surveys are often influenced by factors beyond the school's control, such as student demographic characteristics. Research suggests, for example, that students of color tend to rate their experiences in school differently than other students do, but the reasons for these differences are not clear.<sup>13</sup> Effective use of the data to support school improvement or accountability requires an understanding of what schools can do to improve climate for the student body as a whole and for various subgroups.

Finally, these surveys are only as valuable as what they measure. Naturally, policymakers and educators want to include as broad a range of school characteristics or domains as possible. Survey designers need to determine how many of these characteristics can be reliably measured within the time it takes to administer the survey. Because the reliability of scores on a single domain is influenced in large part by the number of questions testing it, there is a trade-off between including many domains and measuring each of them with enough items to produce reliable scores. There is also some ambiguity in interpreting results as reflections of student attributes rather than attributes of the school.<sup>14</sup>

## Recommendations

Whether surveys are being used for accountability, reporting or improvement, state and local education agencies can take several steps to ensure that results are used appropriately and lead to improved learning opportunities for students.<sup>15</sup>

### Weigh the trade-offs of accountability measures

There are clear benefits to using surveys to gauge school climate, including creating a fuller picture of school performance and creating incentives for district and school staff to enact policies and practices that support a high-quality climate. But the risk of score corruption weighs more heavily against their use for accountability. If policymakers want to use school climate and student

engagement surveys to rate schools, they should assign small weights to survey results, or award points for participation rather than scores. Most of the states we examined follow these practices.

### Monitor survey effects over time

Given the lack of evidence showing climate surveys are valid in accountability systems, states should continue to study the results as they gain experience with these tools. Analyses of the data can shed light on how surveys are functioning—such as whether the demographic composition of the student body affects school-level scores—and how the scores are influencing overall accountability decisions. The research center Policy Analysis for California Education is doing valuable work in this area with California's CORE Districts.

States should also gather data from educators and other stakeholder groups to understand how the data are interpreted and used, and to ensure that stakeholders support the inclusion of these surveys in the statewide systems. States might consider administering surveys or convening focus groups to gather input and then use the results to inform changes to the measures or to the accountability and reporting rules associated with the measures. Illinois conducted such a review on its 5E Survey in 2014 and found uneven use of the survey results across its districts. That discovery led to the development of more training and resources for school staff.<sup>16</sup>

### Support educators' use of climate data to inform practice

Teachers and other educators need guidance on how to use climate survey data appropriately and in ways that will help them improve teaching and learning. This guidance could be offered through coaching or other forms of professional development that are shaped to educators' contexts. These should help teachers make sense of survey results alongside student achievement test scores, attendance, or behavioral data.

Any guidance regarding appropriate use of survey data should acknowledge the risks associated with inappropriate or excessive use. For instance, while data suggesting differences in student perception of school climate across racial and ethnic groups can help teachers and school leaders assess how they are serving all their students, this information should not be used to assign students to interventions based on their ethnic or racial status. Further, the risks associated with high-stakes uses, including the temptation to game the results, should be clear to all users of the data.

Using survey data to improve school climate and student success takes a champion in the school, a commitment from a principal or leading teacher. And it takes time. It is encouraging to see that several of the states we examined are developing toolkits and training so that educators have a sense of how to use the data in ways that promote a high-quality school climate.

### **Create conditions that produce high-quality survey results**

There are several steps state and local education leaders can take to enhance the quality of survey data. For example, because the validity of survey scores is influenced by participation rates as well as by how seriously respondents take the surveys, policymakers could reward high participation rates and supply schools with information outlining the surveys' value. Leaders could also seek feedback from schools on factors that might pose threats to validity, such as surveys that are culturally inappropriate or misaligned with students' native languages.

While it is encouraging that states are recognizing the value of assessing the quality of conditions for learning, the use of school climate and student engagement surveys in school accountability should be done with care. As state survey systems mature, and we learn more about what does and doesn't work, states will be able to improve how they use surveys and explore other non-academic indicators of school performance, recognizing the breadth of ways that schools help students succeed.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>11</sup> Toch and Miller
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Hough et al.  
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- <sup>15</sup> The National Center of School Climate provides a [School Climate Resource Center](#). The Council of Chief State School Officers offers [this guide](#) for measuring social-emotional learning and school climate.
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## APPENDIX

## School Climate Surveys Under ESSA

	How are surveys used under ESSA?	What weight is assigned to surveys in accountability rubrics?	Were surveys administered before ESSA?	What grades are surveyed?	Who is surveyed?
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>	Reporting	N/A	California Healthy Schools Survey has been offered to districts since 1997	Grades 5, 7, 9 & 11	Students, parents and staff
<b>DELAWARE</b>	Improvement	N/A	Delaware School Climate Survey for students has been used since 2012, Teacher survey was developed in 2013	Grades 3-12	Students, parents and staff with teacher surveys being used to assess equity
<b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</b>	Piloting	N/A	Pilot surveys are administered as part of a grant from the National Institutes of Justice to improve school climate	Grades 7-10	Students, parents and staff
<b>GEORGIA</b>	Reporting	N/A	School climate survey was first used in 2011	Grades 3-12, 6-12 posted on website	Students, parents and staff

	Are survey results included on the state report card?	What domains are surveyed?	What survey is being used?	How are scores derived for accountability or reporting?	How are survey results used to drive improvement?
<b>CA</b>	Districts are required to upload results of their choosing to California dashboard	Engagement; academic expectations and mindsets positive interpersonal relationships; social-emotional & physical safety, clarity of rules and behavioral expectations; mental and physical health, social-emotional development; respect for diversity and equity; school physical environment	Districts can choose their surveys but most use the California Healthy Kids survey	Schools can use any indicator they want. They can request a report card from WestEd based on certain indicators	Resources and training are provided by the California Department of Education
<b>DE</b>	No, but the information is made available to schools and parents	School climate, including relationships among school community members, school safety, fairness and clarity of rules for behavior; social and emotional competencies, classroom management techniques; and cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement	Delaware School Climate Survey, TELL Delaware for teachers	Schools receive multiple score reports and the reports include a Total School Climate Score based on the mean of their subscale scores	The data is used to determine areas of focus for training, coaching, and resource allocation; school teams receive technical assistance for data interpretation and use in improvement planning; each school receives longitudinal data reports and a data interpretation guide
<b>DC</b>	Not yet	Engagement, safety and environment measured in the U.S. Education Department survey, with some tweaks to reflect LGBTQ issues	U.S. Department of Education survey	The scores are based on the US. DoE scoring system and compared to national benchmarks	Child Trends provides schools with technical assistance, workbooks for Safe School Certification; some schools receive \$15,000 grants under the pilot
<b>GA</b>	Yes with a 5-star rating system.	School connectedness, social support from peers and adults, cultural acceptance, social/civil learning, physical environment, school safety, peer victimization, drug and alcohol use, school climate, mental health	Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0	Results from surveys of parents, students and teachers are combined with discipline data, information on violence and substance abuse, and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators	Schools have access to a comprehensive report which will allow them to identify areas in need of improvement, and plan targeted student interventions to improve achievement for all students

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<b>IDAHO</b>	Accountability	10%	No	Grades 3-8 (9-12 will be surveyed but not for accountability)	Students, parents and staff
<b>ILLINOIS</b>	Accountability	5% based on participation, not survey results	All schools have had to use some survey, The 5E survey began in 2013-14.	Grades 4-12	Students, parents and staff
<b>INDIANA</b>	Piloting and Improvement	N/A	Schools receiving Title I funding were required to survey stakeholders, but the state did not offer a survey	Grades 3-12	Students, parents and staff
<b>IOWA</b>	Accountability	18% in elementary and middle schools, 8% in high school	The current survey was developed in 2010 as part of a federal grant and initially added to the statewide Iowa Youth Survey	Grades 3-12	Students for accountability. Teacher and parent surveys will be available by Spring 2020
<b>MARYLAND</b>	Accountability	10%	In some schools	Grades 5-11	Student and teacher results combined in an index (weighted 70% students, 30% teachers)

	Are survey results included on the state report card?	What domains are surveyed?	What survey is being used?	How are scores derived for accountability or reporting?	How are survey results used to drive improvement?
<b>ID</b>	Yes	Behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement	Cognia Student Engagement Survey	Declined to say, citing proprietary concerns	Cognia is supporting school improvement resources
<b>IL</b>	Yes, the results of the survey appear on the report card, but not in accountability rubric	Effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environment, and ambitious instruction	5Essentials Survey is used by most districts. Two alternatives are available.	The report card scores represent composite scores on questions in each of the five sections. The teacher and student response rates are averaged to determine a score.	The Illinois State Board of Education offers resources for schools on its website.
<b>IN</b>	No, it will be included in school improvement plans required for every school	Engagement; school environment including fairness, grading, and discipline; responsibility; perceptions about school staff and leadership; school climate; professional development; resource availability and usefulness	Survey created by Panorama	N/A	State officials will work with schools, as will Panorama, to look at their data and pinpoint the root cause and gaps in their instruction, climate and culture and then make evidence-based recommendations
<b>IA</b>	Yes	Physical and emotional safety, adult-student relationships, student-student relationships and expectations/boundaries	Iowa Youth Survey: Conditions for Learning	The overall composite score is the average of the construct scores (the percentage of students who answered every construct item positively)	Materials developed under the Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools grant include 5 data toolkits; the state will support specific training in this area across the state for designated schools
<b>MD</b>	Indices reported for students by grade span and disaggregated by racial/ethnic groups, economic disadvantage, students with disabilities, and English Learners; educator results are school-level	4 domains: relationships, safety, community, and environment with 10 topics: respect for diversity, participation and engagement, emotional and physical safety, bullying, substance abuse, behavioral and academic support, physical environment, relationships with students and staff; for educators: quality of instructional feedback	Survey created in collaboration with REL Mid-Atlantic & Mathematica based on ED School Climate Surveys, Delaware School Climate Survey, Illinois 5 Essentials Survey, and a survey from a principal professional development program evaluation	Index is a weighted average of student and educator averages with a range from 1 to 10; MSDE and partners used psychometric analysis and benchmarking based on U.S. Department of Education's methodology	Currently developing materials within MSDE for school climate interventions and school improvement

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<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>	Improvement	N/A	No	Grades 4, 5, 8 & 10	Students
<b>MONTANA</b>	Accountability	5%	Not in a mandatory fashion	Grades K-12	Developing
<b>NEVADA</b>	Improvement and Reporting	Initially, participation was a 2% bonus, but state submitted an amendment to remove it	Not statewide	Grades 5-12	Students except for those eligible for alternative assessments
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>	Accountability	10% in elementary/middle 5% in high school	Student attendance and student/parent surveys were part of the school accountability system	Grades 3-12	Students and parents
<b>NEW YORK</b>	Piloting	N/A	The surveys were required for schools in need of improvement before ESSA; New York City requires surveys	Grades 5-12, but schools can opt to use other surveys focused on earlier grades	Students, parents, staff

	Are survey results included on the state report card?	What domains are surveyed?	What survey is being used?	How are scores derived for accountability or reporting?	How are survey results used to drive improvement?
<b>MA</b>	No, results go to schools	Cultural competence, relationships, participation, emotional and physical safety, bullying, mental health, instructional environment, and discipline	Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) Student Survey Project	Schools receive an overall score for school climate and then for three aspects of the survey	The Department of Education website provides profiles of what a typical low-, middle-, and high-scoring schools look like and provides guidance for interpreting data and crosswalks with social-emotional learning
<b>MT</b>	Not yet	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
<b>NV</b>	Not in report card, but the state has created an interactive site showing all survey results	Cultural and linguistic competence, emotional and physical safety, relationships, and social and emotional competencies (17 categories part of CASEL 5 framework)	Nevada School Climate/Social Emotional Learning Survey	Scores ranging from 100-500 based on benchmarks developed by the U.S. Department of Education	Schools receive an annual report from the state with survey results and a tool to compare results with others; the state gives direct support, as well as U.S. Education Department resources, to schools
<b>NM</b>	Yes	Culture of learning, student engagement, classroom management—aligned with the observation domains for the educator evaluation system	Opportunity to Learn survey	A school earn full points when the average survey score was 45 out of 50. Average scores over 45 resulted in additional points earned above the “maximum”	Results from the survey are one component of the educator evaluation system, which establishes a framework for continuous improvement and professional growth
<b>NY</b>	No	Cultural and linguistic competence, relationships, and school participation; emotional and physical safety, bullying and cyberbullying, substance abuse, and emergency readiness/management; Physical and instructional environment, physical and mental health, and discipline	U.S. Department of Education school climate survey	The state plans to develop a school climate index	A statewide technical assistance center provides resources, and regional education boards provide professional development

## School Climate Surveys Under ESSA

	How are surveys used under ESSA?	What weight is assigned to surveys in accountability rubrics?	Were surveys administered before ESSA?	What grades are surveyed?	Who is surveyed?
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>	Accountability	30% in elementary and middle schools, 20% in high school	No	Grades 3-12	Students; the state is working on parent and staff surveys
<b>OHIO</b>	Studying	N/A	About 1/3 of districts now use surveys, many of them locally generated; Ohio is studying how they are using results & whether to add to accountability	N/A	N/A
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b>	Accountability	10% in elementary & middle, 5% in high school	No	Grades 3-12, if enrolled 90 days	Students

	Are survey results included on the state report card?	What domains are surveyed?	What survey is being used?	How are scores derived for accountability or reporting?	How are survey results used to drive improvement?
<b>ND</b>	Statewide data is posted	Cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement	Cognia Student Engagement Survey piloted in 2017	The accountability index is based on how many students are completely engaged	Every school in the state creates a strategy map, a plan with goals, objectives and initiatives they choose; the state will provide resources based on school priorities
<b>OH</b>	No	N/A	The study, funded by federal Title IV, Part A grant dollars, is evaluating what surveys districts are administering and how they are using results	N/A	N/A
<b>SC</b>	Yes	Cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement	Cognia Measured Progress' Student Engagement Survey (renamed South Carolina Climate Assessment Survey)	South Carolina will award points for percentage of students who are "committed" averaged across the engagement domains	Survey data is being used to provide schools with adequate support and strategies for increasing student engagement and improving school climate







**WALKING A FINE LINE**  
SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS IN STATE ESSA PLANS