



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education**

January 20, 2017

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: 2017 Virginia Middle School Climate Survey**

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify school divisions that the school climate survey that will be administered in grades six, seven, and eight between February 1, 2017, and April 1, 2017. The survey measures student and teacher perceptions of school rules and discipline, teacher-student relationships, student engagement in school, and the extent of bullying and teasing at school. School staff members and students will complete the survey online. Each school may choose a three-week period to administer the survey between February 1, 2017, and April 1, 2017. Complete instructions for administering the surveys are available on the Department of Criminal Justice Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) website at <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety>. Every Superintendent will receive specific instructions via email.

**Background Information**

This survey is a component of the annual school safety audit which school divisions are required to submit to VCSCS, according to 22.1-279.8.B of the *Code of Virginia*. The VCSCS began including a survey of school climate for reports for the 2012-2013 school year and future years on an annual basis.

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. The survey was conducted in grades seven and eight in the spring of 2013 and 2015 and will continue with those grades this year.

The survey is being extended in 2017 to include grade six. Schools that have a grade six, but do not have grades seven and eight, will not be asked to participate. In 2017, the survey will be conducted in each school that has regular education programs for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Each eligible school will administer the school climate survey to its students and staff for grades six, seven and eight.

The staff survey should include the following staff members who serve sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students: school administrators (principal or assistant principal), school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, school resource officers, school security officers, school social workers, and teachers. 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.

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.

**Survey Instructions in Brief**

All staff members should be invited to complete the teacher/staff version of the survey. Student and staff participation is voluntary. 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. Parents of students should be advised of the survey and offered the option to decline participation. Staff members should be offered the same option; however, it is important to have a high participation rate, so we ask principals to encourage their teachers and other staff members to complete the anonymous survey.

Schools will have two options for the student survey: (1) they may survey all students in grades six through eight or (2) they may randomly select 25 students for each grade. Schools choosing the first option should offer the survey to all eligible students and achieve a participation rate of at least 80 percent, exclusive of students who are not able to complete the survey due to handicapping conditions or language barriers. Schools choosing the second option must follow a random number procedure 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.

Additional information is on the VCSCS website at <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety>. Questions may be directed to Jessica Smith, the School and Campus Security Program Specialist, at (804) 786-5367 or [Jessica.smith@dcjs.virginia.gov](mailto:Jessica.smith@dcjs.virginia.gov).

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