



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

January 17, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: School Safety Audit: The Secondary School Climate Survey**

This memorandum is to inform you about the school climate survey that will be administered in grades 9 through 12 between February 1 and April 1, 2014. This survey is part of the annual school safety audit which school divisions are required to submit to the Virginia Center for School Safety (VCSS), according to §22.1-279.8.B of the *Code of Virginia*. 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.

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 will continue with those grades every second year thereafter. As announced last January, the survey will be conducted in grades 9 through 12 in the spring of 2014 and then continued with those grades every second year thereafter.

Schools will receive a detailed report of survey results for each grade level 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.

In 2014, the survey will be conducted in each school that has regular education programs for students in grades 9 through 12. 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 and teachers in grades 9 through 12.

Schools should invite all teachers for grades 9 through 12 to complete the survey. Schools will have two options for the student survey: (1) they may survey all students in grades 9 through 12; 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 disabling 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.

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.

Student and teacher participation is voluntary. Parents of students identified for participation in the survey will be advised by a standard letter and offered the option of declining to participate. Teachers will be offered the same option.

The survey will be administered online at school. In response to school requests, the survey period has been moved forward one month. Each school may choose a 3-week period to administer the survey between February 1 and April 1.

Written instructions for random sampling and survey administration, and additional information about the survey, will be made available on the Web site for the Virginia Center for School Safety at <http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/>. Questions may be directed to Donna Michaelis, manager of the VCSS, at 804-371-6506, [donna.michaelis@dcjs.virginia.gov](mailto:donna.michaelis@dcjs.virginia.gov); or Jessica Smith, school and campus security program administrative specialist, at 804-786-5367 or [Jessica.smith@dcjs.virginia.gov](mailto:Jessica.smith@dcjs.virginia.gov).

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