What do Minnesota students think about school climate?

A body of research shows that the way students experience their school’s climate connects to their academic success, behaviors and health outcomes.

Many dimensions of school climate influence students, including how successfully schools encourage the academic engagement of their students.

This is the fourth in a series of School Climate Insights developed by researchers at the University of Minnesota using Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) data to inform school climate improvement efforts.

Climate Insight #4
ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

How many students report high levels of academic engagement?

The percent of students in a school who report having the highest levels of academic engagement ranged from 0-50% across MN schools.

Average Percent of students in a school who are very engaged in academics

0% 24% Highest 50%

About the indicator*
The academic engagement indicator includes student reports of:

- Grades: Mostly As and Bs
- College plans
- School attitudes: (e.g. “I care about doing well in school”)

When many students in a school are very academically engaged, what happens to...

Our research found that when a school has a high concentration of students who report feeling very academically engaged, student behaviors and academic outcomes in that school are better than in schools with fewer of these students.

academic outcomes?

Meeting MCA reading standards 46% 71%
Meeting MCA math standards 39% 71%

student behaviors?

Report skipping school (at least 1x/month) 17% 6%
Report being physically bullied (last 30 days) 23% 13%

How does your school compare to Minnesota averages?

Free school climate reports are available to any school or district that participated in the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey.

The report will highlight climate topics, student outcomes and behaviors while comparing your school’s data to MN schools.

To request your Climate Insight, email our research team at social-i@umn.edu

After validating your request, we’ll send you a fact sheet about your school that includes:

Climate Indicators
- Internal assets
- Safety
- Disciplinary experiences
- Academic engagement
- Teacher relationships

Student Outcomes
- Meeting MCA standards for math and reading
- Absenteeism
- Bullying

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Climate Insight

What works?

Creating a positive school climate requires a strategic improvement process characterized by six overlapping essential practices:

Educational Leadership
-endorses and leads any and all improvement efforts.

Engaging the Whole School Community
-in all improvement efforts.

Assessment
-of school climate is comprehensive and measures progress.

Teaching and Learning Practices
-employ pro-social instruction, classroom management strategies and curriculum that utilizes different learning strategies.

Policies and Practices
-support positive school climate.

Relational/Management Practices
-support meaningful student-teacher-staff relationships.

Resources
-Visit the School Safety Technical Assistance Center for:
  - Technical Assistance and Support
  - Safe and Supportive Schools Act Training
  - School Climate Improvement Training
  - Bullying Prevention/Intervention Resources
  - Guidance and Sample Policies
  - Best Practices and Evidence-Based Strategies

*Data & methods

Data used in this Climate Insight come from approximately 122,000 8th, 9th and 11th grade students who completed the Minnesota Student Survey in 2013. The analysis included four of the many school climate indicators:

1. Safety: Feeling safe at or on the way to/from school
2. Internal assets: 14 questions about positive self image and social competence
3. Educational engagement: grades, engagement, college plans
4. Disciplinary experiences: office referrals, suspensions
5. Positive teacher relationships: adults and teachers listen to, care about, are interested in and treat students fairly

Comparisons of highest and lowest levels contrasted schools at the top 10% and bottom 10% of each indicator.

About this project

Funded by the UMN Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI), these Climate Insights leverage UMN research and MDE practice to achieve a shared goal: improving student outcomes by improving school climate.

The UMN Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health
-in the Department of Pediatrics is home to a cohort of researchers focused on understanding how social influences – policies, community norms, school climate, resources – impact the health and well-being of young people.

Findings from their research are put into practice through collaboration with community partners as well as health and education systems.

Contact Marla Eisenberg, ScD, MPH
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The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) School Safety Technical Assistance Center
-supports learning environments for students that maximize their learning potential to be successful in school and in life.

For more information on how to address school climate visit the Center’s website or contact the Center directly.

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchSafety

MDE.SSTAC@state.mn.us
651-582-8364

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS)

The Minnesota Student Survey is an essential data source for understanding how best to support the health, well-being and academic success of young people. Unlike some surveys, MSS measures more than just the individual risk behaviors of young people—it also includes strengths, assets and community impacts.

Used by researchers and practitioners alike, MSS reports are available on-line at:

http://education.state.mn.us
Find MSS info under “Data Center”

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