

A Comparison of AISD District-Wide Surveys

Addressing Responses to Similar Items Across the TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys

District-Wide Surveys Background

District-wide surveys are used in a variety of ways around the district. District-wide surveys are often used as a means to monitor working and learning conditions, in the district strategic plan scorecard, and as an outcome measure for district programs and initiatives. Additionally, these surveys are designed to collect feedback from some of the main district stakeholders: staff, students, and families. Annually, campus-based staff are asked to respond to the Teaching, Engaging, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey, students are asked to respond to the Student Climate Survey, and families of students in Austin Independent School District (AISD) are asked to respond to the Family Survey. These surveys provide rich data for the district to aid in decision-making processes, as well as allow staff, students, and families the opportunity to have their voices heard. Having these multiple perspectives from different stakeholder groups on aspects of climate, culture, and other characteristics of the school environment helps to provide a deeper insight into the overall organizational climate of AISD.

Although there is a general understanding that some of the same topics are examined in each of these three surveys (e.g., safety, student conduct, community involvement), a comparison of these surveys to determine any direct overlap in survey items has not been explored. Therefore, it is the purpose of this report to identify similar items across these three surveys and to examine the relationships between responses to or perceptions of these items.

Before relationships between survey items could be explored, similar items across surveys needed to be identified. The TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys were examined to choose items that were reflected in at least one of the other surveys. That is, some item concepts may have been shared by only two of the three surveys. When looking for item concepts that appeared in all three of the observed district-wide surveys, items concerning safe school environments and social emotional learning (SEL) were shared across all three surveys. Given that safety at school and SEL are focal points for the district, it is logical that items related to these topics would be asked of campus-based staff, students, and families. Another important item, the TELL Survey scorecard item “Students at this school follow rules of conduct”, is mirrored in the Student Climate Survey. The results of the entire survey crosswalk are in Appendix A. The following sections address the comparisons of similar items across surveys and therefore across survey respondents/stakeholder groups. The TELL Survey provides staff’s perceptions, the Student Climate Survey provides students’ perceptions, and the Family Survey provides families’ perceptions.

Explanation of Mean Calculations

Means were calculated for each item at each of the specified levels: elementary, middle, high, and for the district overall. Data was first filtered to the specified level, and then a mean based on the 1 – 4 responses was calculated for each item of interest. As noted with each figure, for the TELL and Family Surveys, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. For the Student Climate Survey, 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = a lot of the time. While the Student Climate Survey utilizes a different measurement scale, the mean item responses across these three surveys still provides comparable information about stakeholder perceptions and therefore exploring relationships between items is appropriate.

TELL, Student Climate, and Family Survey Item Comparisons

As stated, the TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys all contain several similar items relating to safety in the school environment and SEL (see Table 1 for survey items).

Table 1.

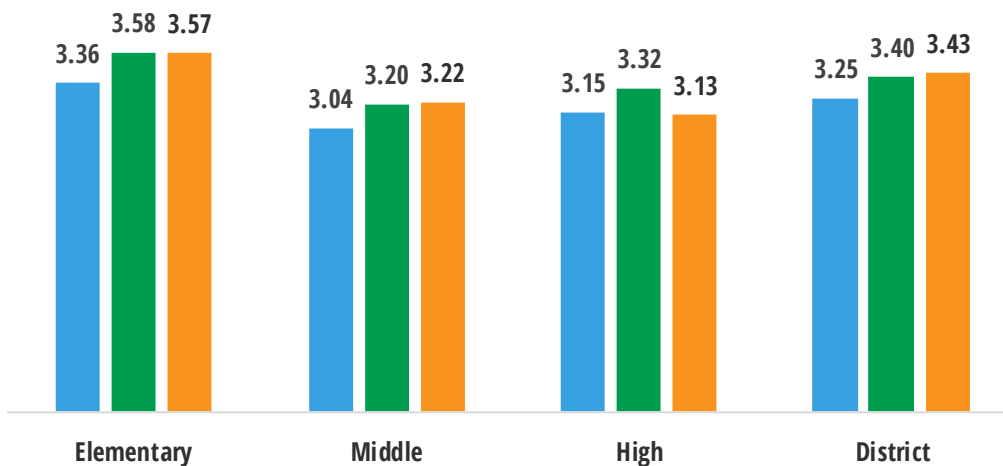
Items Related to Safety and SEL Across the TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys

TELL Survey items	Student Climate Survey items	Family Survey items
All campus staff work in a school environment that is safe.	I feel safe at my school.	My child: Attends school in a safe learning environment.
All campus staff interact with one another in a way that models social and emotional competence.	I use ways to calm myself down. During my school day, I am aware of when my feelings change.	My child's school provides my child with adequate opportunities to: Learn social and emotional skills (e.g., using strategies to calm down when upset, naming their feelings, demonstrating empathy toward others).
My principal models social and emotional competence in the way that he/she deals with students and faculty on an everyday basis.	If I get angry with a classmate, we can talk about it and make it better.	

When comparing responses to these items across surveys, the means appear relatively similar across the items at each level, with higher means for all stakeholder groups at the elementary level. The means at each level and for the district overall are displayed graphically in Figure 1. For the district overall, families perceived the greatest safety at their child’s school, followed by students, and then by staff.

Figure 1.

Perceptions of safety were similar across all groups and levels, with **students** feeling slightly greater safety across levels than did **staff**. **Families’** perceptions were consistent with **students’** perceptions at the elementary and middle levels but were more consistent with **staff’s** perceptions at the high school level.



Source. 2019 TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys

Note. Items were rated on a scale from 1–4. For the TELL and Family Surveys, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. For the Student Climate Survey, 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = a lot of the time.

Related to the SEL items, families’ perception of their children having the opportunity to learn SEL skills was lowest at the high school level, with students’ perceptions of using SEL techniques relatively stable across levels. Staff appeared to report that principals treat students and staff in a way that models SEL more often than staff perceived that their fellow staff interact with each other in a way that models SEL. More specifics for each level for the SEL items are provided in Figures 2a–d.

Figures 2a–d.

While item means were similar for the four items across levels and for the district overall, at the high school level, **students** were more likely to report that they engaged in SEL techniques than **families** were likely to perceive that students learned SEL skills. **Staff** perceived that their principals modeled SEL more so than they perceived that other staff modeled SEL.

Figure 2a. Elementary

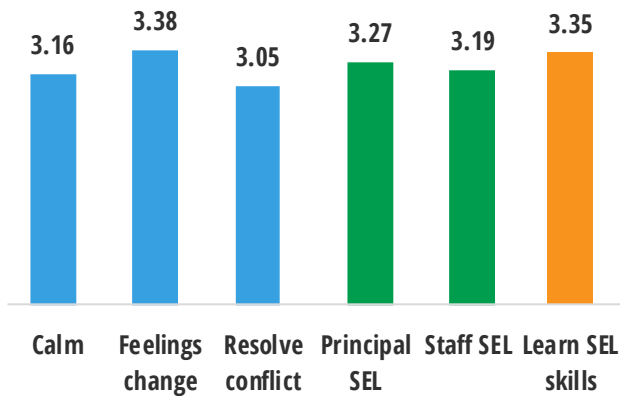


Figure 2b. Middle

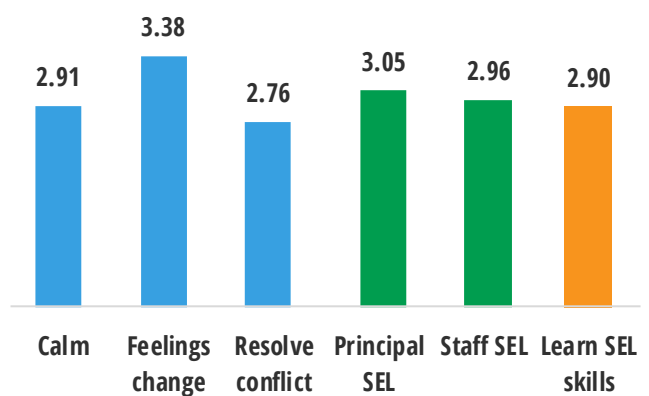


Figure 2c. High

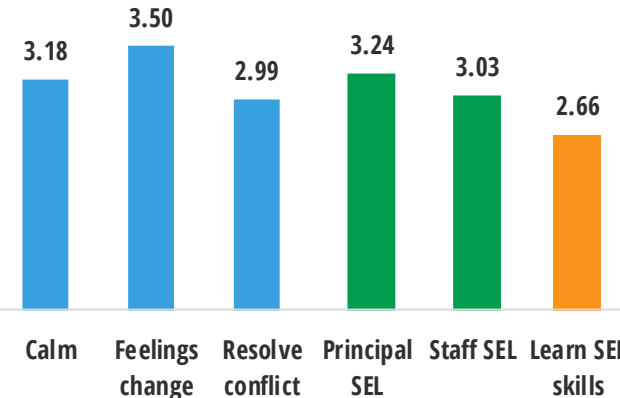
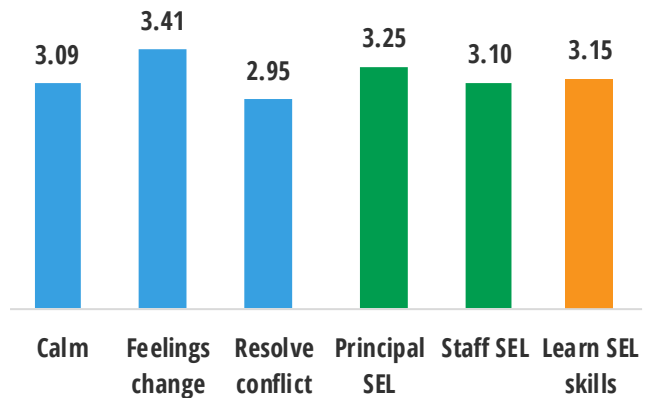


Figure 2d. District



Source. 2019 TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys

Note. Items were rated on a scale from 1–4. For the TELL and Family Surveys, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. For the Student Climate Survey, 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = a lot of the time.

TELL and Student Climate Survey Item Comparisons

For the TELL and Student Climate Surveys, four conceptually similar items were found across surveys. The first set of items concerned students following rules of conduct, the second set concerned students’ abilities to achieve academically, the third set concerned students’ abilities to reach their goals, and the last set concerned perceptions of using time efficiently in class. Table 2 lists the exact survey items.

Table 2.

Similar Items Across the TELL and Student Climate Surveys

TELL Survey items	Student Climate Survey items
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	Students at my school follow the school rules.
Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	I can do even the hardest schoolwork if I try.
Students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	I can reach the goals I set for myself.
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about: The use of time in my school.	Our classes stay busy and do not waste time.

These items were compared to one another across all levels and for the district overall. Again, higher responses to these items were seen at the elementary level than at other levels. Interestingly, across all levels and for the district overall, students were more likely to perceive that their fellow students followed the rules of conduct than staff were to perceive that students followed the rules of conduct. Additionally, students at the secondary levels reported that time was being wasted less often than did staff members at the secondary levels. Staff members appeared to feel that students at their school could reach their goals and achieve academically more than did students themselves. A more in-depth depiction of these results for each level and for the district overall are provided in Figures 3a–d.

Figures 3a–d.

Staff's and students' perceptions for these four items were similar across levels and for the district overall. Only staff at the elementary level felt that time was wasted in class more than did students.

Figure 3a. Elementary

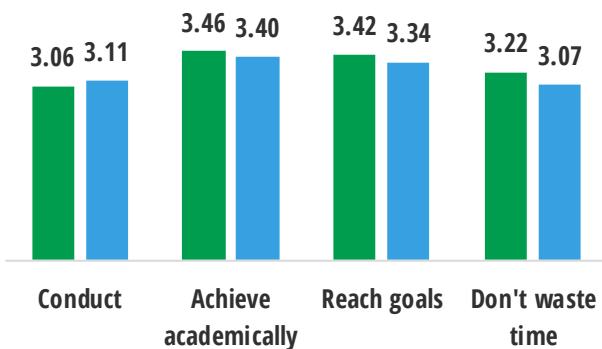


Figure 3b. Middle

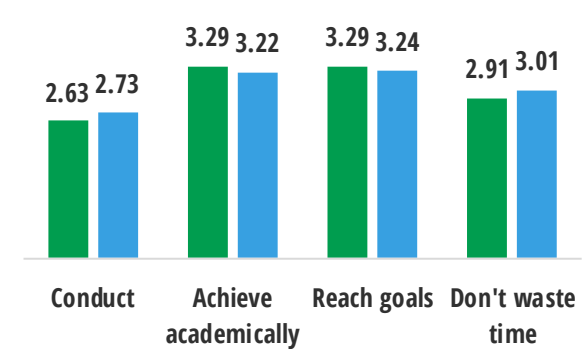


Figure 3c. High

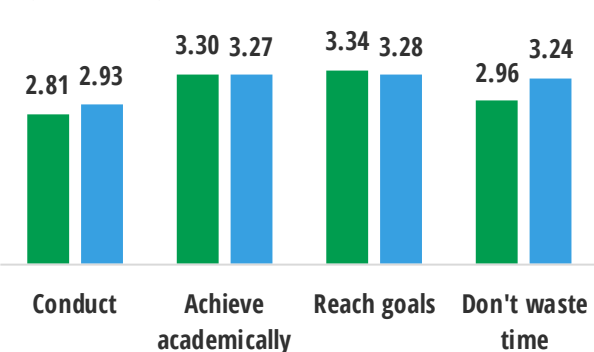
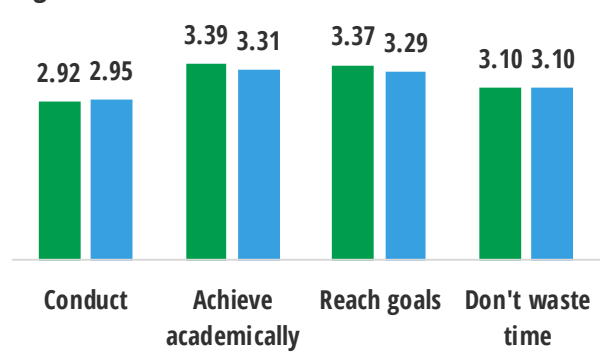


Figure 3d. District



Source. 2019 TELL and Student Climate Surveys

Note. Items were rated on a scale from 1–4. For the TELL Survey, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. For the Student Climate Survey, 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = a lot of the time.

TELL and Family Survey Item Comparisons

For the TELL and Family Surveys, three conceptually similar items were compared. The first set of items concerned the community’s support of the school; the second set of items concerned how the school works to engage the community, parents, or guardians; and the last set of items concerned parents’ ability to provide and awareness of opportunities to provide input on decision making. Table 3 lists the exact survey items.

Table 3.

Similar Items Across the TELL and Family Surveys

TELL Survey items	Family Survey items
The community we serve is supportive of this school.	I feel: Our local community supports our school.
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	I feel: Our school works hard to engage our local community.
Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	I am aware of opportunities to provide input into district decision-making processes.

Schools at the elementary level had the highest mean ratings across all three items and across both family and staff stakeholder groups. However, in contrast with many of the other middle school findings in the Family, TELL, and Student Climate Surveys, middle schools reported slightly higher item means across staff and families for most items than did high schools. Additionally, staff’s perceptions were stronger than families’ perceptions across items at all levels and for the district overall, indicating that staff were more likely to either agree or strongly agree with these items than were families. Also of interest, larger differences were found between staff’s and families’ perceptions on survey items regarding decision making. Staff responded to an item concerning decision making at the school level, while families responded to an item regarding decision making at the district level. These differences in the item phrasing may explain the larger differences between stakeholders’ perceptions. Alignment of item phrasing is discussed more in the conclusion. Item means for each level and for the district overall are provided in Figures 4a–d.

Figures 4a–d.

Staff reported stronger agreement more often than did **families** across all levels and for the district overall. The largest mean discrepancy between **staff** and **families** was on the item related to providing input in decision making.

Figure 4a. Elementary

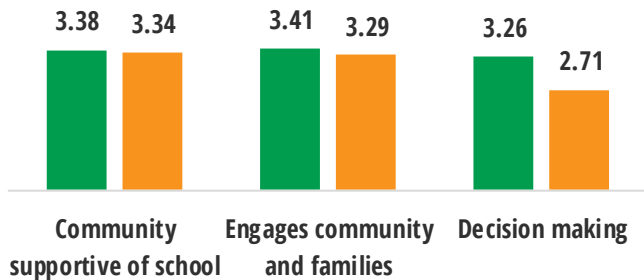


Figure 4b. Middle

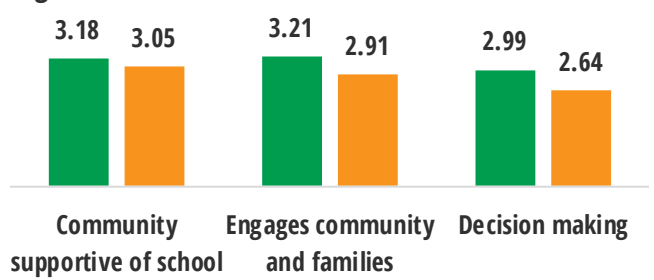


Figure 4c. High

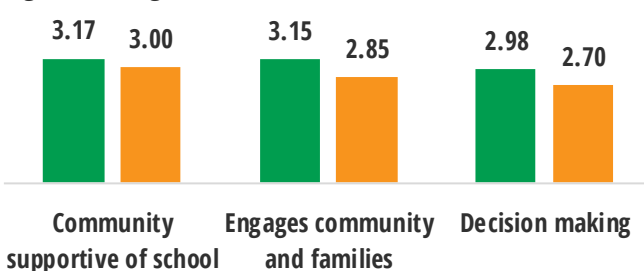
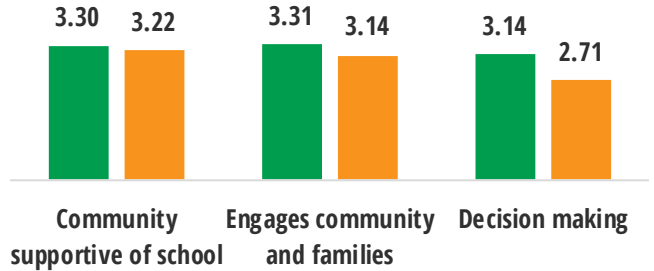


Figure 4d. District



Source. 2019 TELL Survey and 2019 Family Survey

Note. Items were rated on a scale from 1–4. For the TELL and Family Survey, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree.

Student Climate and Family Survey Item Comparisons

For the Student Climate and Family Surveys, several items were compared. The first set of items concerned whether the student liked attending school and the second set of items concerned the arts and creativity. Table 4 lists the exact survey items.

Table 4.

Similar Items Across the Student Climate and Family Surveys

Student Climate Survey items	Family Survey items
I like to come to school.	My child: Likes going to school.
My school is an artsy, creative place.	My child's school provides my child with adequate opportunities to: Study the arts/experience creative learning.

Perceptions often differed between families and students. Regarding feeling that the student liked going to school, families were more likely to perceive that the child liked going to school than students were likely to report enjoying going to school. Interestingly, at the secondary level, families were more likely to perceive that their student’s school was an artsy or creative place than students were to perceive of their school as an artsy or creative place. At the elementary level, students perceived that their school was more artsy or creative than did families. More detailed results related to these two items are displayed in Figures 5a–d.

Figures 5a–d.

Families reported that their child liked going to school more consistently than **students** reported that they liked going to school. At the elementary level, **students** perceived that their school was more artsy/creative than did **families**, but this relationship was reversed at the secondary levels.

Figure 5a. Elementary

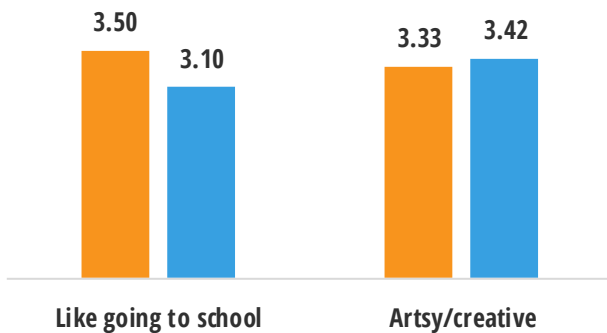


Figure 5b. Middle

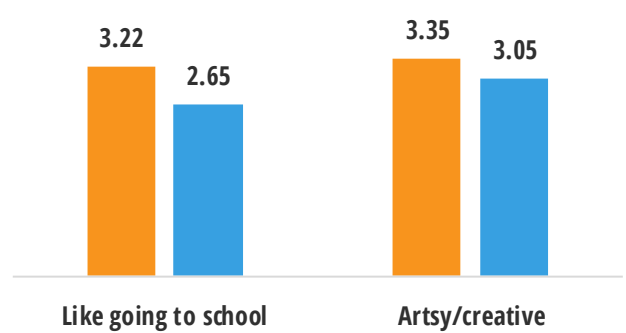


Figure 5c. High

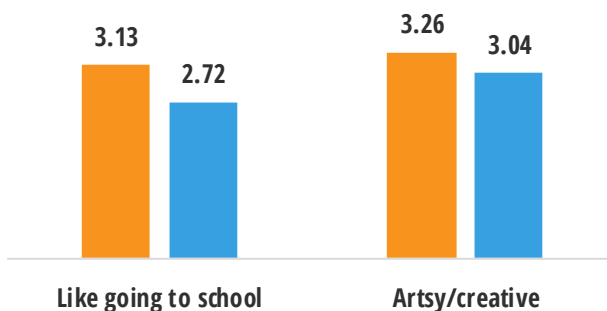
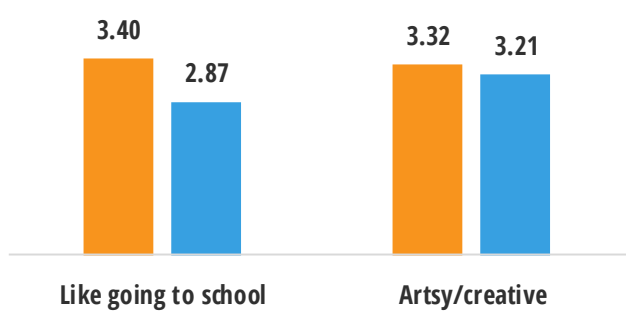


Figure 5d. District



Source. 2019 Family Survey and 2019 Student Climate Survey

Note. Items were rated on a scale from 1–4. For the Family Survey, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. For the Student Climate Survey, 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = a lot of the time.

Conclusion

Multiple item concepts are shared across the TELL, Student Climate, and Family Surveys. When exploring responses to similar items by students, staff, and families, the average responses to these items were similar across stakeholder groups for each level and for the district overall. Some consistent trends were observed; for example, higher means were often seen at the elementary levels, and staff tended to endorse items more strongly than did families (Figures 4a –d). Additionally, the finding that staff had lower perceptions of safety than did students is interesting, and more exploration of why this occurs could be warranted.

Overall, these comparisons show where there is alignment in items across three of the major district surveys, as well as alignment in perceptions by AISD staff, students, and families. While there appear to be several shared items across these three surveys, greater alignment across these surveys may be worth consideration. Alignment of items, especially items used in the district’s strategic plan scorecards, in the Local Accountability System, and for program evaluations would provide differing perspectives on topics that matter most to our programs, district, and the state. Additionally, aligned measurement scales of the surveys may also increase the ability to more directly compare responses on these three surveys. Having students’, staff’s, and families’ perspectives could provide the district with rich data on these most important topics and could aid in decision making at both the school and district levels.



Appendix

Appendix A: Crosswalk of TELL, Student Climate, and Family Survey Matched Items

TELL Survey items	Student Climate Survey items	Family Survey items
All campus staff work in a school environment that is safe.	I feel safe at my school.	My child: Attends school in a safe learning environment.
All campus staff interact with one another in a way that models social and emotional competence.	I use ways to calm myself down. During my school day, I am aware of when my feelings change.	My child's school provides my child with adequate opportunities to: Learn social and emotional skills (e.g., using strategies to calm down when upset, naming their feelings, demonstrating empathy toward others).
My principal models social and emotional competence in the way that he/she deals with students and faculty on an everyday basis.	If I get angry with a classmate, we can talk about it and make it better.	
Students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	I can reach the goals I set for myself.	
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	Students at my school follow the school rules.	
Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	I can do even the hardest schoolwork if I try.	
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about: The use of time in my school.	Our classes stay busy and do not waste time.	
	I like to come to school.	My child: Likes going to school.
	My school is an artsy, creative place.	My child's school provides my child with adequate opportunities to: Study the arts/experience creative learning.
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.		I feel: Our school works hard to engage our local community.
Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.		I am aware of opportunities to provide input into district decision-making processes.
The community we serve is supportive of this school.		I feel: Our local community supports our school.