



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

**DATE:** November 30, 2018

**TO:** Division Superintendents

**FROM:** James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** **2019 Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (DCJS/VCSCS)**

This memorandum reports on the school climate survey that will be administered in grades 6-8 between February 4, 2019, and March 29, 2019 by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) at the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This survey is a component of the annual school safety audit which school divisions are required to submit to the VCSCS, according to § 22.1-279.8.B of the Virginia Code. 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 DCJS VCSCS school climate survey was conducted for grades 7 and 8 in the spring of 2013 and 2015. In 2017, students in grades 6 were also surveyed if they attended schools with a grade 7, in addition to students in grades 7 and 8. The survey will be conducted for these grades again in 2019. The survey was conducted for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 in 2014, 2016, and 2018.

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.

In 2019, the survey will be conducted in each school that has regular education programs for 6th-8th grade students. This includes all middle schools as well as combined schools that might include higher or lower grades. Each school will administer the school climate survey to its students, teachers, and staff in grades 6-8.

Schools should invite all teachers and staff for grades 6-8 to complete the survey. We recommend that schools survey all students, so that they have the most complete and accurate information about their school. If schools are unable to survey all students, they will have the option of surveying a random sample of 25 students for each grade 6-8. Schools surveying all students should achieve a participation rate of at least 80%. Schools choosing the random

sample 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.

In response to principal requests, the teacher survey was expanded to include the following staff members who serve 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students: school administrator (principal or assistant principal), school counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, school resource officer, school security officer, and school social worker. 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.

Student and teacher/staff participation is voluntary, but recommended. 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/staff will be offered the same option. It is valuable to have a high participation rate, so we ask principals to encourage their teachers and other staff members to participate.

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 4, 2019, and March 29, 2019.

Written instructions for random sampling and survey administration, and additional information about the survey will be made available on the website for the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety at <http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-safety-survey/secondary-school-climate-survey>

Every principal will receive specific instructions via email. Questions may be directed to Shellie Evers of the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, at 804-629-7042 or [shellie.evers@dcjs.virginia.gov](mailto:shellie.evers@dcjs.virginia.gov).

Finally, please note that in 2019, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is administering a voluntary school climate survey in grades four and five and to students in grades nine through twelve. Students in grade six will also be surveyed in a school without a grade seven. Please direct any questions related to the VDOE survey to Mona Mallory by email at [m.mallory@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:m.mallory@doe.virginia.gov) or by phone at (804) 225-3911. You may also visit the [DOE Climate Survey page](#) for additional information on the VDOE school climate surveys.