



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

January 8, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: 2016 Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify school divisions that the school climate survey will be administered in grades 9-12 between February 1, 2016 and April 1, 2016. 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 and April 1, 2016. Complete instructions for administering the survey are available on the Department of Criminal Justice Services Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) Web site at <http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/audit/student>. Every Superintendent will receive specific instructions via e-mail.

Background Information

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 *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 9-12 in the spring of 2014 and will continue with those grades this year.

Schools will receive a detailed report of the 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 response to principal requests, the teacher survey has been expanded to include the following staff members who serve 9th-12th 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.

Survey Instruction in Brief

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.

All staff members should be invited to complete the teacher/staff version of the survey. Student and staff participation is voluntary. 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 completing the student survey: (1) they may survey all students in 9th-12th grade or (2) they may randomly select 25 students from 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 should also be randomly selected so that at least 25 students in each grade complete the survey.

Additional information is on the VCSCS Web site at <http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/audit/student>. Questions may be directed to Jessica Smith, school and campus security program specialist, at (804) 786-5367 or Jessica.Smith@dcjs.virginia.gov.

SRS/CAC/rt