November 10, 2016

Dear District 181 Families,

As adults supporting the education of our children, we know that a student's social and emotional experiences can have an impact on academic achievement and child development. Research shows that the learning environment often affects students' experiences, which can include feelings of safety, the ability to build positive relationships, and how students respond to social and academic challenges. Collectively, these factors contribute to school climate, a broad term that refers to the quality and character of the learning environment.

In December, the District will administer a school climate survey that will ask for your honest feedback about the learning environment. **The Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), designed by the National School Climate Center, is a 20-minute anonymous survey that will be administered online to students in Grades 4-8 and made available online to all staff and all parents between December 5-16, 2016.** Students and parents will be asked to reflect on the following dimensions of school climate: Safety, Teaching and Learning, Interpersonal Relationships, and Institutional Environment. Students and staff will access the online survey at school; parents will be sent instructions by email for completing the survey at home. Although only students in Grades 4-8 will take the survey, all parents and staff are encouraged to participate.

The CSCI has been vetted at the state level and is an alternative assessment to the Illinois 5Essentials, which was used in our District for several years starting in 2012. District 86 is also using the CSCI alternative survey. In collecting this data, we are responding to federal and state education mandates, as well as our own need for information on which to base school improvement plans. You can read more about the purpose of school climate surveys, the legislative background in Illinois, and the particular instrument we are using on the District website (http://tinyurl.com/D181CSCI).

Students in Grades 6 and 8 have been completing the Illinois Youth Survey (IYS) every other year since 2008. That survey provides us with information about risk taking behaviors and school climate. With the CSCI, we will learn about the climates at all of our schools and will gain a more comprehensive picture of the learning conditions across the district.

Participation is anonymous and voluntary for everyone. Please be assured that your input is protected by the design of the survey and tabulation of the data. There are no names, birthdates or any other personal information associated with the completed surveys. The District will be provided with final reports, not raw data. The reports generated by the National School Climate Center will be received by the District in early 2017 and will be used in our ongoing school improvement planning process. Additionally, data will be sent to the Illinois State Board of Education and included in each school's report card that is publicly released each year.

You will receive additional information about this survey from your children's schools in the next few weeks. Parents are welcome to preview the student surveys which will be available in each school office. If you choose

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for your child(ren) not to participate, please inform your principal in writing no later than December 2. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Carol Larson in the Department of Learning (clarson@d181.org).

We hope you and your student(s) will participate in the Comprehensive School Climate Survey. Thank you for helping us learn more about the strengths and areas we need to improve in our school environments. Together we can support our District 181 Mission to provide a premier educational experience that teaches students to be critical thinkers and enables them to achieve their full potential – academically, socially, and emotionally.

Sincerely,
Don

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