

Community Consolidated School District 181

BOARD REPORT

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TITLE: Comprehensive School Climate Inventory Results

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BACKGROUND:

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires its districts to administer a school climate survey biennially. The results of these surveys are included on ISBE’s school report cards and used to inform D181 school improvement plans. One of ISBE’s approved survey tools is the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), which is published by the National School Climate Center and used to collect data on the 13 dimensions described in the chart below. In December 2016, D181 administered the CSCI for the first time in lieu of the 5Essentials. The CSCI replaced the 5Essentials because its results were expected to provide more detailed data and research-supported guidance.

DIMENSION	MAJOR INDICATORS
Safety	
Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing, clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.
Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.
Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.
Teaching and Learning	
Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenge; and individual attention.
Social and Civic Learning	Support for development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.
Interpersonal Relationships	
Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school—student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.
Social Support-Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students’ success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students’ problems.
Social Support-Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including: friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.
Institutional Environment	
School Connectedness/Engagement	Positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.
Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.
Social Media	
Social Media	Sense that students feel safe from physical harm, verbal abuse/teasing, gossip, and exclusion when online or on electronic devices (for example, facebook, twitter, and other social media platforms, by an email, text messaging, posting photo/video, etc.).
Staff Only	
Leadership	Administration that creates and communicates a clear vision, and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.
Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.

RESULTS:

The National School Climate Center (NSCC) sets response rate targets for the following populations:

- 85-100% of students and personnel
- 30-40% of parents

In aggregate, D181 met response rate targets for students and parents. However, we did not meet the minimum 85% target for personnel, as we had 75% of the elementary personnel and 72% of middle school personnel responding. The NSCC asks schools to collect responses from all building personnel including janitors, lunch staff, secretaries, and other non-certified staff. In our first administration of the survey, we encountered some challenges in ensuring we received responses from personnel who work at multiple schools, have limited access to technology, speak a first language other than English, etc.

However, according to the NSCC, even though we did not meet the ideal response rate threshold for personnel, a 72-75% response rate represents a significant proportion of the population group. At this level of response, the data is valid and informative and should not be discredited. Nonetheless, we will strive to improve the response rate in future surveys.

Interpretation

- For each dimension, the CSCI reports the *median* of individual scale scores. The median is the middle value in an ordered set of values. In this report, the NSCC defines median as the “midpoint” score and notes that “there are equal numbers of scores below and above the median” (see pg. 15 of the elementary schools report).
- The median scores are assigned to one of three categories: negative, neutral, and positive. Median scores less than 2.5 on a 5-point Likert scale are categorized as negative, scores that range between 2.5-3.5 are considered neutral, and scores greater than 3.5 are considered positive.
- “Notable” differences are observed when the median difference between populations is greater than .20 or when there are negative, neutral, or positive categorical differences.
- There are three population groups: parents, personnel, and students. Within each population, subgroup data are available for further comparisons.
- Neutral responses should not be interpreted as negative responses.
- The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of aggregated District results.

Special Notes

According to the NSCC:

- Within the general population, the responses from elementary communities tend to be more positive than middle school communities.
- The social-emotional security dimension tends to be most negative for many districts.
- D181’s school climate results profile is similar to other high achieving school districts.

General Findings

The results of this survey suggest a strong school climate for D181 elementary and middle schools.

In addition to individual school results, D181 received two aggregate reports: one for the elementary schools and one for the middle schools. The dimensions that received positive median scores for all population groups on both aggregate reports are as follows:

- *rules and norms*
- *sense of physical security*
- *support for learning*
- *social and civic learning*
- *respect for diversity*
- *social support-adults*
- *social support-students*
- *school connectedness/engagement*
- *physical surroundings*
- *leadership*
- *professional relationships*

There are no negative dimensions in either report. The elementary schools results show that there are only two instances of neutral dimensions: student responses to *sense of social-emotional security* and parent responses to *social media*. In the middle school report, neutral median scores for a *sense of social-emotional security* and *social media* are observed for all three population groups (i.e., parents, student, and personnel). Both of these dimensions focus on the presence of verbal abuse, harassment, and exclusion, either in the general school setting (*social-emotional security*) or when students are using social media (*social media*).

As a population group, D181 personnel responses are notably higher (i.e., median scores are greater than .20) than parent and student responses at both the elementary and middle school levels across multiple dimensions. This could be attributed to our educators' involvement in explicit school climate goals. For instance, staff often discuss and enact ways to support students via team collaboration time, benchmarking meetings, school improvement discussions, etc. Because they are part of the planning process and these factors are inherent to their professional goals, they might be more keenly aware of specific efforts to shape school climate and to attend to the needs of students.

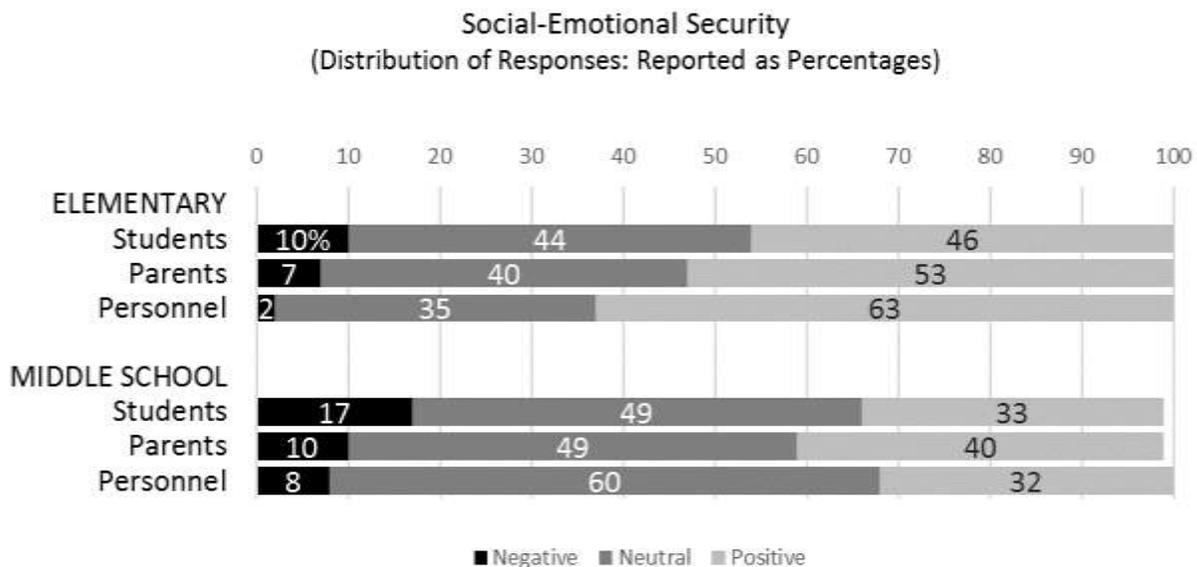
The National School Climate Center recommends making parent, student, and personnel comparisons by chunking the three greatest and the three lowest median scores for each population group¹. *Physical surroundings*, which has to do with space, resources, and the cleanliness, attractiveness, and condition of school facilities, was rated as a top dimension for all three elementary population groups, which suggests that this is perceived to be a District-wide strength at the elementary level. However, at the middle school level, parents and

¹ Dimensions with the same median score collectively receive the same ranking.

personnel ranked it as one of the lowest dimensions, which is consistent with District discussions about the need to rebuild Hinsdale Middle School. At the middle school level, *connectedness and engagement* is one of the top-ranked dimensions across all population groups. *Connectedness and engagement* is defined as the, “positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life.” The two dimensions that received the lowest ratings across all elementary and middle school population groups are *social media* and *social-emotional security*, which are discussed in greater detail below.

Sense of Social-Emotional Security

According to the NSCC, a *sense of social-emotional security* involves students feeling safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion. This is one of the lowest rated dimensions on the survey, and responses by elementary students and middle school personnel, parents, and students resulted in a neutral median score. The following chart depicts the distribution of negative, neutral, and positive responses by population group:



Overall, the ratings for *sense of social emotional security* are less positive at the middle school level than at the elementary school level, which is consistent with the NCSS observation that elementary ratings tend to be more positive than middle school ratings. The middle school student results show the greatest proportion of negative responses (17%) and the middle school personnel results show the greatest proportion of neutral responses (60%).

The survey item analysis provides additional insights about why elementary students rated this dimension as neutral. Most elementary students agree or strongly agree that they have not been called names, teased, or made fun of more than once (51%), and perceive their peers to be nice to other students (82%) and willing to stop students from making fun of others (63%).

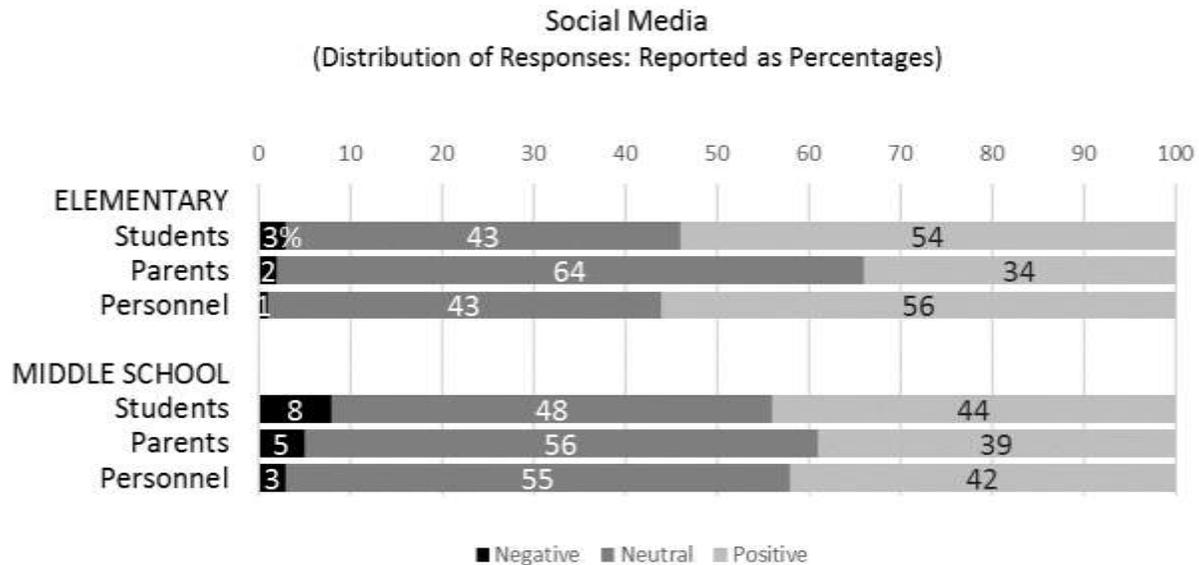
However, some students agree or strongly agree that they have been called names, teased, or made fun of more than once at school (33%), have observed others as targets of the same (42%), or have witnessed the exclusion of others (40%).

At the middle school level, an overall neutral rating for *sense of social-emotional security* is observed for all three population groups: parents, students, and personnel. Similar to the elementary student responses, the middle school responses suggest that approximately half or more of students and parents do not perceive themselves or their child, respectively, to have been a direct target of insult, teasing, harassment, or verbal abuse more than once and report that there are students willing try to stop these behaviors. However, 50% of parents, 47% of students, and 42% of personnel agreed or strongly agreed that, "There are groups of students in my school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being a part of the group." Additionally, both students (43%) and personnel (42%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have witnessed other students insulted, teased, or verbally abused more than once by peers.

In sum, although most D181 students do not perceive themselves as direct targets for name calling, teasing, harassment, or verbal abuse, they are perceiving other students as targets of these behaviors and witnessing exclusion. One possible reason why the student negative ratings for *social-emotional security* are proportionally greater than the parent or personnel ratings is that the adults may not always be aware of some incidents.

Social Media

The second category, *social media*, received an overall neutral rating by parents at the elementary school level and all three population groups at the middle school level. Similar to a *sense of social-emotional security*, the *social media* dimension represents perceptions about verbal abuse, harassment, and exclusion but with a focus on how students perceive these behaviors in social media environments. The elementary parent responses are proportionately more neutral (64%) than the other groups at both the elementary and middle school levels, and the middle school student results showed the greatest proportion of negative responses (8%) (see chart below).



The report's survey item analysis show which items contributed to a neutral median score for the elementary parents. A large proportion of the elementary parents selected a neutral rating for perceiving whether...

- many students will stop threatening or harassing behaviors (70%)
- students share inappropriate information (49%)
- peers support each other on social media (65%)
- harassed students will seek adult support (65%)
- students have the ability to use social media without being harassed by a peer (67%)

Only one survey item was not proportionately greater in the neutral category, "My child has been threatened or harassed on social media more than once by a student in this school," which resulted in 72% of the parents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with that statement.

Because many social media web sites post age requirements and parents did not have an option to select "not applicable," the larger proportion of neutral elementary parent responses could be an indication that some parents perceive the survey statements as irrelevant to their child's school experiences or may be unsure about the social media practices at their child's school.

At the middle school level, 60% or more of the students and parents report that they or their child, respectively, have not been threatened or harassed on social media more than once and can use it without being harassed. In comparison, 49% of personnel agree or strongly agree that students can use social media without peer harassment. Similar to the elementary parent data, middle school parent results show that the distribution of responses are proportionately more neutral than positive or negative for items that ask parents to rate whether...

- many students will stop threatening or harassing behaviors (54%)
- students share inappropriate information (45%)
- peers support each other on social media (47%)
- harassed students will seek adult support (44%)

Because fewer than 50% of middle school personnel, parents, and students either agreed or strongly agreed to most of the survey items listed above, it is likely that the large proportions of neutral responses to these specific items contributed to the overall *social media* neutral median score for each population group.

It is important to note that neutral ratings can represent multiple viewpoints. For instance, a neutral rating can indicate indecision, a rating that is less than positive, the need for more information, or not perceiving a statement as applicable to the rater's experience. For this reason, further discussions may be useful for enriching our understandings of the responses to the social media survey items.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None.

RECOMMENDATION:

In conclusion, the results of the CSCI aggregate reports suggest strong school climate throughout the District. All dimensions were rated positive, with the exception of two neutrally-rated dimensions: *sense of social emotional security* and *social media*. None of the dimensions in the aggregate elementary and middle school reports received a negative rating.

On February 28, 2017, the administrators and social workers received professional development on how to interpret their schools' CSCI data and were provided time to work in groups. They will review the guidance provided in the reports and use this information as they collaborate with staff on 2017-18 school improvement goals. Part of the review will be to analyze and consider results at the subgroup level. The Department of Learning committees will also consider this data as it integrates the Illinois Learning Standards for social-emotional learning into the District's curricula and creates plans for instruction that addresses peer relationships and social media use.

One way to monitor progress on these dimensions is to track the distribution of responses per population group. Progress can be measured by increasing the proportion of positive ratings. Overall, the dimensions with positive median scores show that over 50% of the population group rated it as positive. Thus, setting target goals for obtaining at least a 50% positive rating threshold may result in a conversion from neutral to positive median score.