



MMSD Student Climate Survey Results - District 2017

Key Findings

1. MMSD students rated *Teaching & Learning* highest among the four dimensions of school climate with 74% positive responses.
2. Students' percent positive responses increased in three of the four dimensions of school climate (*Relationships*, *Safety* and *Institutional Environment*) between 2016 and 2017.
3. Advanced learners and Asian students had higher percentages of positive responses on all dimensions, while African American students had lower percentages of positive responses on all dimensions.
4. Elementary students' responses were more positive across all dimensions compared to secondary students.
5. Among open-ended comments, students most often described *Relationships* as the greatest strength of their schools, and they described aspects of both *Relationships* and *Teaching & Learning* as the greatest challenges of their schools.

Background

Since 2015, MMSD has surveyed parents, staff, and students each spring to measure climate in the district. The district's Research & Program Evaluation Office (RPEO) is responsible for the creation, administration, analysis and production of resources annually. The data gathered from these surveys informs the district's work around [Strategic Framework](#) Goal #3: *Every student, family, and employee experiences a positive school and district climate* and *Priority Area V: Accountability and School Support Systems*. The MMSD Student Climate Survey focuses on four research-based dimensions of school climate: 1) *Relationships*; 2) *Teaching & Learning*; 3) *Safety*; and, 4) *Institutional Environment*. Within the student survey, questions are aligned intentionally to district initiatives and priorities, including the *Strategic Framework Vision of College, Career and Community-Readiness*; *Strategic Framework Priority Area I: Behavior Education Plan* and the *Great Teaching Matters Framework*. Schools use climate survey data to drive their school improvement actions, including setting goals for their 2017-18 [School Improvement Plans](#).

In 2016-17, we made revisions to the student survey which included deleting or adding questions in dimensions, realigning questions across dimensions, simplifying the wording of questions, and changing to a consistent scale for all items. We eliminated the *School Improvement* dimension and the single question previously in it was moved into the *Teaching & Learning* dimension. We made these changes to increase clarity, reduce length, and ensure maximum utility from every question and dimension.

This report focuses on the 2016-17 district results for students; similar reports are available for the parent and staff surveys. For more information on MMSD Climate Surveys and to view detailed results – including interactive [scorecards](#) and [comparisons](#) across years – visit the [climate survey website](#).

Data and Methods

MMSD administered the student climate survey from February 6 to 24, 2017. Students in grades 3 through 12 accessed links to the electronic survey, in English, Hmong and Spanish, via a secure webpage. School staff coordinated the completion of the survey during class time.

A total of 16,390 students responded to the confidential survey for a response rate of 86%, compared to 78% in 2016. Participation increased somewhat in 2017 as a result of a change in administration procedures. Last year, RPEO staff emailed survey links to students' school accounts which led to some surveys being deleted by students or being caught in the District's spam filtering. Use of a secure, web-based link this year gave all students equal access to the survey which contributed to the increase in participation. Students' responses included their student IDs so survey results could be disaggregated by demographic group. Students' demographics are displayed in Table I:



Table 1: Demographics Student Survey	District Overall	
African American	16%	18%
Asian	9%	9%
Hispanic/Latino	21%	21%
Multiracial	8%	9%
White	44%	43%
Low Income	45%	50%
English Language Learner	28%	28%
Special Education	13%	14%
Advanced Learner	20%	14%
Elementary (Grades 3-5)	34%	23%
Middle	30%	22%
High	35%	30%

For the most part, student respondents mirror the demographics of the district's overall enrollment. Advanced learners responded at higher rates and low-income students responded at lower rates compared to other student groups.

On the closed-ended questions, we calculated response distributions (i.e., the range of responses) and percent positive responses. Percent positive reflects the percent of responses that were desirable (either strong or very strong agreement with a positive statement) and aligns to the way MMSD reports metrics on other Strategic Framework goals, such as reading proficiency, high school graduation and challenging and well-rounded curriculum. On the [student scorecard](#), response distributions show the percentage of responses from very negative to very positive for each closed-ended question. As part of the realignment of survey questions, items that were negatively worded in prior years, were rewritten so that "strongly agree" now corresponds with "very positive." Each question on the survey aligns to a dimension of school climate and a percent positive response was also calculated for each dimension.

We analyzed results and selected findings for this report based on a variety of factors. First, we reviewed percent positive responses, looking for differences of four percentage points or greater among respondent groups at the dimension and question levels. Then, we reviewed results based on groups of interest related to district initiatives and priorities. We also identified questions of interest based on district priorities, connections to school improvement and district goals or accountability. Among the groups, dimensions, and/or questions that stood out, we selected specific items to highlight based on interest and impact.

On the open-ended questions, we analyzed results to tie them to specific dimensions using a multi-step process in NVivo, a software program designed for qualitative analysis. The approach relied on coding, a way of organizing and sorting qualitative data that involves assigning labels, or codes, to each comment or response, which makes it easier to draw themes from and summarize the data. We began with a provisional code list (i.e., a predetermined set of codes) that consisted of the dimensions from the climate survey. First we searched the comments for key words identified from survey questions pertaining to each dimension, along with other synonyms and antonyms to these words, and coded those comments accordingly. Secondly, we assigned the comments not captured in the previous step to an *Other* category, as they did not directly or explicitly relate to any specific climate dimension in the climate survey. Finally, we ran a word frequency on the codes in the *Other* category to determine if we could include any of those words in our word searches as performed in the first step. We identified an additional word applicable for each dimension and we again ran key word searches and coded those statements accordingly.

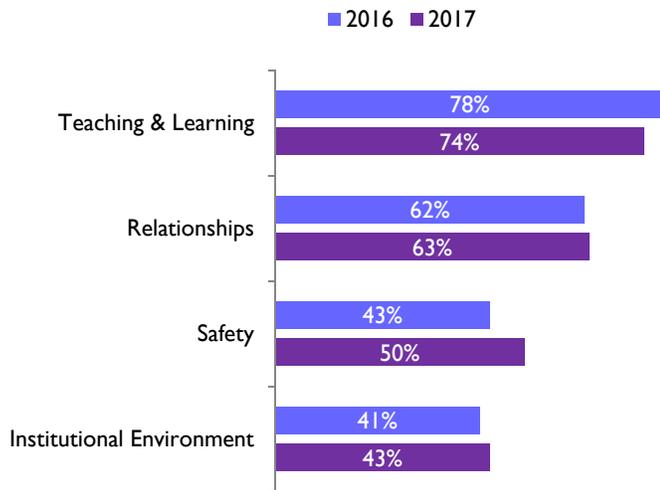


Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

Overall and Year-to-Year

Students rated *Teaching & Learning* highest among the four dimensions of school climate with 74% positive responses to questions overall, followed by *Relationships* with 63%. *Institutional Environment* was rated the lowest with 43% positive responses. The percent positive responses by dimension and year is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Students' Percent Positive Response by Dimension of School Climate



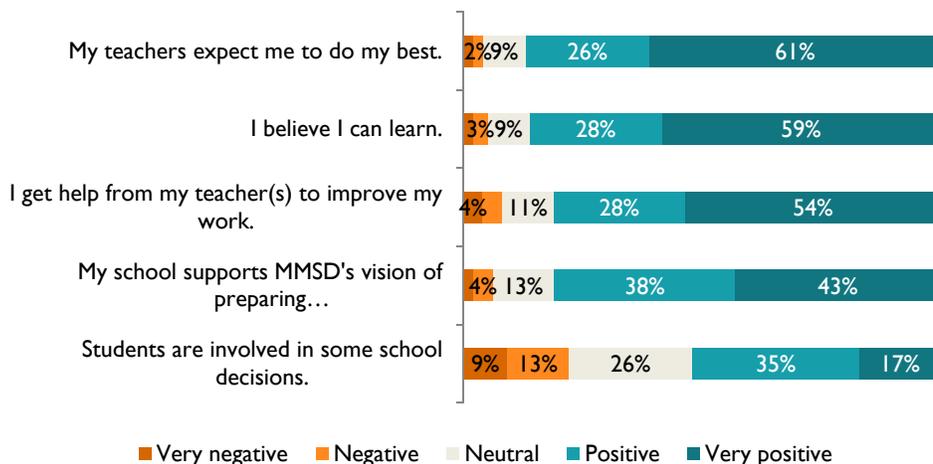
Students' percent positive responses increased in three out of four dimensions of school climate and decreased in one dimension between 2016 and 2017. The dimension that showed the greatest year-to-year increase was *Safety*, 50%, compared to 43% in 2016. The increase in the percent positive responses in *Safety*, is explained, in part, by the rewording of the bullying and harassment questions, which previously required students to respond negatively (*Ex: In this school, students experience bullying/harassment*) to indicate agreement. Additionally, the number of harassment items were reduced from seven specific types of harassment to one harassment item on the 2017 survey. The dimension of *Teaching & Learning*, while rated the most positively at 74%, declined compared to 78% positive responses in 2016.

Highlights Within Dimensions:

Teaching & Learning

As it was in 2016, *Teaching & Learning* questions measuring students' perceptions of their own abilities and teachers' expectations received the most positive responses. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of students agreed *their teachers expect them to do their best of students* and 87% of students *believe they can learn*. Eighty-two percent (82%) of elementary students said they *get help from their teachers to improve their work*. These findings continue to support MMSD's implementation of *Great Teaching Framework Practice #1: Set high and clear expectations for all students*.

Figure 2: Teaching & Learning



In 2017, for the first time, students were asked to assess MMSD's vision. Seventy-five percent (75%) of students agreed *their schools support MMSD's vision of preparing students for college, career, and community*. This new question provides useful baseline data on how effectively MMSD is achieving its vision. Within *Teaching & Learning*, the lowest percent positive response, of 52%, was given to *students are involved in some school decisions*. Response distributions for highlighted questions in *Teaching & Learning* are shown in Figure 2 at left.

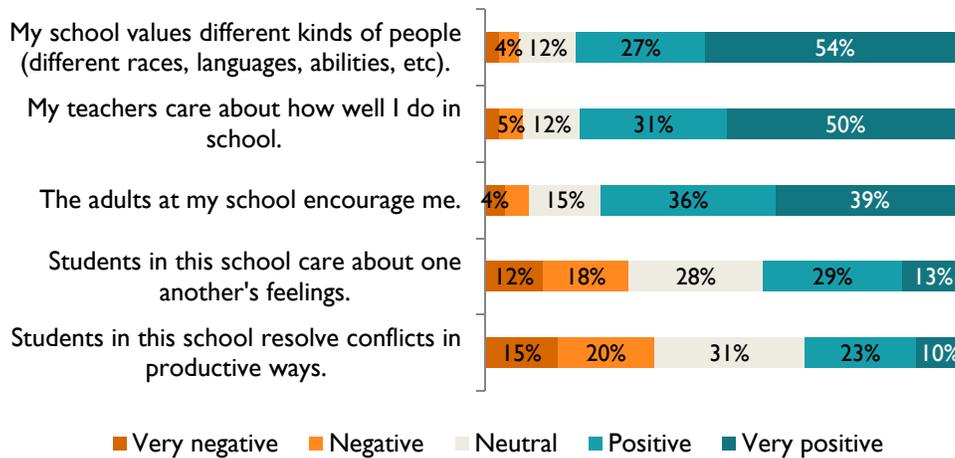


Relationships

Students rated *Relationships* second highest among the dimensions, with 63% positive responses to questions overall. Within the *Relationship* dimension, students' responses were substantially similar year-to-year with students rating student-to-student relationships the least positively and student-to-teacher relationships the most positively. More students disagreed, 35%, than agreed, 33%, that *students resolve conflicts in productive ways* and only 42% agreed that

students care about one another's feelings. Yet, despite their lack of positivity about student-to-student relationships, 81% of students agreed their *schools value different kinds of people (different races, languages, abilities, etc.)*. Students rated questions on student-to-teacher relationships much more positively. Eighty-one percent (81%) of students agreed *their teachers care about how well they do in school* and 75% agreed *adults in their school encourage them*. Response distributions for highlighted questions in *Relationships* are shown in Figure 3 at left.

Figure 3: Relationships

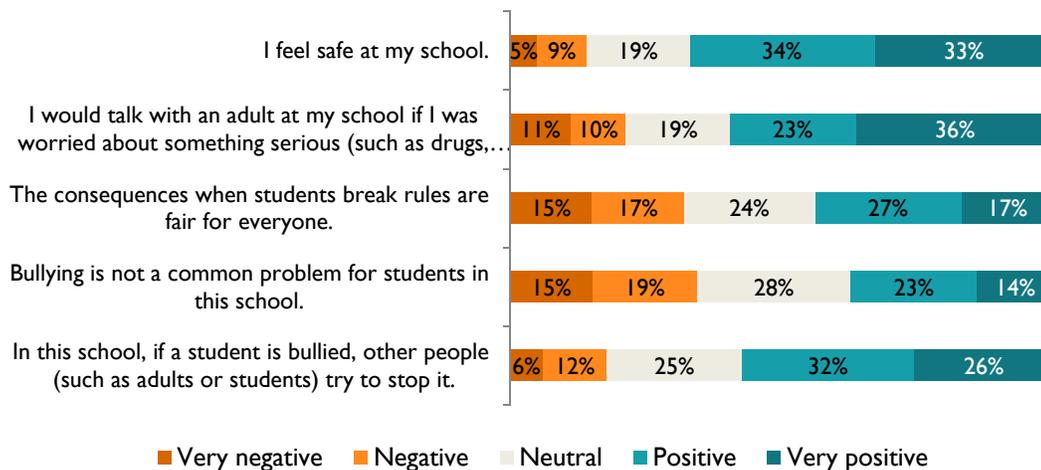


Safety

The dimension of *Safety* had the highest increase in percent positive responses, 50%, compared to 43% in 2016. The increase is explained, in part, by the rewording of the bullying and harassment questions, as well as an increase in the percent positive responses on all but one of the *Safety* questions that remained unchanged. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of students agreed *they feel safe at their schools* and 59% agreed *they would talk to an adult at school if they were worried about something serious (such as drugs, friends hurting themselves, sex, etc.)*. Additionally, 44% of students agreed *the consequences when students break rules are fair for everyone*, an increase of 4 percentage points compared to last year. Similar

percentages of students agreed, 37%, and disagreed, 34%, that *bullying is not a common problem for students in their schools*. On the 2017 survey, students were asked a follow up question regarding bullying in which 58% agreed that *if a student is bullied, other people (such as adults or students) try to stop it*. Response distributions for highlighted questions in *Safety* are shown in Figure 4 at left.

Figure 4: Safety





Highlights Among Student Groups:

Advanced learners and Asian students had the most positive responses across all dimensions. Advanced learners were between two and four percentage points higher and Asian students were two and three percentage points higher on each dimension, compared to students overall. Conversely, African American students had lower percentages of positive responses on all dimensions, by two and three percentage points, compared to students overall. And, special education students rated *Teaching & Learning* five percentage points lower than students overall. Percent positive responses by student group are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Student Groups Percent Positive Response by Dimension	Teaching & Learning Safety			Institutional Environment
	Relationships	Learning	Safety	
African American	60%	72%	48%	41%
Asian	66%	76%	52%	46%
Hispanic/Latino	63%	72%	51%	45%
Multiracial	61%	72%	50%	42%
White	63%	75%	51%	43%
Female	63%	74%	49%	43%
Low Income	62%	72%	50%	45%
English Language Learner	65%	74%	52%	48%
Special Education	62%	69%	50%	46%
Advanced Learner	65%	78%	53%	47%
Students Overall	63%	74%	50%	43%

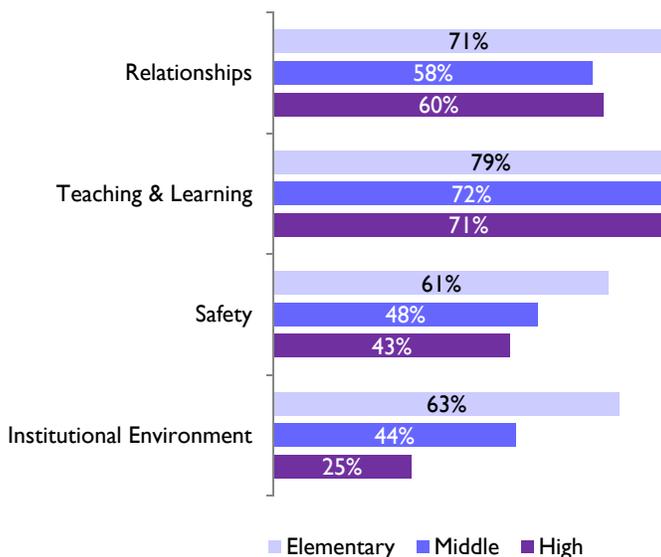
Though the variances at the dimension level among student groups is not large, great differences in experience by student groups are illustrated by questions within the dimensions. For example, within the *Relationships* dimension, 94% of advanced learners agreed *their schools value different kinds of people*, while just 76% of African American and special education students agreed – a difference of 18 percentage points. Within *Teaching & Learning*, 91% of advanced learners *believe they can learn*, compared to just 80% of special education students – a difference of 11 percentage points. These findings may have

implications as staff engage in the *reflect and adjust* cycle around the *Great Teaching Framework's Practice #2: Acknowledge all students*, specifically around culturally and linguistically responsive practices and *Practice #3: Develop self-efficacy*, related to explaining, modeling, and supporting positive self-talk.

Highlights Across School Levels

Just as it was in the prior year, elementary students' responses were more positive across all dimensions and questions compared to secondary students. Percent positive responses by student level are shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Students' Percent Positive Responses by Dimension & Level



Across all student levels, *Teaching & Learning* was the highest rated dimension, with 79% positive responses among elementary students, 72% positive for middle school students, and 71% positive for high school students. The dimension that dropped most in positive responses across student levels was *Institutional Environment*, decreasing 38 percentage points between elementary, 63%, and high school, 25%. When looking at the questions within the *Institutional Environment* dimension which had the largest variance in positive responses by level, 55% of elementary students agree *their schools are clean*, compared to 39% of middle school and 21% of high school students. Similarly, elementary school students have a more positive outlook on their buildings' conditions. Seventy percent (70%) of elementary students agree *their buildings are kept in good condition*, compared to 49% of middle school and 29% of high school students.



Findings: Open-Ended Responses

The climate survey asked students two open-ended questions: (1) What do you feel is your/this school’s greatest challenge?, and (2) What do you feel is your/this school’s greatest strength? Our analysis focused on categorizing these comments into the dimensions; for those comments that were off-topic or unclear, we coded them as *Other*. The percent of coded comments for students responding to the question about school strengths is reflected in Figure 6, and the percent of coded comments for students responding to the question about school challenges is shown in Figure 7.

Students most often identified strengths in their schools related to *Relationships* (e.g., diversity, community, communication) and *Teaching & Learning* (e.g., learning, courses, classes). These results support the findings of the closed-ended responses, where *Relationships* and *Teaching & Learning* received the highest percent positive responses from students. When identifying strengths, student results from 2016-17 are very similar to those from 2015-16; the only notable difference is how they identified aspects of *Relationships* as a strength slightly less in 2016-17 than in 2015-16. Disaggregated by race, Asian students identified aspects of *Relationships* as strengths of their schools more than other racial groups, while African American students identified aspects of *Relationships* as strengths of their schools less often than other racial groups.

Figure 6: Overall Students' Percent of Coded Comments for School Strengths by Dimension

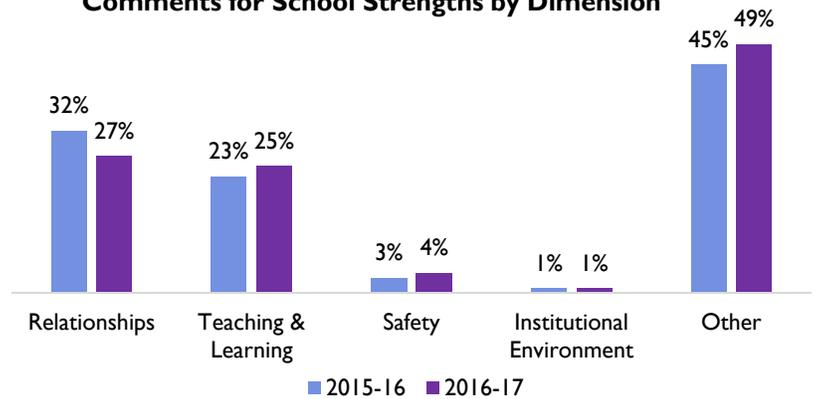
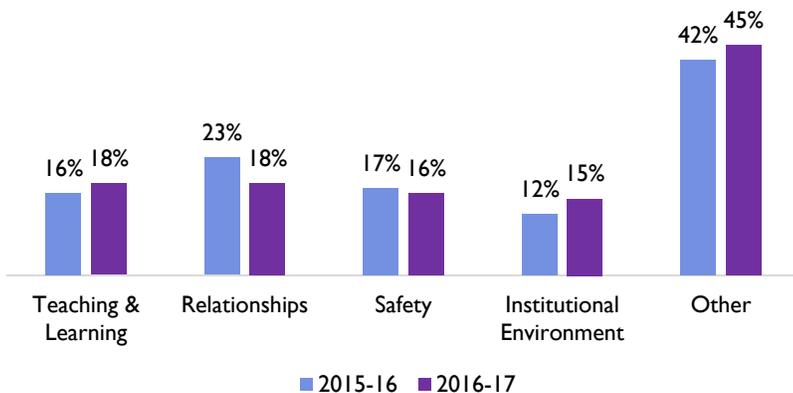


Figure 7: Overall Students' Percent of Coded Comments for School Challenges by Dimension



When articulating the challenges of their schools, students’ comments were similarly distributed across aspects of *Teaching & Learning*, *Relationships*, *Safety*, and *Institutional Environment*. That aspects of *Teaching & Learning* and *Relationships* were among the challenges identified by students, but were also the biggest strengths of their schools and received the highest percent positive responses from students in the closed-ended responses suggests that students are identifying different facets of each dimension in their schools. In other words, *some* aspects of *Teaching & Learning* and *Relationships* are a strength, while others are a challenge.

Compared to 2015-16, while the ordering of the top three challenging dimensions changed, *Relationships* was the only dimension that showed a bit more change in the percent of coded comments – it decreased about 5 percentage points from last year. Disaggregated by race, African American students identified *Institutional Environment* as a challenge less than other racial groups.