Understand the Data

Strategic Framework Goal #3 states that every student, family and employee experiences a positive school and district climate. To measure progress towards that goal, MMSD administers parent, staff, and student climate surveys. The first administration of these instruments was in spring 2015, with results available in May. This Quick Start Guide is designed to help school staff access and analyze the data resulting from these surveys to help inform their School Improvement Plan.

Climate Surveys in MMSD

Recent research has confirmed that a positive school climate is associated with a number of positive outcomes for students and teaching staff, including higher graduation rates, increased academic achievement, better health promotion and teacher retention. School climate reform has been identified as an evidence-based school improvement strategy that supports students, parents/guardians and school personnel to create safer, more supportive and engaging K-12 schools.

Research and input from students, parents, staff, and community members guided the development of the MMSD Climate Surveys. Questions in the MMSD Climate Surveys align to the essential dimensions of climate identified by research, including:

- **Safety** - rules and norms, physical safety, social-emotional safety;
- **Relationships** - respect for diversity, school connectedness/engagement, social support, leadership, and students’ race/ethnicity and their perceptions of school climate;
- **Teaching and Learning** - social, emotional, ethical, and civic learning; service learning; support for academic learning; support for professional relationships; teachers’ and students’ perceptions of school climate;
- **Institutional Environment** - physical surroundings, resources, supplies;
- **School Improvement Process** - safe, supportive, engaging schools; and
- **Family Engagement** (parent survey only) - roles, beliefs, attitudes and activities of parents.

The dimensions of school climate are highly inter-related and a single question may be relevant to multiple dimensions of climate; however, for reporting purposes each question is associated only with the dimension which the MMSD Climate Survey Steering Committee determined to be closest linked to the question.

Questions and Contacts

For technical questions about the MMSD Climate Surveys, contact Jill Brown in the Research & Program Evaluation Office, jabrown@madison.k12.wi.us. For questions about how to use climate survey data as part of SIP or teacher team planning, contact your School Improvement Partner or Data Strategist.
Access the Data

What resources are available?
There are several types of resources designed to help you access your climate survey data. These include:

- **Scorecards and Comparisons** – one-page summary that reviews responses to all questions within one particular survey or shows comparisons between different surveys or between schools/departments’ results on a single survey
- **Summary Reports** – detailed analysis of survey results, including identification of key findings and results by subgroup
- **Pivot Tables** – searchable tables by survey that allow schools to dig in to the data for specific respondent groups
- **Open-Ended Responses** – data files that contain the open-ended comments submitted by survey respondents

These resources exist at the district, school, and department level. Whatever your needs for climate survey data are, there is an available resource that fits them, and all resources are designed to be used alone or in tandem.

Where can I find them?
These documents can be found on the Data Dashboard. To access the Data Dashboard, go to mmsd.org and click “Staff Only.” Then click on the “Data Dashboard” icon under “Logon Pages for Staff.” Or, you can click on this link: dashboard.mmsd.org. In either instance, you will need to log in using your b number and password.

Once in Data Dashboard, you can find the climate survey resources by looking for “Climate Survey” on the left-hand side under “Other Links.” Clicking on the “Climate Survey” will take you to a table of links with filters to get to district and school results.

Who can access these resources?
School staff have access to all district-level resources, including district scorecards, comparisons, and summary reports. Access to school-specific resources, including scorecards, comparisons, summary reports, pivot tables, and open-ended responses, is restricted to the school principal, assistant principals, data point people, and school secretaries.

How do I navigate these resources?
**Scorecards**
Each scorecard contains several pieces of relevant information. The Total Respondents are listed at the top right (1). Next, the Dimension Means are listed for each of the relevant dimensions (2). The Responses by Question section (3) shows the overall mean response and the distribution of responses (from very negative to very positive) for each question asked of that survey group. From left to right, the table shows the dimension, the question wording, the mean response for that question, and then the distribution of responses by percentages.
All questions are scaled from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest possible response and 3 corresponding to neutral. Responses that are negative are shown in orange, neutral responses are in white, and positive responses are in teal. Gray percentages indicate no response for that particular question. In general, the higher the mean, the better the response.

**Comparison - Student-Staff-Parent**

This comparison provides an overview of school results across all three surveys. The Response Rates by Group table includes the number of individuals or households contacted to respond, the number of surveys completed, and the corresponding response rate. The Dimension Means show the overall average score for each of the dimensions in the survey. The Dimension Means by Respondent group graph shows how average scores by dimension differed between students, staff, and parents.

**School Comparisons**

School comparisons show dimension means across schools relative to the district average. The Dimension Means by School table lists the school, total respondents, and means for each dimension. Again, the means are on a 1-5 scale, with higher numbers indicating better results. Relatively higher scores are indicated in blue and lower relative scores are indicated in orange.

**Summary Reports**

The summary reports provide more detailed information on the survey responses, including significance testing and disaggregated results by subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, income status). There are four reports available at the district level:

- District Surveys Summary
- Parent Survey Summary
- Staff Survey Summary
- Student Survey Summary

In addition, each school will receive a summary report for their three surveys.
Pivot Tables
The Excel pivot tables allow users to compare results for all questions, surveyed groups and demographic populations. Users first select the question they want to examine using the “Select Question” dropdown (10). A “Climate Survey Question Bank” file also can be downloaded via the Dashboard that provides a key to which questions were asked of which groups. Then, the users select how the results should be grouped within the table. The default setting (“Aggregate”) shows the total of all groups who answered the question. “Population type” disaggregates results for Parents, Staff, and Students. Other choices disaggregate further within each of the three surveyed groups. The table populates providing the number and percentage for the selected group or demographic for each response option (strongly disagree to strongly agree) (11). The table also combines the agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree responses as the Top 2 and Bottom 2, respectively. The pivot table also provides the total sample size and the mean response for each question and group.

Open-Ended Responses
Each school will have access to the responses to open-ended questions posed on each survey. The Excel file contains two worksheets: Greatest Challenge and Greatest Strength. The comments from each question can be filtered by survey group: parents, staff and students (12).
Analyze the Data

The Data Analysis Protocol (located in the SBLT Toolkit and Teacher Team Toolkit) provides an excellent structure to analyze any data, including climate survey data. Questions on the Data Analysis Protocol will help guide your discussion.

Consider the questions below as needed as you review your data. These questions, which are specific to the type of data discussed in this Data Use Guide, are designed to be paired with the questions in the Data Analysis Protocol to help you dig deeper into your data. The form on page 7 is designed to help provide additional guidance for this conversation.

Review the Data
- What were our school’s response rates by survey type (i.e., parent, staff, student)?
- What were our average scores for each climate dimension? How did these vary by survey type?
- Which climate dimension areas were rated highest and lowest for our school?

Analyze the Data
- Considering each survey type (i.e., parent, staff, student), which specific climate dimension is a potential celebration? Which climate dimension may be an area for improvement?
- What patterns or trends emerge across survey types?
- Are specific student groups (e.g., students with IEPs, students in a specific grade) showing a different pattern or trend?

Discuss Root Cause
- What are our beliefs about each of the climate dimensions and how might this be impacting the data?
- What curricular or instructional successes or challenges might be contributing to our overall climate data, as well as each specific climate dimension?
- What student engagement successes or challenges might explain current climate data?
- What implications do the climate data have for our school’s universal practices or for teams involved with planning and monitoring school climate?

Consider Actions
- What systems could our school put into place that might positively impact one or more of the climate dimensions?
- How might school teams (e.g., teacher teams, student services teams) use the climate data to identify areas in need of adjustment (e.g., tiered support)?
- Are there specific strategies for identified focus groups that need to be implemented?

Implement a Plan
- Based on our analysis of the climate data, what actions do we need to stop doing? What actions should we continue doing or do more of? What actions do we need to start doing?
- On what date will we come back and check on the progress of our action steps?
Moving Forward as a Team, we are going to...

Stop doing...

Continue doing...

Start doing...

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