



MMSD Student Climate Survey Results - District 2018

Key Findings

1. MMSD students rated *Teaching & Learning* highest among the four dimensions of school climate with 73% positive responses, followed by *Relationships*, 61% positive responses.
2. Students' percent positive responses decreased slightly in *Teaching & Learning*, *Relationships* and *Safety* and remained the same in *Institutional Environment* between 2017 and 2018.
3. Advanced learners, English Language Learners, and Asian students had the most positive responses across all dimensions while African American and Multiracial 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 from students of color, students celebrated the community, the diversity, and the classes and learning opportunities as strengths of their school; they identified challenges in student behavior, school cleanliness, learning, and relationships or community.

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 1: 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 2018-19 [School Improvement Plans](#).

In 2016-17, we made revisions to the student survey to increase clarity, reduce length, and ensure maximum utility from every question and dimension. No further revisions were made in 2017-18.

This report focuses on the 2017-18 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 trends](#) across years – visit the [climate survey website](#).

Data and Methods

Table 1: Demographics	Student Survey (n)	Student Survey % District	Overall %
African American	2,578	16%	18%
Asian	1,474	9%	9%
Hispanic/Latino	3,421	21%	21%
Multiracial	1,375	9%	9%
White	7,189	45%	43%
Low Income	7,511	47%	48%
English Language Learner	4,543	28%	28%
Special Education	2,057	13%	14%
Advanced Learner	4,497	28%	20%
Elementary (Grades 3-5)	5,515	34%	31%
Middle	4,776	30%	30%
High	5,743	36%	29%

MMSD administered the student climate survey from February 5 to 23, 2018. 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 16,209 students responded to the confidential survey for a response rate of 82%, compared to 86% in 2017. Students' responses included their student IDs so survey results could be disaggregated by demographic group. Students' demographics are displayed in Table I at left.

Across nearly all student groups, respondents mirror the demographics of the district’s overall enrollment with the exception of advanced learners and high school students who responded at higher 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. Each question on the survey aligns to a dimension of school climate and a percent positive response was also calculated for each dimension.

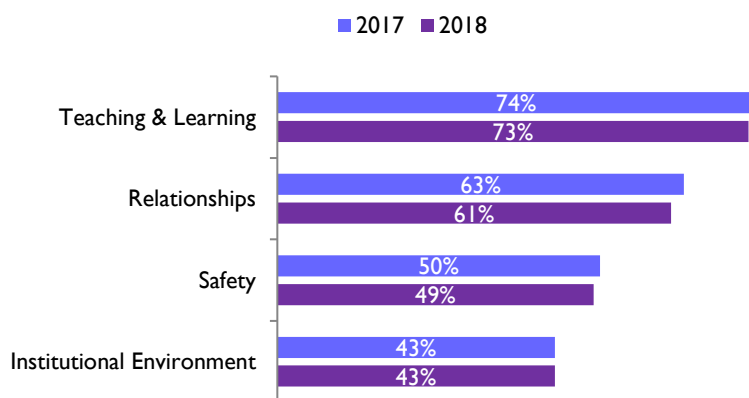
We analyzed results and selected findings for this report based on a variety of factors. First, we reviewed percent positive responses, looking for differences of four percentage points or greater among respondent groups at the dimension and question levels. Then, we reviewed results based on groups 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.

Given the district’s commitment to elevate the voices of those typically not heard, we focused our analysis of the open-ended questions on the responses of students of color. After uploading responses into NVivo, a software program designed for qualitative analysis, we thematically analyzed those responses to discern patterns regarding students of color’s perception of climate. In order to identify themes emerging organically from participant voice, we used techniques such as repetitive reading of responses, word frequency queries, and scanning responses for similar ideas.

Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

Overall and Year-to-Year

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



Students rated *Teaching & Learning* highest among the four dimensions of school climate with 73% positive responses to questions overall, followed by *Relationships* with 61%. *Institutional Environment* was rated the lowest with 43% positive responses. The percent positive responses by dimension and year is shown in Figure 1 below.

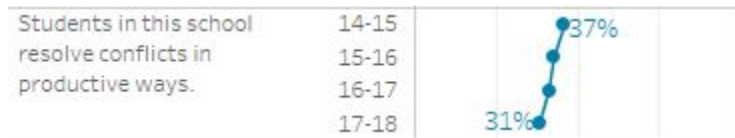
Students’ percent positive responses decreased slightly in *Teaching & Learning*, *Relationships* and *Safety* and remained the same in *Institutional Environment* between 2017 and 2018. The dimension that decreased most year-to-year was *Relationships*, 61%, compared to 63% in 2017.



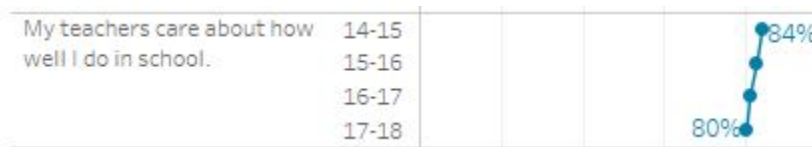
Highlights Within Dimensions

Relationships

For the fourth consecutive year, students rated *Relationships* second highest among the dimensions of school climate, though their responses to questions in the *Relationships* dimension varied widely, ranging from 31% to 80% positive overall. Students rated relationships with one another the least positively while rating their relationships with adults at school the most positively. This year, only 31% of students agreed that *students resolve conflicts in productive ways* compared to 37% in 2014-15. The four year trend for that question is shown below.

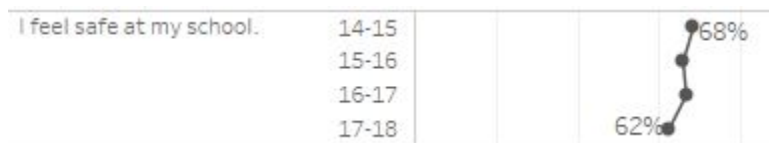


Yet, during this same period, students consistently gave very positive ratings to their relationships with adults at school. This year, 80% of students agreed their *teachers care about how well they do in school*, compared to 84% in 2014-15. The question's four year trend is shown below.



Safety

Students rated *Safety* 49% positively overall, compared to 50% positively last year. Responses to *Safety* questions ranged from 38% to 62% positive overall. Year-to-year, all but one question within the dimension of *Safety* decreased in percent positive responses between one and five percentage points, while the remaining question, *I would talk with an adult at my school if I was worried about something serious*, remained at 59% positive. Among questions within the dimension of *Safety*, students rated *I feel safe at my school*, the most positively, 62%. However, *I feel safe at my school*, also had the largest year-to-year decline in positive responses, 62% compared to 67% last year. The four year trend for that question is shown below.



Within the *Safety* dimension, *Bullying is not a common problem for students in this school* was rated the least positively, 37%, compared to 38% last year. No four year trend is available for this question as it was added to the survey in 2017.

Highlights Among Student Groups

Advanced learners, English Language Learners, and Asian students had the most positive responses across all dimensions. Advanced learners were between three and four percentage points higher, ELL students were between one and five points higher and Asian students were between one and three percentage points higher on each dimension, compared to students overall.

Conversely, African American and Multiracial students had lower percentages of positive responses on all dimensions; African American students' positive responses were two and three percentage points lower while Multiracial students' responses were one and two percentage points lower, compared to students overall. Percent positive responses by student group are shown in Table 2 on the following page.



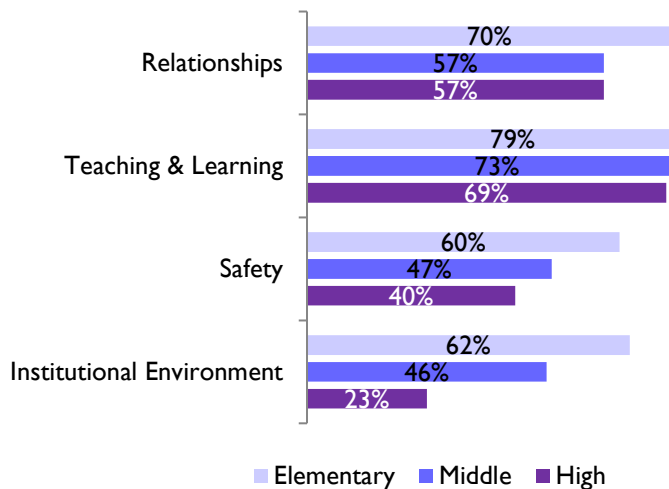
Table 2: Student Groups Percent Positive Response by Dimension	Teaching & Learning			Institutional Environment
	Relationships	Learning	Safety	
African American	59%	71%	46%	41%
Asian	64%	76%	51%	44%
Hispanic/Latino	62%	72%	50%	46%
Multiracial	59%	72%	47%	42%
White	62%	75%	49%	42%
Female	62%	74%	48%	43%
Low Income	61%	71%	48%	44%
English Language Learner	64%	74%	51%	48%
Special Education	61%	70%	50%	46%
Advanced Learner	64%	77%	52%	47%
Students Overall	61%	73%	49%	43%

As it was in 2017, the variances at the dimension level among student groups are not large. But experiences among students differ greatly when individual questions within the dimensions of school climate are examined. For example, within the *Relationships* dimension, 75% of Asian, 73% of ELL, and 72% of advanced learners agreed, *the adults at my school respect the students* compared to just 62% of African American students and 66% of multiracial students. Within *Teaching & Learning*, 84% of advanced learners *participate in classroom discussions*, compared to 67% of special education students – a difference of 17 percentage points.

Highlights Across School Levels

For the fourth consecutive 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 2 below.

Figure 2: 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, 73% positive for middle school students, and 69% positive for high school students. The dimension with the largest variation in positive responses across student levels was *Institutional Environment*, decreasing 39 percentage points between elementary, 62%, and high school, 23%.

When looking at the questions within the *Teaching & Learning* dimension which had the smallest variation - 10 percentage points - in positive responses by level, 72% of elementary students *look forward to seeing the adults at their schools*, compared to 55% of middle school and 54% of high school students.

Similarly, a higher percentage of elementary school students agree their teachers care about how well they do in school, 87%, compared to 80% of middle school and 74% of high school students.

When looking at the questions within the *Institutional Environment* dimension, which had a 39 point variation in positive responses by level, 55% of elementary students agree *their schools are clean*, compared to 40% of middle school and 19% of high school students. A higher percentage of elementary school students agree *their buildings are kept in good condition*, 68%, compared to 51% of middle school and 26% of high school students. The dimension of *Safety* also had a large variation – 20 percentage points – in positive responses by level. Among questions within *Safety*, 76% of elementary students agree they *would talk with an adult at their schools if they were worried about something serious*, compared to only 45% of high school students and 56% of elementary students agree *their personal things are safe at school*, compared to only 31% of high school students.



Findings: Open-Ended Responses from Students of Color

The climate survey asked students two open-ended questions: (1) *What do you feel is your/this school's greatest strength?*, and (2) *What do you feel is this/your school's greatest challenge?* We received 5,267 comments regarding strengths, and 5,222 comments regarding challenges from students of color. The themes listed below are in no particular order – they represent the topics most often discussed. The corresponding word clouds represent a visual of frequently discussed ideas, with larger words being used more often than the smaller words.

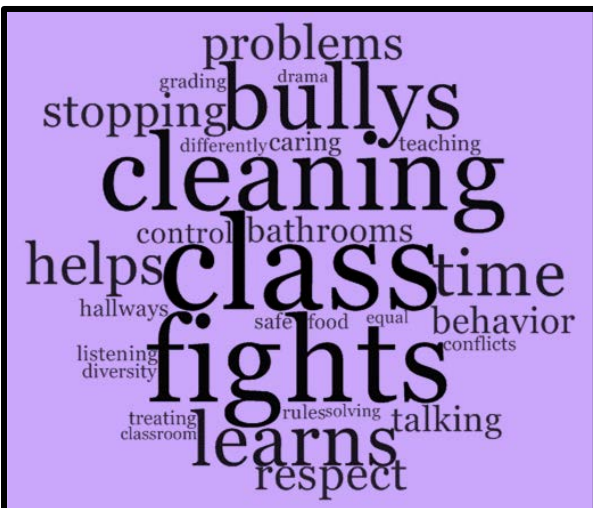
Strengths

Students of color often noted that strengths of their school resided in their school community and in the opportunities present in their school environment. Aspects of their school **community** were often identified by students of color as a strength of their school – in particular, help provided by their teachers. “The students and teachers help each other,” wrote one student. Students of color described receiving help at school with learning, with success, and with “problems at school or at home.” Other students of color described support as a strength of their school. One student wrote, “Supporting each other,” while another elaborated, “I think the school’s greatest strength is our community. We work together so well and make great progress while doing so.” Communication and “being a community” were also school assets, such as, “People coming together as a community to help each other be successful.” **Diversity** as a value and as a reality was another important strength for students of color. “Valuing diversity and differences” offered one student, and another emphasized, “I think that this school’s greatest strength is diversity, and how people come from all different kinds of backgrounds.” Students of color found their **classes and learning opportunities** to be a strength of their schools as well, with some generic references to teachers. When referencing classes, students of color talked about the *variety*, the amount of fun/engagement in classes, and the preparatory nature of courses. One student lauded how “The classes really help prepare us for college learning,” and another said, “[...] has lots of class options in different areas and skill levels.” Students of color also explained how “learning new things” was an asset of their particular school, along with the “learning environment” of the school.



Challenges

Students of color identified a few challenges facing their schools. For some, **student behavior**, such as fighting and bullying, was a major challenge facing their school. “I think the school’s greatest challenge is to control fights or other disruptive behavior,” wrote one student. Some described challenges with learning in spite of behavior issues or other students disturbing the learning environment. “When only a few students misbehave,” one student pronounced, “it disrupts the whole class and makes it harder to learn.” Bullying was another topic of discussion, with some students of color claiming, “I think our schools’ greatest challenge is stopping bullying.” There were also concerns around teachers noticing bullying. “Bullying,” wrote one student, “A lot of teachers don’t really see it, but, it is still a major thing. And more teachers need to acknowledge it.” **Cleanliness** of the schools were another challenge students of color elaborated on. Many wrote comments akin to “Keeping the school clean,” while others expounded on specific areas of the school that needed attention, such as bathrooms, hallways, cafeterias, or the floors. “The bathrooms are never clean and the locks on the stalls don’t work,” said one student, “The garbage cans are always full and they look the same as the recycling cans.” Students of color also referred to





challenges in **learning**. Some students of color identified particular topics of difficulty (e.g., learning English) or the difficulty of individualized learning, such as “knowing what each individual person needs to learn.” Others elaborated on students being “motivated to learn” or the *engagement* side of teaching and learning, such as “trying to keep the kids interested in learning.” Some students of color referenced teachers and their teaching: “I feel that some teachers don’t teach very well” With that, aspects of **relationships or community**, such as respect and helping were also cited as challenges. Students of color talked about the need to “respect each other every day,” and this included students to teachers, teachers to students, and students to students. “I think that there are a lot of students at school who don’t really show teachers and staff enough respect,” said one student. Students of color talked about challenges related to “helping everyone with their needs,” “to help kids get ready for college and high school and help you prepare”, and “helping each other.”