

Clarence Bee Article – May 2019
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School Climate Survey

The Clarence School District has participated in a pilot program to measure school climate over the past two years. The New York State Education Department will soon add the measure of school climate to the overall accountability system for schools. The District believes that adding a school climate measure to the existing academic test measures and graduation rate is a positive step forward that will help us determine how we can improve as a learning organization.

The school climate index (SCI) is a tool that allows school buildings and districts to effectively assess and analyze school climate through school-to-school comparisons and to identify schools most in need of programmatic interventions aimed at improving school climate. An SCI creates and provides a state-normed, school-level description of multiple research-based factors that are known to influence learning success in schools. Measuring school climate is a crucial step in improving school climate and giving school administrators information regarding the climate in their respective buildings and districts. School administrators can then use SCI data to evaluate and improve school climate in their buildings.

There are three separate parts that make up the measure of school climate, chronic absenteeism, reports of disruptive incidents, and the school climate survey. The part that we believe provides the richest source of information is the school climate survey. We are delivering the survey to four stakeholder groups including students in grades 5-12, parents, faculty and staff. The surveys have a variety of questions that are focused on three big domains of school climate, safety, engagement, and environment. The survey responses are further collated into thirteen subcategories that help us make sense of the data.

We shared data from last year's school climate surveys with the Strategic Planning Team this past March. One interesting result was that each of the stakeholder groups responded in a positive manner when asked to comment on the overwhelming number of current climate variables in each of the schools. One area that stood out with lower overall positive ratings in all of the buildings was the variable of mental health. There weren't large discrepancies between the responses of students, parents, and teachers on most of the variables, but teachers tended to score the climate more positively than the other stakeholder groups.

This year we will be able to compare survey responses to last year, providing us with better information on how to improve school climate.