

# **Appendix F**

## **Cognitive Testing of Questionnaire Items Summary Report**

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### **ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCS): Violence Questions**

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## **Findings**

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## 1. Introduction

This report summarizes findings of the cognitive testing of three potential new items to be added to the ED School Climate Surveys, two for students and one for staff. Research Support Services Inc. conducted the testing: forty-one cognitive interviews were conducted in Illinois, in the Chicago Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area between November 7 and 30, 2015.

All respondents worked or studied at a middle or high school<sup>1</sup>. Ten interviews were conducted with teachers, either working in high schools or in middle schools. Eleven<sup>2</sup> interviews were conducted with non-instructional staff. Ten interviews were conducted with middle school students and ten with high school students.

## 2. Recruiting

Participants were recruited through online postings and flyers targeted at middle and high school teachers and school staff, as well as parents of middle- and high schoolers. Flyers (shown in Appendix A) were also handed out to staff in school offices and security guards at the entrance of schools, as well to students outside of schools. Four schools were visited for flyer distribution: two suburban middle schools, one suburban high school, and one high school in the north side of Chicago. An electronic flyer was also posted on Research Support Services' Facebook page, and staff shared it through their personal networks. Interested candidates had to respond to one of four telephone screeners, one for students, one for teachers, one for staff and one for principals (see Appendix B).

### 2.1. Respondent Characteristics

Of the 41 total participants, 20 were students and 21 were teachers or school staff. Of the 20 students, 15 were enrolled in public schools, 4 in a charter schools and 1 in a private school; 12 were male and 8 were female. The distribution by grade level was: 1 fifth grader, 9 middle schoolers, and 10 high schoolers. In terms of race/ethnicity, there were 6 Hispanic and 14 non-Hispanic. Racial distribution was 4 White, 11 African-American, 1 Asian, 1 bi-racial, and 3 other (Hispanic). Age distribution was: one 17 year old, one 16 year old, three were 15, five were 14, four were 13, five were 12, and one was 10 years old.

Of the 21 teachers and other school staff, 6 were male and 15 were female. Among the 10 teachers, 4 taught middle school, and 6 taught high school. The 11 staff included 1 principal, 3

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<sup>1</sup> Including 5th grade students or teachers in schools that include a middle school.

<sup>2</sup> Right after the planned 20 interviews with staff were completed, one additional principal agreed to be interviewed. Hence a total of 21 interviews were completed to add another principal's perspective.

administrative support staff, 2 security staff, 1 detention specialist, 1 school psychologist, 1 recess and after-school monitor, 1 student activities specialist, and 1 tutor specialist.

### Teacher Characteristics

ID Number	Interview Type	Gender	School Level	School Type	Teacher Type	School Location	Experience	Hispanic?	Race
1001	Teacher	Male	Middle School	Private	Core Subjects	Urban	3 to 6 years	Yes	Other (Hispanic)
1005	Teacher	Female	High School	Public	Instructional Staff	Urban	3 to 6 years	No	Asian
2012	Teacher	Male	Middle School	Public	Core Subjects	Urban	3 to 6 years	No	Black or African American
2014	Teacher	Female	High School	Private	Non-Core Subjects	Urban	3 to 6 years	No	White
3003	Teacher	Female	Middle School	Public	Non-Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
3004	Teacher	Male	High School	Public	Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	No	White
3006	Teacher	Female	High School	Charter	Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	No	White
5001	Teacher	Male	Middle and High School	Charter	Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	No	White
5002	Teacher	Female	High School	Public	Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	Yes	White
5003	Teacher	Male	High School	Public	Core Subjects	Urban	7 years or more	Yes	Other (Hispanic)

### Staff Characteristics

ID Number	Interview Type	Gender	School Level	School Type	Job Title	School Location	Experience	Hispanic?	Race
2010	Staff	Female	Middle School	Public	School Psychologist	City/Urban	3 to 6 years	No	White
2015	Staff	Female	Middle School	Public	Tutor Specialist	City/Urban	3 to 6 years	Yes	Black or African American
2020	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Student Activity Specialist	City/Urban	7 years or more	No	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
2021	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Administrative Support Staff	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
3005	Staff	Female	Middle School	Charter	Recess and after school monitor	City/Urban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
3009	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Administrative Support Staff	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
3012	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Detention Specialist	Suburban	7 years or more	Yes	Black or African American
3017	Staff	Male	Middle School	Public	Principle	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
4002	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Administrative Support Staff	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
4005	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Safety Officer	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American
4006	Staff	Female	High School	Public	Student Management Personnel	Suburban	7 years or more	No	Black or African American

## Student Characteristics

ID Number	Interview Type	Gender	Grade Range	School Type	Age	School Location	Hispanic?	Race
1002	High School Student	Female	9 to 12	Charter	15	City/Urban	No	Black or African American
1004	High School Student	Male	9 to 12	Public	15	City/Urban	No	Black or African American
2004	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	12	City/Urban	Yes	White
2006	High School Student	Female	9 to 12	Public	14	City/Urban	No	Black or African American
2013	High School Student	Female	9 to 12	Public	14	Suburban	No	White
2019	High School Student	Male	9 to 12	Public	17	Suburban	No	Black or African American
3001	Middle School Student	Female	6 to 8	Public	13	Suburban	Yes	Black or African American
3002	High School Student	Female	9 to 12	Charter	14	City/Urban	Yes	Black or African American
3008	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	13	City/Urban	Yes	Other (Hispanic)
3010	High School Student	Male	9 to 12	Public	13	City/Urban	No	Asian and African American
3011	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	12	Suburban	No	White
3013	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	14	Suburban	No	Black or African American
3015	Middle School Student	Female	6 to 8	Public	13	City/Urban	No	Black or African American
3016	Middle School Student	Male	5th Grade	Private	10	City/Urban	No	White
4001	High School Student	Male	9 to 12	Public	14	City/Urban	No	Black or African American
4003	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	12	Suburban	No	Asian
4010	Middle School Student	Male	6 to 8	Public	12	Suburban	No	Black or African American
4011	Middle School Student	Female	6 to 8	Public	12	Suburban	No	Black or African American
5004	High School Student	Male	9 to 12	Charter	15	City/Urban	Yes	Other (Hispanic)
5005	High School Student	Female	9 to 12	Charter	16	City/Urban	Yes	Other (Hispanic)

### 3. Interviews

Some teachers/staff were interviewed at the schools where they worked, per their request. Students and remaining staff were interviewed in a few city and suburban locations: a rented interview room or public space at the Chicago Cultural Center, and a Chicago hotel lobby where a parent could sit away from earshot but still be able to view their child.

Parents were asked to sign consent forms for the students. Each interview began with an introduction and administration of a consent form for teachers/staff and an assent form for the students (shown in Appendix C). Then each respondent was asked to complete a short questionnaire while thinking aloud and describing how he or she came up with his/her answers (shown in Appendix D). Once they completed the questions, the interviewer probed the respondent answers following a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix E).

### 4. Testing New Item for Teachers and School Staff

#### 4.1. Methods

Testing with teachers and other school staff was focused on a single questionnaire item. However, to provide context and avoid singling out the specific item of interest, respondents were provided with a 2-page questionnaire containing a total of 9 questions, among them the one being tested.

The full set of questions were:

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school?**

**Mark One Response**

28. I can manage almost any student behavior problem.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

29. I feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical conflicts among students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

31. The following types of problems occur at this school often: robbery or theft.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. The following types of problems occur at this school often: vandalism.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

33. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student possession of weapons.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

34. The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

35. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical abuse of teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

36. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student verbal abuse of teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 34 was the focus of this testing. However, probing also covered questions 28, 30, 3, 35 and 36, to provide context and get the respondents used to answering probes. Interviews were short, rarely longer than 30 minutes.

## Findings

Question 34 read as follows:

34. The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Two respondents marked Agree, ten respondents marked Disagree, and nine respondents marked Disagree Strongly.

## 4.2. Testing Goals

Testing of this item and the corresponding cognitive probing aimed at answering the following questions:

- Did respondents understand the question as intended?
- Were they thinking of sexual assault and sexual violence or were they thinking of violence in general and sexual assault separately?
- Were they thinking of their school as they answered?
- Why did they choose one response category over another?

### 4.3. Overall Question Interpretation

Responses to the question varied depending on interpretation, as did response strategies. Twelve respondents interpreted the question as referring to sexual violence, including sexual assault, while seven thought the question was asking about two distinct types of things: violence in general (non sexual in nature) and sexual assault. One respondent asked initially if the question referred to sexual violence or violence in general; two others asked a similar question during probing. Another recommended adding 'bullying' to the question (which fits with his interpretation of violence in general).

In probing, interviewers asked what the respondent thought was meant by 'sexual assault.' "Rape," "molestation," "inappropriate touching" were the most common inclusions in the definitions elicited. A few respondents indicated they were thinking of student on student acts, but also staff on student, or student on staff incidents.

Of the two respondents who marked Agree, one was a teacher who understood the scope of the question but said she would broaden it to include "inappropriate" music: "Sometimes they (students) don't consider it inappropriate; if I feel uncomfortable with the activity, I consider it assault. I think sometimes the girl doesn't want to say anything about it." Upon further probing she explained: "We have very strict policies about what they (students) can say so they will call out parts of songs." She felt this is something the boys do that is demeaning to the female students, but they do not want to report the males to avoid getting them in trouble.

The other respondent who answered 'Agree' did so treating the 'or' as separating two different kinds of things: on one hand violence (non-sexual) and on the other sexual assault. While she said sexual assault does not occur, her answer was affirmative because she was answering about violence in general.

*"I agree. Sexual assault, no...but the violence, like I said the students they can be playing and then they can start fighting each other, or hit each other. You know, they end up getting suspended because they have an issue with keeping their hands to themselves. And more so, I would say 6th to 8th graders than it is the younger kids, because the bigger kids for some reason they are so angry, so if somebody says something to them they get mad and they want to fight instead of talking."*

The respondent clarified that if the question had asked only about sexual assault she would have answered "strongly disagree" because: "We haven't had any issues with sexual assault at the school."

For another respondent (case 2015), the question was only asking about physical aspects of violence or assault. Since in the school "there aren't physical altercations; most of it is verbal," the respondent marked Disagree. However, the same respondent, later said "Just as violence can be emotional or physical, but they are both violence."



A respondent who marked Disagree, explained his response as taking into account both violence in general and sexual assault, and providing an answer that would cover both types of incidents.

*“If it was just sexual assault I would have answer ‘strongly disagree,’ but putting violence out there made me just put disagree because the violence does occur sometimes. And sometimes and often are definitely two different things, but looking at the question with ‘often’ again, makes you ‘disagree’.”*

Upon further probing, the respondent said that if the question had asked only about sexual assault she would have answered Strongly Disagree because:

*“Inappropriately touching maybe a male to a female or vice versa, it can go both ways, but I think that’s where it starts.” – “That just doesn’t happen in my school, as far as I know.”*

Some respondents wondered if the question referred only to incidents inside the school or also on school grounds, or in the neighborhood around the school. One respondent noted that:

*“Another thing I’m thinking about too is for these questions maybe clarifying like do they mean literally like **in** the school or is it going to count like outside of school, like after school when kids are hanging out or...a lot of times we hear about things happening out in the school like in the neighborhood parks and stuff, and then it’s still a repercussion for the kids at school but it’s not necessarily happening in the school.”*  
[PROBE: Does the question make you think they mean only IN the school?] *“Yeah, it makes me think it’s in the school, but I guess my mind is leaning towards things I hear happening right outside of school or right after school I guess.”*

And in the words of another respondent:

*“No one has been sexually assaulted here in the building, I just can’t foresee any—I mean it could possibly happen but I can’t foresee it happening not on day, evening or night shift, I just can’t foresee it happening—happening in the school, outside the school I can’t speak. Inside the school I have to disagree totally that is not happening here.”*

However, generally, respondents felt that frequency for something to be considered to occur 'often' depends on the type of event. For an act that is more serious or more uncommon, such as rape, 'often' may be just "more than three times a year." Whereas, for a common or less serious act like verbal altercation, 'often' may be interpreted as "every day."

One respondent indicated that, for a question like Q36 R, he would consider "often" once a month or 12 times a year for this type of occurrence, whereas for Q34, he considered "often" 3 to 5 times a year.

Thinking of sexual assault, most respondents said they would consider anything over 3 to 5 times a year to be 'often'.

One single respondent gave an absolute response: she defined 'often' as something "happening a lot of the times that the school is in place... In a week, probably 3 (days) out of the 5."

#### 4.4. Interpretation of 'Sexual Assault and Violence'

As indicated above, one respondent broadened the definition to include things like "inappropriate music." However, for most teachers and staff, interpretations tended to focus on inappropriate touching.

*"If you touch somebody inappropriately, touching someone if they don't want to be touched, like in their private areas or anywhere where you are not supposed to touch them. That's what I think about when I think of sexual assault."*

*"Sexual assault means physically, inappropriately touching someone against their will. I think that for those kids it's inappropriate because they are in the school property and they are under age."*

*"It could be heterosexual or transgender or homosexual. Could be threats or stalking, inappropriate contact between faculty and student. Violence and could be verbal as well as physical."*

*"Because it's all together like that, to me that's still referring to a violent act that has to do with sexuality. So for example it could be...related to someone being physically hurt or harmed because of their sexual orientation."*

One of the respondents who separated violence from sexual assault explained the distinction:

*"Two different things. Sexual is sexual, rape. Violence, violence, beat, knock somebody out...Then you could put them as both because it could happen the same way you could be sexually assaulted and beaten at the same time."*

Without exception, all respondents were thinking about the school in which they currently work. Those working in more than one school were asked to focus their answers on the school where they work most hours. They did so without any noticeable difficulty.

#### 4.5. How Often Is 'Often'

What constitutes 'often' for respondents varied to some degree, but generally they believed that the type or seriousness of an incident determines how often is 'often.'

One respondent who treated the question as double barreled (asking about violence in general and also about sexual assault), illustrates the relative meaning of 'often.' For her, "it depends": for sexual assault, more than three incidents in a year would be 'often' whereas for a verbal altercation between a staff member and a student, twice a day might be 'often.'

Another respondent thought of 'often' as "something that is continuously going all the time and we don't have that problem here...it would be like on an occasional basis...it's very rare that that would happen here." For this respondent, 'often' referring to sexual assault might be three to four times ever. "Often for sexual assault would be different than finding drugs—four or five times in a month would be often for finding drugs in school for example, one instance would be often for sexual assault...often to verbal assault on staff would be every day."

#### **4.6. Precision of Response Choices**

Interviewers probed on why the respondents chose a specific response category rather than an adjacent one. This is a helpful approach to understand how respondents interpret the categories.

From their narratives, it emerged that respondents tended to answer Disagree when they had not heard of any specific incidents, which gave them the impression that such things do not happen often (or else they would have heard). However, in some cases, they felt unsure that it does not happen at all simply because they are unaware, and this stopped them from answering "strongly disagree."

Disagree answers came generally from those who have not heard much, or have not heard of incidents inside the school, or only of an odd incident, but nothing they would see as happening often. Among those who selected Strongly Disagree, while not systematically different, a few articulated stronger reasons: "no incidents in 20 years," "none inside the school," "never heard of a rape."

#### **4.7. Recommendations**

If this item is included in the survey, we recommend that it be rephrased to avoid the different interpretations regarding 'sexual assault and violence.' All other concepts in the item worked well in the testing. The rephrased item would read:

The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or sexual violence.

## 5. Testing Items for Middle and High School Students

### 5.1. Methods

Testing with students focused on two items. However, to provide context and avoid singling out the specific item of interest, respondents were provided with a 2-page questionnaire containing a total of 10 questions, among them the two being tested. The questions were:

13. It is easy to talk with teachers at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. My teachers care about me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. At this school, there is a teacher or some other adult who students can go to if they need help because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. My teachers make me feel good about myself.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. I feel like I am part of this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

31. I feel socially accepted.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. I feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

33. I feel safe going to and from this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

34. Students at this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

35. I sometimes stay home because I don't feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Questions 15 and 34 were the focus of this testing. Respondents were asked to self-administer the questions. In addition to the two questions tested, probing was done on questions 13, 14, 32, 33 and 35, to set the stage, provide context, and train the students on probe answering. The interviews were short, as those of the adults, most often under 30 minutes.

## 5.2. Question 15 Findings

Question 15 read as follows:

15. At this school, there is a teacher or some other adult who students can go to if they need help because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

All of the high school students marked either Agree (n=4) or Strongly Agree (n=6). Among the students in middle school, 3 strongly agreed and 4 agreed. In addition there were three cases where the student marked Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

### 5.2.1. Testing Goals

Testing of this item and the corresponding cognitive probing aimed at answering the following questions:

- Were the students thinking of their current school?
- Did “some other adult” include adults outside of school?
- Is “go to” literal or figurative to them?
- Were they including violence that happened outside of school?
- What was the student’s level of comfort with this question?
- Why did they choose one response category over another?

### 5.2.2. Overall Question Interpretation

The two key concepts in this question are 'sexual assault' and 'dating violence.' Most high school students interpreted 'sexual assault' as referring to rape plus other kinds of physical assault of a sexual nature. One thought only of rape and 2 only of inappropriate and unwanted touching. The definitions elicited included:

- *"Unwanted sexual contact."*
- *"Like by being touched or something, the wrong way or, you know, by someone that shouldn't be touching you."*

- *"I think it means like if you were violated in some sort of situation or someone touched them."*
- *"Physically touching someone without their permission."*
- *"Like being harassed or raped or something. Being forced to do something you don't want to do basically."*

A smaller proportion of the middle school students mentioned rape explicitly, only 3 of the 10. The remainder spoke of unwanted touching, grabbing, or kissing.

The phrase 'dating violence' was interpreted more dissimilarly in the two age groups. All 10 high school students referred to violence within the context of a dating relationship, where one or both persons are physically violent to the other. A couple of students also mentioned screaming or being verbally violent. None of the students interpreted dating violence as including forcible sexual behavior.

Among the middle school students, there were a few who did not understand the concept of dating violence as intended. Two students guessed it might mean "forced dating." References to physical fights or to the girl in a couple getting hit or punched were common, but also, without explicit mention of sexual violence, several referred to unspecified "abuse."

Both middle school and high school student respondents were thinking of their current school as they answered the question, with no exceptions.

### **5.2.3. The Concept of 'Some Other Adult'**

The majority of the high school students only referred in their response to adults in their school. Upon probing several mentioned that the question asks specifically for someone 'at the school.' However for 2 respondents, 'some other adult' included adults outside of school.

*"It can be any adult that you are close to."*

*"It could include other people outside of school...(Someone who) could help you by talking to your parents or helping you find a solution."*

Students said they were thinking mostly of teachers, counselors, and social workers. There were some single mentions of "janitor," "security," "coach," "any school staff," "other parents in the school," and "principal."

Among the 10 middle school students, 6 were only thinking of adults in the school, while 2 also included family members. As for school personnel, they also volunteered "peer mediation teacher," and "social worker." One student was unsure if the question aimed to include or exclude adults outside the school.

#### 5.2.4. Concept of 'Going to'

One goal of testing this item was to know if the students might limit their answer by interpreting 'go to' literally, that is, thinking only of adults they can go in person to meet and talk, and excluding adults they can contact in other ways, such as by phone or by email.

Both high school and middle school students interpreted 'go to' as intended, not limiting it by mode of communication or ability to meet in person.

#### 5.2.5. Including Incidents Occurring outside of School

The question is not specific regarding where the sexual assault or dating violence in question would occur. As intended, all but one of the high school students included in their thinking any incident that could happen either in school or out of school.

*"No, I think it's asking if it's happening period, and you don't feel comfortable telling your parent or somebody in your family, is there someone at school that you feel comfortable telling."*

*"It could be happening somewhere else. It would probably most likely be happening somewhere else because students at my school mostly feel safe so, I don't think things like this would take place at school. It could happen anywhere."*

The one student who thought only of incidents occurring out of school did so simply because she could not imagine such things could happen inside the school:

*"Something that's happening outside of school most likely....because it's not really much you can do in my school, it's really strict and like they don't go for stuff like that."*

For one of the middle school students, the question was not "exactly clear" as to where the sexual assault or dating violence would occur, but for the larger number (n=5) it could refer to either inside or outside of school. Two more thought the question was only about in-school incidents, and one thought it was only about things happening outside of school ("Most likely outside...because that's the time where that mostly happens.")

#### 5.2.6. Students Level of Comfort with This Item

Interviewers observed the students while they completed the questionnaire and -- in some cases - - expressed their thoughts. None of the respondents was observed to be uncomfortable upon reaching this question, while they self-administered the questionnaire.



However, there was some degree of discomfort in a few cases when having to answer the cognitive probes, in particular, when asked for a definition of sexual assault. By observation of the interviewers and responses to other probes, there were 2 respondents that appeared less than fully comfortable discussing this question. The interviewers marked them as 'somewhat comfortable.'

*"Felt like it would always be somewhat difficult to go to an adult about these issues."*

Middle school students appeared generally very comfortable with the question. Six of the ten respondents answered the probes comfortably.

### **5.2.7. Choice of Response Category**

As mentioned above, all of the high school students marked either Agree (n=4) or Strongly Agree (n=6). Among the students in middle school, 3 strongly agreed and 4 agreed. In addition there were three cases where the student marked Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

The rationale for selecting agree or strongly agree was well articulated and clear among the high school students. In schools where affirmative steps have been taken to let students know who they can go to with these types of issues, this was an easy question to answer.

*"I said yeah because at the beginning of the school year they had a seminar or whatever for if a problem like that were ever to come up to...they gave you instructions on what to do. They tell you to go to a teacher that you know...and it's your counselor that helps you with that."*

*"They always tell us if there is any problem we can come to them."*

*"Because there are like 10 counselors, and they are all willing to help anyone in any situation. And also the teachers. We develop strong bonds with the teachers because they really care about you."*

*"Because they have people specifically assigned to help with situations like this."*

*"Because we have counselors, it is set up if your last name is like A to G you go see this counselor and so and so... With the counselors you can go to them and talk to them with confidence, and they are there to help you through situation like sexual assault and dating violence, and if it is really a problem they reach out for you so you don't have to because sometimes you are scared and you don't know what to do. That is why the counselors are there to help you through situations like these that are affecting you in school or outside."*

*"I chose that answer because I said before that it's a big family. So, there aren't a lot of students there, it's just freshmen this year, so it's really easy to go up to a teacher and ask for advice and all the teachers are telling you, oh, if you need help with something come to me or if it's something private just tell me so I can help you. Because if you have a problem that's personal and then it's affecting your work, they can tell."*

*"I said strongly agree because we have four counselors I believe, at the school and they're all really nice. You only could get pulled out of class if like you really need to talk to them, and your talk is private no one else hears about it and your information is not spread through the school...you can talk to them about anything and they'll give you advice or help you."*

*"Because there are so many people, and they are always willing to listen."*

Even when the students do not feel the school has been proactive, there are trusted adults they feel they can go to:

*"There is a teacher at my school that you can always go to talk to about anything."*

*"Not like everyone cares, not everyone you can trust like they would do something. Like you can tell a teacher and they can do something but, later on they don't really do it. Like if you tell someone it has to be someone you really trust. Basically, not all people care but some do."*

One of the students explained why he chose Agree rather than Strongly Agree:

*"I agreed because even though I am not necessarily a result of sexual assault or dating violence I am sure some people in the school have gone through that...I may know a couple of people or a couple of stories, but I am not directly related to anybody I know of that has experience sexual assault or dating violence specifically, so I am not quite sure the aspects of the school that support that, so I just said agree because I know it's there, but I am not sure it's definitely there."*

None of the middle school students knew of any such incidents ever happening to students in their schools. They answered from their knowledge of school resources. The narratives elicited were mostly consistent with the response each gave to the survey item.

*"I agree because there are social workers at my school that you can go talk to about violence or assaults, bullying, school work or problems at home."*

*"We have peer mediation and we have deans and stuff, so like if anything ever happens we have cameras in the hallways and they can hear things in classes so if they see something happening they can catch it on tape. People could tell the dean and the dean could take over the situation and like suspend or expel or what they need to do."*

*"We had a lot of problems last year, and we had the social worker that came she helped everyone get through stuff. She let them come to her class at different times and periods."*

*"I know there is this one teacher that everybody goes to that helps with their problems."*

Two respondents selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree because of the lack of a specific person in their school designated to deal with such issues.

*"I disagree, not many people go to counselors because of that and there isn't really a counselor that does stuff like that."*

*"Because we don't have one and that never happened at our school."* (By "don't have one," the respondent meant a counselor specifically for sexual assault issues.)

Finally, one respondent answered Question 15 inconsistently, given the answers he provided to probes. At question 14 he said that the teachers at his school really care about the students and cited that one of his teachers specifically mentioned in class that students could come to talk/see him at any time. At Question 15, he answered Disagree. He paraphrased Question 15 as "Is there an adult you can turn to if you need help for any reason?" The interviewer noted that this respondent seemed to not have fully understood the question initially. First he said the question was about seeking "advice on dating" but then expanded his definition to include "needing help not just about dating but for any reason." The respondent seemed confused by the question.

### **5.2.8. Recommendations**

The concept of dating violence may be difficult for some middle school students, as indicated in the findings. Otherwise the item appears to function well. A different wording or an explanation of what dating violence means might be useful to assure all are answering about the same type of incidents or situations.

### **5.3. Question 34 Findings**

Question 34 read as follows:

34. Students at this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The distribution of responses followed an almost identical pattern among high schoolers as among middle schoolers. Middle school students selected Disagree in 3 cases and Strongly Disagree in 7. Among the high school students, 6 selected Strongly Disagree, 3 selected Disagree, and 1 answered Agree.

### 5.3.1. Testing Goals

Testing of this item and the corresponding cognitive probing aimed at answering the following questions:

- How did respondents interpret this item?
- How did they decide on their response?
- What does “unsafe” mean to them?
- Why did they choose one response option over another?
- Were they thinking of both sexual assault and dating violence?

### 5.3.2. Overall Question Interpretation

The probes on interpretation of this item elicited narratives that showed consistency in how respondents answered the item. The one high school student who answered Agree, did so out of general societal awareness, rather than from anything that is happening at the school:

*"Just because I don't see it directly relating towards me, doesn't mean it's not there, because I know that sexual assault and dating violence is a big problem that has been emerging with teenagers so I know that not all the relationships in the school are 100% safe and don't have any of these things or components in them. That's why I put agree."*

Other study participants took an opposite approach. The fact that they have no awareness of such cases was generally taken as evidence that it cannot be such a big problem in their school. Their reason for disagreeing with the statement about students feeling unsafe was based on the rejection of such issues ever happening for students at their school.

*"To my knowledge there haven't been any acts of sexual assault or dating violence at [Name of school], so as I see it, I strongly disagree that it is a problem. The principal normally has assemblies or meetings with the entire school if something is a problem, and he announces it. We haven't had anything like that, so I doubt that that's a safety problem for the students at our school."*

*"I strongly disagree with this because...I feel like it's a big family at the school...I feel really comfortable talking with my teachers, I don't have problems with any students so it's just like, I just strongly disagree with it."*

*"I have not heard anything about any sexual assault or dating violence. Like I don't see bruises on people's faces, so I am pretty sure it's safe in terms of that. There may be fights, but not in terms of those two topics"*

*"I have never heard of anyone being sexually assaulted or like dating...being involved in dating violence, but also there could be people that I have never heard of that could have experienced this, so I disagree. But could agree, if there were more information."*

Others more clearly were addressing the issue of feeling unsafe:

*"Pretty much if you know someone you know they are not going to hurt you or put you in danger."*

*"Because it is like some teachers there would help or any other guardians or parents there would help. They would probably give you advice or so or ask who is doing that or how would they help, people would call the police or so to help. They would do something to make you feel better."*

*"I chose that answer because the school, no one really...the students know not to bully anyone or anything because you will get in serious trouble for bullying or sexual assault or anything, cause most of the students there they're not, they'll go talk to a counselor so they'll let them know right away and the person will get in trouble most likely."*

Middle school students answered with a similar range of logic responses:

*"I disagree because if you are in that situation, teachers probably help, but it kind of depends because if you don't want to tell a teacher and you want to keep it to yourself and a teacher is just doing their job and they don't see any signs or anything then it probably wouldn't be safe."*

*"I disagreed because not a lot of stuff happens at my school. It's like a boring school. So not a lot happens, we only had a couple of fights and a couple of sexual assaults that really weren't."*

*"Nothing wrong ever goes down at my school. Some of the boys 'play fight' but no one gets hurt."*

*"We don't have any problems in our school with sexual assault." "They are asking about whether people have problems with teachers or students touching them but we don't have that."*

*"Because that never happened around my neighborhood, because my neighborhood's a really good neighborhood." (What do you mean 'that never happened' What?) "You never heard of anything on the news that causes any sexual assault or dating violence."*

*"Because everybody at my school is pretty chill and don't touch each other. We all just talk to each other, there is no dating violence and like people rarely date at my school and no one really touches each other, no sexual assault, we can't even hug, so there is no sexual assault either."*

*"Not many people date at my school."*

*"This usually don't happen at our school, so people should not feel unsafe about it."*

It is worth mentioning that some respondents answering Disagree indicated that they would have answered Strongly Disagree; however, not knowing how other students truly feel, they were not totally sure none felt unsafe. They felt they could not confidently speak for others.

### **5.3.3. Meaning of Unsafe**

Question 34 asks if students **at** this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence. This could be interpreted as students who attend that school feeling unsafe or as students feeling unsafe **in** the school. Generally respondents interpreted in this latter fashion, which may not necessarily be the item intent.

The high school students' narrative responses appeared to remain focused on the topic of sexual assault or dating violence:

*"Unsafe as in there is a person at the school that could harm you or do these things to you."*

*"Feeling unsafe as in you feel like you don't have anybody to turn to maybe...basically you don't feel like the school has provided resources to keep you from an issue in the school at that time."*

*"I think they mean that the person might feel, like they might be hurt again by the same person or other people. They might be blamed or something like that."*

*"You probably don't feel like you can really trust, like you don't feel safe, you don't feel protected or so. Or you don't trust anyone or you feel uncomfortable."*

*"Maybe helpless, unprotected because when you come in there and you haven't talked about these problems, and if there is a problem and you are coming and you know that the person who you are having an issue with is there, and no one else knows, then they can make you feel like you are helpless or defenseless or unprotected because you have not reached out and now this is a problem for you... If it was outside, now it is a problem for you at school too."*

*"As in they would be scared to go to school or like they were afraid of something at the school they would feel like they would not want to jeopardize themselves by going in the school."*

*"They...feel like there's no one there for them...they have to be careful about their surroundings."*

*"I guess you are scared in a sense to show people. Like maybe they wear long sleeves because maybe they have a bruise on their arm, so they are constantly pulling it down."*

The middle school students provided similar narratives but also brought up bullying and assault other than sexual or dating related:

*"Do you feel unsafe, like do you feel comfortable telling anyone. Or are you nervous to tell anyone because you think they won't help or they will probably embarrass you because of your situation. It is kind of asking do you feel comfortable talking to anyone."*

*"If they feel like something bad is going to happen to them or like someone could get jumped or something."*

*"When you feel like someone is going to hurt you after school or in the bathroom."*

*"They mean as in if they feel as if they will be assaulted, if they would experience those bad things, which some people do."*

*"Is there any bullying or people getting hurt in the school."*

#### **5.3.4. Considering Sexual Assault, Dating violence, or Both**

High schoolers were all thinking of both sexual assault and dating violence. Seven of the middle schoolers also thought of both, while it was not clear what one student included or not, and the other was only thinking of sexual assault.

#### **5.3.5. Recommendations**

Before deciding on adoption of this item, consider whether the intent matches the interpretations elicited in terms of where the students feel unsafe, and from whom do they feel unsafe.

**Appendix A:**  
Flyers



## Education Research Study

# Students Needed!

We are looking for students in grades 5-12.

Research Support Services (RSS) is looking for participants to help evaluate questions for a new survey for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. These survey questions are part of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), a project with the goal to better understand what it is like in schools.

You will be asked to review survey questions and offer your thoughts about them. This type of research is known as cognitive interviews. We will audio record your responses and take other notes as necessary; information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. These sessions will last no more than 60 minutes.

Students will receive **\$25** to thank them for their time and participation. In addition, parents or legal guardians that bring their child to and from the cognitive interview site will receive **\$25** to thank them for their time and effort.



If you are interested, please contact Sandra at:

**1-888-587-2940**

OMB #1850-0803

## Education Research Study

# Teachers Needed!

We are looking for Teachers of grades 5-12.

Research Support Services (RSS) is looking for participants to help evaluate questions for a new survey for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. These survey questions are part of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), a project with the goal to better understand what it is like in schools.

You will be asked to review survey questions and offer your thoughts about them. This type of research is known as cognitive interviews. We will audio record your responses and take other notes as necessary; information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. These sessions will last no more than 60 minutes.

Teachers and other staff will receive **\$40** for their time and participation.



If you are interested, please contact Sandra at:

**1-888-587-2940**

OMB #1850-0803

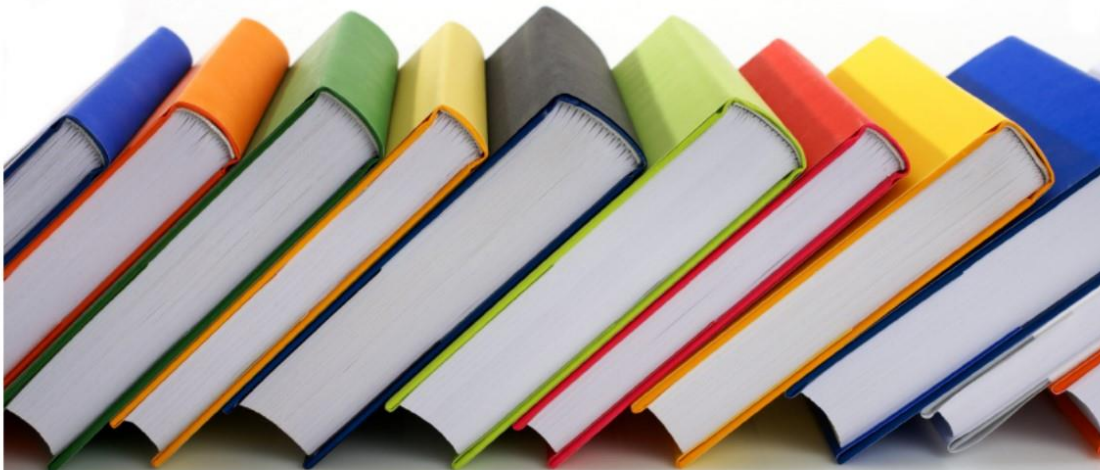
# Education Research Study **Middle and High School Staff Needed!**

We are looking for Principals and Non-Instructional Staff in middle schools and high schools.

Research Support Services (RSS) is looking for participants to help evaluate questions for a new survey for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. These survey questions are part of the ED School Climate Surveys

You will be asked to review survey questions and offer your thoughts about them. This type of research is known as cognitive interviews. We will audio record your responses and take other notes as necessary; information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. These sessions will last no more than 60 minutes.

Principals and other staff will receive **\$40** for their time and participation.



If you are interested, please contact Sandra at:

**1-888-587-2940**

OMB #1850-0803

**Appendix B:**  
Screeners

School Climate **Student/Parent** Screener

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Screener ID _____  Date _____  Recruiter _____
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Hello. My name is [XXXXXX] and I work for Research Support Services. We are conducting a brief but important study about students’ experiences at school. Your participation is voluntary, and you will receive no sales pitch or follow-up calls based on your participation. I’d like to tell you a little bit about the study first; is now a good time? (YES OR NO AND CALL BACK LATER)

We are looking for students to help us understand how they interpret survey questions asking about the student’s school. These survey questions are part of a new suite of school climate surveys that are being developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The objective of the current study is to assess the clarity of the survey questions, and we need help from students to do that. The information gained from the study will be used for potential revisions to the survey questions. Research Support Services (RSS) will be conducting the interviews. I’d like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify for the study.

i. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Do you have a child in your household who is currently enrolled in middle school or high school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No (THANK AND TERMINATE)

2. What is the name of the school this child is currently attending?

\_\_\_\_\_

IF PARENT HAS MORE THAN ONE CHILD IN MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ASK THEM TO REFER TO THE ONE WHO HAD THEIR BIRTHDAY MOST RECENTLY.

3. Is this a public school, private school, charter school, or some other type of school?

- a. Public school
- b. Charter school [ATTEMPT TO RECRUIT A MIX]
- c. Private school
- d. Other type of school (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)
- e. Don’t know

4. What grade is this child currently in?
  - a. Grade 5
  - b. Grades 6-8 (ATTEMPT TO RECRUIT ~2 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE; THEN A MIX OF THE OTHER 2 CATEGORIES)
  - c. Grades 9-12

Other (THANK AND TERMINATE.)

5. How old is this child?

RECORD AGE \_\_\_\_\_

- 5a. And is this child male or female?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female

The next few questions are for classification purposes only.

6. Is this child Hispanic or Latino?
  - a. Yes [RECRUIT A MIX OF YES/NO]
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to answer

7. Which of the following categories best describes this child's ethnic or racial background? (You may select one or more races.)

[RECRUIT A MIX OF RACE/ETHNICITY BASED ON RESPONSES TO Q6/7]

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- e. White
- f. Prefer not to answer

8. What kind of area do you live in? (READ LIST)

- a. City/Urban
- b. Suburban
- c. Rural
- d. Don't know (SPECIFY LOCATION) \_\_\_\_\_

We are conducting a study with students about new survey questions that ask about their experiences at school. If your child qualifies, do you give your permission for us to invite him/her to also participate in a

60-minute interview? Your child will receive \$25 to thank them for their time and participation, and if you bring your child to and from the interview, you will also receive \$25.

- Yes
- No [THANK AND TERMINATE]

## CHILD SCREENING

At this point, I'd like to be able to ask your child a few questions, during which you are welcome to stay on the line. Is he/she available to speak with me at this time? (IF NOT, GET A RE-CALL TIME AND CALL BACK)

What is your child's name?

RECORD NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Again, you are welcome to stay on the line, but please allow your child to speak for him/herself. Thank you.

SAY TO STUDENT:

Hi (student's first name). My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been speaking with your (mom/dad/other) for a few minutes.

As I explained to your (mom/dad/other), I work for a research company and we are conducting an important study about how things are at school. These questions are part of a survey of what students like you think about their school. We are looking for students who can help us understand what they think about these survey questions, so we can help to make the survey better. Right now, I'd like to talk to you to find out if you are able to participate in the study. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of these questions, and whatever you say is OK. OK?

Great.

ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS OF THE STUDENT:

1. What grade are you currently in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What type of school do you currently attend? (READ LIST)
  - a. Public school
  - b. Charter school
  - c. Private school
  - d. Don't know

3. What is the name of your school? (RECORD)  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please tell me what your favorite subject is in school and why. (WRITE VERBATIM)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<p><u>NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS:</u> IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY BE ARTICULATE. IF STUDENT CANNOT OR WILL NOT EASILY GIVE A ONE-TO-TWO SENTENCE UNPROMPTED ANSWER IN WELL UNDERSTOOD ENGLISH, PLEASE <u>TERMINATE</u>.</p>
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5. Do you think you'd be comfortable coming to an interview to talk with an adult you haven't met before about your opinions of some questions about your experiences at school? [IF CHILD IS A MINOR, ADD: Your parent will be coming with you. IF NOT A MINOR: A parent or friend can come to the interview, if you wish.]

SELECT ONE

- a. YES
- b. NO [THANK AND TERMINATE]



**INVITATION**

IF STUDENT IS 18 OR OLDER, GO TO THAT SECTION ON NEXT PAGE.

IF STUDENT IS UNDER 18 ASK TO SPEAK TO PARENT AGAIN

Your child has qualified to participate in an interview session with a researcher in (INSERT LOCATION) to discuss survey questions about their school environment. *The interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME).* The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. \$25 will be given to each participant to thank them for their time and participation and, in addition, we will give you \$25 as a thank you for your time if you will bring your child to and from the facility. Will your child be able to attend the interview?

SELECT ONE

Yes (CONTINUE)

No (TRY FOR ALTERNATE TIME. IF NONE WORK, THANK AND TERMINATE.)

In order for your child to participate in the research study, you must sign and return a parental consent form. You can either bring the signed form to the interview or you can scan it and email it back. Without a signed form your child cannot participate in the interview and receive the \$25. May I email you a parental consent form?

SELECT ONE

Yes (RECORD EMAIL ADDRESS)

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

No --Please remember that you will need to sign the consent form when you arrive or your child cannot participate in the interview and receive \$25.

**IF STUDENT IS 18 OR OLDER**

You have qualified to participate in an interview session with a researcher in Evanston/Chicago to discuss survey questions about their school environment. *The interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME).* The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. \$25 will be given to each participant, plus \$25 to a parent or guardian if they bring you to and from the interview. Would you be able to attend the interview?

SELECT ONE

Yes (CONTINUE)

No (TRY FOR ALTERNATE TIME. IF NOT AVAILABLE FOR ANY TIMES, THANK AND TERMINATE)

Thank you for speaking with me today. I just wanted to let you know that the interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME). The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. Your child will receive \$25. If you end up bringing your child to and from the interview, we will also give you \$25 as a thank you for your time and effort.

School Climate **Teacher** Screener

---

Screener ID _____
Date _____
Recruiter _____

Hello. My name is [XXXXXX] and I work for Research Support Services. We are conducting a brief but important study about school climate. Your participation is voluntary, and you will receive no sales pitch or follow-up calls based on your participation. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the study first; is now a good time? (YES or NO and call back later)

We are looking for school staff members to help us understand how they interpret school climate survey questions. These survey questions are part of a new suite of school climate surveys that are being developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The objective of the current study is to assess the clarity of the survey questions, and we need help from people who work at schools to do that. The information gained from the study will be used for potential revisions to the survey questions. Research Support Services (RSS) will be conducting the interviews. I'd like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify for the study.

- i. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Are you male or female?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
- 1. Do you currently work at an elementary, middle, or high school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  
- 2. What type of school do you work at; is it an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
  - a. Elementary school only (no grades above 5) [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - b. Middle school / junior high (roughly grades between 5-9) [RECRUIT MIX OF MIDDLE/HIGH; BE SURE TO HAVE AT LEAST SOME MS ONLY AND SOME HS ONLY]
  - c. High school (ROUGHLY GRADES BETWEEN 9-12)
  
- 3. Is this a (read school types):
  - a. Public school, [RECRUIT 2/3 PUBLIC, 1/3 OTHERS]
  - b. Charter school, or
  - c. Private school?

4. ONLY ASK IF NOT ALREADY CLEAR WHICH CATEGORY RESPONDENT FALLS INTO: What is your title at this school?
1. Teacher for core subjects (e.g., math, science, English, foreign language, social studies, history) [RECRUIT A MIX OF JOB TYPES]
  2. Teacher for non-core subjects (e.g., band, art, computer, music, gym)
  3. Instructional staff (e.g., NOT A CLASSROOM TEACHER - teacher's aide, instructional coach, department head)
5. Would your school location be considered (READ RESPONSE OPTIONS):
- a. Urban, [RECRUIT HALF URBAN; HALF SUBURBAN/RURAL]
  - b. Suburban, or
  - c. Rural?
  - d. DON'T KNOW (SPECIFY LOCATION)
- 

6. Including this school year, how many years have you been working as a [title]? [IF NEEDED: at any school, not limited to current school]  
[RECRUIT A MIX OF EXPERIENCE LEVELS]
- a. 2 years or less
  - b. 3 to 6 years
  - c. 7 years or more

The next few questions are for classification purposes only.

7. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
- a. Yes [RECRUIT A MIX OF YES/NO]
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to answer
8. Which of the following categories best describes your ethnic or racial background? (You may select one or more races.)  
[RECRUIT A MIX OF RACE/ETHNICITY BASED ON RESPONSES TO Q7/8]
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - e. White
  - f. Prefer not to answer

9. What is your primary position at this school?
- a. Teacher / instructional staff (e.g., teacher's aide) [RECRUIT X]
  - b. Principal [RECRUIT FOR PRINCIPAL (RECRUIT X TOTAL) ; IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - c. Non-instructional staff (e.g., school counselor, lunchroom staff, nurse, janitor, bus driver, administrative support) [RECRUIT X; IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - d. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ (IF TEACHING STAFF OR NON-INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, RECRUIT FOR COG LAB, IF NEEDED. OTHERWISE THANK AND TERMINATE.)

## INVITATION

You qualify to participate in an interview session with a researcher in (INSERT LOCATION) to discuss new school climate survey questions). The interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME). The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. \$40 will be given to each participant.

School Climate **Non-instructional Staff** Screener

---

Screener ID _____
Date _____
Recruiter _____

Hello. My name is [XXXXXX] and I work for Research Support Services. We are conducting a brief but important study about school climate. Your participation is voluntary, and you will receive no sales pitch or follow-up calls based on your participation. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the study first; is now a good time? (YES OR NO AND CALL BACK LATER)

We are looking for school staff members to help us understand how they interpret school climate survey questions. These survey questions are part of a new suite of school climate surveys that are being developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The objective of the current study is to assess the clarity of the survey questions, and we need help from people who work at schools to do that. The information gained from the study will be used for potential revisions to the survey questions. Research Support Services (RSS) will be conducting the interviews. I'd like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify for the study.

- i. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Are you male or female?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
1. Do you currently work at an elementary, middle, or high school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  
2. What type of school do you work at; is it an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
  - a. Elementary school only (no grades above 5) [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - b. Middle school / junior high (roughly grades between 5-9) [RECRUIT MIX OF MIDDLE/HIGH; BE SURE TO HAVE AT LEAST SOME MS ONLY AND SOME HS ONLY]
  - c. High school (ROUGHLY GRADES BETWEEN 9-12)
  
3. Is this a (read school types):
  - a. Public school, [RECRUIT 2/3 PUBLIC, 1/3 OTHERS]
  - b. Charter school, or
  - c. Private school?

4. ONLY ASK IF NOT ALREADY CLEAR WHICH CATEGORY R FALLS INTO: What is your title at this school? [RECRUIT A MIX OF JOB TYPES]
  - a. School counselor
  - b. School nurse
  - c. Librarian
  - d. Administrative support staff (e.g., secretary)
  - e. Janitorial staff
  - f. Lunchroom/kitchen staff
  - g. Bus driver
  - h. Sports coach
  - i. Other
  
5. Would your school location be considered (read response options):
  - a. Urban, [RECRUIT HALF URBAN; HALF SUBURBAN/RURAL]
  - b. Suburban, or
  - c. Rural?[DON'T READ]: Don't know (Specify location)\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Including this school year, how many years have you been working as a [title]? [IF NEEDED: at any school, not limited to current school]  
[RECRUIT A MIX OF EXPERIENCE LEVELS]
  - a. 2 years or less
  - b. 3 to 6 years
  - c. 7 years or more
  
7. Are you Hispanic?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
8. Which of the following categories best describes your ethnic or racial background? (You may select one or more races.) [RECRUIT A MIX OF RACE/ETHNICITY BASED ON RESPONSES TO Q7/8]
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - e. White
  - f. Prefer not to answer
  
9. What is your primary position at this school?

- a. Non-instructional staff (e.g., school counselor, lunchroom staff, nurse, janitor, bus driver, administrative support) [RECRUIT X]
- b. Principal [RECRUIT FOR PRINCIPAL (RECRUIT X TOTAL) ; IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
- c. Teacher / instructional staff (e.g., teacher's aide) [RECRUIT FOR TEACHING STAFF (RECRUIT X TOTAL); IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
- d. Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ (IF TEACHING STAFF OR NONINSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, RECRUIT FOR COG LAB, IF NEEDED. OTHERWISE THANK AND TERMINATE.)

## INVITATION

You qualify to participate in an interview session with a researcher in (INSERT LOCATION) to discuss new school climate survey questions). The interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME). The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. \$40 will be given to each participant.



## School Climate **Principals** Screener

---

Screener ID _____
Date _____
Recruiter _____

Hello. My name is [XXXXXX] and I work for Research Support Services. We are conducting a brief but important study about school climate. Your participation is voluntary, and you will receive no sales pitch or follow-up calls based on your participation. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the study first; is now a good time? (YES OR NO AND CALL BACK LATER)

We are looking for school staff members to help us understand how they interpret school climate survey questions. These survey questions are part of a new suite of school climate surveys that are being developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The objective of the current study is to assess the clarity of the survey questions, and we need help from people who work at schools to do that. The information gained from the study will be used for potential revisions to the survey questions. Research Support Services (RSS) will be conducting the interviews. I'd like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify for the study.

- i. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Are you male or female?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
1. Do you currently work at an elementary, middle, or high school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  
2. What type of school do you work at; is it an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school? (check all that apply)
  - a. Elementary school only (no grades above 5) [THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - b. Middle school / junior high (roughly grades between 5-9) [RECRUIT MIX OF MIDDLE/HIGH; BE SURE TO HAVE AT LEAST SOME MS ONLY AND SOME HS ONLY]
  - c. High school [ROUGHLY GRADES BETWEEN 9-12]
  
3. Is this a (read school types):
  - a. Public school, [RECRUIT 2/3 PUBLIC, 1/3 OTHERS]
  - b. Charter school, or
  - c. Private school?

4. Would your school location be considered (read response options):
  - a. Urban, [RECRUIT HALF URBAN; HALF SUBURBAN/RURAL]
  - b. Suburban, or
  - c. Rural? [DON'T READ]:
  - d. Don't know (Specify location) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your primary position at this school?
  - a. Principal [RECRUIT X]
  - b. Teacher / instructional staff (e.g., teacher's aide) [RECRUIT FOR TEACHING STAFF (RECRUIT X TOTAL); IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - c. Non-instructional staff (e.g., school counselor, lunchroom staff, nurse, janitor, bus driver, administrative support)[RECRUIT FOR NON-INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF (RECRUIT X TOTAL); IF ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH OF THESE RECRUITED, THANK AND TERMINATE]
  - d. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ (IF TEACHING STAFF OR NONINSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, RECRUIT FOR COG LAB, IF NEEDED. OTHERWISE THANK AND TERMINATE.)
  
6. Including this school year, how many years have you been working as a principal? [IF NEEDED: at any school, not limited to current school]
  - a. 2 years or less [RECRUIT A MIX OF EXPERIENCE LEVELS]
  - b. 3 to 6 years
  - c. 7 years or more
  
7. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
8. Which of the following categories best describes your ethnic or racial background? (You may select one or more races.) [RECRUIT A MIX OF RACE/ETHNICITY BASED ON RESPONSES TO Q6/7]
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - e. White
  - f. Prefer not to answer

## INVITATION

You qualify to participate in an interview session with a researcher in (INSERT LOCATION) to discuss new school climate survey questions. The interview is scheduled for (INSERT DAY/DATE AND TIME). The session will last 60 minutes. The interview is strictly for research purposes. Let me assure you that no one will attempt to sell or enroll you in anything. \$40 will be given to each participant.

**Appendix C:**  
Consent/Assent Forms

# Informed Consent – Parents/Legal Guardians of Students

## School Climate Study

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Research Support Services (RSS) is conducting a study on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education. For the study, the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), we are seeking students between grades 5-12 to participate in an effort to gather information that will improve the survey. For this study, an RSS staff member will meet students individually for up to 60 minutes. Students will be given \$25 to thank them for their time and participation. Parents/Guardians will be given \$25 in the event they transport their child to and from the study location.

Students will be asked to think aloud while they read student questions from the EDSCLS. Additionally, the interviewer (RSS staff member) will ask targeted questions to gain a better understanding of student comprehension of the survey questions. Student responses will be audio-recorded and the information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. Your child's participation is voluntary, and he/she may request to stop at any time during the session.

Before your child is eligible to participate, this consent form is required. Additionally, parents are responsible for the transportation of his/her child to and from the interview location.

If you have further questions, please contact Alisú Schoua-Glusberg at 847-864-5677, or via [alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com).

Thank you,



Alisú Schoua-Glusberg

Research Support Services

847-864-5677

[alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com)

**Informed Consent Form for Parents/Legal Guardians of Students**

Student Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

I am the parent/guardian of the student identified above. I have read the description of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) study and associated activities (see reverse); I hereby give my permission for my child named above to participate in the study sessions. I understand that my child’s session will be audio-recorded. All responses may be used only for research purposes and may not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form, for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) 20 U.S.C., § 9573].

I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary, and that he/she may stop participating at any time during the session. I understand that I am responsible for my child’s transportation to and from the interview location. If I have further questions and/or concerns about my child’s participation, I may contact Alisú Schoua-Glusberg at 847-864-5677, or [alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please bring this to the scheduled study session.***

# Student Assent form

## School Climate Study

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

I understand the research is about a new survey that asks about my opinions of the school that I currently attend. I understand that I'm participating voluntarily, that the session will be audio-recorded, that this is a one-time activity, and that my answers may be used only for research purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573).

I have read this information (or had the information read to me) I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them.

I agree to take part in the research.

*OR*

I do not wish to take part in the research and I have not signed the assent below. \_\_\_\_\_ (initialled by child/minor)

### Only if child assents:

Print name of child \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
day/month/year

### **Statement by the researcher/person taking consent**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the child understands the cognitive interview process.

I confirm that the child was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by him/her have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this assent form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the assent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher /person taking the assent \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

INFORMED CONSENT – TEACHER

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

Dear Teacher,

Research Support Services (RSS) is conducting a study on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education. For the study, the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), we are seeking teachers of students between grades 5-12 to participate in an effort to gather information that will improve the survey. For this study, an RSS staff member will meet with teachers individually for up to 60 minutes. Participants will be given \$40 to thank them for their time and participation.

Teachers will be asked to think aloud while they read questions from the EDSCLS. Additionally, the interviewer (RSS staff member) will ask targeted questions to gain a better understanding of teacher comprehension of the survey questions. Participant responses will be audio-recorded and the information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. Your participation is voluntary, and you may request to stop at any time during the session.

Before you are eligible to participate, this consent form is required.

Thank you,



Alisú Schoua-Glusberg

Research Support Services

847-864-5677

[alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com)

**Informed Consent Form - Teacher**

Teacher Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the description of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) study and associated activities (see reverse); all of my questions have been answered. I understand that my session will be audio-recorded. All responses may be used only for research purposes and may not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form, for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) 20 U.S.C., § 9573]. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may stop participating at any time during the session. I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please bring this to the scheduled study session.***



# Informed Consent – Non-Instructional Staff

## School Climate Study

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

Dear Non-Instructional Staff Member,

Research Support Services (RSS) is conducting a study on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education. For the study, the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), we are seeking non-instructional staff members in schools of students between grades 5-12 to participate in an effort to gather information that will improve the survey. For this study, an RSS staff member will meet with participants individually for up to 60 minutes. Participants will be given \$40 to thank them for their time and participation.

Participants will be asked to think aloud while they read questions from the EDSCLS. Additionally, the interviewer (RSS staff member) will ask targeted questions to gain a better understanding of non-instructional staff comprehension of the survey questions. Participant responses will be audio-recorded and the information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. Your participation is voluntary, and you may request to stop at any time during the session.

Before you are eligible to participate, this consent form is required.

Thank you,



Alisú Schoua-Glusberg

Research Support Services

847-864-5677

[alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com)

**Informed Consent Form – Non-Instructional Staff**

Non-Instructional Staff Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the description of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) study and associated activities; all of my questions have been answered. I understand that my session will be audio-recorded. All responses may be used only for research purposes and may not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form, for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) 20 U.S.C., § 9573]. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may stop participating at any time during the session. I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Non-Instructional Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please bring this to the scheduled study session.***

# Informed Consent – Principals

## School Climate Study

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

Dear Principal,

Research Support Services (RSS) is conducting a study on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education. For the study, the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), we are seeking principals of students between grades 5-12 to participate in an effort to gather information that will improve the survey. For this study, an RSS staff member will meet with staff individually for up to 60 minutes. Participants will be given \$40 to thank them for their time and participation.

Participants will be asked to think aloud while they read questions from the EDSCLS. Additionally, the interviewer (RSS staff member) will ask targeted questions to gain a better understanding of principal comprehension of the survey questions. Participant responses will be audio-recorded and the information collected during this study will be for research purposes only. Your participation is voluntary, and you may request to stop at any time during the session.

Before you are eligible to participate, this consent form is required.

Thank you,



Alisú Schoua-Glusberg

Research Support Services

847-864-5677

[alisu@researchsupportservices.com](mailto:alisu@researchsupportservices.com)

**Informed Consent Form – Principals**

Principal Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the description of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) study and associated activities (see reverse); all of my questions have been answered. I understand that my session will be audio-recorded. All responses may be used only for research purposes and may not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form, for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) 20 U.S.C., § 9573]. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may stop participating at any time during the session. I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please bring this to the scheduled study session***

**Appendix D:**  
Questionnaires

# School Climate Surveys

## Student questionnaire

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school?  
Mark One Response.**

13. It is easy to talk with teachers at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. My teachers care about me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. At this school, there is a teacher or some other adult who students can go to if they need help because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. My teachers make me feel good about myself.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. I feel like I am part of this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

31. I feel socially accepted.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. I feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

33. I feel safe going to and from this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

34. Students at this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

35. I sometimes stay home because I don't feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

# School Climate Surveys

## Instructional/non-instructional staff questionnaire

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school?  
Mark One Response**

28. I can manage almost any student behavior problem.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

29. I feel safe at this school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical conflicts among students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

31. The following types of problems occur at this school often: robbery or theft.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. The following types of problems occur at this school often: vandalism.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



33. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student possession of weapons.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

34. The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

35. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical abuse of teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

36. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student verbal abuse of teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Appendix E:**  
Protocols

**Case ID#** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Climate Surveys**

**OMB #1850-0803 v.145**

**STUDENT SURVEY  
2015**

Conducted by:  
U.S. Department of Education  
National Center for Education Statistics

Administered by:  
Research Support Services, Inc

## **MATERIALS NEEDED FOR INTERVIEW**

- INTERVIEWER PROTOCOL BOOKLET (THIS BOOKLET)
- RESPONDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
- DO YOU HAVE THE CORRECT VERSION OF THE BOOKLET AND QUESTIONNAIRE?
- CONSENT FORM (4 COPIES) AND ASSENT FORM (2 COPIES)
- INCENTIVE
- PAYMENT RECEIPT (2 COPIES)
- DIGITAL RECORDER AND EXTRA BATTERIES
- PENS AND PENCILS

## **STEP 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION SCRIPT**

**Interviewer Instructions:** The following scripts should NOT be read verbatim. Text in italics is suggested content with which the interviewer should be thoroughly familiar in advance. Text in brackets [ ] presents instructions for the interviewer.

*Hello, my name is <your name > and I work for Research Support Services. It's nice to meet you, thanks for coming to help us out today.*

[Create small talk to build rapport with the student]:

*You are here today to help us out with a new survey that we are working on with the U.S. Department of Education. This survey asks about your opinions of the school you currently attend. A survey is just a set of questions about your experiences. This is not a test. I will ask you to take the survey as if you were taking a real survey. There are no right or wrong answers, and it's ok if you do not know some of the answers. I will not be grading your work. Once you are done I will ask you questions about the survey. This will help us make the survey better and clearer for other students just like you.*

*You can choose whether or not you want to participate. You may also skip any question you do not want to answer. [We have discussed this research with your parent(s)/guardian and they know that we are also asking you for your agreement. If you are going to participate in the research, your parent(s)/guardian also have to agree. But if you do not wish to take part in the research, you do not have to do so, even if your parents have agreed.] Because the information you provide is so important, I am going to be taking notes while you are working and while we are talking [INSERT IF THERE IS AN OBSERVER: and my colleague will also be observing our session today].*

*Also, this interview will be recorded so researchers can review the tapes later. Your responses and any information that refers to you or the name of your school will not be included in our report. Your responses will be used for research purposes only and will not be disclosed, or used for any other purpose except as required by law. [if ask: Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9573]*

*Remember, you are not being tested or graded; we want you to tell us what you think about the survey. Would you like to be a part of this study? [If respondent agrees, continue, if not, end the interview.]*

*If at any time you want to stop, just let me know.*

[If, for any reason, the participant is no longer interested in participating, thank the participant for his/her time and end the interview.]

*Before we continue, do you have any questions about what I just said?* [Answer any questions the student may ask.]

PROVIDE RESPONDENT WITH A COPY OF THE ASSENT FORM. ASK THE RESPONDENT TO READ THE FORM (OR READ IT TO HIM/HER, DEPENDING ON RESPONDENT PREFERENCE), ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS, AND HAVE THE RESPONDENT SIGN THE FORM. LEAVE A SEPARATE COPY OF THE FORM WITH THE RESPONDENT.

- SIGNED ASSENT FORM COLLECTED
- COPY OF ASSENT FORM GIVEN TO RESPONDENT

- IF THE RESPONDENT HAS ASSENTED TO RECORDING, START THE RECORDER.

## **STEP 2: THINK-ALoud PRACTICE**

While you fill out the survey I want you to think out loud about how you are answering some of the questions. Hearing you talk about how you figure out your answers to the questions will help me understand how to make the questions better. I am more interested in how you arrive at your answers than in the answers you give me. To help you get started on thinking aloud, we are going to do a practice activity. I'm going to ask you a question and ask you to think aloud as you decide on your answer.

How many windows are there in the house or apartment where you live?

Please tell me what you are thinking while you are figuring out your answer.

Probe as needed for detail: **How did you arrive at that answer? What were you visualizing when you were deciding on that answer? Can you tell me more about what you are including in your count?**

When complete: **Thank you; that's the kind of detail I'm looking for when you talk to me about your answers to the questions in the survey.**

HAND RESPONDENT A COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND A PEN.

### **STEP 3: COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Now I would like you to complete the questionnaire. While you are answering the questions, please think about the school you currently attend. I'd like you to think aloud while you decide on your answer. Please read aloud anything that you would normally read to yourself if I were not here.

Remember that I am very interested in hearing you talk about what you are thinking about as you figure out your answers to the questions.

Probe bank (from Willis)

- Can you tell me in your own words what that question was asking?
- What does the word [term] in this question mean to you?
- How easy or difficult is it to remember [topic]?
- How easy or hard was it to choose an answer?
- Tell me what you are thinking?
- How did you come up with that answer?
- You said [answer]. Can you tell me more about that?
- [In response to R actions or comments]: Tell me what happened? Tell me what you were doing?
- [If you pick up on a visual cue like a furrowed brow or a puzzled look]: "Tell me what you are thinking."
- [If you pick up on a visual cue that indicates confusion like paper flipping or rereading an old question before answering this question]: "Tell me what just happened. Tell me about what you were just doing."

**Say to respondent: Please answer these questions thinking about the school you are attending right now.**

#### **National Center for Education Statistics ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) – Cognitive Testing Items**

*Throughout the survey, "This school" means activities happening in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. Unless otherwise specified, this refers to normal school hours or to times when school activities/events were in session.*

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school? Mark One Response.**

13. It is easy to talk with teachers at this school.

Sengrel12

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## PROBES

1. What is this question asking?
2. What does 'talk with teachers' mean in this question?

14. My teachers care about me.

Sengrel14

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## PROBES:

1. What does this question mean to you?

15. At this school, there is a teacher or some other adult who students can go to if they need help because of sexual assault or dating violence.

Sengrel153

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## PROBES

- 1) Tell me about your answer.
- 2) What is this question asking you?
- 3) What does 'if they need help' mean in this question
- 4) What does sexual assault mean in this question?
- 5) What does dating violence mean in this question?

### GOALS

- ARE THEY THINKING OF THEIR CURRENT SCHOOL?
- DOES "SOME OTHER ADULT" INCLUDE ADULTS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?
- IS "GO TO" LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE TO THEM?
- ARE THEY INCLUDING VIOLENCE THAT HAPPENED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?
- WHAT IS THE STUDENT'S LEVEL OF COMFORT WITH THIS Q?
- WHY DID THEY CHOOSE AGREE/DISAGREE VS. STRONGLY AGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE

16. My teachers make me feel good about myself.

Sengrel17

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. I feel like I am part of this school.

Ssafemo56

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

31. I feel socially accepted.

Ssafemo57

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. I feel safe at this school.

Ssafpsaf59

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**PROBES:**

1. What is this question asking?
2. What does 'safe' mean in this question?

33. I feel safe going to and from this school.

Ssafpsaf60

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**PROBE:**

1. What does to and from school mean to you?



34. Students at this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence.

Ssafpsaf154

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### PROBES

1. Tell me more about your answer?
2. What is this question asking?
3. You said students (do/do not) feel unsafe in your school. Tell me more about that. What does unsafe mean in this question?
4. You answered XX tell me why you chose that answer instead of [one below]
5. And tell me about how you chose that answer instead of [one above]

### GOALS

- **ARE THEY THINKING OF BOTH SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DATING VIOLENCE?**
- **HOW DID THEY DECIDE ON THEIR RESPONSE?**
- **WHAT DOES “UNSAFE” MEAN TO THEM?**
- **WHY DID THEY CHOOSE AGREE/DISAGREE VS. STRONGLY AGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE**

35. I sometimes stay home because I don't feel safe at this school.

Ssafpsaf63

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### PROBE

1. What is this question asking?

## **STEP 4. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING**

*We are finished. Thank you for helping us. The information you've provided will be very helpful for making this survey better.*

**INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS:** COLLECT MATERIALS AND ESCORT STUDENT OUT OF THE INTERVIEWING ROOM AND BACK TO HIS OR HER PARENT. PLEASE GIVE THE STUDENT AN INCENTIVE [\$25], THE PARENT AN INCENTIVE [\$25] IF THEY BROUGHT THEIR CHILD TO AND FROM THE INTERVIEW, HAVE THEM SIGN RECEIPTS, AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME AND EFFORT.

Case ID# \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer Initials \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## School Climate Surveys

OMB #1850-0803 v.145

# INSTRUCTIONAL/NON-INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF SURVEY 2015

Conducted by:  
U.S. Department of Education  
National Center for Education Statistics

Administered by:  
Research Support Services, Inc.

Years Working in Current Title	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 or less <input type="checkbox"/> 3-6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 or more
Staff Title _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Core <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Core <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Instructional Staff

### **MATERIALS NEEDED FOR INTERVIEW**

- INTERVIEWER PROTOCOL BOOKLET (THIS BOOKLET)
- RESPONDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
- DO YOU HAVE THE CORRECT VERSION OF THE BOOKLET AND QUESTIONNAIRE?
- CONSENT FORM (TWO COPIES)
- INCENTIVE
- PAYMENT RECEIPT
- DIGITAL RECORDER AND EXTRA BATTERIES
- PENS AND PENCILS

## STEP 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION SCRIPT

**Interviewer Instructions:** The following scripts should NOT be read verbatim. Text in italics is suggested content with which the interviewer should be thoroughly familiar in advance. Text in brackets [ ] presents instructions for the interviewer.

*Hello, my name is <your name > and I work for Research Support Services, Inc. It's nice to meet you, thank you for coming to help us out today.*

[Create small talk to build rapport with the teacher/Admin]:

*You are here today to help us out with a new survey that we are working on with the U.S. Department of Education. This survey asks about your opinions of the school where you currently work. I will ask you to take the survey as if you were taking a real survey. There are no right or wrong answers, and it's ok if you do not know some of the answers. As you are answering the survey questions I will ask you about them. I will also stop you once in a while to ask you questions. This will help us make the survey better and clearer for other teachers and school instructional staff just like you.*

*Because the information you provide is so important, I am going to be taking notes while you are working and while we are talking [INSERT IF THERE IS AN OBSERVER: and my colleague will also be observing our session today].*

*Also, this interview will be recorded so researchers can review the tapes later. Your responses and any information that refers to you or the name of your school will not be included in our report. Your responses will be used for research purposes only and will not be disclosed, or used for any other purpose except as required by law. [if ask: Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9573]*

*Remember, in this study we want you to tell us what you think about the survey. Would you like to be a part of this study? [If respondent agrees, continue, if not, end the interview.]*

*If at any time you want to stop, just let me know.*

[If, for any reason, the participant is no longer interested in participating, thank the participant for his/her time and end the interview.]

*Before we continue, do you have any questions about what I just said? [Answer any questions the participant may ask.]*

PROVIDE RESPONDENT WITH A COPY OF THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM. ASK THE RESPONDENT TO READ THE FORM (OR READ IT TO HIM/HER, DEPENDING ON RESPONDENT PREFERENCE), ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS, AND HAVE THE RESPONDENT SIGN THE FORM. LEAVE A SEPARATE COPY OF THE FORM WITH THE RESPONDENT.

- SIGNED CONSENT FORM COLLECTED
- COPY OF CONSENT FORM GIVEN TO RESPONDENT
- IF THE RESPONDENT HAS CONSENTED TO RECORDING, START THE RECORDER.

## **STEP 2: THINK-ALOUD PRACTICE**

While you fill out the survey I want you to think out loud about how you are answering some of the questions. Hearing you talk about how you figure out your answers to the questions will help me understand how to make the questions better. I am more interested in how you arrive at your answers than in the answers you give me. To help you get started on thinking aloud, we are going to do a practice activity. I'm going to ask you a question and ask you to think aloud as you decide on your answer.

How many windows are there in the house or apartment where you live?

Please tell me what you are thinking while you are figuring out your answer.

Probe as needed for detail: **How did you arrive at that answer? What were you visualizing when you were deciding on that answer? Can you tell me more about what you are including in your count?**

When complete: **Thank you; that's the kind of detail I'm looking for when you talk to me about your answers to the questions in the survey.**

HAND RESPONDENT A COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND A PEN.

## **STEP 3: COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Now I would like you to complete the questionnaire. While you are answering the questions, please think about the school where you currently work. I'd like you to think aloud while you decide on your answer. Please read aloud anything you would have read to yourself if I were not here.

Remember that I am very interested in hearing you talk about what you are thinking about as you figure out your answers to the questions.

Probe bank (from Willis)

- Can you tell me in your own words what that question was asking?
- What does the word [term] in this question mean to you?
- How easy or difficult is it to remember [topic]?
- How easy or hard was it to choose an answer?
- Tell me what you are thinking?
- How did you come up with that answer?
- You said [answer]. Can you tell me more about that?
- [In response to R actions or comments]: Tell me what happened? Tell me what you were doing?
- [If you pick up on a visual cue like a furrowed brow or a puzzled look]: "Tell me what you are thinking."
- [If you pick up on a visual cue that indicates confusion like paper flipping or rereading an old question before answering this question]: "Tell me what just happened. Tell me about what you were just doing."

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school? Mark One Response**

28. I can manage almost any student behavior problem.

Isafemo58

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**PROBES:**

1. What is this question asking?
2. When you answered this question, what kinds of 'student behavior problem' did you think of?

29. I feel safe at this school.

Isafpsaf59

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

30. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical conflicts among students.

Isafpsaf60

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**PROBES:**

1. What is this question asking?
  2. IF AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE: Tell me about the kinds of physical conflicts that occur.
- IF DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE: What do you think is meant in this question by physical conflicts?

31. The following types of problems occur at this school often: robbery or theft.

Isafpsaf61

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

32. The following types of problems occur at this school often: vandalism.

Isafpsaf62

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

33. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student possession of weapons.

Isafpsaf64

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

PROBE:

1. Tell me about your answer
2. What do you think they mean here by 'often'?

34. The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or violence.

Isafpsaf143

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

PROBES:

- 1) Tell me about your answer.
- 2) What is this question asking you?
- 3) What does 'sexual assault or violence' mean in this question?
- 4) What do you think they mean by 'often' here?

#### GOALS

- **DO THEY UNDERSTAND THE Q?**
- **ARE THEY THINKING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS OR SEXUAL ASSAULT AND VIOLENCE SEPARATELY?**
- **ARE THEY THINKING OF THEIR SCHOOL?**
- **WHY DID THEY CHOOSE AGREE/DISAGREE VS. STRONGLY AGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE**

35. The following types of problems occur at this school often: physical abuse of teachers. Isafpsaf66

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

PROBES:

- 1) Tell me about your answer.
- 2) What does physical abuse mean in this question?

36. The following types of problems occur at this school often: student verbal abuse of teachers. Isafpsaf67

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

PROBES:

- 1) Tell me about your answer.
2. What would you consider often for this type of occurrence?

#### **STEP 4. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING**

*We are finished. Thank you for helping us. The information you've provided will be very helpful for making this survey better.*

**INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS:** COLLECT MATERIALS. PLEASE GIVE THE RESPONDENT AN INCENTIVE, AND HAVE THEM SIGN RECEIPT [\$40].