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National Center for Education
Statistics
ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)
National Benchmark Study 2017
Updated

Appendix A
Communication Materials
OMB# 1850-0923 v. 6

Letter for Districts Not Requiring Approval for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title] [First Name] [Last Name]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title] [Last Name]:

In spring 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released a free-to-use web-based school climate survey platform (the ED School Climate Surveys or EDSCLS) that provides schools, districts, and states with the ability to measure their schools' climate by collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and noninstructional staff (including principals). A national benchmark study of 500 nationally representative schools will be conducted from December 2016 to June 2017 to produce national school climate scores. The national scores are a vital part of the platform, providing perspectives for states, districts, or schools to interpret their own results in relation to the nation as a whole. The benchmark data will be published and also provided in the second release of the platform in fall 2017.

One or more schools in your district have been selected as part of the national sample in the benchmark study from December 2016 to June 2017. I am writing to ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in this national study. Each school that participates in the benchmark study will receive an iPad tablet computer to help with the data collection.

This national study is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education and will be carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). While participation in this national study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district so that we can have a representative sample of schools from across the country. If your district or state has also planned to conduct a data collection using the released platform EDSCLS from December 2016 to June 2017, we would like to work with your district to transfer the school data from our collection to your district so that the sampled schools will not need to answer the same surveys twice.

NCES is conducting this study to fulfill its mission to study the condition of education in the United States (ESRA, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). The data provided by schools and staff may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). The study will not identify participating districts, schools, or individuals. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. To further protect confidentiality, we disclose the names of schools only to the governing district for each school and only after the enclosed nondisclosure affidavit form is signed and returned to us. We ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the schools sampled in the study. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB 1850-0923.

Within the next few days, a letter will be sent to the selected schools describing the study and requesting their participation. A representative from AIR may conduct a follow-up phone call to help answer any questions.

In the meantime, please take a look at the enclosed brochure and frequently-asked-questions document. If you have additional questions about the national study, please do not hesitate to call AIR toll free at 1-844-849-5252, or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. For more information about the national study, you can contact [NCES Contact] at NCES [NCES Phone Number] or [NCES E-mail] or visit the EDSCLS website at [EDSCLS Website].

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Peggy Carr, Ph.D.
Acting Commissioner

Advance Letter for District Requiring Approval for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]

[School District Name]

[Street Address]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear Superintendent [Last Name]:

In the coming days, we will submit a formal application to conduct research in one or more schools in your district for the national benchmark study of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS). This national study is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education and will be carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The EDSCLS is a new survey endeavor that provides schools, districts, and states with the ability to measure their schools' climate by collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and noninstructional staff (including principals). It provides a unique opportunity to collect national data on school climate indicators from the school's perspective.

Through the EDSCLS, schools nationwide have access to survey instruments and a survey platform that allows for the collection and reporting of school climate data across stakeholders at the local level. The national scores are a vital part of the platform, providing perspectives for states, districts, or schools to interpret their own results in relation to the nation as a whole. The benchmark data will be provided in the second release of the platform in fall 2017.

NCES is conducting this study to fulfill its mission to study the condition of education in the United States (ESRA, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). The data provided by schools and staff may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). The study will not identify participating districts, schools, or individuals. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. To further protect confidentiality, we disclose the names of schools only to the governing district for each school and only after the enclosed nondisclosure affidavit form is signed and returned to us. We ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the schools sampled in the study. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB 1850-0923.

If you have additional questions about the national study, please do not hesitate to call AIR toll free at 1-844-849-5252, or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. You may also contact [NCES Contact] at NCES ([NCES Phone Number] or [NCES E-mail]) or visit the EDSCLS website: [EDSCLS Website].

Thank you for giving this matter your attention. We look forward to your school's participation in this important data collection effort.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.
Acting Commissioner

Letter for Districts Requiring Approval for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title] [First Name] [Last Name]
[School District]
[Address 1]
[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title] [Last Name]:

In spring 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released a free-to-use web-based school climate survey platform (the ED School Climate Surveys or EDSCLS) that provides schools, districts, and states with the ability to measure their schools' climate by collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and noninstructional staff (including principals). A national benchmark study of 500 nationally representative schools will be conducted from December 2016 to June 2017 to produce national school climate scores. The national scores are a vital part of the platform, providing perspectives for states, districts, or schools to interpret their own results in relation to the nation as a whole. The benchmark data will be published and also provided in the second release of the platform in fall 2017.

One or more schools in your district have been selected to participate in the benchmark study from December 2016 to June 2017. I am writing to ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in this national study. Each school that participates in the benchmark study will receive an iPad tablet computer to help with the data collection. The benchmark study is a nationally representative survey of almost 30,000 students in 500 schools across the United States. Each school selected for the survey is representative of approximately up to 200 other schools with similar characteristics. Your district's participation in the benchmark study is very important, as schools like yours are needed to meet the benchmarking criteria established by ED.

A significant challenge facing districts is the perceptions of safety and climate at their schools. The EDSCLS includes questions related to student and faculty engagement, safety issues, and environmental factors that contribute to school climate. The EDSCLS has been established as the result of a 2013 ED announcement to place a high priority on efforts to help the nation's schools "create safer and more nurturing school climates."

The EDSCLS also seeks to provide researchers and policymakers with a tool necessary to deepen our understanding of school culture. Topics in this area include relationships, student participation, emotional and physical bullying, substance abuse, the state of school facilities, and discipline protocols. The staff surveys will provide further insight into the perceptions of school climate, and will allow schools to identify areas of their climate where perceptions differ between stakeholders.

Each school and district faces unique challenges, which the EDSCLS aims to help diagnose. Participation by each selected district is necessary to ensure that the 2017 data collection provides usable and actionable data to help ED establish a functioning benchmark, and to help each school and district meet their particular challenges. Your participation is vital.

This national study is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education and will be carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). While participation in this national study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district so that we can have a representative sample of schools from across the country. If your district or state has also planned to conduct a data collection using the released platform EDSCLS from December 2016 to June 2017, we would like to work with your district to transfer the school data from our collection to your district so that the sampled schools will not need to answer the same surveys twice.

NCES is conducting this study to fulfill its mission to study the condition of education in the United States (ESRA, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). The data provided by schools and staff may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). The study will not identify participating districts, schools, or individuals. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. To further protect confidentiality, we disclose the names of schools only to the governing district for each school and only after the enclosed nondisclosure affidavit form is signed and returned to us. We ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the schools sampled in the study. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB 1850-0923.

Within the next few days, a letter will be sent to the selected schools describing the study and requesting their participation. A representative from AIR may conduct a follow-up phone call to help answer any questions.

In the meantime, please take a look at the enclosed brochure and frequently-asked-questions document. If you have additional questions about the national study, please do not hesitate to call AIR toll free at 1-844-849-5252, or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. For more information about the national study, you can contact [NCES Contact] at NCES [NCES Phone Number] or [NCES E-mail] or visit the EDSCLS website at [EDSCLS Website].

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Peggy Carr, Ph.D.
Acting Commissioner

Advance Letter for Schools for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]

[School Name]

[Street Address]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title] [Last Name]:

I am writing to invite [School Name] to participate in the upcoming national benchmark study of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS). [*if schools in special districts: **Your district has approved EDSCLS.***] Data collection for this survey is being carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the U.S. Department of Education. The EDSCLS is a new survey endeavor that provides schools, districts, and states with the ability to measure their schools' climate by collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and noninstructional staff (including principals). It provides a unique opportunity to collect national data on school climate indicators from the school's perspective.

Through the EDSCLS, schools nationwide have access to survey instruments and a survey platform that allows for the collection and reporting of school climate data across stakeholders at the local level. The national scores are a vital part of the platform, providing perspectives for states, districts, or schools to interpret their own results in relation to the nation as a whole. The benchmark data will be provided in the second release of the platform in fall 2017. **Your school's participation in the EDSCLS benchmark is critical to the success of the survey, as it is part of a small, nationally representative sample that was selected to participate.**

NCES is conducting this study to fulfill its mission to study the condition of education in the United States (ESRA, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). Under this law, the data provided by you to NCES and collected from your school may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). Reports of the findings from the survey will not identify participating districts, schools, or staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0923.

In the coming days, you will receive a formal request to solicit your school's participation in the EDSCLS benchmark, with more detailed information on the scope of the survey, a FAQ document, as well as materials to be completed and returned if you decide to participate. If you have additional questions about the national study, please do not hesitate to call AIR toll free at 1-844-849-5252, or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. You may also contact [NCES Contact] at NCES ([NCES Phone Number] or [NCES E-mail]) or visit the EDSCLS website: [EDSCLS Website].

Thank you for giving this matter your attention. We look forward to your school's participation in this important data collection effort.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.
Acting Commissioner

Letter for Schools for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title/Principal] [First Name] [Last Name]

[School Name]

[Address]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title] [Last Name]:

In spring 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released a free-to-use web-based school climate survey platform that provides schools, districts, and states with the ability to measure their schools' climate by collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and noninstructional staff (including principals). A national benchmark study of 500 nationally representative schools will be conducted from December 2016 to June 2017 to produce national school climate scores. The national scores are a vital part of the platform, providing perspectives for states, districts, or schools to interpret their own results in relation to the nation as a whole. The benchmark data will be published and also provided in the second release of the platform in fall 2017.

I am writing to invite your school to take part in this national benchmark study of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS). Participation in this national study is voluntary. However, I encourage your school's participation, as it is crucial for the development of valid survey questions that will accurately measure school climate and for the refinement of a no-cost, user-friendly, high-functioning tool that schools, districts, and states throughout the United States can use at their discretion to administer the EDSCLS. The invited schools are part of a nationally representative, scientifically selected sample and the information they provide is important for us to be able to describe the national school climate. Participating schools will be provided with an iPad tablet computer to aid in the coordination and administration of the data collection. If your school has already planned to conduct your own data collection using the EDSCLS platform from December 2016 to June 2017, we would like to work with you to transfer the school data from our collection to your school so that the respondents will not need to answer the same surveys twice.

This national benchmark study will be carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). If your school is willing to participate, please call us at 1-844-849-5252 or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. In the phone call or e-mail exchange we will discuss the next steps, including the appointment of a School Coordinator at your school to act as the point of contact for AIR in the administration of the national study. In the next few days, a representative from AIR may also contact you about your school's participation.

NCES is conducting this study to fulfill its mission to study the condition of education in the United States (ESRA, 20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). Under this law, the data provided by you to NCES and collected from your school may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0923. In the meantime, please take a look at the enclosed brochure and frequently-asked-questions document.

If you have additional questions about the national study, please do not hesitate to call AIR toll free at 1-844-849-5252, or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. For more information about the national study, you can contact [NCES Contact] at NCES [NCES Phone Number] or [NCES E-mail] or visit the EDSCLS website at [EDSCLS Website].

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.

Acting Commissioner

Follow-Up Letter/Email for Schools for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title/Principal] [First Name] [Last Name]
[School Name]
[Address]
[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title] [Last Name]:

Previously, your school received a set of materials from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) detailing the scope of the upcoming ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) national benchmark study. I am writing to follow-up with you about your school's participation in the study.

Participation in this national study is voluntary. However, your school's participation is crucial because the invited schools are part of a nationally representative, scientifically selected sample and the information they provide is important for us to be able to describe the national school climate. Participating schools will be provided with an iPad tablet computer to aid in the coordination and administration of the data collection.

We understand that schools are very busy. If your school chooses to participate, we are asking for participation from one class of students from each eligible grade ~~(up to four offered within your school (grades) will be randomly selected to take the student survey. Two 5, 7, and 11)~~ and two teachers from each eligible grade ~~(up to four offered within your school (grades) will be randomly selected to take the instructional staff survey. 5, 7, and 11)~~. The principal will also be invited to complete the noninstructional staff survey.

You may also choose to have this survey administered to all of your students in grades 5-12, teachers, and noninstructional staff. If you choose this option, you will receive a report presenting valid and reliable measures of your school climate. The report would be available after the completion of the national study. If your school has already planned to conduct your own data collection using the EDSCLS platform from December 2016 to June 2017, we would like to work with you to transfer the school data from our collection to your school so that the respondents will not need to answer the same surveys twice.

This national benchmark study will be carried out by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES is authorized to conduct this national study by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). Under this law, the data provided by you to NCES and collected from your school, staff, students, and their parents may be used by NCES for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used by NCES, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB [Number].

If your school is willing to participate, please call us at 1-844-849-5252 or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. In the next few days, a representative from AIR may also contact you about your school's participation. In the meantime, please take a look at the enclosed summary of activities for school coordinators and frequently-asked-questions document. For more information about the national study, you can contact [Name] at NCES [Phone Number] or [E-mail] or visit the EDSCLS website at [EDSCLS Website].

Thank you for your support of the EDSCLS.
Sincerely,

[Contact Name]
[Recruiter Contact Information]

Letter/E-mail for Participating Schools for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title/School Coordinator] [First Name] [Last Name]

[School Name]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [School Coordinator]:

Thank you for participating in the national benchmark study of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS). In the next few weeks, you will receive a FedEx package containing the detailed information needed to administer EDSCLS, including a checklist detailing what you need to do to coordinate the data collection at your school.

As part of the national study, AIR will provide your school with a tablet. On this device, the EDSCLS website will be set up as the browser homepage. PDF versions of the EDSCLS questionnaires will be available in case potential respondents would like to know more about EDSCLS or would like to review the items before the data collection.

If you have questions about the EDSCLS, please call us at [EDSCLS Phone Number], or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. More information about the EDSCLS is also available at [EDSCLS Website]. Thank you for your support of the EDSCLS.

[Contact Name]

[Recruiter Contact Information]

Reminder E-mail for Participating Schools in the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study

[Date]

[Title/School Coordinator] [First Name] [Last Name]

[School Name]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Title/School Coordinator] [Last Name]:

Thank you for participating in the national benchmark study of the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS).

We are writing to you as a friendly reminder that your next step in this national benchmark is providing the American Institutes for Research (AIR) with counts of the numbers of students and instructional staff who are eligible to participate in the data collection. Please refer to the eligibility requirements included in the package that was delivered to your school on [Date].

If you have questions about the EDSCLS, please call us at [EDSCLS Phone Number], or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. More information about the EDSCLS is also available at [EDSCLS Website]. Thank you for your support of the EDSCLS.

[Contact Name]

[Recruiter Contact Information]



ED School Climate Surveys Platform

What is the EDSCLS Platform?

In early 2013, the Department of Education (ED) announced that a high priority would be placed on efforts to help the nation's schools "create safer and more nurturing school climates." One component of this effort is the development of a school climate measurement platform to provide valid and reliable measures of school climate for local education agencies including schools, school districts, and states. The Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) provided funds to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to develop this platform for release.

The platform will be **downloadable free of charge** and provide user-friendly school climate reports. Education agencies administering the survey will be able store the data locally on their own data systems. The platform will include surveys for middle and high school students, their parents, teachers/instructional staff, non-instructional staff and administrators. In 2017, NCES on behalf of ED will survey 500 schools to create nationally-representative school climate benchmark scores. The national benchmark scores will be added to the platform's reporting functionality to enable comparisons between local and national scores.

Features of the Platform

The school climate platform will provide domain-level climate scores for local education agencies administering the surveys and each of the school climate topics. School administrators can examine these scores for the entire school and by grade level, race, or gender. Item-level statistics will be available at the school-level. Districts administering the survey will be able to produce reports to compare between schools and compare individual schools with the entire district. States administering the survey will be able to produce reports to compare between districts and compare individual districts with the entire state.

Development Priorities

- Minimize disclosure risk
- Process data and provide survey results to the administering education agency
- Allow for the import and export of data such that schools can deliver data to districts or states, for the purposes of higher level reporting
- Allow for users to add user-created items
- The platform is being developed as license-free technology

If you are interested in knowing more about the EDSCLS Platform or the EDSCLS national study, please email schoolclimate@air.org or leave a message at **1-844-849-5252** (toll free).

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls>

What's measured?

Engagement

- + Cultural and linguistic competence
- + Relationships
- + Participation

Safety

- + Emotional safety
- + Physical safety
- + Bullying/cyberbullying
- + Substance abuse
- + Emergency readiness/management

Environment

- + Physical environment
- + Instructional environment
- + Physical Health
- + Mental Health
- + Discipline

Development Schedule

July 2014

Administer cognitive labs to test survey content and platform usability.

March/April 2015

Administer pilot test of 25 middle schools and 25 high schools to test items, develop scales for topics and domains, and refine platform technology.

Spring 2016

School climate platform available for education agency download.

Spring 2017

National benchmark data collection of 500 schools surveying grades 5 through 12.

Fall 2017

A revised school climate platform with national benchmark reporting is available for education agency download.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is EDSCLS?

The ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) offer a platform that includes a suite of survey instruments developed for schools, districts, and states by the U.S. Department of Education. Through the EDSCLS, schools nationwide have access to survey instruments and a survey platform that enable the collection and reporting of school climate data across stakeholders at the state or local level. The surveys can be used to produce school-, district-, and state-level scores on various indicators of school climate from the perspectives of students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff (including principals), and parents and guardians. The U.S. Department of Education will also provide benchmark data in 2017, collected from a nationally representative sample of schools across the United States, to facilitate comparisons of school climate scores at the local and national levels.

The EDSCLS platform allows education leaders to seek the viewpoints of multiple respondent groups. A multi-perspective approach is important because each of the stakeholders experience school climate differently. The EDSCLS includes four surveys. The “student survey” is intended for students in grades 5–12. The “parent survey” is for parents and guardians of students in grades 5–12. The “instructional staff survey” and the “principal and noninstructional staff survey” are for all staff employed in schools that cater to at least one grade between 5 and 12. Combined, these four surveys measure school climate from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In the national benchmark study, in addition to the principal, all students and staff can be surveyed or you can opt to only survey a sample of students and teachers. If a school selects to sample, ~~we are asking for participation from~~ one class of students ~~from each eligible grade (up to four grades) would be randomly selected to take the student survey,~~ and two teachers from each eligible grade ~~(up to four grades) would be randomly selected to take the instructional staff survey. In either case, the offered~~ within your schools (grades 5, 7, and 11). The principal will be asked to complete the noninstructional staff survey. If the school chooses to invite all of its students, teachers, and/or noninstructional staff to take part in the EDSCLS survey, after the completion of the national EDSCLS study, the school will receive a report with aggregated measures of school climate perceptions from the perspectives of the school’s respondents along with comparisons to the perceptions expressed in the EDSCLS national sample.

Which schools in my district have been selected for participation?

District administrators who want to know which of their schools have been selected for participation should return a signed copy of the nondisclosure affidavit form. We will send you the name of the schools as soon as we receive the form. If you have any questions, please contact [NCES Contact] at [NCES E-mail] or [NCES Phone Number]. More information about the EDSCLS is also available at [EDSCLS Website].

Why was my school selected for participation?

Schools with varying demographics and in different locales were scientifically selected so that the national sample is representative of the overall public school population. The selection process is important for ensuring that the sample accurately reflects the nation’s schools and can allow comparisons between a school, district, and/or state and the nation as a whole.

Who conducts the national benchmark study?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education is conducting this national benchmark study under authorization in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (20 U.S. Code, Section 9543). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB [Number]. Data collection for this study will be carried out by trained staff from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) under contract to NCES.

When will the national benchmark study be conducted?

The national benchmark study will be conducted from December 2016 to June 2017. The data collection window for each school lasts between two and four weeks, depending on the school’s size and other factors such as standardized testing schedules. The collection window does not need to be contiguous; for example, a portion of the surveys may be administered in the first week of a month, paused for two weeks, and then finished in the last week of a month.

How long do the questionnaires take to complete?

The student questionnaire takes approximately 40 minutes to complete. The instructional and principal surveys require approximately 30 minutes. These estimates include the time to read instructions and complete all items.

What will happen with the collected data?

AIR/NCES will use the data to create national benchmarks with which schools, districts, and states can compare themselves. The data will also be used to refine scales for domains and topic areas.

Is participation required by federal law?

No. School participation is voluntary. However, we hope you will participate in this national study so that schools like yours are accurately and fairly represented.

How will the national study be coordinated in my school?

Schools are asked to designate a School Coordinator to assist AIR staff members with material distribution and data collection. The School Coordinator will be the main contact at the school with whom AIR will communicate. AIR staff will not visit the school. The School Coordinator can be a teacher or any school staff member (e.g., office administrator).

Summary of Activities for School Coordinators

What will be asked of the School Coordinator?

Upon the school's agreement to participate, the school must appoint a School Coordinator to administer the data collection in that school. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) staff will work with the School Coordinator on the following:

- ✓ If the school opts to administer the EDSCLS survey to a sample rather than all of its students in grades 5-12 and teachers, the School Coordinator will provide AIR with a list of classes between grade 5 and grade 12 for sampling students and teachers.
- ✓ School Coordinator will receive questionnaires in PDF form and a data collection guide containing:
 1. Sample Proctor Script
 2. Sample Confidentiality Pledge for Survey Proctors
 3. Sample Parental Consent Opt-in form (for states that require opt-in opportunity)
 4. Sample Parental Consent Opt-out form (for states that require opt-out opportunity)
- ✓ School Coordinator will receive an iPad tablet computer for the school to facilitate survey administration.
- ✓ School Coordinator will receive lists of log-in credentials, one for each respondent group.
- ✓ School Coordinator will distribute log-in credentials.
- ✓ School Coordinator will receive response rate reports from AIR weekly and will encourage participation in the national study by sharing the response rates with respondents.

Proctor Script for In-School Student Survey

Good morning/afternoon.

You're here because [School Name] wants to conduct a survey to hear your opinions about the school. The survey will ask your opinion on questions ranging from student engagement, to bullying, to the conditions of the school building itself. Your answers will be used to improve the school experience for you, your fellow students, and your teachers. Some of your teachers, and the principal, will also have the chance to voice their opinions in similar surveys.

Your school wants to hear from everyone, so your participation is very important. But it's also voluntary. You do not have to take the survey and you can skip any question you don't want to answer.

Please answer the questions as best you can. If you are unsure about the meaning of a survey question, do your best to answer it on your own. In order to maintain privacy, I will not be able to help you interpret the meaning of questions. Similarly, you should not ask other students or look at their responses.

When you have finished the survey, please sit quietly and do not disturb your fellow students.

Now, take the username in front of you, use it to log into the survey, but do not begin the survey until instructed. Once I have made sure everyone has successfully logged in and written down the PIN displayed on the page, I will move to a part of the room where I cannot see anyone's answers, and at that time I will instruct you to begin.

...

Now that everyone has reached the PIN page, please begin.

Survey Submission Rate Report

To encourage high response rates among respondents, AIR will produce survey submission rate reports and distribute them weekly to School Coordinators. These reports can be used to encourage survey participation, particularly to the least responsive groups of respondents. Individual respondents will be not identified, but the usernames that are not used to log-in to the survey (unused usernames) will be provided to the survey administrators for targeted or general follow up. A sample Survey Status Submission Report is shown below:

Dear [Title/School Coordinator] [Last Name]:

The tables below display your schools current submission status.

Principal

TOTAL USERNAMES GENERATED	NUMBER OF SUBMITTED SURVEYS	NUMBER OF INCOMPLETE SURVEYS	NUMBER OF UNUSED USERNAMES	SURVEY SUBMISSION RATE
1	0	0	1	0.00%

Students

TOTAL USERNAMES GENERATED	NUMBER OF SUBMITTED SURVEYS	NUMBER OF INCOMPLETE SURVEYS	NUMBER OF UNUSED USERNAMES	SURVEY SUBMISSION RATE
500	50	8	442	10.00%

Instructional Staff

TOTAL USERNAMES GENERATED	NUMBER OF SUBMITTED SURVEYS	NUMBER OF INCOMPLETE SURVEYS	NUMBER OF UNUSED USERNAMES	SURVEY SUBMISSION RATE
37	19	0	18	51.35%

Incomplete surveys are defined as, “Cases assigned this status may include those where respondents have logged in to the survey but not yet consented to participate, where respondents have consented to participate but not yet responded to any survey items, and where respondents have responded to survey items, but have not yet viewed the final “thank you” screen. This number will provide Survey Administrators with a count of the number of respondents who have started, but not yet finalized the survey.”

If you have questions about the EDSCLS materials or the data collection at your school, please call us at 1-844-849-5252 or send an e-mail to schoolclimate@air.org. Thank you for your patience and support of the EDSCLS.

Sincerely,
[Contact Name]

[Contact Information]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-IN PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that are not requesting individual student data

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the weeks of [Weeks of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.

If you do want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the computer lab) where the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator] at [School Coordinator Phone Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do not want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-OUT PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that are not requesting individual student data

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the week of [Week of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.

If you do not want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will not participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the library) while the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator Name] at [Administrator Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will not be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-IN PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that request student data without directly identifying PII

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the weeks of [Weeks of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. Answers to individual questions will not identify any person and the only people who may see answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your child’s school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.

If you do want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the computer lab) where the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator] at [School Coordinator Phone Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do not want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-OUT PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that request student data without directly identifying PII

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the week of [Week of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required law (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. Answers to individual questions will not identify any person and the only people who may see answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your child’s school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.

If you do not want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will not participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the library) while the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator Name] at [Administrator Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will not be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-IN PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that request student data with directly identifying PII

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the weeks of [Weeks of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes, except as required law or described here (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. The only people who may see your child’s answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your child’s school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. Although these reports will not identify any person or their responses, your child’s data may be combined with other data about your child to help improve the climate of your child’s school.

If you do want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the computer lab) where the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator] at [School Coordinator Phone Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do not want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]

[NOTE: While the italicized text may be modified to suit the needs of each school or district, the non-italicized text should be kept consistent across all national benchmark study sites.]

SAMPLE OPT-OUT PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
at schools that request student data with directly identifying PII

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[School Name] is participating in a national benchmark study of a voluntary survey about school climate. The survey will be administered to students during regular school hours during the week of [Week of Administration]. It will ask students about their perceptions surrounding topics such as student engagement, school environment, and school safety.

To create benchmark data to facilitate the comparison of local school climate with that of the whole nation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will use individual-level responses from participating schools but without the names or other direct personal identifiers of the respondents. All information received by NCES that in any way relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals is protected from disclosure by federal statute; it may be used only for statistical purposes, except as required law or described here (20 U.S. Code, Section 9573).

The data your child provides may also be used by your child’s school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your child’s school. The only people who may see your child’s answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your child’s school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your child’s answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your child’s school and district and used to create records about the climate of your child’s school. Although these reports will not identify any person or their responses, your child’s data may be combined with other data about your child to help improve the climate of your child’s school.

If you do not want your child to participate in this survey, please complete, sign, and postmark this letter using the enclosed postage paid envelope by [Deadline Date]. If you sign and postmark this letter by [Deadline Date], this means your child will not participate in the survey and will be asked to report to a designated place in the school (for example, the library) while the survey is administered.

If you have any questions about this national study or about your child’s participation or would like to see a copy of the student survey, please contact [School Coordinator Name] at [Administrator Number]. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this national study, please contact [NCES Contact Info].

I understand that by completing and signing the form below and returning this letter, my child will not be allowed to take the School Climate Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

If you do want to allow your child to take the survey, you do not have to sign or send back anything.

Sincerely,

[Principal Name]