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School Climate in Vermont's Accountability Model: Overview

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has incorporated school climate measures into its statewide accountability model. An overview of the role of school climate in this model is provided below.

Why is Vermont emphasizing the importance of a healthy climate in schools?

Research has shown that a healthy school climate is linked to other positive education outcomes, including improved student academic performance. For this reason, Vermont has long supported whole-child approaches to education, and expressed this formally through 2014's Education Quality Standards (EQS).

Where is school climate represented within Vermont's accountability model?

Vermont's accountability model includes [five categories of measures](#):

Measures that satisfy federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

1. Academic Proficiency

Additional State Identified Measures reflecting EQS-priority areas:

2. Personalization
3. High Quality Staffing
4. Safe, Healthy Schools
5. Investment Priorities

Within this framework, school climate is primarily represented through the Safe, Healthy Schools performance measures. Climate data will be included in Vermont's [annual accountability data snapshot](#), and will be discussed as a part of statewide and local-level [continuous improvement efforts](#).

What are Vermont's Safe, Healthy Schools performance measures?

Within the Safe, Healthy Schools category, Vermont will be measuring the rate of Disciplinary Exclusion in schools, or the rate at which schools are disciplining students using out-of-school suspensions. Vermont wants to encourage schools to adopt disciplinary practices that keep students on-campus and engaged, and to avoid the disproportionate application of out-of-school suspensions to historically-marginalized student groups.

The second Safe, Healthy Schools performance measure will be a climate survey for students and school staff.

What school climate survey will Vermont be using?

At this time, Vermont plans to adopt the US Department of Education's school climate surveys (EDSCLS). The survey measures three domains of school climate: engagement, safety, and environment. It also measures thirteen subtopics within those domains, including topics like physical safety, bullying, and substance abuse that reflect the education priorities of Governor Scott.

Vermont also plans to include additional survey questions reflecting measures within the Personalization (Flexible Pathways) and High Quality Staffing (staff satisfaction) components of the state accountability system.

This survey will be field tested statewide in 2018-19, and will be required beginning in 2019-20. Additional guidance about the survey will be released as this work progresses.

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Chris Case at chris.case@vermont.gov.