Student Experiences of School Climate in the Iowa City Community School District 2020

Aiming to create more equitable experiences and outcomes for all students using a data-informed, evidence-based, inclusive process of decision-making within school districts.
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Executive Summary

This report details the results of the Student Experiences of School Climate Survey administered annually to the 5th through 12th grade students in the Iowa City Community School District. The ICCSD has administered this survey to students each February from 2016-2020. A total of 6,835 students completed the survey in 2020, resulting in a 78% response rate.

Key Finding: Overall, the majority of students report a positive school climate and these perceptions remain consistent over time. However, there are persistent disparities in student experiences of the school climate. Students with socially marginalized identities are less likely to experience positive teacher and peer relationships, inclusive classrooms, a safe and equitable disciplinary environment, and social and emotional learning. Additionally, while an increasing number of students report having opportunities to discuss topics such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, students with socially marginalized identities are less likely to report these experiences.

Connection to DEI Plan: Goal 3: Create equitable, inclusive, and supportive school environments; Strategy 3B: Promote, develop, and support positive peer and adult relationships and social well-being; Strategy 3C: Incorporate a more inclusive and representative curriculum

Recommendations:
1. Encourage greater emphasis on creating a positive, welcoming and safe school environment.
2. Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that emphasize relationship building with students with socially marginalized identities.
3. Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers on creating inclusive classroom environments.
4. Provide inclusive teaching materials and supports for teachers.
5. Systematically center equity and inclusion in all curriculum review processes.

Key Finding: A substantial number of students perceive inequitable treatment in teacher relationships and disciplinary practices. Whereas 81% of White students agree that teachers treat them fairly, only 70% of Black students agree. Black students also perceive lower levels of disciplinary equity compared to White, Asian, and Latino students. Non-binary and LGB students also perceive especially low levels of equitable treatment from teachers and disciplinary equity. About 200 students describe a lack of fairness from teachers and inequitable enforcement of the rules and distributions of consequences and rewards. There are also low levels of restorative conflict resolution, particularly for junior high and high school students.

Connection to DEI Plan: Strategy 2D: Culturally responsive policies and practices related to student behavior and discipline; Strategy 3B: Promote, develop, and support positive peer and adult relationships and social well-being.

Recommendations:
1. Ensure all educators are provided training on disciplinary procedures and that students are aware of the procedures and expectations.
2. Implement discipline protocols that are culturally competent through collaboration with a diverse committee of stakeholders.
3. Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers on restorative justice practices.
4. Implement restorative practices district-wide.
**Key Finding:** Bullying is a major issue in schools. On average, 22% of students report being personally bullied with verbal bullying being the most common type. Nearly half of students report they have observed bullying on the basis of appearance and about a third on the basis of gender or race. Also, the majority of students report hearing hurtful comments from students about sexual orientation (76%), race (73%), and gender (67%). Between one-quarter and one-fifth of students report hearing these types of hurtful comments from teachers. Furthermore, students describe a lack of responsiveness by teachers and staff to address bullying and other incidents. They want schools to try to deal with these issues better and suggest strengthening anti-bullying initiatives.

*Connection to DEI Plan:* Strategy 3D: Reduce the incidents of bullying and harassment on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, immigrant status, religious affiliation, appearance, class, or disability.

*Recommendations:*
1. Increase pro-social and anti-bullying learning opportunities for students.
2. Improve school responsiveness to bullying and hurtful comments.
3. Incorporate topics of race, gender, sexual orientation, immigrant status, and disability discrimination into anti-bullying efforts.
4. Increase professional learning opportunities for teachers on the use of socially and culturally inappropriate language.

**Key Finding:** There is a lack of emotional and mental health support for students. Students report lower levels of adult emotional and social support (68% and 69% respectively) compared to academic support (90%). On average, 65% of students report that they talk about ways to help them control their emotions and this number is significantly lower for junior high and high school students. Students describe a lack of attention, resources, outreach, visibility of existing resources, and capacity of school staff to meet mental health needs. They emphasize a general need to focus more on mental health in schools.

*Connection to DEI Plan:* Strategy 3A: Equitably promote, develop, and support student mental and emotional well-being.

*Recommendations:*
1. Increase emotional and mental health supports and services.
2. Coordinate local partnerships and referrals to increase capacity to resolve unmet need.

**Key Finding:** Only half of students feel like they have a voice in what goes on in their classroom and school. Many students note that teachers don’t allow for student input in class content, teaching, projects, and disciplinary actions. They want teachers and adults in school to listen and act on their voices.

*Connection to DEI Plan:* Strategy 5A: Increase representation and engagement from parents, students, and community members from underrepresented groups in district and school activities and decision-making processes.

*Recommendations:*
1. Increase opportunities for students to participate in decision-making.
2. Purposefully recruit underrepresented students.
Introduction

The Iowa City Community School District (ICCSD) is committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school environment. In response to substantial racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, and disproportionalities in disciplinary outcomes and special education assignment, the Equity Implemented Partnership (EIP) was launched in fall 2015 as a research-practice partnership with the ICCSD and researchers at the University of Iowa. The broad aim of this research partnership is to improve the equitability of school experiences for students in the district by collaborating with the University to provide research expertise and capacity to conduct data collection and analysis, facilitate stakeholder engagement, and assist in the implementation and evaluation of research-based strategies.

The EIP’s work focuses on using data on student experiences of school climate to inform district and school building decisions and planning processes. The focus on student experiences draws on the growing body of work which demonstrates that safe, supportive, and relationally strong school environments promote academic, social, and emotional development, and that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and socially marginalized identities are less likely to experience these types of positive school environments. Ensuring a positive school climate is one of the most important evidence-based strategies that schools can pursue in supporting student achievement and well-being.

The collection of student experiences provides insight about the characteristics of the school climate from the student perspective. The district uses school culture and climate measures in district-wide performance goals, such as comprehensive school improvement plans (CSIP) and the newly developed 2019-2022 Comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (see sidebar for plan goals).

This report describes the results of the Student Experiences of School Climate survey administered annually 5th through 12th grade students in the Iowa City Community School District. The ICCSD has administered this survey to students each February from 2016-2020.

This report describes the key findings related to:

- Teacher and Adult Relationships
- Social and Peer Relationships
- Inclusive Classrooms
- Safety and Disciplinary Environment
- Social and Emotional Learning

The survey data examining various dimensions of school climate is reported for all 5th-12th grade students as well as disaggregated to examine differences in experiences by race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, social class, and English-Language Learner status.

This information can be used to identify areas of opportunity and strength, as well as disparities across demographic groups, which assists in the monitoring of progress towards equity goals and guides district decision-making and building-level improvement planning.

### 2019-2022 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan Goals

1. Reduce the opportunity gap for structurally disadvantaged students
2. Reduce disproportionality in discipline
3. Create equitable, inclusive, and supportive school environments
4. Attain diverse and culturally proficient teachers, administrators, and staff
5. Increase stakeholder engagement (parents, students, and community members)
6. Create culturally responsive and equity-informed district policies and practices
Survey Data Analysis

The survey report is organized by five sections and each page includes the survey topic, items used to measure the topic, and the overall and group-specific averages. The end of each of section also includes the qualitative results from the open-ended question at the end of the survey. It is important to consider the context of the overall qualitative results and quantitative results.

The presentation of the quantitative survey data looks like this:

This box displays the name of the survey topic and its included survey items. For example, academic support is a composite measure which is an average of the survey items listed below.

This graph shows the average levels (mean) of student perceptions over time for each survey topic. For example, 93% of students report academic support in 2020.

This box indicates the metric or scale being used. For example, % Agree indicates the percentage of students who selected Strongly Agree or Agree for each of the survey items.

These graphs show significant differences by social identities or characteristics. The yellow bars, lines, and text are used to call attention to groups with less positive experiences.
Survey Sample Demographics

All ICCSD students in grades 5-12 were invited to take the 2020 School Culture and Climate Survey in February 2020. The total number of respondents was 6,835 with an overall response rate of 78%. The sample is representative of the district student populations (see appendix for full representation analysis). The graphs below show the demographic makeup of survey respondents.

See Glossary for a full list of terms and definitions. Further details about the survey’s administration and sample can be found in the Appendix.
This section of the report includes student survey topics and items that capture several aspects of student relationships with teachers and adults. Also included are the open-ended comments related to teacher and adult relationships provided by students at the end of the survey.

Key Findings

On average, the majority of students report positive teacher and adult relationships. Student experiences are relatively consistent over time.

Overall, students report the highest levels of respect for their teachers (95%), followed by academic support (93%).

They report the lowest levels of student voice (51%), followed by equitable treatment (78%) and personal concern (78%).

About a quarter of students have heard hurtful comments from teachers about race, gender, sexual orientation, immigrant status, or religious identity.

Students with socially marginalized identities report less positive experiences across all aspects of teacher and adult relationships.

Of 964 student comments about teachers, 632 included descriptions of negative relationships with teachers and adults in their school. Within comments about negative relationships, 202 described inequitable treatment, for example, “Teachers choose favorites and try to keep them out of trouble.”

Academic and emotional support from teachers was frequently mentioned in student comments, with 123 students describing teachers as unsupportive, and 92 describing supportive teachers, for example, “The teachers are very thoughtful, they make sure everyone understands what we are doing” and “In school I feel safe because I have staff members who care for us.”

Students with socially marginalized identities are more likely to hear these comments about their respective identity.
My teachers care about my learning.

Teachers encourage me to work hard.

Teachers encourage me to ask questions and participate in discussions.

**Academic Support**

- % Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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**Race/Ethnicity Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of Black and multi-racial students report academic support compared to White students.

**Gender Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of non-binary students report academic support compared to male and female students.

**Sexual Orientation Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-LGB</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of LGB students report academic support compared to non-LGB students.

**FRPL Status Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-FRPL</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRPL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of FRPL students report academic support compared to non-FRPL students.
Equitable Treatment

- Teachers treat students fairly.
- Teachers give everyone the same opportunities in the classroom.
- Most of my teachers treat me the same as other students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equitable Treatment</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender Differences**

- Male: 79%
- Female: 77%
- Non-Binary: 66%

A lower percentage of non-binary students report equitable treatment compared to male and female students.

**Sexual Orientation Differences**

- Non-LGB: 84%
- LGB: 77%

The disparity has increased between LGB and non-LGB students for equitable treatment from 2019 to 2020.

**Race/Ethnicity Differences**

- White: 81%
- Black: 70%
- Latino: 79%
- Asian: 82%
- Other: 74%
- Multi: 72%

A lower percentage of Black, multi-racial, and students who identify as another race report equitable treatment compared to White and Asian students.

**FRPL Status Differences**

- Non-FRPL: 82%
- FRPL: 76%

FRPL students consistently report lower levels of equitable treatment compared to non-FRPL students.
General Concern
• Teachers listen to students when they have problems.

Personal Concern
• Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say.

See appendix for full list of items included

Race/Ethnicity Differences
Black and Latino students report lower levels of concern and have a larger gap between their general and personal perceptions compared to white and Asian students.

Gender Differences
Non-binary students report lower levels of concern and have a larger gap between their general and personal perceptions compared to male and female students.

FRPL Status Differences
FRPL students report lower levels of concern and have a larger gap between their general and personal perceptions compared to non-FRPL students.

Sexual Orientation Differences
LGB students report lower levels of concern and have a larger gap between their general and personal perceptions compared to non-LGB students.
**Teacher Respect**

**General Respect**
- Teachers at my school treat students with respect.

**Personal Respect**
- I respect my teachers.

**FRPL Status Differences**

A lower percentage of FRPL students report general respect compared to non-FRPL students but there is no difference in personal respect.

**Gender Differences**

A lower percentage of non-binary students report general and personal respect compared to male and female students. Male students report lower levels of personal respect compared to female students.

**Race/Ethnicity Differences**

A lower percentage of Black students report general and personal respect compared to White students.

**Sexual Orientation Differences**

A lower percentage of LGB students report general and personal respect compared to non-LGB students.
Teacher Trust

- I trust my teachers.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

A lower percentage of Black, Latino, and Multi-racial students report teacher trust compared to White students.

School Level Differences

A lower percentage of junior high and high school students report teacher trust compared to elementary students.

Gender Differences

Non-binary students consistently report lower levels of teacher trust compared to male and female students.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A lower percentage of LGB students report teacher trust compared to non-LGB students.
### Student Voice

- I have chances to help decide what is best for the class or school.
- My teachers ask me what I want to learn about.

### Sexual Orientation Differences

LGB students consistently report lower levels of student voice compared to non-LGB students.

### Gender Differences

Non-binary students consistently report lower levels of student voice compared to non-LGB students.

### ELL Status Differences

A lower percentage of non-ELL students report student voice compared to ELL students.

### School Level Differences

A lower percentage of elementary and junior high students report student voice compared to high school students.
**Mentorship**

- Is there at least one adult in your school that you trust and go to for advice?
- Who is this person (or people)? (i.e. teacher, other adult, community member)

**Race/Ethnicity Differences**

A lower percentage of **Black and Latino students** report having a mentor compared to White and Asian students. They also are **less likely** to report that this mentor is a teacher, but Black students are more likely to report they have another adult as a mentor compared to **White and Latino students**.

**ELL Status Differences**

**ELL students** consistently report lower levels of mentorship compared to non-ELL students.

**Sexual Orientation Differences**

A lower percentage of **LGB students** report mentorship compared to non-LGB students.
**Adult Support**

- The school staff supports me academically.
- The school staff supports me socially.
- The school staff supports me emotionally.

**Gender Differences**

Adult Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sexual Orientation Differences**

Adult Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-LGB</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELL Status Differences**

- **Non-ELL** 93%
- **ELL** 85%
- Non-ELL 79%
- Non-ELL 74%

**IEP Differences**

- **Non-IEP** 93%
- **IEP** 88%
- Non-IEP 75%
- Non-IEP 68%

**Non-binary students** consistently report lower levels of adult support compared to male and female students.

**LGB students** consistently report lower levels of adult support compared to non-LGB students.

A lower percentage of **ELL students** report adult academic support but a higher percentage report social and emotional support compared to **non-ELL students**.

A lower percentage of **IEP students** report adult academic support but a higher percentage report social and emotional support compared to **non-IEP students**.
How often have you heard hurtful comments about [race, sexual orientation, gender, immigrants, religious identity] from teachers?

A higher percentage of Black, Latino, and Asian students report hearing hurtful comments about race compared to white students.

A higher percentage of non-binary students report hearing hurtful comments about gender compared to male and female students.

A higher percentage of LGB students report hearing hurtful comments about sexual orientation compared to non-LGB students.

A higher percentage of ELL students report hearing hurtful comments about immigrants compared to non-ELL students.
Open-Ended Responses Related to Teacher and Adults Relationships

Of the 1,066 open-ended responses, a majority of comments (N=964) included student perceptions of their relationships with adults at school, including: teachers, staff, substitutes, guidance counselors, lunch staff, student family advocates, principals, administration, librarians, and other or unspecified staff.

Of the 964 comments about teacher and adult relationships, most students described the positive and/or negative relationships and the qualities of teachers and adults which either facilitated or deterred relationships. Students described favorable and/or unfavorable characteristics of teachers based on observed behavior and interactions, and direct interactions with teachers. Of the 964 comments, a majority included content about negative relationships and experiences with teachers and adults at schools (N=632).

Negative Perceptions and Relationships (N=632)

In student descriptions of negative relationships with teachers and adults, many used general language to describe their feelings towards their teachers, such as “bad” or “mean” (N=157). Within this theme, more specific perceptions of negative teacher characteristics include inequitable treatment, a lack of support, dissatisfaction with performance, and hurtful comments from teachers.

**Inequitable Treatment (N=202)**

Many students (N=202) described perceptions of both general and targeted lack of fairness from their teachers. Student comments describe this inequitable behavior in rewards, attention, and discipline. Students attributed this behavior as having a negative impact on their relationships with teachers. Often students described a tendency for teachers to have “favorite” students as well. For example, one student said that “teachers choose favorites and try to keep them out of trouble.”

Some students attributed unfair treatment based on race, gender, academic ability, or social status. Race and gender were the two most common with race accounting for 34 of the comments and gender identity being 23 of the comments. Students primarily described a general pattern of inequitable treatment because of race or gender from teachers with some attaching personal experiences to their comments. For example, “Some teachers definitely discriminate. E.g., White and Black student both have hoods up, black student asked to put hood down.”

Some students also described enforcement of disciplinary practices, for example, “teachers always get the boys in trouble but the girls never get in trouble.” Students also commented on the inconsistency of equity in teacher’s attention to students’ academic needs. Noting that sometimes students received an abundance of help while others received none, for example, “it doesn't feel like each student is getting the same amount of support and help.”

**Unsupportive (N= 123)**

More than a hundred (N=123) open-ended comments described teachers and adults in the school as being unsupportive, sometimes specifying lack of support emotionally or academically. Students perceived teachers and adults in their schools to lack emotional support and understanding for student circumstances (N=44), including invalidation of feelings and opinions. Most commonly students described teachers as not considering the mental health of students or students did not feel as though they could go to their teachers for help. Some examples include: “teachers seem to care more about the fact that students get their work done in their class...”
“I really enjoy my teachers, they have helped me through a lot this month.”

“Teachers seem to care more about the fact that students get their work done in their class rather than making sure they are okay mentally.”

Students also perceived teachers and adults in their schools to lack support academically (N=28). Students described feeling that academic support was either inequitably dispersed or completely unavailable. “The district seems to only care about the high achieving students and student-athletes. There is no support for those who are struggling” is one of the comments outlining the issue.

Dissatisfaction with Performance (N=70)

Seventy students described dissatisfaction with the job performance of their teachers, which included ineffective teaching styles and unprofessional behavior, such as displays of anger or inappropriate comments and jokes. Examples of these comments include, “they won’t change their teaching style even though it has been made clear to them that the majority of their students are not learning anything in their class.”

Within this theme, some of the comments (N=15) described how a lack of cultural competence from teachers detracted from student and teacher relationships, for example, “Some teachers don’t really talk about equality and equity” and “There are one or two teachers that have had continuous issues about accepting and respecting identities and experiences.”

Hurtful Comments (N=80)

Eighty students describe instances involving hurtful comments from their teachers and adults in the school. The hurtful comments students describe include both comments they have personally heard/experienced as well as more general comments about hurtful comments from a teacher or adult in the school. The following is an example of a student response describing a personal experience, “A teacher in my school is very rude to me and my friends and they roll their eyes at us, I’ve heard them talk about me or my friends before in a bad way.” The following is an example of a student describing a more general experience, “I have heard teachers, specifically those who sponsor extracurricular activities, make unfair assumptions about the socioeconomic status of students based on their race or native language.”

Positive Perceptions and Relationships (N=213)

Most (N=93) of the comments about positive relationships between students and teachers used general language like “I like my teachers” or “teachers are great.” Within this theme, students commented specifically on supportiveness as a positive quality and had a feeling of satisfaction with their teachers teaching capabilities.

Supportive (N=92)

Among the 92 general comments relating to supportive behavior from adults in school, 48 students described specific instances where they felt their teachers were emotionally (N=30) or academically (N=18) supportive. Thirty students described their teachers and adults in the school as emotionally supportive. Comments included satisfaction in their ability to get help from teachers when needed and that they felt safe because of the teachers. For example, “I really enjoy my teachers, they have helped me through a lot this month” and “In school I feel safe because I have staff members who care for us.”
Eighteen students described feeling academically supported by their teachers and adults in the school. Students described their teachers as caring about their learning and making the effort to accommodate individual needs in teaching. For example, “The teachers are very thoughtful, they make sure everyone understands what we are doing” and, “teachers here go out of their way to make sure you are showing up and getting work done at school.”

Satisfaction with Performance (N=25)

Twenty-five students in open-ended comments described satisfaction with their teachers teaching capabilities. These students felt as though their teachers are competent, organized, and consistent in the classroom. Comments included, “The teachers also have enough experience to know what students may have trouble with, and what students might not need to focus on in our lessons” and “I really like all my teachers and they are good at their jobs.”

A couple of students described their teachers and adults in the school as culturally competent (N=2). These comments included satisfaction in the way specific teachers handled topics such as race and gender. For example, “I feel like more teachers should talk about things like racism, sexual preferences, gender identity, and things that that. I feel that [educator name redacted] does a really good job of talking about these types of things that give a good message to her students in a respectful way. I think we need more teachers like her.”

Lack of Connection (N=40)

In open-ended comments, 40 students described that they were lacking a relationship with their teachers and adults in school. This theme excluded descriptions of negative interactions and relationships and only included the absence of connection. For example, students described perceptions that teachers are apathetic to non-academic problems and teachers not trying to connect with students. These students perceived teachers and adults in school to lack empathy and understanding for student circumstances, including invalidation of feelings and opinions. Due to the feelings that their teachers did not put in the effort to cultivate relationships, students felt that they did not have a relationship. For example, one student described their experience as “I feel discouraged by my counselor as I feel he does not think I am able to do what I know I can and my opinions about my education are not listened to.”

Student Voice (N=74)

74 students in open-ended comments described teachers not allowing for student input in class content, teaching, projects, and disciplinary actions.

Students (N=28) described teachers and adults in the school as not being receptive to student input on academic matters such as decision-making processes of what is taught, how it is taught, and why it is taught. For example, one student said, “There is one teacher how doesn’t ask us how we are and if we are learning anything and if we make a suggestion I kind of feel like it doesn’t matter.”

Other students (N=24) commented on teachers and adults in the school lack of willingness to listen and act with the student perspective in mind when it comes to disciplinary matters. For example, one student said, “You get no chance to explain yourself and if you try you will probably get a [write] up.”

“There is one teacher how doesn’t ask us how we are and if we are learning anything and if we make a suggestion I kind of feel like it doesn't matter.”
Areas for Improvement (N=27)

The improvements highlighted by students include comments about teacher diversity, student voice and teacher capability and understanding.

Several student described not feeling welcome or represented due to the lack of diversity of the teaching staff, such as, “There isn’t a lot of diversity among the teachers and I feel like the school could do better about hiring people not based off of their color but base them off of their work and if they are a good teacher” and “Most of the teachers are white woman so I would like to see some more difference in the people teaching.”

Student also reported experiences of not having their voice heard by teachers, such as, “I think students don’t have enough say in what goes on at school... I wish that more teachers would take students seriously” and “I feel like this school is so insistent on hearing what we have to say, but they never listen or take action” and “THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE CHOICES MADE BY THE STUDENTS!!!”

Some students commented about improvements related to teacher capability and understanding. For example, one student wrote, “Teachers and students are not properly educated on LGBTQ issues and how to interact with said students especially on the topic of Gender - very few teachers ask for pronouns and/or preferred names, Pronouns are especially important as the wrong pronouns can make some people very dysphoric.” Another student shared a personal experience in which teachers overlooked the root cause behind a student’s behavior, saying, “I have recently been diagnosed with dyslexia and I have realized through my experience this year that many students and teachers don’t understand what dyslexia is and how hard it is to deal with. Since I was in elementary school, I have had reading problems and have been getting help from teachers about reading fluency. My parents have asked constantly, back in the day, if I should get tested for dyslexia, and all of the teachers that tutored me said no. But, I have dyslexia and the teacher didn’t understand the signs of dyslexia and what dyslexia actually is. Start teaching your staffers what dyslexia is, so you can make life on students with dyslexia easier at a young age. Then, they don’t have to go through what I have to go through now.”
Social and Peer Relationships

This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of social and peer relationships. Also included are the open-ended comments related to social and peer relationships provided by students at the end of the survey.

Key Findings

On average, **82%** of students feel like they belong at school and this has percentage **increased** from 80% in 2018. However, Black and Latino students, non-binary students, LGB students, ELL students, IEP students, and FRPL students are all **less likely to feel like they belong**.

**22%** of students report being personally bullied in the past year and rates of bullying are highest in **elementary school**.

Students are most likely to report that students in their school are **bullied on the basis of appearance (43%)**, followed by **gender (29%)**, and **race (26%)**.

Students with **socially marginalized identities** are more likely to report students bully others on the basis of their respective identity.

The **majority** of students have **heard hurtful comments from students** about sexual orientation (76%), race (73%), and gender (67%).

**89%** of LGB students have heard hurtful comments about sexual orientation from students.

**85%** of non-binary students have heard hurtful comments about **gender** from students.

In open comments, 637 students reported observed and personal experiences of bullying. **Verbal bullying** was the most common type of bullying, described by 262 students. For example, “I often hear people call others gay (intending for it to be an insult). I also hear people calling other people inappropriate names because of their skin color. People aren’t as accepting of people as I would like.”

In open comments, 104 students reported feeling **isolated at school** and **lacking a social connection** with peers. Students described feeling like an outsider or not having friends, such as, “I don't fit in with most of the kids here.” Some students expressed the emotional effect of feeling isolated, for example, “I'm scared I feel lonely and trapped it's not safe here.”
School Belonging

- I feel like I belong in my school.
- I fit in with students at this school.
- I feel close to people at this school.

FRPL Status Differences

A lower percentage of FRPL students report school belonging compared to non-FRPL students.

Gender Differences

A lower percentage of non-binary and female students report school belonging compared to male students.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A lower percentage of LGB students report school belonging compared to non-LGB students.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

A lower percentage of Black and Latino students report school belonging compared to white students.
## Peer Relationships

### General Peer Relationships
- Students have friends at school they can trust and talk to if they have problems.

### Personal Peer Relationships
- I have a friend who really cares about me.

*(See appendix for full list of items included)*

### Gender Differences

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<th>General Relationships</th>
<th>Personal Relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>87%</td>
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**Non-binary students** report less positive peer relations compared to male and female students. **Females** report less positive general relationships, whereas **male** report less positive personal relationships.

### Sexual Orientation Differences

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<tr>
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<th>General Relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-LGB</strong></td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-LGB</strong></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>LGB</td>
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**LGB students** report less positive peer relations compared to non-LGB students.

### Race/Ethnicity Differences

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<th>General Relationships</th>
<th>Personal Relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
<td>91%</td>
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**Black students** report less positive peer relations compared to White students. **Latino students** report less positive personal relationships compared to White students.

### FRPL Status Differences

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<th>General Relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-FRPL</strong></td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-FRPL</strong></td>
<td>91%</td>
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**FRPL students** report less positive peer relations compared to non-FRPL students.
At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their... [race or ethnicity, national origin or immigrant status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, poverty or social class, religion, appearance, other, none]

A higher percentage of Black, Asian, and Multi-racial students report school bullying because of race compared to White students.

A higher percentage of non-binary and female students report school bullying because of gender compared to male students.

A higher percentage of LGB students report school bullying because of sexual orientation compared to non-LGB students.

A higher percentage of FRPL students report school bullying because of social class compared to non-FRPL students.
Personal Bullying

- I have been physically bullied
- I have been verbally bullied
- I have been socially bullied
- I have been cyber-bullied

See appendix for definition of bullying provided

22% of students report being bullied

29% of elementary students, 24% of junior high students, and 16% of high school students report being bullied.

Frequency of Bullying (of students who report being bullied)

Gender Differences

A higher percentage of non-binary students have been bullied in the past year. Females are more likely to be socially or cyber bullied, while males are more likely to be physically bullied.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A higher percentage of LGB students report being bullied compared to non-LGB students.
**Hurtful Comments**

- How often have you heard hurtful comments about [race, sexual orientation, gender, immigrants, religious identity] from students?

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<th></th>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Immigrant Status</th>
<th>Religious Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Religious Identity</td>
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Students of all races report high levels of hearing hurtful comments about race from students.

A higher percentage of **LGB students** report hearing hurtful comments about sexual orientation compared to non-LGB students.

A higher percentage of **non-binary and female students** report hearing hurtful comments about gender compared to male students.

A higher percentage of **ELL students** report hearing hurtful comments about immigrants compared to non-LGB students.
Open-Ended Responses Related to Social and Peer Relationships

Of the 1,066 open-ended survey comments, a vast majority of the comments (N= 1332) included student perceptions of their peer relationships, attachment to school, social environments, bullying, and student body norms. Many comments included content that fit into several subthemes of peer relationships, so when consolidated into an overarching theme, the different types of content outnumbered the actual number of comments. For example, if a student described bullying and positive peer relationships in a single comment, both categories were counted in the total comments about peer relationships. Most of the comments were about bullying (N=637), followed by negative and positive peer relationships (N=471), and school belonging and social experiences (N=214). Also, many students also left general comments about their attitude toward their school environments, including general positive (N=355), negative (N=227), and neutral (N=95) statements. Examples of these categories include, “I like my school the way it is and the people in it,” “schools not bad it could be a lot worse,” and “I do not like this school [and] I don't like the people in this school.”

School Belonging and Social Experiences (N=214)

Students shared experiences of whether or not they felt a sense of belonging in school based on social interactions (or lack thereof), personal compatibility with social culture, and attitudes towards peers.

Feelings of Isolation (N=104)

Some comments also reflected students’ feelings of being isolated or alone at school, including a lack of social connection with peers. Many comments contained personal experiences of feeling like an outsider or not having friends, such as, “I don’t fit in with most of the kids here,” and “I don’t have any good friends at my school.” Some students expressed the emotional effect of feeling isolated, for example one student wrote, “I'm scared I feel lonely and trapped it's not safe here.” Additionally, many new students commented about not feeling welcome or having trouble making friends, such as, “I am new to this school. The teachers are nice and the kids are mostly too, but I've had trouble making new friends,” and “I don’t' really have any friends at this school and to me this school isn't as welcoming as my old school was.”

Students also commented on general observations of student isolation. One student wrote, “I think our school and our students need to do a better job being more inclusive. Too many people are sitting by themselves during lunch and going about their school day without anybody to talk to.” Another student said, “There's absolutely nowhere for kids at school to go if they are having a tough time mentally, they have nobody to talk to, they feel alone. It is horrible because there's nothing students can do, they're trapped here with other students and teachers that don't care about their well-being.”

Inclusiveness and Belonging (N=70)

Some students described a general sense of belonging in school and personal experiences related to fitting in at school. The comments comprise of feeling included in classroom discussions and activities, a sense of fitting in within the classroom, feeling comfortable and willing to participate as well as feelings of belonging related to extracurricular activities like sports and clubs. Some students felt that all students could be included, such as, “I think that the school is a great place to be for learning purposes. I have made quite a few friends while I was here and they accepted me for who I was so I believe that other students do the same” and “The school is great and it is a good environment where every student feels like they belong.” However, other students felt that some level of exclusion was inevitable in school environments, for example a student commented,
“Overall, [High School] is a very inclusive school that tries to have something for everybody. There are some groups that don’t really include anyone else, but that is always going to happen in high school no matter how hard school officials can try.”

 Cliques (N=40)

Forty students also commented about social cliques, issues with exclusion, and friend-group relations, such as, “Everyone is already in a friend ‘group’ and no one really wants to let you in from my experience,” and “Students form groups and lock others out of them, insinuating the problems of making friends.”

 Peer Relationships (N=471)

Students commented on their perceptions of and interactions with other students (N=471). This includes rule breaking, disrespect toward teachers, academic competition between students, supportive student relationships, and any other interaction excluding bullying. The majority of these comments were negative peer relationships (N=324), which were further categorized into observed relationships between students (N=195) and personal conflicts among peers (N=68). However, some students described positive peer relationships (N=147).

 Negative Peer Relationships (N=324)

Comments discussing negative peer relationships are categorized into general peer relationships (N=195) and personal peer relationships (N=68). General peer relationships includes perceptions and judgments made by students such as negative attributions toward other students and reports of normative judgements of student behavior. On the other hand, personal peer relationships include specific negative peer relationships and personal conflicts which are more equal, unlike one-sided repetitive and negative interactions like bullying.

 General Negative Peer Relationships (N=195)

Many students observed general negative peer relationships (e.g. "bad kids") and described normative judgements of student behavior as well as perceptions of negative attributions toward their peers.

Several comments discussed the school’s treatment of “bad kids” saying, “The kids that are breaking school rules a lot are treated better than good kids and get more rewards.” Other students felt that “good kids” should be treated better by comparison, for example a student wrote, “Sometimes I also wish that the kids who get good grades and don’t act up in class like me would get more attention than the kids who don’t do their work and just distract and annoy the whole class.”

Many comments also reported situations of students breaking the rules or being loud and disruptive, for example a student wrote, “My classes are always disruptive with loud students and my teachers can’t control them. Most students have no regard or respect for their peers or teachers.” Another student commented, “Many students are very rambunctious in the halls and at lunch and are disrespectful to teachers and disruptive during class. They can be especially disrespectful and disregard of substitute teachers.”

Another common theme among these comments included detailed examples of students being disrespectful or rude to teachers, such as, “I sometimes see when a teacher or elder substitute would say something to a student and to be cool, the student would just burst out in these disrespectful words and stuff for no reason and I don’t like that at all” and “This one teacher sometimes just let the "bad" kids walk over her and let them cuss at her and be really rude and I feel like that makes some kids not feel safe.” Some comments described a general lack of respect and acceptance among students, such as, “No

“Most students don’t know how to respect others opinions and differences, and I don’t think some students even realize the hurt they are causing upon students.”
one respects people if they're different. Everyone judges each other” and “Most students don't know how to respect others opinions and differences, and I don't think some students even realize the hurt they are causing upon students.”

Several comments also discussed negative peer interactions and an overly competitive social environment. For example one comment said, “I feel like all the drama going around needs to stop because I feel like it’s unnecessary to be doing all that and it's kinda taking away our teachers work time and students class time.” Another comment read, “It's competitive to the point of being unhealthy and I am stressed all the time and probably burning out. I feel like I have to be double accelerated in everything just to keep up with the people round me.”

There were also some general statements about negative student relationships, such as, “As a student body, we are extremely divided, everyone is extremely judgy and although people like to think they're caring and mindful of other people's feelings, most times they don't even know that what they said is hurtful. I see kids every day make careless "joking" comments about other kids and the thing is they barely even know each other. People don't know what is going on in other people's lives and they don't care to know because they're so focused on themselves and getting themselves through the week they can't bother to care.”

Personal Negative Peer Relationships (N=68)

Students described personal conflicts with specific peers in which the conflicts were more equal, not like one-sided repetitive negative interactions such as bullying. The comments about personal peer conflicts often included being left out, feeling that a peer was being mean, or not accepting each other due to differences. Most students explained specific conflicts with friends or peers, such as, “I like this school and love my friends but sometimes we have too much drama and leads to fights” and, “I have been told to sit near people I don't want to by lunch monitors because I don't have a spot. Sometimes those people are rude, like, "Why are you in my spot!!" when I didn't even want to be there in the first place.”

Other comments detailed student observations of peer conflicts relating to political beliefs, race, and sexual orientation, such as, “I'm a student athlete and I personally think that most of the people or my team are racist and there’s no punishment when they say things to other black or Mexican Athletes” and “In addition, the political climate is only tolerant of liberal/progressive views. Having moderate (not even Conservative) political leanings, I have been told I am a "Conservative" or a "Fascist" for supporting Joe Biden in the caucuses.”

Positive Peer Relationships (N=147)

Despite the many student comments about negative peer interactions, many also described themselves as having positive relationships with their peers. Most of these comments were short, only about one sentence and did not contain many details about their positive peer interactions. The statements tended to be broad and non-specific relating to relationships with other students, such as, “I have amazing friends who are there for me” and “I have caring friends that care about me and make me laugh” and “My friends will stand up for me.”

The comments included student perceptions of supportive relationships, students caring about and accepting one another, and the influence these positive peer relationships have on students’ feelings toward the school climate.

One student shared a personal comment about how having positive peer relationships helped them get through a difficult situation, saying, “When my brother passed away I had all the friends I could possibly need at the school to help me get through it.”
Many students made connections between feeling safe at school and having positive peer relationships. One student wrote, “My school is very welcoming and safe. The teachers are very kind and help you with whatever you need. The education here is amazing. The students are very welcoming and kind. Thank you [Elementary School]!”

Several students included that their positive peer relationships made them feel accepted and welcome in the school, such as, “Everyone in my school is really welcoming and would be happy to be anyone’s friend, no matter how they look, their gender or what they identify as, or their religion” and “I just moved here, and everyone is very welcoming. I had no problem making friends, and I enjoy waking up knowing I have to go to school! “

**Bullying (N=637)**

In order to understand the prevalence of bullying, comments were differentiated from general school observations of bullying (N=147) and personal experiences of bullying and victimization (N=121). In the following sections, the comments describing general and personal experiences of bullying will be examined followed by the bullying types.

**General School Bullying (N=147)**

General observed bullying includes any experience of bullying that is not personal to the student. Among student’s general experiences of bullying, students reported seeing bullying targeted at the victim’s race (N=23), sexual orientation (N=20), and gender identity (N=19). Additionally, of these general observations of bullying, many students described hearing an excessive amount of swearing and name-calling at school. One student wrote, “I do witness lots of really crude things being said and done to other people. Examples of those are like the typical rude comments (sometimes racist), on occasion some fights, and typical things like that. Not all students in this school are like that, I’m just going off of what I see in the hallways every day.”

Many comments included perceptions about the impact that bullying had on students in the school environment. Some students reported feelings such as stress and fear. Another student wrote, “The amount of bullying I witness scares me because I know no one seeing it will do anything about it. I know a fight will happen and the kids involved get disciplined but fights keep happening because none of the kids in fights get serious long term consequences that affect them.”

Several comments described teachers failing to address bullying, either because they were not aware it was happening or because they ignored it. For example, one student commented, “Teachers and other staff members need to be more aware of the bullying happening at [Junior High School].” Some comments addressed issues with reporting bullying or the school’s lack of response to bullying, such as, “I feel like the school and staff don’t do enough to enforce any anti-bullying campaigns and stuff.”

**Personal Experiences of Bullying (N=121)**

These comments included any situation relating to experiences of bullying that were personal to the student. Of students’ personal experiences of bullying, they reported bullying based on race (N=3), sexual orientation (N=7), and gender identity (N=11).
Some comments about personal bullying related to sexual orientation and gender identity include, “I feel like a lot of students don’t support the LGBTQ+ community, because they make fun of us and use harmful words” and “There is one girl who punches me and my friends and calls us [expletive] because we are LGBTQ” and “I have heard stories and do notice that people who represent groups like ethnic minorities, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ members that are open about their identity, among other groups (including myself) are usually treated separately or discriminated against but in more subtle ways most of the time.”

Some students used this section to explain other things they get bullied for, how often they are bullied, and the lack of resources offered by the school to help them with conflicts, such as, “I was harassed a bit in the beginning of the year. Boys at [Junior High School] sometimes make inappropriate comments about girls. It makes me extremely uncomfortable” and “Sometimes people make fun of me sometimes just like three times this year” and “This one kid says really hurtful things to and about me and my parents told my teacher to move my seat a couple months ago and she never did. Teachers also don’t really do much when you have a problem. Then, the person keeps doing it.”

The comments also reflect on how bullying impacts students’ sense of safety and belonging at school. One student wrote, “I don’t feel that safe in class because some people in my class like to make fun of me, make rumors, and tease me all the time.”

Types of Bullying

Students described different types of bullying they observed and experienced personally, including verbal bullying (e.g. teasing, threats, gossip, “jokes”) (N=262), exclusionary bullying (N=41), physical bullying (e.g. punching, kicking) (N=34), and cyber bullying (N=8). Students said they observed verbal (N=64), exclusionary (N=17), and physical (N=12) bullying. Other students also reported personally experiencing verbal (N=53), exclusionary (N=19), and physical (N=10) bullying.

Verbal Bullying (N=262)

The majority of bullying comments described verbal bullying. These included hurtful comments and other forms of verbal bullying such as teasing, threats, and gossip. Many comments described language or bullying targeting a specific identities and statuses (based on race, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status). The most frequent examples included race (N=35), gender and gender identity (N=32), and orientation (N=28), followed by religion (N=4) and disability (N=1).

Sixty one students reported hurtful comments they heard at school that included inappropriate language. Many students (N=41) indicated that they felt inappropriate language was directed at students regarding gender identity, race, and sexual orientation. One student wrote, “I often hear people call others gay (intending for it to be an insult). I also hear people calling other people inappropriate names because of their skin color. People aren’t as accepting of people as I would like.”

“I often hear people call others gay (intending for it to be an insult). I also hear people calling other people inappropriate names because of their skin color. People aren’t as accepting of people as I would like.”

Fifty-nine students described verbal bullying in the form of offensive jokes and other types of hurtful comments that portray bullying as humor. Some students feel hurt by this type of bullying while other students feel that jokes are acceptable. Of the 59 comments about offensive jokes, 20 comments specifically involved gender identity, sexual orientation, and race.
Forty-seven students also reported verbal bullying about characteristics not associated with identity, such as appearance. These comments mostly included statements about physical insecurities, flaws, and imperfections like, “If you don’t look “good enough” you get called names and made fun of.” Many students also reported bullying due to their height, weight, clothing, and athletic ability, for example, “I think people are definitely treated badly in this school. I don’t get treated badly, and I think the only reason for that is because I am a varsity athlete with a muscular body type. People who have smaller, less intimidating body types are certainly picked on.”

Social Bullying (N=41)

Some students reported bullying that was specifically aimed at socially excluding students. The comments brought up issues between students like being gossiped about, ignored, or left out of activities or social groups. Some comments (N=19) describing exclusionary bullying also included discriminatory behavior toward students of certain identities and statuses (based on race, national origin, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity). Several students felt that the school should try to deal with these issues better, for example one student wrote, “A lot of the issues that go on with exclusion or discrimination aren’t reported or dealt with through administration so they continue to happen with the person who is excluding or discriminating facing no consequences for their actions.” However, other students felt that some level of exclusionary behavior was inevitable, for example another student responded by saying, “There are some groups that don't really include anyone else, but that is always going to happen in high school no matter how hard school officials can try.”

Physical Bullying (N=34)

Students reported both observed and personal incidents of physical bullying including punching, hitting, kicking, fighting, and other forms of physical violence as well as property damage. Many comments also discuss how physical bullying impacts student’s feelings of safety in the school environment. For example, one student wrote, “This year I am a new student at [elementary school], and I don’t necessarily feel welcome here, at recess, people punch and kick other students, and I kind help but feel like I or one of my good friends could get hurt.”

Areas for Improvement (N=18)

The comments about improvements related to peer relationships mostly focus on strengthening the schools anti-bullying initiatives, such as, “I believe the school should have more options to deal with bullying/harassment” and “I feel like the school and staff don’t do enough to enforce any ‘anti-bullying’ campaigns and stuff” and “I just feel like the school needs to keep a closer eye on what’s happening out of earshot and how some people (me) have been bullied for the whole school year.”

“I believe the school should have more options to deal with bullying/harassment.”
Inclusive Classrooms

This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of inclusive classrooms. Also included are the open-ended comments related to inclusive classrooms provided by students at the end of the survey.

Key Findings

On average, 77% of students feel like a valuable classroom member at school. However, there are significant differences by gender, sexual orientation, race, class, and ability status in classroom membership.

Inclusive discussions have increased over time, however students with socially marginalized identities are least likely to report having inclusive discussions.

Students report more opportunities in class to talk about race (70%) compared to gender (56%) and sexual orientation (53%).

Students (N=47) commented about their level of inclusion in classroom discussions and activities, barriers to participating and feeling excluded within the classroom environment, such as, “Not very inclusive for certain races and cultural identities, kids are not very accepting of others’ differences, differences are not acknowledged enough within classrooms.”

Students (N=119) commented about content of classes, including teaching materials, class activities and discussion, and homework and assignments. Many students (N=22) felt curricula lacked diversity, for example, “This school has not changed it's still not as inclusive as they say. People of color are not represented in the curriculum and so are the LGBTQ community...”

91% of White students agree that content is inclusive, while 81% of Asian students and 76% of Black and Latino students agree.

41% of non-binary students report feeling unable to share their views in class because of their gender, compared to 10% of males and 7% of females.

25% of Black students and 18% of Latino students report feeling unable to share their views in class because of their race, compared to 9% of Asian and 7% of White students.

Students (N=119) commented about content of classes, including teaching materials, class activities and discussion, and homework and assignments. Many students (N=22) felt curricula lacked diversity, for example, “This school has not changed it's still not as inclusive as they say. People of color are not represented in the curriculum and so are the LGBTQ community...”

41% of non-binary students report feeling unable to share their views in class because of their gender, compared to 10% of males and 7% of females.

25% of Black students and 18% of Latino students report feeling unable to share their views in class because of their race, compared to 9% of Asian and 7% of White students.
Inclusive Discussions

- There are opportunities in class to talk about [race, gender, sexual orientation, differences in learning or physical abilities].

School Level Differences

High school students report the least opportunities in class to talk about gender, sexual orientation, and learning or physical abilities. Elementary students report less opportunities to talk about gender compared to junior high students and junior high students report less opportunities to talk about abilities compared to elementary students.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Opportunities to Talk about Race

A lower percentage of Black students report having opportunities in class to talk about race compared to white and Latino students.

Gender Differences

Opportunities to Talk about Gender

A lower percentage of non-binary and female students report having opportunities in class to talk about gender compared to male students.
I see people of many races, cultures, and backgrounds represented in my classes and homework.

My teachers present positive images of people from a variety of races, cultures, and backgrounds.

My teachers use examples of races, cultures, and backgrounds that are like mine.

A lower percentage of LGB students report inclusive content compared to non-LGB students.

A lower percentage of Latino, Asian, and Black students report inclusive content compared to white students.

A lower percentage of elementary and high school students report inclusive content compared to junior high students.

A lower percentage of female and non-binary students report inclusive content compared to male students.
Classroom Membership

- I see myself as a valuable member of the classroom.
- I feel that my contributions are valued in the classroom.

Unable to Share
- I feel unable to share my views in class because of my [race, gender identity].

FRPL Status Differences
Classroom Membership

A lower percentage of FRPL students report classroom membership compared to non-FRPL students.

IEP Status Differences
Classroom Membership

A lower percentage of IEP students report classroom membership compared to non-IEP students.

Gender Differences
Unable to Share due to Gender

A higher percentage of non-binary students report being unable to share due to gender compared to male and female students.

Race/Ethnicity Differences
Unable to Share due to Race

A higher percentage of Black and Latino students report being unable to share due to race compared to white students.
Of the 1,066 open-ended responses, many comments (N=339) described experiences in the classroom setting specifically. Students included comments about the curricula and assignments, student impact, classroom management and overall inclusiveness. The descriptions examine the difficulty and diversity of class content, student’s feelings of personal belonging in the classroom, and student participation.

**Curriculum and Assignments (N=119)**

Many students commented about both the positive and negative aspects of the academic content of classes, including teaching materials, class activities and discussion, and homework and assignments. Additionally, students specifically described the difficulty (N=48) and inclusiveness (N=22) of the curriculum and class assignments.

Several student comments provided feedback on improvements to the learning environment, such as, “Teachers should really listen to what their students give them advice on in AP classes in regards to the lesson planning” and “We learn more from discussions and interesting conversations than 2 hour homework.” Some students also suggested more practical content be included into the curriculum, for example, one student wrote, “Why don’t we learn how to pay bills or do taxes or learn stuff that will actually help in life instead learning how to find slope or something?”

Several students suggested that more extracurricular activities should be available, such as, “I think we should have a science club so people like it science more” and “FFA and agriculture clubs should be available at [High School]!” and “It would be better if we had more clubs and extracurricular activities.”

**Difficulty (N=48)**

There was a wide variation in student assessments of how difficult and stressful or easy and boring the class work was. Many students described how the competitive environment and heavy school workload affected them mentally and emotionally. One student wrote, “I’m afraid to come to school. Homework gives about 90% of the people I know a mental breakdown including me.” Another student commented, “I feel like school puts too much work and stress to students.” Some students felt that the workload was manageable but that increased communication between teachers was needed to spread the workload out during the week. For example, a student said, “I just wish teachers would be better at recognizing when students are suffering. I wish they would communicate because some days I have no tests and others I have tests in every class and it is overwhelming. I do not have time to have fun anymore.”

**Inclusive Content (N=22)**

Students commented on the diversity of the curriculum of the class being taught, including the lack of content on students of color, LGBTQ+, and other groups. Most students felt that the curriculum was not diverse enough, for example one student wrote, “I am a senior at [High School] and this school has not changed it’s still not as inclusive as they say. People of color are not represented in the curriculum and so are the LGBTQ community. You don’t teach us about each other. Students are still ignorant you aren’t preparing people for real world if you think you are that’s sad because some of the questions that are asked aren’t taught like they should be or given the time to talk about a lot still needs to be done.”
A few students disliked the diversity of the curriculum, such as, “I don’t support LGBTQ+ community because my religion and for a respect to God. I can’t share that with people because people in my class are LGBTQ+ and I don’t want to be rude but we have to do things in writing about LGBTQ+ and I don’t like doing that because it’s not fair to the people who don’t support LGBTQ+ community.”

Inclusive Classrooms (N=47)

The student comments about inclusive classrooms described students’ feelings about their level of inclusion in classroom discussions and activities. Most of these comments described barriers to participating and feeling a lack of inclusion within the classroom environment, such as, “Teachers and the administration could make more of an effort to make sure everyone feels represented. It has not been an issue for me but I have noticed and have talked w kids about it” and “Not very inclusive for certain races and cultural identities, kids are not very accepting of others’ differences, differences are not acknowledged enough within classrooms.”

Students had contrasting views on whether teachers should encourage discussions about inclusiveness. One student said, “I feel like more teachers should talk about things like racism, sexual preferences, gender identity, and things that that. I feel that [educator name redacted] does a really good job of talking about these type of things that give a good message to her students in a respectful way. I think we need more teachers like her.” However other students felt differently. One student wrote, “Please do not force discussions of race, sexuality, gender, or anything alike! When pointing it out, it makes it look alienated! These things are normal! Like bruh nothing relating to race/sexuality/gender makes anyone more important to talk about. Women are not more important than men, men are not more important than women, nonbinary folk should not be singled out. We are all people. Stressing our differences only makes the chasms between us further and deeper.”

Several students also commented on their perceptions of unfair punishment or rewards in classrooms, such as, “Racism is still very prevalent, especially among teachers. Many students of color are visibly/noticably treated unfairly in comparison to white students like myself, whether it be negative assumptions or accusations about their behavior, or educational neglect” and “Sometimes the people who always do their work don’t get rewarded and the kids that don’t usually do their work, when those types of kids do their work, get rewarded a lot more than they should.”

“Racism is still very prevalent, especially among teachers. Many students of color are visibly/noticably treated unfairly in comparison to white students like myself, whether it be negative assumptions or accusations about their behavior, or educational neglect.”

Another notable theme discussed within classroom inclusivity was exclusion based on political beliefs. Students described feeling outcast due to conservative political beliefs and a perception of liberal bias amongst teachers and in school. One student wrote, “Politics are insane. Teachers bring it up way too much, and every analysis or interpretation or opinion you have is immediately applied to politics. The people at this school would genuinely shun, and literally talk about others behind their backs because of their political beliefs all the time.”

Classroom Membership (N=30)

Comments about classroom membership included observations of students’ sense of fitting in within the classroom, feeling comfortable and willing to participate and engaged in the material being presented. It also includes diversity within the classroom with regard to representation of who is present and if there are students who look like and identify like them in their courses. Students had contrasting experiences of belonging in the classroom environment, some felt connected to the school and that they were represented
while others felt excluded, unrepresented, and that they did not belong. Some students commented on the lack of diversity of classroom membership as limiting inclusivity.

**Participation (N=12)**

Participation included comments in which students described their sense of belonging, opportunity, and efficacy to participate in classroom discussions and activities. Most comments expressed a need for a more inclusive environment to encourage participation or a feeling that teachers do not call on students equitably in class to participate.

**Student Impact of Classroom Experiences (N=117)**

Student impact includes comments that explicitly stated (not implied) positive and negative impacts on students regarding classroom experiences. While the majority of comments were negative in nature, all the comments included impacts on student’s mental and emotional health, academic outcomes, social behavior, student voice, and participation (e.g. attendance).

Numerous students described negative impacts on their mental and emotional health, specifically related to a competitive and stressful classroom environment, such as, “It feels like teachers only care about test scores and not at all about how students feel about how they learn and the weight of our workload. It would be so helpful if teachers communicated with each other and at least attempt to spread the workload out during the week” and “The incredibly competitive atmosphere and college or career shaming, by teachers and students alike, leads to increased stress for students and increases the feeling that we’re almost being pitted against each other.” Another student wrote, “It’s competitive to the point of being unhealthy and I am stressed all the time and probably burning out. I feel like I have to be double accelerated in everything just to keep up with the people round me.”

Many comments also included negative impacts on student learning, such as, “The teachers are welcoming and friendly, but we don’t learn much in some of the classes I am taking. Some teacher care more about chatting than teaching. Others don’t give information in an organized manner for students to learn from” and “To be honest, 8th grade has been awful, at [Junior High School], none of the teachers have any control of the classes. I don’t feel like I’ve learned anything this year.” Despite the many negative comments pertaining to student learning, there were also a few positive comments about the learning environment, such as, “[educator name redacted] is the hands down best teacher of all time. He makes learning fun and the thing is we’re still learning!”

Another common impact described by students was teachers’ direct influence on student expression. One student wrote, “There are one or two teachers that have had continuous issues about accepting and respecting identities and experiences that have been “talked to” about their behavior but nothing has been changed, so that is why I selected generally unsafe in classrooms and teachers respecting their students.” Some comments conveyed examples of teachers not enhancing student voice and participation, such as, “Teachers always think students are in the wrong and that [they are] always right. We are not given the option to explain our point of view as it is often seen by teachers as talking back or giving attitude” and “Teachers should really listen to what their students give them advice on in AP classes in regards to the lesson planning.”

**Classroom Management (N=54)**

The comments coded in classroom management include descriptions of classroom-specific disruptions and teacher responses. The majority of these comments discuss a lack of discipline in response to negative student behavior, such as “Students just think they can do whatever they want and get away with it. Teachers always threaten to remove a student or have a student's phone taken away. But they never do it, making the hall monitors almost completely useless” and “No one enforces the rules here. No one. I hate this place. I want to
leave because it is awful here. The other students are awful, and the adults don’t stop it. Get audio on the cameras, and check them more often. I don’t want a dictatorship, but I want something more strict than a [expletive] free-for-all where anything goes.”

Some students felt that rules and enforcement should be more strict and suggested ways to improve the response to disruptive behavior, such as, “Kids need to stop talking through entire class periods while teachers are teaching and teachers need a way to punish them for constantly being disrespectful.” and “I feel that teachers should have stricter classroom rules because there are always kids talking and making annoying noises when I’m trying to focus.”

“I feel that teachers should have stricter classroom rules because there are always kids talking and making annoying noises when I’m trying to focus.”

Other comments described disruptions that needed to be handled better by educators, for example, one student wrote, “Teachers need to work with parents on how to best help and educate their students not tattle-tale when a student doesn’t do something they ask for. This isn’t necessarily the teachers fault, they’re in a system that promotes surface level behavioral discipline, but we can definitely improve on training them to handle problems effectively instead of labeling kids as "bad kids" and thereby isolating them from the rest of their peers and making them a bigger target for hurtful behaviors.”

Areas for Improvement (N=42)

Student described improvement they would like to see within the classroom, including adjustments to the curriculum and class content, the classroom environment, and extracurricular activities.

The comments about the curriculum and class content included descriptions of usefulness and inclusivity. Some students wrote, “Let’s actually learn about something we’ll need in life, and not something that we’ll just go home and forget. Like how to get a job, how to do taxes, etc. All we learn about is unnecessary stuff that we’re never going to use” and “Why don’t we learn how to pay bills or do taxes or learn stuff that will actually help in life instead learning how to find slope or something?”

Other students provided suggestions and highlighted areas for improvement regarding the inclusiveness of the curriculum, such as, “I feel that the puberty curriculum is not inclusive” and “Gender and gender identity should be addressed more often as well as diversity in religions, race, and sexuality. Students should feel safe to express themselves without the fear of being harassed by other students out of lack of information” and “I also think that we shouldn’t just be talking about black people during February, but also think about other races during other times too. Also more black or other raced teachers at this school would be nice.”

Students also commented on improvement to their learning environment, such as, “I feel that the classes in fifth grade are way too big and make learning harder for the teachers and the students” and “Not very inclusive for certain races and cultural identities, kids are not very accepting of others’ differences, differences are not acknowledged enough within classrooms.”

Other students expressed a desire for more extracurricular activities, such as, “It would be better if we had more clubs and extracurricular activities” and “I think we should have a science club” and “FFA and agriculture clubs should be available at [High School]!” Several students included comments about including more extracurricular activities related to gender identity and sexual orientation saying, “I think we need to start a pride club for the LGBTQ+ community...” and “We need a queer alliance.”
This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of safety and disciplinary environment. Also included are the open-ended comments related to safety and disciplinary environment provided by students at the end of the survey.

### Key Findings

**On average, 81% of students feel like their school is welcoming and safe.** However, students with socially marginalized identities are less likely to feel safe.

**Students are more likely to report they are personally disciplined fairly (77%) than students in school are generally disciplined fairly (66%).** Students report higher levels of disciplinary transparency and consistency (76%), compared to disciplinary strictness (66%).

**High school students report the lowest levels of positive disciplinary practices, responsiveness, and restorative conflict resolution, followed by junior high students.**

**Black students report lower levels of disciplinary equity but higher levels of disciplinary consistency, strictness, and transparency compared to White students.**

**Non-binary and LGB students report lower levels of all aspects of the safety and disciplinary environment.**

Of the 478 student comments about safety, 331 described unsafe experiences that students have witnessed or endured. The most frequently reported unsafe experience was physical aggression and fights (N=110). For example, “I feel like our school environment has got worse this year because of the amount of fights that happen every day and every week. It makes for an environment that is not enjoyable to be in.”

Of the 217 comments about disciplinary environment, 100 were about schools and staff being unresponsive to rule-breaking or bullying. For example, “When there is a problem no one talks about it or they try to handle it [themselves] because they think that the school is going to blow them off.”
81% of students agree that their school is welcoming and safe.

Gender Differences

A lower percentage of non-binary students report the school is welcoming and safe compared to male and female students. A lower percentage of female students feel safe compared to male students.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

A lower percentage of Black and multi-racial students report the school is welcoming and safe compared to White and Asian students.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A lower percentage of LGB students report the school is welcoming and safe compared to non-LGB students.

FRPL Status Differences

A lower percentage of FRPL students report the school is welcoming and safe compared to non-FRPL students.
Disciplinary Equity

General Disciplinary Equity
- The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.

Personal Disciplinary Equity
- I know I would receive the same punishment as others for breaking a school rule.

*(See appendix for full list of items included)*

### Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>General Disciplinary Equity</th>
<th>Personal Disciplinary Equity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>NB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of non-binary students report general and personal disciplinary equity compared to male and female students.

### Race/Ethnicity Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>General Disciplinary Equity</th>
<th>Personal Disciplinary Equity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of Black students report disciplinary equity compared to white students.

### Sexual Orientation Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>General Disciplinary Equity</th>
<th>Personal Disciplinary Equity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-LGB</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>LGB 71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of LGB students report disciplinary equity compared to non-LGB students.

### School Level Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>General Disciplinary Equity</th>
<th>Personal Disciplinary Equity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elem</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JH</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>HS 75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of high school students report disciplinary equity compared to junior high and elementary students.
**Disciplinary Practices**

**Disciplinary Consistency**
- The school principal and teachers consistently enforce the rules.

**Disciplinary Strictness**
- The school rules are strictly enforced.

**Disciplinary Transparency**
- If a school rule is broken, students know what kind of process will follow.
- Students know what the rules are.

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**Sexual Orientation Differences**

A lower percentage of **LGB students** report positive disciplinary practices compared to non-LGB students.

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**Race/Ethnicity Differences**

A lower percentage of **White and Asian students** report positive disciplinary practices compared to Black and Latino students.

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**School Level Differences**

A lower percentage of **junior high and high school students** report positive disciplinary practices compared to elementary students.

---

**Gender Differences**

A lower percentage of **non-binary students** report positive disciplinary practices compared to male and female students.
## Responsiveness

- The school would take appropriate action if an incident was reported to them.
- Teachers make it clear that bullying is not allowed.
- If you tell a teacher that you’ve been bullied, the teacher will do something to help.
- Students at your school try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

### School Level Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Take Action</th>
<th>Teachers Clear Bullying Not Allowed</th>
<th>Teachers Help If Being Bullied</th>
<th>Students Stop Bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elem 84%</td>
<td>Elem 92%</td>
<td>Elem 85%</td>
<td>Elem 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JH 80%</td>
<td>JH 87%</td>
<td>JH 84%</td>
<td>JH 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS 75%</td>
<td>HS 82%</td>
<td>HS 84%</td>
<td>HS 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**High school students** report the lowest levels of agreement that the school takes action and that teachers are clear bullying is not allowed. **Junior high students** report the lowest levels of agreement that students stop bullying and lower levels of agreement that the school takes action and teachers are clear compared to elementary students.

### Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Take Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary 61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of **LGB students** report that students stop bullying compared to non-LGB students.

### Non-binary students

Report the lowest percentage of agreement that the school would take action, followed by **female students**.
Restorative Conflict Resolution

- Teachers and students work together to address behavior problems or conflicts.
- We practice ways to settle conflicts so that everyone can be okay with the result.
- When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to explain.

IEP Status Differences

A higher percentage of IEP students report restorative conflict resolution compared to non-IEP students.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A lower percentage of LGB students report restorative conflict resolution compared to non-LGB students.

School Level Differences

Junior high and high school students report lower levels of restorative conflict resolution compared to elementary students. High school students are the least likely to report that they practice ways to settle conflicts so that everyone can be okay with the result.
Of the 1,066 open-ended responses, many students commented about the safety and disciplinary environment (N=695). Students described unsafe experiences they’ve had, a lack of responsiveness from teachers and adults, and inequitable enforcement of the rules and distributions of consequences and rewards.

Safety (N=478)

Unsafe Experiences (N=331)

Of the 478 open-ended responses related to safety, 331 students described unsafe incidents that they had either personally experienced or witnessed in school. Descriptions of unsafe experiences included: verbal aggression: physical aggression and fights (N=110), verbal aggression (N=60), dating and sexual harassment (N=21), and substance abuse (N=12).

Physical Aggression and Fights (N=110)

110 students in open-ended comments described how physical aggression and fighting disrupted safety at their schools, saying “I feel like our school environment has got worse this year because of the amounts of fights that happen every day and every week. It makes for an environment that is not enjoyable to be in.” Several students noted the impact of physical fights, saying, “I have seen many fights break out between these people in the halls, and it makes me feel unsafe.”

“\textit{I feel like our school environment has got worse this year because of the amount of fights that happen every day and every week. It makes for an environment that is not enjoyable to be in.}”

Verbal Aggression (N=60)

Sixty of the comments describing unsafe experiences were about verbal aggression and inappropriate language. Students described the inappropriate language to be cursing or slurs. Students commented that the verbal aggression they experienced or heard was related to race (N=26), gender identity (N=25), and sexual orientation (N=23). Students reported hearing the inappropriate language from both students and teachers either generally or referenced personal events. Some of the comments included, “\textit{People make flippant racist and homophobic and sexist comments all the time}” and “\textit{There is still a big problem with people using gay as an insult.”}

Dating and Sexual Harassment (N=21)

Twenty-one students described unsafe experiences in the form of dating and sexual harassment, including unwanted advances, stalking, and jokes. Some comments about sexual harassment included observations about the lack of regulation, and accountability concerning sexual harassment policies and procedures in school. Students described their experiences, “\textit{my friend very narrowly missed being sexually harassed by a boy in my class, and I don’t think appropriate action was taken. That seems to serious to lecture him about, then LET IT GO?}”
Students also commented on the high frequency of jokes and comments about their bodies and commented on the gendered nature of the problematic behavior. Students described their experiences, “Boys at our school will yell inappropriate comments to girls about their bodies and appearances.” and “I feel like the boys at school are not respectful to girls. Often, I hear sexist jokes or boys "rating" girls. Sometimes these comments are directed towards girls, over times not. Nonetheless, they are still unacceptable.”

Substance Abuse (N=12)

Twelve students described unsafe experiences related to substances (e.g. vape, cigarettes, “drugs”) at school. Students also expressed discomfort from being around other students who are under the influence of substances. Students described their experiences, saying, “sometimes when I go to the bathroom I see other students vaping and it makes me feel uncomfortable to go into the bathroom.”

One student pointed out how drug use is inequitably punished, saying “Drug use is punished differently by race. I'm white but I know that black kids get harsher punishments than white students if they use drugs. White athletes especially get away with drug use.”

Disciplinary Environment (N=217)

Out of the open-ended comments about disciplinary practices in school (N=217), the majority (N=100) described unresponsive discipline. Students perceived a lack of response or non-existence of discipline in instances where they feel something should have been done. Some students (N=61) perceived the disciplinary practices in school to be inconsistent and inequitable while others thought discipline was too lenient (N=24). In contrast, some students described some discipline to be harsh or over-reactions (N=21).

Unresponsive (N=100)

100 students described the disciplinary actions in their schools to be unresponsive. Comments were categorized as unresponsive when students perceived school staff as ignoring or not addressing bullying or other incidents. These comments are either about events students witnessed or students comment that they or others reported issues but that nothing had been done to help. Students described the lack of intervention by school staff as bystanders and authorities, saying, “teachers need to help students that are being bullied and need to step in when they see something like bulling. I am still being bullied and my parents talk to the school staff but nothing’s happening. I was threatened to be jumped and beaten up multiple times and I don’t feel that I feel safe in this school. It would be nice if something could be done.” And, “when there is a problem no one talks about it or they try to handle it [themselves] because they think that the school is going to blow them off.”

“When there is a problem no one talks about it or they try to handle it [themselves] because they think that the school is going to blow them off”

Lack of Disciplinary Equity and Consistency (N=61)

Sixty-one students in open-ended comments described inequitable enforcement of the rules and distributions of consequences and rewards. Students attributed the inequity in responses to school staff preferences, biases, and the race or gender of students. Students described their perceptions, saying, “Rules are enforced
unfairly in the school and between other schools. Everyone should have to follow the same rules and student handbook. people who are in sports and those who aren’t also needed to be treated the same. It is not fair that they are held at a higher standard when they have much more to lose than others.” and “The teachers are very sexist if a boy does something wrong they get in trouble but when a girl does something they are fine it is ridiculous and I’m sick of it. You get no chance to explain yourself and if you try you will probably get a right up”

Lack of Disciplinary Strictness (N=24)

Twenty-four students described the disciplinary action in their school to be too forgiving. Students described peers who they felt should have received more punishment than was given for their behavior. Comments included both general observations and personal experiences. Examples of this include, “I once reported someone for sexual harassment and the school made them say sorry and then that was it” and “It’s not enough the punishments students get away with things a lot such as skipping class fighting and most of them are people who do these things repeatedly and can yell, skip.”

Disciplinary Harshness (N=21)

Twenty-one of the 217 students who commented on disciplinary practices in their school described how they perceive the disciplinary action in their school to be harsh or overreactions. Students described instances where they felt the school or teachers reacted beyond what was necessary for the scenarios. For example, “a few staff members insisted that some students go to class, and after some verbal resistance, they called the police. It seemed excessive and ultimately counterproductive to their purpose (punishment instead of fixing the problem).” A common place where students felt the rules were harshly enforced is in the lunchroom. Comments include, “The lunch ladies have said they were going to beat a kid and the one lunch lady was giving out write ups for no reason she gave out 10 write ups.”

Fair and Consistent (N=6)

Only six students described positive perceptions of disciplinary practices, adequate responses to incidents, and general feelings of safety in their schools, saying, “I think that the school has gotten better at enforcing the rules about school, school activities, and any other event that involves the school.”

Areas for Improvement (N=35)

Many students made general comments about the need to modify disciplinary policies such as, “I think schools need to heavily reconsider how they punish students” and “Not very inclusive, needs to reform the way that they handle students that misbehave” and “The punishment protocol could be improved but other than that it is good.” However, other students felt that more work needs to be done than simply addressing surface level behavioral issues. Students pointed out that only dealing with behavioral issues often ignores the root cause behind students exhibiting “bad” behavior, such as, “Teachers need to work with parents on how to best help and educate their students not tattle—tale when a student doesn’t do something they ask for. This isn’t necessarily the teachers fault, they’re in a system that promotes surface level behavioral discipline, but we can definitely improve on training them to handle problems effectively instead of labeling kids as "bad kids" and thereby isolating them from the rest of their peers and making them a bigger target for hurtful behaviors.”
A number of students also commented on improvements related to school safety, such as, “The front doors to the school are always locked, but the side door is open in the morning for kids doing morning activities such as Jazz Band. I think this is dangerous because a school shooter could get in then, and wait until school starts to attack a lot of kids” and “This school cares more about security theater than actual security. They do many things to make it seem as though they’re protecting us, but they don’t actually increase security at all. For example, the school now makes you present an I.D. to a security camera before they let you in. Most school shooters are students who go to that school, who have an I.D. Plus, anyone can just let somebody in.” Another student wrote, “We don't do school shooting "practices" and I feel like we should even if the principal, some staff, and some students don't think a shooter could come in our classroom or school we should still have a drill because it can happen to any school, even if they think our school is safe it could easily be broken into so I think we still need that practice. It makes me feel weird that we don't do them because if it does happen then we won't be prepared and won't know what to do. This past year I have noticed that we haven't done drills other than one or two fire drills. We won't be prepared if something does happen.”
Social and Emotional Learning

This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of social and emotional learning. Also included are the open-ended comments related to social and emotional learning provided by students at the end of the survey.

Key Findings

Overall, 90% of students report diversity, inclusiveness, and equity and important at their school and 77% report that students in this school respect each other’s’ differences. However, there are significant differences by gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ELL status, and ability status in school diversity values.

Students are more likely to report being personally empathetic (95%) than feeling other students are empathetic (67%).

65% of students report that they talk about ways to help them control their emotions. This percentage is lower for high school and junior high students, LGB students, non-binary students but higher for ELL and IEP students.

On average, 79% of students report having a growth mindset.

Students (N=167) commented on their school’s diversity values including race (N=30), gender (N=31) and sexuality (N=32) diversity. Students expressed concerns over consistent demonstration of diversity values, such as, “Teachers and students are not properly educated on LGBTQ issues and how to interact with said students especially on the topic of Gender - very few teachers ask for pronouns and/or preferred names.”

Students (N=88) described a lack of attention, resources, outreach, visibility of existing resources, and capacity of school staff to meet mental health needs. Students were unsure of how to seek help or someone to talk to for mental health issues, saying “if teachers were better trained on mental health, it would greatly improve my school.”

Black (70%) and Latino (69%) students report lower levels of growth mindset compared to Asian (88%) and White (84%) students.

ELL and IEP students (62%) report lower levels of growth mindset compared to non-ELL and non-IEP students (81%).
Diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at my school.
Students in this school respect each other’s differences.
Adults in this school respect each other’s differences.
Adults in this school respect student identities.

A lower percentage of Black students report school diversity values compared to White and Asian students. A lower percentage of Latino students report students respect differences compared to Asian students.

A lower percentage of IEP students report DEI is important at their school and this disparity has increased over time.

A lower percentage of LGB students report students respect differences compared to non-LGB students.
Personal Diversity Values

- I am accepting of those different than myself.
- It is wrong to discriminate against someone because of their race, appearance, culture, religion, or on some other basis.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Accepting of Differences</th>
<th>Wrong to Discriminate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 98%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 95%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 97%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of Black and Latino students report personal diversity values compared to White and Asian students.

Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Accepting of Differences</th>
<th>Wrong to Discriminate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 95%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 97%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB 94%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of male students report personal diversity values compared to female students.

ELL Status Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Accepting of Differences</th>
<th>Wrong to Discriminate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-ELL</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of ELL students report personal diversity values compared to non-ELL students.

FRPL Status Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Accepting of Differences</th>
<th>Wrong to Discriminate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-FRPL</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRPL</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lower percentage of FRPL students report personal diversity values compared to non-FRPL students.
Empathy

General Empathy
- Students in my school act in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of other students.
- We talk about the importance of understanding our feelings and the feelings of others.

Personal Empathy
- It is important to help other people.
- I care about other people’s feelings.

Gender Differences

A lower percentage of non-binary and female students report students are empathetic but they report a higher percentage of personal empathy than male students.

ELL Status Differences

A lower percentage of non-ELL students report students are empathetic but they report a higher percentage of personal empathy than ELL students.

School Level Differences

A lower percentage of junior high and high school students report students are empathetic compared to elementary students and there are no differences in personal empathy.

FRPL Status Differences

A lower percentage of non-IEP students report students are empathetic but they report a higher percentage of personal empathy than IEP students.
Perspective-Taking, Self-Management and Teamwork

Perspective-Taking
- We talk about how our actions affect others.
- We work on listening to others so that we really understand what they are trying to say.

Self-Management
- We talk about ways to help us control our emotions.

Teamwork Relationship Skills
- I feel that I am better at working with other people because of what I learned in my school.

School Level Differences

A lower percentage of junior high and high school students report perspective-taking and self-management compared to elementary students.

Sexual Orientation Differences

A lower percentage of LGB students report perspective-taking, self-management, and teamwork skills compared to non-LGB students.

IEP Status Differences

A lower percentage of non-IEP students report perspective-taking, self-management, and teamwork skills compared to IEP students.

Gender Differences

A lower percentage of female and non-binary students report perspective-taking, self-management, and teamwork skills compared to male students.
Challenging myself won’t make me any smarter.
There are some things I am not capable of learning.
If I am not naturally smart in a subject, I will never do well in it.

(Items reverse coded so higher value indicates greater growth mindset)

A lower percentage of **LGB students** report growth mindset compared to non-LGB students.

A lower percentage of **Black and Latino students** report growth mindset compared to White and Asian students.

A lower percentage of **ELL students** report growth mindset compared to non-ELL students.

A lower percentage of **IEP students** report growth mindset compared to non-IEP students.
Of the 1,066 open-ended survey comments, students (N=200) described concepts related to social and emotional learning, including their school’s diversity values, personal social values, and mental health.

**School Diversity Values (N=167)**

More than one hundred students shared their perceptions of the school’s valuation of diversity. Students described the school environment related to many types of diversity, including gender and sexuality diversity, race, religion, and ability. The majority of these comments expressed concerns over the school’s lack of diversity values surrounding the LGBTQ+ community and students of color. Many students reported the manifestation of a lack of diversity values in experiences of hearing inappropriate language and slurs directed toward minority students. For example, one student wrote, “I often hear people call others gay (intending for it to be an insult). I also hear people calling other people inappropriate names because of their skin color.”

Students also made comments about insufficient demonstration of support for gender (N=31) and sexually (N=32) diverse students. More specifically, students described the impact that teachers can have on inclusivity regarding students who identify as LGBTQ+. For example, one student wrote, “Teachers and students are not properly educated on LGBTQ issues and how to interact with said students especially on the topic of Gender - very few teachers ask for pronouns and/or preferred names, Pronouns are especially important as the wrong pronouns can make some people very dysphoric.”

Additionally, many students commented on deficient diversity values regarding race (N=30), such as, “I feel like different races get treated different” and “I also think that we shouldn’t just be talking about black people during February, but also think about other races during other times too. Also more black or other raced teachers at this school would be nice” and “The white people in this school are easily chosen over colored people. I and my friends (we’re black) have been told to be quiet while so ironically the white people were clearly talking and nothing was said to them.” Several students also described the lack of diversity represented in the teaching staff, such as, “Most of the teachers are white women so I would like to see some more difference in the people teaching” and “Teachers and the administration could make more of an effort to make sure everyone feels represented...” Another student wrote, “There isn’t a lot of diversity among the teachers and I feel like the school could do better about hiring people not based off of their color but base them off of their work and if they are a good teacher.”

A few students felt that the school’s lack of diversity values contributed to fewer opportunities for students, saying, “Many kids in minority groups (race, sex, orientation, etc.) have told me they feel disillusioned about trying out for things like school plays that have a mostly-white and mostly-heterosexual background story and mostly-white cast (like Matilda) because they’re afraid that they won’t be accepted socially and they won’t be able to join because of their status in the first place.” This lack of opportunity could contribute to several other students commenting about how diversity is publicized as a value of the school, but not practiced, saying, “If we as a school [High School] are claiming to be a diverse, hate-free school full of tolerance and happy anti-discrimination rainbows, hugs, kisses, etc. then we need to make non-majority kids feel like they’re actually
accepted enough to try out new classes and activities that might not seem to welcome them both by the script and by the other people involved. Not to mention it feels like while most individual teachers are hate-free, the teachers at the top of the chain (those in charge of the school) don’t seem to give a shit and just wanna push out this lie of an anti-discrimination message so they look good and can advance their agenda. “

Despite the many comments describing a lack of diversity values, some students (N=58) reported positive diversity values embodied by their schools. Students described these values as an emphasis on the equitable treatment of students, fostering an inclusive school environment, and encouraging respectful behavior. For example, one student wrote, “Everyone in my school is really welcoming and would be happy to be anyone’s friend, no matter how they look, their gender or what they identify as, or their religion. The adults are also really kind and made sure there is no bullying going on in the school and make sure that students understand that their actions will have consequences.”

“Everyone in my school is really welcoming and would be happy to be anyone’s friend, no matter how they look, their gender or what they identify as, or their religion. The adults are also really kind and made sure there is no bullying going on in the school and make sure that students understand that their actions will have consequences.”

Personal Social Values (N=95)

Ninety-five students shared their personal perspectives and values related to social and emotional skills.

Pro social (N=61)

Sixty-one students described pro-social mindsets, such as valuing open-mindedness, empathy, respect, acceptance, cooperation, and collaboration. For example, “I just want to let people know that schools should be caring and welcoming for anybody. Also with students should be respectful to others” and “Every student in this school should be mindful and caring of all other students no matter who they are or if they know them, it’s just common respect and courtesy” and “Gender and gender identity should be addressed more often as well as diversity in religions, race, and sexuality. Students should feel safe to express themselves without the fear of being harassed by other students out of lack of information.”

School Overreach (N=32)

In contrast, thirty-two students shared views that devalued social and emotional skills and understanding and acceptance of diversity and felt that school was not an appropriate setting to determine social values or teach social skills. For example, “Equity and diversity should not be goals as they are both completely neutral. As long as the rules are equal then the district should let the cards fall as they may, because that is what’s fair” and “Some teachers don’t really talk about equality and equity cause their class isn’t meant for it such as maths and science classes” and “I get how there needs to be a diversity speaker all the time, but it seems to the point where the school just cares about making everyone feeling included and it sometimes goes too far.”

Growth Mindset (N=13)

In a few comments, students expressed their mindset at school. Some students described having a growth mindset (N=9), or having an attitude of grit and knowing that failure is not final, having resiliency in the face of academic and social challenges, feeling like they have the ability to succeed in school. Other students (N=4) expressed a fixed mindset, or an unwillingness to meet challenges with an open mind, not wishing to change.
Mental Health (N=88)

Students also commented, both explicitly and implicitly, about mental health. While the majority of these comments advocated for more mental health resources from schools, a few students (N=10) mentioned suicide in their comments. Of the 10 students, 8 mentioned suicide generally, describing dealing with the loss of a classmate due to suicide or how marginalized students may be at higher risk than their peers. Two students included personal statements about suicide.

The majority of these comments emphasized a general need to focus more on mental health in schools, such as, “We should focus more on Mental Health issues since I know so many people deal with it but get barely any help from the school” and “…I understand that it is the end of the tri and teachers are trying to get in grades and get all of their work done but I strongly believe that the mental health of the student body is more important than getting every last thing done for the trimester…” One student also commented, “I feel like this school really does not take into accommodation the students having hard times at home or have to help their family financially or have mental health issues. Most teachers see these kids as “lazy” and not wanting to work. I know because I am one of these students. I’m currently failing school and I want to do better and pass but most days I have no motivation to get out of bed.”

“I feel like this school really does not take into accommodation the students having hard times at home or have to help their family financially or have mental health issues. Most teachers see these kids as “lazy” and not wanting to work. I know because I am one of these students. I’m currently failing school and I want to do better and pass but most days I have no motivation to get out of bed.”

Other students described experiences in which teachers could have handled mental health situations better, such as, “Most of the teachers are understanding, but most do not necessarily care if you are having a bad day. If I had a panic attack, often I am forced to still present that day. I think if teachers were better trained on mental health, it would greatly improve my school” and “Teachers should be more understanding about mental health and learning disabilities. When I asked my math teacher if I can have more time because I’m in the middle of getting a 504 plan she rolled her eyes and made it seem like I was making an excuse” and “Well, something that I have noticed is that teachers seem to care more about the fact that students get their work done in their class rather than making sure they are okay mentally. I have had many instances where I have either heard or been told by a teacher to ‘just get it done.’”

Several students felt that their schools lacked mental health resources and expressed not having anyone to talk to when dealing with a problem or a mental health issue. For example, one student wrote, “I feel stuck sometimes when I don’t know how to deal with some problems and I feel like I don’t know who to talk to, besides from my friends, who can’t give much help other than advice.” However, other students felt that the issue was not a lack of resources but a lack of communication by the school. One student said, “I think that when students are so emotional they should always have someone to talk to. Our school does a good job of saying that students have someone to talk to, but I believe our school could make that known more often. Students need someone to talk to a lot, especially people in my class. It would be helpful if students could be more aware of the fact that teachers/counselors are there for them if they need it, such as if they are going through trauma or a hard time.”

Areas for Improvement (N=14)

These comments mostly reported a need for more mental health resources in schools, such as, “We should focus more on Mental Health issues since I know so many people deal with it but get barely any help from the school” and “I think the schools should focus more on mental health”
Unmet Need (N=126)

Open-ended comments included 126 students describing feelings of perceiving the school as not providing fully for individual students or the overall student body. Within this category students also commented on a lack of support (N=92) from the school. This lack of support is broken down between a lack of academic (N=19) and emotional support (N=35).

Lack of Support (N=92)

Lack of support is specifically relating to the school environment, meaning that students feel as though their schools did not provide emotional or academic resources for them. A lack of emotional support was commented on thirty-five times by students. Comments included, “I believe the school should have more options to deal with bullying/harassment.” Nineteen of the open-ended student comments described a lack of academic support from their schools as a need that was not being met. This included descriptions of students feeling like the school did provide fully for them in an academic sense. Comments included: “we need more teachers/ para educators” and “Yes I would like to say we need Better physical Education and better equipment”
**Conclusion**

A growing body of research demonstrates that a positive, safe, and supportive school environment is essential for students to achieve to their full potential and thrive in their social, mental, and emotional development. Schools can create a positive school environment through a coordinated, purposeful effort.

The State of Iowa is one of several states to include school climate as one of the indicators of school quality in their state-specific plans as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Using the Conditions of Learning Survey, school climate is now included in the ESSA Accountability Index for each school.

Given the extensive information obtained from the Student Experiences of School Climate Survey over the past four years, the Iowa City Community School District is well-positioned to be a leader in the State of Iowa in attending to student experiences of school climate.

Below are several of the best practices guidelines identified by numerous organizations and researchers including the U.S. Department of Education, the National School Climate Research Center, American Institutes for Research’s Safe and Supportive Learning, CASEL, and the Learning Policy Institute. These recommendations also echo many of the suggestions provided in the IS3 Toolkits developed by the Iowa Department of Education to support schools in improving school climate.

1. Ensure that district decision makers understand the value of school climate and that efforts taken to improve school climate must include district-level support.

2. Ensure that there are consistent processes in place to collect school climate data using a valid and reliable survey instrument that includes items on a range of school climate topics.

3. Ensure that school climate indicators are integrated into and aligned with existing district and school goals, and include realistic goals for improvement.

4. Create a school-based climate team composed of students, teachers, administrators, other staff, and parents that meets regularly to review school climate data, identifies key areas of focus, and plans for address school climate issues.

5. Identify current activities and programs that address school climate, and determine additional needs (e.g., better implementation of existing programs or selection of new or alternative initiatives).

6. Develop a plan for evaluation and monitoring that includes data on implementation and outcomes.

A1. Glossary

The following acronyms and terms are used throughout the report.

**ELL:** English Language Learner

**FRPL:** Free or Reduced Price Lunch

**ICCSD:** Iowa City Community School District

**IEP:** Individualized Education Program. This is an indicator of disability status.

**LGB:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual or Asexual

**Non-Binary:** Transgender Male, Transgender Female, Genderqueer, or Gender-Nonconforming

**Race:** White, Asian, Latino, Black, Multi (selected more than one racial group), or other

**Parental Education:** High School or Less, College (some college or college degree), or Post College (some post-graduate or graduate or professional degree)

**Socially Marginalized Identity:** This term includes students from groups who experience disadvantage as a result of the way society functions. This includes Black and Latino students, non-binary students, LGB students, ELL students, IEP students, and students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

**Bullying:** Bullying is the repeated use of one’s strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person on purpose. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. It is not bullying when two students who are about the same in strength or popularity have a fight or argument.

- **Physical bullying:** Repeatedly hitting, kicking, or shoving someone weaker on purpose.
- **Verbal bullying:** Repeatedly teasing, putting down, or insulting someone on purpose.
- **Social bullying:** Getting others repeatedly to ignore or leave someone out on purpose.
- **Cyber bullying:** Using technology (cell phone, email, Internet, etc.) to tease or put down someone.
A2. Survey Administration

In field: February 3 – February 28

A link to complete the survey online was sent to all 5th-12th grade ICCSD student e-mail accounts on February 3, followed by two reminder e-mails later in the month.

An IP address authenticator was utilized to ensure the survey was only accessed through an ICCSD internet connection.

Survey administrators were provided the script below along with instructions to read aloud to students before taking the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but it is very important that you provide an honest answer to each question. It is important that every student has the opportunity to provide all the information contained in this survey.

However, if you find questions in this survey that you would prefer not to answer or cannot answer truthfully, please leave them blank. In all other instances, please select the one response that comes closest to your honest answer to each question. Your answers should be based on what you think is really true, not what you think is the way it should be or what you think is the most pleasing answer.

Your responses are confidential and your answers will be combined with the answers from all the other students. This combination of answers will be used to help design and implement programs that will benefit you and other students in Iowa City schools. Please relax and thank you for participating in this survey.

Parents were notified of the survey via Blackboard Connect. As with other surveys administered by the District, parents were provided a link to access the survey and given the opportunity to opt their student out of participating.

Survey Accessibility

The Student Experiences of School Climate Survey was administered via Qualtrics. For accessibility and readability purposes of the survey, definitions were provided in a “hover-over-text” function for words that were above a 5th grade reading level. In addition, all survey questions and response categories had an audio file embedded, so students had the option to listen to the survey questions and responses read aloud.
A3. Survey Response Rates

Number of respondents (N) = 6,835  Overall response rate of 78%

All ICCSD students in grades 5-12 were invited to take the 2020 Student Experiences of School Climate survey in February 2020. The figures below show the survey response rate by school level and by race.

By School Level:

Response Rates

Response rates are calculated by comparing the number of ICCSD students in 5th to 12th grade to the number of people who completed the survey.

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\# \text{ Survey Respondents}}{\# \text{ Total Students}}$$

Elementary schools have the highest response rate with 91% of 5th and 6th graders completing the survey. High schools have the lowest response rate with 70% of 9th-12th graders completing the survey.

Asian students have the highest response rate at 84%. Black students* have the lowest response rate at 59%. White students and Latinx students have similar response rates (68% and 69% respectively).

Further details about the survey’s administration and sample can be found in the Appendix.

By Race:

Response Rate Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>(N=2,379)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>(N=5,203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>(N=6,562)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>(N=6,771)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2016 sample only included 6th, 8th, and 11th graders. Starting in 2017, 5th through 12th graders were invited to take the survey.

*Survey respondents were allowed to select more than one racial identity. Eight percent of the sample selected more than one racial identity and 44% of these students selected Black/African American as one of their identities.
A4. Survey Representativeness

By School Type:

Elementary Schools  29% of survey respondents 25% of district population
Junior High Schools  44% of survey respondents 50% of district population
High Schools

By Race:

White Students  52.8% of survey respondents 60.8% of district population
Black Students  16.7% of survey respondents 22% of district population
Latinx Students  8.5% of survey respondents 9.7% of district population
Asian Students  6.7% of survey respondents 6.3% of district population

15% of survey respondents [1,042 students] identified as multi-racial, did not respond, or selected “other.”

Survey Sample Representativeness

The demographics of the student survey respondents is similar to that of the Iowa City Community School District overall (i.e. the sample is representative).

High school students represent 44% of the survey respondents but 50% of the district student population. Thus, high school students are slightly underrepresented in the survey sample. On the other hand, elementary school students and junior high schools students are slightly over represented in the survey sample. On the other hand, elementary school students and junior high schools students are slightly underrepresented in the survey sample. Thus, high school students represent 44% of the survey respondents but 50% of the district student population. Thus, high school students are slightly underrepresented in the survey sample. On the other hand, elementary school students and junior high schools students are slightly over represented in the survey sample. On the other hand, elementary school students and junior high schools students are slightly over represented in the survey sample.

White, Black, and Latinx, students all appear to be underrepresented in the survey sample, however, this is due in part to survey respondents selecting multiple racial identities and/or selecting “other” race.

Further details about the survey’s administration and sample can be found in the Appendix.
A5. Survey Topics and Items

In order to measure constructs with a high degree of validity, in many cases this report uses composite measures. Composite measures combine the student responses to similar survey items and provide an overall average. Topics measures with composites are noted below.

**Teacher and Adult Relationships**

**Academic Support (3 item composite)**
- My teachers care about my learning.
- Teachers encourage me to work hard.
- Teachers encourage me to ask questions and participate in discussions.

**Equitable Treatment (4 item composite)**
- Teachers treat students fairly.
- Teachers give everyone the same opportunities in the classroom.
- Most of my teachers treat me the same as other students.
- Adults in this school respect student identities.

**General Teacher Concern (3 item composite)**
- Teachers listen to students when they have problems.
- Students are supported by the teachers.
- Teachers often let students know when they are being good.

**Personal Teacher Concern (3 item composite)**
- Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say.
- If I have problems in a class, I am comfortable talking to most of my teachers about it.
- Most of my teachers seem to understand where I am coming from.

**General Teacher Respect**
- Teachers at my school treat students with respect.

**Personal Teacher Respect**
- I respect my teachers.

**Teacher Trust**
- I trust my teachers.

**Student Voice (2 item composite)**
- I have chances to help decide what is best for the class or school.
- My teachers ask me what I want to learn about.

**Mentors**
- Is there at least one adult in your school that you trust and go to for advice? (used to identify the presence of a “mentor”)
- Who is this person (or people)? (used to identify the role of the mentor i.e. teacher, other adult, community member)
- Are any of these people (this person) the same race as you? (used to identify race-matched mentors)
- Are any of these people (this person) the same gender as you? (used to identify gender-matched mentors)

**Adult Support**
- The school staff supports me emotionally.
- The school staff supports me academically.
- The school staff supports me socially.

**Hurtful Comments from Teachers**
- How often have you heard hurtful comments about race from teachers?
- How often have you heard hurtful comments about sexual orientation from teachers?
- How often have you heard hurtful comments about gender from teachers?
- How often have you heard hurtful comments about immigrants from teachers?
- How often have you heard hurtful comments about religious identity from teachers?

**Social and Peer Relationships**

**School Attachment (4 item composite)**
- I feel like I belong in my school.
- I fit in with students at this school.
• I feel close to people at this school.
• This school is welcoming and safe.

General Peer Relationships (3 item composite)
• Students have friends at school they can trust and talk to if they have problems.
• Students have friends at school to eat lunch with.
• Students try to make new students feel welcome in the school.

Personal Peer Relationships (3 item composite)
• I have a friend who really cares about me.
• I have a friend who I talk to about my problems.
• I have a friend who helps me when I am having a hard time.

School Bullying
• At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...
  o Race or ethnicity
  o National origin or immigrant status
  o Gender or Gender Identity
  o sexual orientation
  o Disability
  o Poverty, income level, or social class
  o Appearance
  o Religion
  o Other
  o None

Personal Bullying
• I have been physically bullied.
• I have been verbally bullied.
• I have been socially bullied.
• I have been cyber-bullied.

Hurtful Comments from Students
• How often have you heard hurtful comments about race from students?
• How often have you heard hurtful comments about sexual orientation from students?
• How often have you heard hurtful comments about gender from students?
• How often have you heard hurtful comments about immigrants from students?
• How often have you heard hurtful comments about religious identity from students?

Inclusive Classrooms

Inclusive Discussions (4 item composite)
• There are opportunities in class to talk about race.
• There are opportunities in class to talk about gender and gender identity.
• There are opportunities in class to talk about sexual orientation.
• There are opportunities in class to talk about differences in learning or physical abilities.

Inclusive Content (3 item composite)
• I see people of many races, cultures, and backgrounds represented in my classes and homework.
• My teachers present positive images of people from a variety of races, cultures, and backgrounds.
• My teachers use examples of races, cultures, and backgrounds that are like mine.

Classroom Membership (5 item composite)
• I see myself as a valuable member of the classroom.
• I feel that my contributions are valued in the classroom.
• I feel unable to share my views in class because of my race.
• I feel unable to share my views in class because of my gender identity.
• You are treated unfairly.

Safety and Disciplinary Environment

Safety (4 item composite)
• How often do you feel safe traveling between home and school?
• How often do you feel safe outside around the school?
• How often do you feel safe in the hallways and bathrooms?
• How often do you feel safe in your classes?

General Disciplinary Equity (2 item composite)
• The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.
• Students are treated fairly when they break school rules.
Personal Disciplinary Equity
- I know I would receive the same punishment as others for breaking a school rule.

Disciplinary Consistency
- The school principal and teachers consistently enforce.

Disciplinary Strictness
- The school rules are strictly enforced.

Disciplinary Transparency (2 item composite)
- If a school rule is broken, students know what kind of process will follow.
- Students know what the rules are.

Responsiveness
- The school would take appropriate action if an incident was reported to them.
- Teachers make it clear that bullying is not allowed.
- If you tell a teacher that you’ve been bullied, the teacher will do something to help.
- Students at your school try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

Restorative Conflict Resolution
- Teachers and students work together to address behavior problems or conflicts.
- We practice ways to settle conflicts so that everyone can be okay with the result.
- When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to explain.

Social and Emotional Learning/Skills

School Diversity Values (4 item composite)
- Diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at my school.
- Students in this school respect each other’s differences.
- Adults in this school respect each other’s differences.
- Adults in this school respect student identities.

Personal Diversity Values (2 item composite)
- I am accepting of those different than myself.
- It is wrong to discriminate against someone because of their race, appearance, culture, religion, or on some other basis.

General Empathy
- Students in my school act in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of other students.
- We talk about the importance of understanding our feelings and the feelings of others.

Personal Empathy
- It is important to help other people.
- I care about other people’s feelings.

Perspective-Taking (2 item composite)
- We talk about how our actions affect others.
- We work on listening to others so that we really understand what they are trying to say.

Self-Management
- We talk about ways to help us control our emotions.

Teamwork Relationships Skills
- I feel that I am better at working with other people because of what I learned in my school.

Growth Mindset (3 item composite, items reverse coded so higher value indicates greater growth mindset)
- Challenging myself won’t make me any smarter.
- There are some things I am not capable of learning.
- If I am not naturally smart in a subject, I will never do well in it.
A6. About the Survey Analysis

This page of the appendix provides details on several aspects of the analysis of the survey data that is presented in the report.

**Focus on Significant Group Differences**

This report details average levels (mean) of student reports of perceptions and experiences in school. The report highlights differences or disparities in group averages only when they are statistically significant differences. When the word “significant” is used in this report, it indicates statistically significant differences between two groups.

To identify which mean differences are meaningful, two criteria can be used: (1) statistical significance and/or (2) substantive magnitude of the difference. The statistical significance criteria assesses the likelihood that the difference is due to chance. Two-sided t-tests are used to statistically test the mean differences between two groups. To test mean differences for comparisons with more than two groups, we estimate one-way analysis of variance with post-estimation pairwise comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer method to account for multiple comparisons and unequal group sizes.

All statistical calculations contain some uncertainty. Uncertainty is affected by the number of students answering the question, the variation in student answers, and characteristics of the survey itself. Therefore, sometimes a difference may seem large, but it is not statistically significant because of one of these factors.

**Use of Composite Measures**

In several instances, similar survey items were used together to create composite measures to best capture an underlying concept or idea. For example, several survey items that measure “Academic Support” i.e. *My teachers care about my learning. Teachers encourage me to work hard. Teachers encourage me to ask questions and participate in discussions. In my classes, my teachers notice my hard work.* Confirmatory factor analysis was used to identify if the sets of survey items capture each concept fit together statistically-speaking. Criteria used included the Eigenvalue, factor loadings, and Cronbach alpha scores to determine if a set of items should be combined to create a composite measure. This procedure of combining multiple items is recommended practice for surveys of school climate because using multiple items to capture an underlying idea or concept provides a better measure than a single survey item which is more prone to random variation.

**Assessing Trends Over Time**

When possible, comparisons are provided between survey responses in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. However, it is important to keep in mind two important factors:

1. The sample of students taking the survey has changed over time. The student survey sample in 2016 was only 6th, 8th, and 11th grade students whereas the student survey sample in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 included all 5th to 12th grade students.
2. Some survey items have been changed over time. These changes may involve wording changes or the use of different survey items altogether. These changes have been noted on the relevant pages of the report.

**Linked Administrative Data**

Along with self-reported demographics (grade level, school, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and level of parent education), in 2020, student survey responses were linked to ICCSD administrative data (FRPL, IEP, and ELL) to allow for analysis of differences in student experiences across these categories.

**Survey Sample & Response Rates**

Response rates are calculated by comparing the number of people in a population (i.e. all 5th to 12th grade ICCSD students) to the number of people who completed the survey. Examining the response rates by demographic groups
provides insight into the differences in survey participation of groups within the overall surveyed sample. The percentages shown in this report are calculated using the full sample (including respondents with missing information).

**Bullying/Harassment Text Responses**

In a series of survey items, students were asked to report whether students at their school harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their race or ethnicity, national origin/immigrant status, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, poverty/income/social class, appearance, religion, or some other reason. If they selected some other reason, they could provide a text response to describe it. Below is a description of the information obtained in the “other” reason.

There were 831 respondents who selected “other” as the basis on which students at their school were bullied or harassed. Of these 831 respondents, 455 also provided text descriptions, 409 of which were valid response. These text responses were categorized into descriptive categories i.e. types, or bases on which, harassment or bullying occurred (94 were solely categorized into the reasons provided in the survey and 315 were categorized into at least one new bullying category). These responses varied from describing additional types bullying or bases on which students were bullied or harassed (athletic ability, academic performance, age, language/accent, family background, personality traits or interests) to more general descriptions of bullying or harassment behavior (social or anti-social behavior, social relationships), and also included descriptions of how or why bullying occurred in their school (bullies being insecure, online forms of harassment, etc.).

**Open-Ended Response Analysis for Additional Experiences and Information**

The final question on the survey is open-ended. Students were given the option to provide written responses about their experiences in school in response to a prompt, asking, “Do you have any other information you would like to share about your experiences in your school or your school climate?” Of the 6,835 total survey respondents, 1,066 students (16% of total sample) provided responses which contained codable content. Responses were omitted if contents were not substantive. For example, “I have nothing to add” and random text entries, such as “ugithiuiwui4ui5ui.”

The open-ended responses to the final survey question were analyzed qualitatively. Responses were categorized according to the main topics of Student Experiences of School Climate Survey utilized throughout this report. Within these main topics, ideas and themes were categorized based on the substantive content of comments.

Two coders used a descriptive codebook which provided definitions of each topic to categorize the content from the student comments. Each coder worked independently, and each comment was coded separately prior to being compared for consistency. Any themes that did not reach a threshold of 70% agreement between coders were refined until at least 80% agreement was reached.

Responses to the open-ended question ranged from a short phrase to several sentences. Most responses included content that was related to more than one topic. Responses were categorized into all applicable topics. For example, in the response below, several substantive topics are present, including school attachment, safety, and inclusive classrooms. “Overall, the school climate is safe and welcoming. However, sometimes I feel uncomfortable expressing my views in class due to my political views.”

Table 1 below displays the number of comments categorized into all applicable themes. When reading the qualitative results, it is important to keep the context of the overall qualitative results and quantitative results. Meaning, qualitative data is **representative**, but not **generalizable**. Themes with lower frequencies are less representative of overall results, and some themes with higher frequencies are contrary to the overall generalizable quantitative survey results. For example, Table 1 shows that 632 students shared negative comments about teachers, but the larger context of the survey (that 6,835 students completed) showed that 95% of students report “I respect my teachers.” Student comments about negative relationships with teachers are representative of their experiences, but note the qualitative sample size and quantitative results when interpreting the significance of these findings in relation to the overall district experiences.
### Table 1. Qualitative Themes and Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Coded Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social and Peer Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Peer Relationships</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Experiences and General Belonging</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Peer Relationships</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher and Adult Relationships</strong></td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities that Deter Relationship</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities that Facilitate Relationships</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student voice</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Connection and Support</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety and Disciplinary Environment</strong></td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Environment</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive Classrooms</strong></td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and assignments</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student impact</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social and Emotional Learning</strong></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Values</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each bar in Figure 1 shows the interaction of content across topics. Along with showing the total number of double-coded comments within in each topic, the segments within the bars show the intersecting topics of comments within the theme. For example, of the comments coded in the main topic of Social and Peer Relationships, 122 comments were also coded in Teacher and Adult relationship and 144 were also coded in Safety and Disciplinary Environment.

![Figure 1. Interaction of Cross-Coding Among Themes](image)
Qualitative Sample

Students who chose to leave a comment at the end of the survey (N=1,066) differed in some demographic categories, compared to the overall survey sample. Specifically, the qualitative sample had a higher proportion of student participation in the following demographic groups (percentage point difference from full survey sample): Non-Binary (2%), Female (3%), LGB (6%), Parent with More Than College Education (6%), Multi-racial (5%), Elementary School (16%), Non-ELL (1%), Non-FRPL (2%), and Non-IEP (1%).
A7. Survey Sample 2016-2020

Survey Sample Changes Over Time

See figures below for changes over time in survey sample composition.

By Parent Education Level

The survey asks students about their parent’s highest level of education. Categories are coded as High School or Less, College (some college or a college degree), and post college (some graduate education or a graduate or professional degree). These categories have remained consistent across all three years of the survey.

By School Type

In 2016, this survey was only administered to 6th, 8th, and 11th grade students. Since 2017, the survey has been administered to 5th through 12th grade students. While the survey sample was not changed from 2017 to 2018 and 2019, the composition of the sample did change. The most substantial change was the increase in the percentage of the sample that is from high schools. This is driven by response rates for high school students being higher in 2018 (72%) and 2019 (68%) than in 2017 (44%), so high school students represent a larger proportion of the sample in 2018 and 2019 compared to 2017, in which larger proportions of elementary and junior high school students made up the survey sample.
By Gender

In 2017, the survey began including non-binary as a gender option for students.

![Gender chart]

By Race

The race of students responding to this survey has remained consistent between 2016 and 2020.

![Race chart]

By Sexual Orientation

In 2017, the survey began asking students to indicate their sexual orientation.

![Sexual Orientation chart]
By Individualized Education Program (IEP) Status
In 2018, the survey was linked to administrative data which indicates students’ IEP status.

By Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) Status
In 2018, the survey was linked to administrative data which indicates students’ FRPL status.

By English Language
In 2018, the survey was linked to administrative data which indicates students’ ELL status.
A8. About the Equity Implemented Partnership

The Equity Implemented Partnership (EIP) was launched in fall 2015 as a research-practice partnership with the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSD) and researchers at the University of Iowa. In spring 2019, the EIP expanded to also work with the Waterloo Community School District. The EIP leverages both the expertise of social science and education policy research at the University of Iowa’s Public Policy Center, and the practitioner knowledge and expertise found in the ICCSD and WCSD to more effectively address persistent inequities in the districts.

The Equity Implemented Partnership aims to create more equitable experiences and outcomes for all students using a data-informed, evidence-based, inclusive process of decision-making. The Partnership has provided a structure for long-term collaboration that is not specific to a single research project, policy decision, or program evaluation. The problems of practice are identified by the district partners and reflect the key priorities of district decision-makers for addressing the substantial equity challenges each district faces.

The Equity Implemented Partnership is unique in having a central focus on achieving greater educational equity for socially marginalized youth, and in pursuing this goal through the facilitation of a data- and research-informed, inclusive process model that targets district decision-making. The process includes five key elements: providing a needs assessment based on survey data collected from students, teachers, and parents; collaboratively identifying key focus areas and providing research syntheses of existing knowledge and identifying strategies with evidence of effectiveness; incorporating the perspectives of diverse stakeholders through the formation and facilitation of task forces charged with providing feedback about potential recommendations and strategies for the district; facilitating implementation plans; and conducting evaluations of programmatic initiatives.
A9. About the Authors

Sarah K. Bruch, MPA PhD

Sarah K. Bruch is an associate professor in the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration, the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, and the School of Education at the University of Delaware. She received a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a Master of Public Administration from the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Washington. Her research focuses broadly on social stratification and public policy. In particular, she focuses on integrating theoretical insights from relational and social theorists into the empirical study of inequalities. She brings this approach to the study of social policy, education, race, politics, and citizenship. These interests also inform a substantial program of engaged research on equity and inclusion in education. In this work, she collaborates with practitioners to design, collect, and analyze data of student, faculty, and staff experiences of school and campus environments; assists in the implementation and evaluation of equity-related programs and policies; and engages with stakeholders in understanding and using data to inform policy and practice decisions.

Rachel Maller

Rachel Maller is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology and a Graduate Research Fellow in the Social and Education Policy Research Program at the Public Policy Center. Rachel began working on the research-practice partnership in 2017 as an undergraduate and has continued her work into graduate school. Rachel’s primary research interests include social stratification and education. Her research examines student experiences in schools, particularly how inequality is embedded within social relationships.

Tessa Heeren

Tessa Heeren is a Research Specialist at the University of Iowa Public Policy Center. Tessa began working in the research-practice partnership as a Master of Social Work student at the University of Iowa in 2015 and brings experience in community engagement and service provision to the research team. Tessa’s involvement in the project stemmed from a desire to inform education policies through community-based research. Along with her work in the Public Policy Center’s Social and Education Policy Program, Tessa has an appointment in the Health Policy Research Program, where she contributes to the evaluation of state health policies and programs.

Logan Drake

Logan Drake is a PhD student at the University of Iowa’s College of Education and a William Duffy Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies. He studies the relationship between civic and moral education from historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives. He began working with the Equity Implemented Partnership as an undergraduate, and his work with the Partnership has focused primarily on a three year evaluation of an implicit bias training program for district teachers.

Sarah Carmona

Sarah Carmona is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa with a B.A. in Political Science, B.A. in Ethics & Public Policy and minor in Spanish. Sarah has been an Undergraduate Research Fellow on the project for the past two years and has grown her interest in researching; especially when it comes to race and education policy. Sarah plans on moving to New York and hopes to continue to work in the policy research field.

Andrea Lynch

Andrea Lynch is a recent graduate from the University of Iowa with a degree in International Relations and Journalism & Mass Communication. While earning her degree, she also conducted public policy research with the Iowa Policy Research Organization, which examined felon disenfranchisement in Iowa. This summer she will be working for the Waterloo Community School District to continue researching equity practices to improve the district’s hiring process and teacher evaluations.
A10. Acknowledgements

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