



Analysis of the Spring 2024 Student School Climate Survey

Survey Description

The 2024 Student School Climate Survey is offered to all students in grades 3-12 across School District of Lancaster. In this report we are examining a sample of questions from the most recent survey, Spring 2024. This analysis also examines results from Spring 2023 and Fall 2023, for comparison.

A total of 2,731 students successfully completed the most recent survey, 37.6% of the potential student sample. To be included in the sample, students must complete all survey questions, which led to some students at the secondary level being excluded from the final sample. In total, 1,724 students completed the elementary survey and 1,007 students completed the secondary version of the survey.

The student survey is anonymous and requires students to self-identify race, ethnicity, gender, grade, and school information. This provides the opportunity for inaccurate data throughout the sample. Participant gender demographics mirror the district rates. 49.7% of participants identify as male, 48.4% as female and 1.9% non-binary/transgender/third gender. However, the self-identified racial demographics of the survey do not mirror district demographics. For example, 48.4% of respondents who select a race indicate Black or African American, whereas 16.8% of district students identify as Black. One point of confusion for students is that ‘Hispanic’ or ‘not Hispanic’ are separately identified under Ethnicity, so Hispanic students can be left to choose a race they may not identify with. Another example of these inaccuracies is that 14 students from the middle schools identified as ‘Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander’ when, currently, there are only 2 students registered as that racial group in the whole district. When asked whether they have an individualized education plan (IEP), many students did not respond or responded, “I don’t know”. Only 20.5% of the sample responded either “Yes” or “No”, which indicates a need to potentially revise this question in the future for clarity.

Survey participation numbers reveal gaps in implementation at different buildings. One Middle School (Lincoln) received no responses for the Spring 2024 survey, Phoenix Academy received only 2 responses despite having 282 students. McCaskey, with a population of over 2,300 students, only received 55 completed survey responses. E.R. Martin, similarly, only received 44 responses, approximately 10% of their student population. Future survey administrations will require broader participation from all schools to ensure a representative sample and actionable insights.

Analysis & Insights

I like school

Responses to the statement “I like school” gives some surprising answers. At the elementary level, students responded more negatively than the secondary students. About 50% of students at



the elementary level responded positively (“Often” and “Always”), whereas this year secondary students agreed with this statement 83% of the time (Figure 1). That was up from 60% in Spring 2023. Those numbers are the same when only middle schools are examined. (Note that the middle school responses are primarily from Reynolds and Wheatland. Jackson’s data is quite positive, but there is no data from Spring 2023 for comparison and Lincoln only has data from Spring 2023.) High school students agreed with the statement “I like school” at high levels, 90%. However, survey participation was low at McCaskey on the Spring 2024 survey, so that result might not be representative.

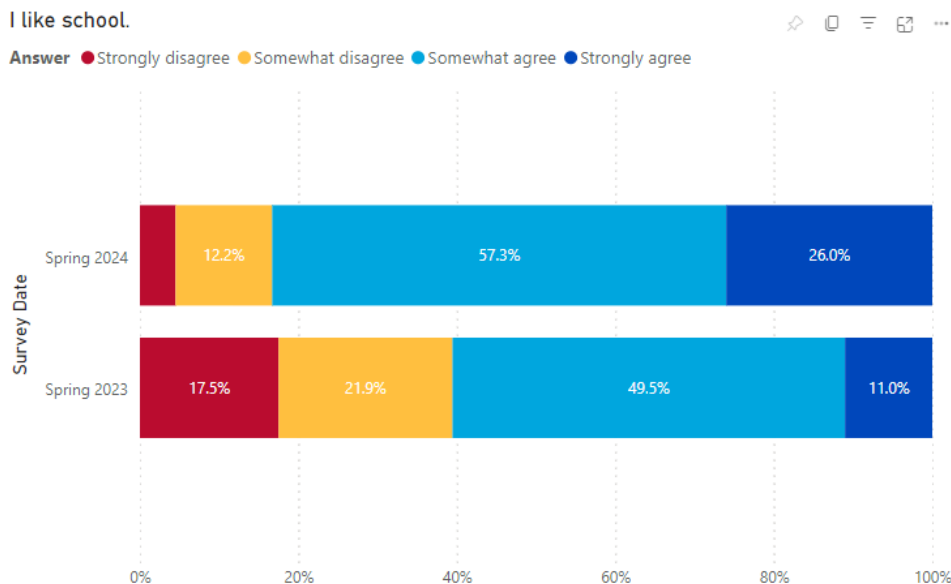


Figure 1. Responses of all secondary students in SDoL to the statement “I like school” from Spring of 2023 to Spring of 2024. Positive responses are on the rise.

I Feel Safe

A common statement is asked of students at all levels which is a valuable measure of school safety: “I feel safe at this school” (elem) or “I have felt unsafe at school or on my way to and from school” (middle and high). Elementary school students express feeling safe more often than secondary students, with elementary students saying they “Always” and “Often” feel safe about 71% of the time. This has increased slightly from 67% positive responses since the Spring 2023 survey.

Although the question is stated in the negative for the older students, middle school students report feeling safe about 58% of the time (i.e., middle school students chose “somewhat ...” and “strongly disagree” with feeling “unsafe at school or on my way to or from school”). Middle school students respond similarly when asked if they are “concerned about my physical safety at school” (disagree at 61%) and if they are “worried about students hurting me” (disagree at 64%).



Those responses suggest a more subtle observation about the source of students' fear. The figure below shows, first, that students observe fights and think there are a lot of fights. Clearly, that experience sticks with them and perhaps it is not surprising given the increased number of major behavior incidents as of this writing in the 2023-2024 school year. However, when comparing the questions “I have felt unsafe at school ...” and “I have worried about students hurting me,” middle school respondents feel unsafe about 42% of the time but worry about other students hurting them 37% of the time (Figure 2). This suggests that students may feel unsafe, but that lack of safety does not seem to be completely related to other students, even though they feel like they observe a lot of fights. These general concerns about safety are mirrored by the Office of Student Services’ focus groups with students. Students in focus groups across each of the secondary schools note worries about students bringing weapons to school, discomfort from participating in safety drills, and students acting inappropriately. These same students note, however, that having a school resource officer, friends, and caring teachers and staff makes them feel safe. This points to the importance of students feeling they have a caring adult at their school.

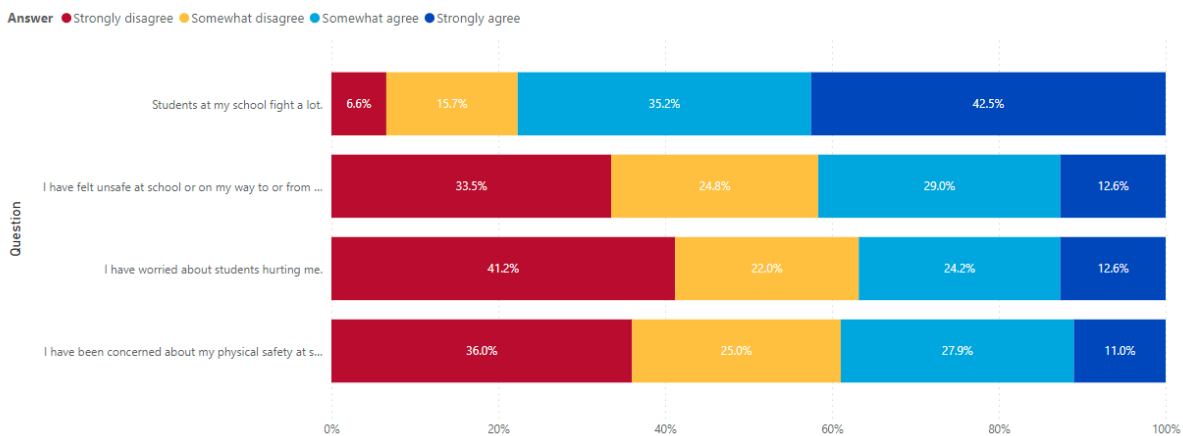


Figure 2. Middle school students’ perceptions of school safety. Data are from the Spring 2024 SDoL Student School Climate Survey.

Overall, at the middle school level, the perceptions of safety have not changed much over the last year (for all three school climate survey distributions). In addition, comparing results from the SDoL surveys with those from the 2023 F&M survey suggests that the perceptions of safety remain consistent.

An interesting change, albeit small, can be seen when comparing grade levels in middle school. When comparing the Fall 2023 and the Spring 2024 surveys, i.e., from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, 6th graders’ feeling of safety decreases by about 9 percentage points. But 8th grade students report an increase in feeling safe, by about 6 percentage points. Perhaps related, 6th graders’ feeling of success in school decreases by about 9 percentage points and 8th graders feeling of success in school increases slightly (3 percentage points). In response to both



of these statements, 7th graders' feelings do not change perceptibly (Note that these grade level results are for Jackson, Reynolds, and Wheatland because those buildings had strong participation on both Fall 23 and Spring 24 surveys).

I know an adult I can talk with ...

When students are asked if there is an adult “at my school who can help me if I need help” (elementary) or if they “know an adult I can talk with if I need help” (middle and high), the good news is that their positive responses are strong. Elementary students respond with “Always” or “Often” about 84% of the time (the range observed over the different buildings is a maximum of 89% and a minimum of 81%). Middle school students respond with “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” about 75% of the time. At McCaskey, the positive responses have risen from 71% a year ago to 85% this year. But again, the response rate at the McCaskey campus was low for the Spring 2024 survey, so this result might not be representative.

The other side of that good news is that, although there are relatively low percentages of students who do not “know an adult at school” that they can talk to if they need help, it still represents hundreds of students. About 218 students at all the middle schools combined and 246 students at all the elementary schools combined felt like they did not have an adult they could talk to.

Statistical testing finds a statistically significant relationship between feelings of safety and belief there is an adult you can turn to for help. While this relationship is significant, it is weak for elementary and secondary students.

I believe in helping others ...

A large majority of secondary students report positively about their own attitudes towards others, for example on questions like “I believe in helping others,” “Doing the right thing is important to me” and “I am open towards different opinions and perspectives.” Students responded positively to these (and other) questions about 90% of the time. Conversely, when asked about their perceptions of the attitudes of others, students respond more negatively. Questions like “Students treat each other well” and “Students in my class behave ...” at the elementary level get only 45% and 40% positive responses, respectively. At the secondary level, “Students show respect to other students ...” and “Students treat one another fairly” get 52% and 54% positive responses, respectively. This indicates some disconnect between how students see themselves and how they see other students.

Teachers treat me with respect.

Students' perspectives on how teachers treat them and how teachers treat their peers are relatively positive on the Spring 2024 survey. At the elementary level, “teachers treat me with respect” was answered at about 81% positive (“Often” and “Always”). These positive responses varied from a minimum of 72% to a maximum of 89% percent across all buildings. Similarly, at the secondary level students felt they were treated respectfully at 81% and 84% at the middle and



high school levels, respectively. That question was “Teachers treat me with respect”, but when asked how teachers treat students in general (“Adults treat students with respect”) the percentage of positive answers was lower, 71% and 55% at the middle and high school levels, respectively. Again, there is a disconnect between their personal experience and their perceptions of others.

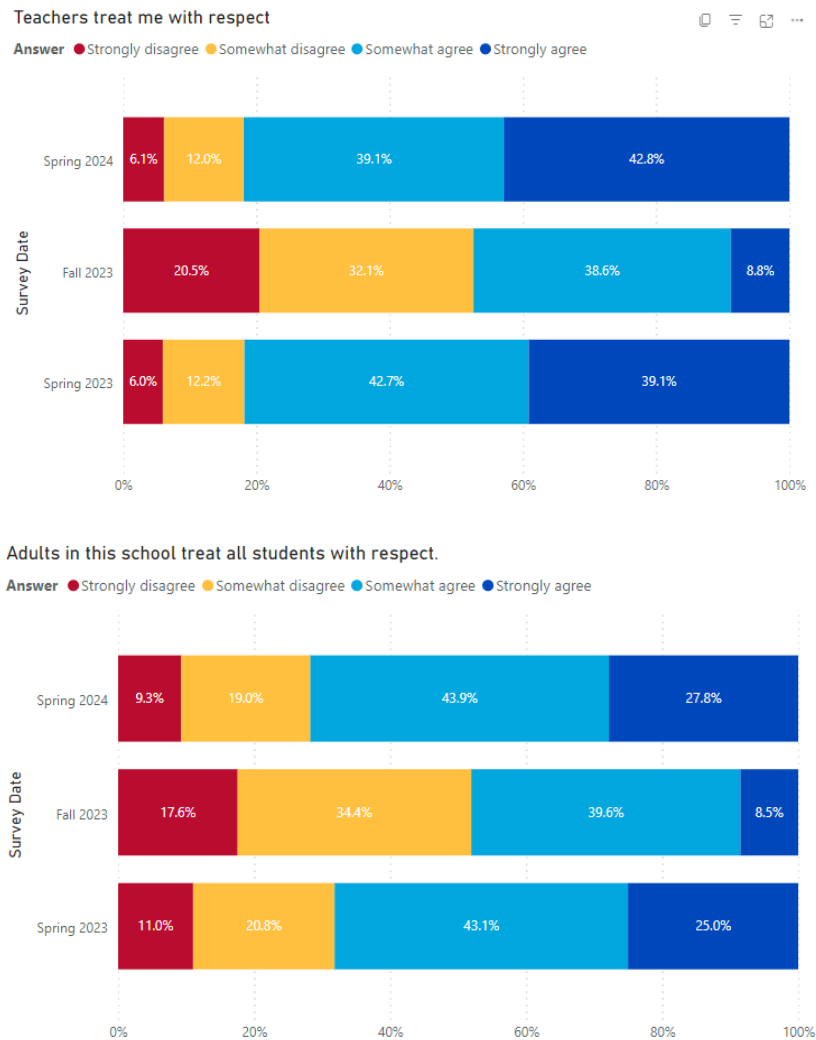


Figure 3. Middle school students’ perceptions of being treated with respect are shown for all three surveys, Spring ‘23, Fall ‘23 and Spring ‘24, so changing attitudes can be observed.

Interestingly, one of the biggest changes that is seen from Fall 2023 to Spring 2024 is middle school students’ perceptions of respect, both respect for themselves personally and respect of all students (Figure 3). Here, students report that they disagree with feeling respected by teachers in the fall, but in the spring their feelings of being respected are improved. This Fall 2023 to Spring 2024 difference is statistically significant (note, however, that the change from Spring ‘23 to Spring ‘24 is not statistically significant). This increase in positive responses was observed for



all racial groups. However, the increase was not as large for students identifying as Black/African American (Figure 4). In other words, Black students' feeling of being respected increased significantly (from 46% to 77%), but not as much as the feeling of White students increased (from 48% to 87%).

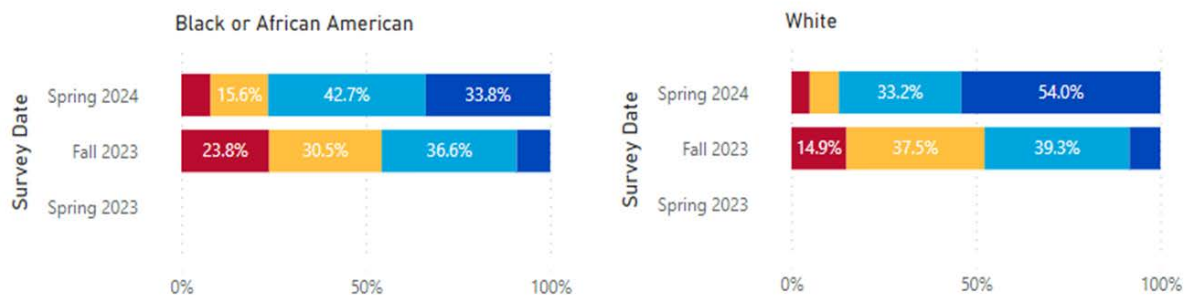


Figure 4. Middle school student responses to the statement "Adults treat me with respect" broken down by race.

I feel successful at school.

Students give positive responses to questions about school academic standards and students' feelings of success. When responding to the statement "I feel like I do well in school" (elementary) and "I feel successful at school" (secondary) 62% and 72%, respectively, responded positively. Those rates of feeling successful ranged from 58% to 70% in the elementary schools and were all close in the middle schools (other schools' numbers were too small to be representative).

There are some differences in how successful students feel based on race. For example, at the elementary level, 59% of Black students responded positively to doing well in school compared with 70% of White students. At the middle school level, 75% of Black students versus 78% of White students reported feeling successful. When Ethnicity is examined, Hispanic students feel like they do well 61% of the time compared with non-Hispanic students at 66%. Middle school Hispanic students reported feeling successful 72% of the time compared with non-Hispanic students at 77%.

At the secondary level, when asked "I feel my school has high standards for achievement", about 76% of students respond positively. At the elementary level, over 90% of students responded positively to "My school wants me to do well." There are also small variations by race here as well, with 75% of Black middle school students responding positively to "My school has high standards" compared with 78% for White students. Similarly, 89% of Black students at the elementary level say "my school wants me to do well" versus 93% of White students.

Limitations



Research Insights
from the Office of Data Analytics

Many of the above survey responses were examined for differences by race and ethnicity. In general, the trends mentioned throughout this document were similar across racial and ethnic groups, except where noted. As mentioned in the introduction, it is important to note that with students self-identifying race and ethnicity, many anomalies were observed, which calls into question some of the observations based on race. In addition, many students chose not to answer the questions about race and ethnicity, so the racial and ethnic sub-groups are smaller than they should be and may not be representative of the whole survey population.