Student Experiences of School Climate in the Iowa City Community School District 2019
# Table of Contents

**Executive Summary** ....................................................................................................................................................... 1

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................................................................... 2

**Survey Sample Demographics** ..................................................................................................................................... 4

**Survey Response Rates** .................................................................................................................................................. 5

**Survey Representativeness** .............................................................................................................................................. 6

**Teacher and Adult Relationships** .................................................................................................................................... 7

  - Overview, District Trends, and Open-Ended Comments ................................................................................................. 7
  - Academic Support .............................................................................................................................................................. 12
  - Equitable Treatment ......................................................................................................................................................... 13
  - General and Personal Concern ........................................................................................................................................ 14
  - General and Personal Respect ........................................................................................................................................ 15
  - Teacher Trust ................................................................................................................................................................. 16
  - Mentorship .................................................................................................................................................................... 17
  - Adult Support ............................................................................................................................................................... 18
  - Student Voice ............................................................................................................................................................... 19
  - Hurtful Comments from Teachers .................................................................................................................................. 20

**Social and Peer Relationships** .......................................................................................................................................... 21

  - Overview, District Trends, and Open-Ended Comments ................................................................................................. 21
  - School Attachment ............................................................................................................................................................ 26
  - General and Personal Peer Relationships ........................................................................................................................ 27
  - School Bullying and Harassment .................................................................................................................................... 28
  - Personal Bullying and Harassment .................................................................................................................................. 29
  - Hurtful Comments from Students .................................................................................................................................... 30

**Inclusive Classrooms** .......................................................................................................................................................... 31

  - Overview, District Trends, and Open-Ended Comments ................................................................................................. 31
  - Inclusive Discussions and Content .................................................................................................................................. 34
  - Classroom Membership .................................................................................................................................................... 35

**Safety and Disciplinary Environment** .......................................................................................................................... 36

  - Overview, District Trends, and Open-Ended Comments ................................................................................................. 36
  - Safety ............................................................................................................................................................................... 42
  - General and Personal Discipline Equity .......................................................................................................................... 43
  - Disciplinary Consistency, Strictness, and Transparency .................................................................................................. 44
  - Responsiveness ............................................................................................................................................................... 45
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 2016-2019.

Key Findings: Overall Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements</th>
<th>No Significant Change</th>
<th>Declines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Classroom membership</td>
<td>• Academic support</td>
<td>• Equitable treatment from teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social awareness (appreciation of diversity)</td>
<td>• Social or emotional support from adults</td>
<td>• Disciplinary equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities in class to discuss race, gender, sexual orientation, &amp; ability status</td>
<td>• Inclusive content</td>
<td>• Hurtful comments from teachers &amp; students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disciplinary consistency &amp; strictness</td>
<td>• School attachment</td>
<td>• Student responsiveness to bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rates of bullying (8 of 10 declined)</td>
<td>• Disciplinary transparency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborative conflict resolution</td>
<td>• Empathy or self-management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growth mindset</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings: Disparities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantaging the Advantaged</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Persistent Disparities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Advanced learners higher on almost all experiences</td>
<td>• Elementary students report more positive teacher-student relationships, fewer hurtful comments from teachers &amp; students, higher perceptions of safety, &amp; greater SEL</td>
<td>• Racial disparities in teacher relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students whose parents have advanced degrees have more positive experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender disparities in bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexual orientation in classroom membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FRPL in hurtful comments from teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings: Good News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduced Disparities</th>
<th>Parity (No Disparity)</th>
<th>Targeted Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sexual orientation disparities in academic support &amp; concern from teachers</td>
<td>• Social support &amp; disciplinary consistency by FRPL or parent education</td>
<td>• ELL &amp; IEP students report higher levels of social &amp; emotional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gender (non-binary) disparities in mentorship, teacher trust &amp; personal respect, &amp; hurtful comments about gender from teachers &amp; students</td>
<td>• Social or emotional support from adults, personal peer relations or growth mindset by school level</td>
<td>• FRPL students report higher levels of perspective-taking, student empathy &amp; self-management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations

1. Ensure district-level support
2. Ensure consistent process to collect data
3. Integrate school climate indicators in improvement planning
4. Create school-based climate teams
5. Identify current programs and strategies for improving school climate
6. Develop evaluation plan
Iowa City Community School District Context

The Iowa City Community School District (ICCSD) is a mid-sized urban district undergoing rapid demographic changes. The District serves just under 15,000 students each year and is considerably more diverse than most Iowa school districts. From 2005-06 to 2018-19, the Hispanic/Latinx population in the District has grown by 71 percent (from 7 to 12 percent); the African American population has increased by 54 percent (from 13 to 20 percent); the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch has increased 70 percent (from 23 to 39 percent); and most dramatically, the number of English language learners has increased substantially, from serving under 200 students in 2005-06 to almost 1,500 students in 2017-18 (ICCSD Enrollment Reports 2014-15, 2018-19). These changing demographics provide an important context in which to understand equity in student experiences and outcomes.

In addition to these rapidly changing demographics, the District struggles with substantial racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, and disproportionalities in disciplinary outcomes and special education assignment. While the District is a high achieving district overall, achievement gaps by race and income are larger in the District than they are on average at the state level, and are on par or worse than national achievement gaps (Nation’s Report Card 2015).

Racial disproportionalities in school discipline are also substantial. According to a recent analysis of the Office of Civil Rights data, the District has the greatest racial disproportionality in the state (Clayworth 2015).

### 2018 Iowa Assessment Proficiency in Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Not Proficient</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2018 ICCSD Enrollment

- White: 58%
- Black: 19%
- Latinx: 11%
- Other: 12%

### 2018 ICCSD Suspensions

- Black: 65%
- White: 28%
- Latinx: 5%
- Other: 2%
Focus on Student Experiences of School Climate

A substantial body of research demonstrates that a safe, supportive, and relationally strong school environments promotes academic, social, and emotional development. Research has also documented 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.

A recent consensus report notes that a positive school climate along with productive instructional strategies, social and emotional development, and individualized supports is the most promising way to promote child development across all domains of well-being including achievement and behavior.

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 2016-2019. Each year, students are surveyed to gather information about the academic, disciplinary, social, and emotional environments in schools.

The data from the Student Experiences of School Climate Survey is 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.

All ICCSD students in grades 5-12 were invited to take the 2019 Student Experiences of School Climate survey in February 2019. 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.
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.
Survey Representativeness 2019

By School Type:

- **Elementary Schools**: 30% of survey respondents, 26% of district population
- **Junior High Schools**: 27% of survey respondents, 24% of district population
- **High Schools**: 43% of survey respondents, 50% of district population

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 43% of the survey respondents but 50% of the district student population. Thus, high school students are slightly underrepresented in survey. On the other hand, elementary school students and junior high school students are slightly overrepresented in the survey sample. White, Black, Latinx, and Asian students 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.
This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of student relationships with teachers and adults (See appendix for list of survey items for each topic). Also included are the open-ended comments related to teacher and adult relationships provided by students at the end of the survey.

### 2019 Results: Teacher-Student Relationships

- **Academic Support:** 92%
- **Equitable Treatment:** 78%
- **General Concern:** 82%
- **Personal Concern:** 77%
- **General Respect:** 89%
- **Personal Respect:** 95%
- **Teacher Trust:** 82%
- **Student Voice:** 50%

### 2016-2019 District Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Support</th>
<th>Equitable Treatment</th>
<th>General and Personal Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Equity Implemented Partnership | 7
Teacher and Adult Relationships

2019 Results: Mentorship

| Have a Mentor | 81% |
| Teacher Mentor | 71% |
| Other Adult at School | 21% |
| Club Mentor | 9% |
| Community Mentor | 4% |
| Race-Matched Mentor | 51% |
| Gender-Matched Mentor | 58% |

2016-2019 District Trends

Mentorship

Race and Gender Matched Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a Mentor</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Mentor</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race-Matched Mentor</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-Matched Mentor</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In open-ended comments, 88 students described lacking emotional support from teachers and adults in school. For example, students described perceptions that teachers are apathetic to non-academic problems and teachers not making an effort to connect with students. Overall, students perceived teachers and adults in school to lack empathy and understanding for student circumstances, including invalidation of feelings and opinions.

“\textit{I have never heard any teacher talk about how they would be there if someone needed to talk. There’s no place to go when you feel unsafe or you’re in a bad mental state. There’s nobody you can rely on other than your friends (if you have any).}”

“I did go to a teacher at my school and asked for help but nobody actually wanted to help me.”

“I have no problem with the teachers at [High School], although the current school system creates an environment for the, and students that is only focused on academics, not emotions or social interactions.”
Teacher and Adult Relationships

2019 Results: Hurtful Comments from Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016-2019 District Trends

- Hurtful Comments about Race
  - 2016: 25%
  - 2017: 21%
  - 2018: 26%
  - 2019: 25%

- Hurtful Comments about Gender and Sexual Orientation
  - 2017: 21%
  - 2018: 22%
  - 2019: 22%

- Hurtful Comments about Immigrants and Religious Identity
  - 2017: 17%
  - 2018: 20%
  - 2019: 21%

*Hurtful comments about sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades*
Teacher and Adult Relationships

2019 Results: Open-Ended Comments

Out of the 1,222 survey comments, nearly half of the comments (N=628) included student perceptions of their relationships with adults at school, including: teachers, staff, substitutes, guidance counselors, student family advocates, principals, administration, librarians, and other or unspecified staff.

Qualities that Facilitate or Deter Relationships

Of the 628 comments about teacher and adult relationships, the vast majority of students (N=530) described the qualities of teachers and adults which either facilitated or deterred relationships. Students described favorable and unfavorable characteristics of teachers based on observed behavior and interactions, and direct interactions with teachers.

Negative (N=419)

In student descriptions of negative relationships with teachers and adults, many used general language to describe their teachers, such as “bad” or “mean” (N=111). Within this theme, more specific perceptions of negative teacher characteristics include inequitable treatment, a lack of professional or cultural competency, and a lack of emotional support.

Inequitable Treatment (N=120)

Many students (N=120) described a lack of fairness (both generally and targeted at individual students) in rewards, attention, and discipline as having a negative impact on teacher relationships, often describing a tendency for teachers to have “favorite” students. Some students attributed unfair treatment based on race, gender, academic ability, or social status, for example, “Too many teachers let the actions of students go if they like the students. Students who are popular and participate in a lot of activities get away with a lot of rule breaking and bullying” and “there’s some teachers who say someone can’t do something but then they let others do it. It’s not fair to me.”

Lack of Professional or Cultural Competency (N=100)

One hundred students described dissatisfaction with the job performance of teachers, which included ineffective teaching styles and unprofessional behavior, such as displays of anger or inappropriate comments and jokes. Within this theme, nearly half of the comments (N=45) described how a lack of teacher cultural competence detracted from student relationships, for example, “There are some teachers at school who don't respect they/them pronouns, even when talking about someone who doesn't identify as male or female.”

Lack of Emotional Support (N=88)

Eight-eight students perceived teachers and adults in school to lack empathy and understanding for student circumstances, including invalidation of feelings and opinions. For example, “Teachers can sometimes really not care about students, and sometimes be really rough on them when the student has clearly had a hard day” and “I did go to a teacher at my school and asked for help but nobody actually wanted to help me.”

Positive (N=110)

Most (N=80) of the comments about positive relationships with teachers used general language like “I like my teachers” or “teachers are great.” Within this theme, 19 students commented specifically on empathetic listening and understanding as positive qualities, saying “All of my teachers are very supportive and understanding and all have a good relationship with all students.”
A lower percentage of non-binary students report academic support compared to male and female students.

Black, multi-racial, and students who identify as other race report significantly lower levels of academic support compared to White and Asian students.

The disparity between LGB and non-LGB students in perceptions of academic support from teachers was reduced from 2017 to 2019.
Black and multi-racial students consistently report lower levels of equitable treatment over time.

Non-binary students report significantly lower levels of equitable treatment compared to male and female students.

A lack of equitable treatment was a prevalent theme in the open-ended comments, with 120 students describing a lack of fairness (both generally and targeted at individual students) in rewards, attention, and discipline as having a negative impact on teacher relationships, often describing a tendency for teachers to have “favorite” students. Some students attributed unfair treatment based on race, gender, academic ability, or social status. Some students also described grading and enforcement of disciplinary practices that they perceived as unfair.

“Sometimes I feel like me and my friends are not treated fairly. We get in trouble for doing things that everybody else was doing.”

“Too many teachers let the actions of students go if they like the students. Students who are popular and participate in a lot of activities get away with a lot of rule breaking and bullying.”

“The teachers are pretty mice but I think many students aren’t given second chances or are allowed to explain themselves.”
Black students report significantly lower levels of general and personal concern compared to White and Asian students.

Non-binary students report significantly lower levels of general and personal concern compared to male and female students.

Students whose parents have a high school degree or less report significantly lower levels of general and personal concern compared to students whose parents have an advanced degree.

LGB students report significantly lower levels of general and personal concern compared to non-LGB students.
General & Personal Respect

2019 Key Findings

1. Race/Ethnicity Differences

Black students report significantly lower levels of general and personal respect compared to White and Asian students.

2. Gender Differences Over Time

The disparity between male and female and non-binary students in reports of personally respecting their teachers was reduced from 2017 to 2019.

3. Sexual Orientation Differences Over Time Personal Respect

The disparity between LGB and non-LGB students was reduced from 2017 to 2019.

4. School Level Differences

Junior high school students report significantly lower levels of general and personal respect compared to elementary school students.
Teacher Trust

2019 Key Findings

1. Gender Differences Over Time

The disparity between male and female and non-binary students was reduced from 2017 to 2019.

2. Race/Ethnicity Differences

Black and multi-racial students report significantly lower levels of trust in their teacher compared to White and Asian students.

3. FRPL Differences

FRPL students report significantly lower levels of trust in their teacher compared to non-FRPL students.

4. School Level Differences Over Time

Junior high school students consistently report lower levels of trust in their teacher compared to elementary or high school students.
White students are more likely to report having a race-matched mentor compared to Black, Asian, and Latinx students.

FRPL students are less likely to report having a mentor compared to non-FRPL students.

Females are consistently more likely to report having a gender-matched mentor from 2016 to 2019 compared to male and non-binary students.
ELL students report higher levels of emotional and social support compared to non-ELL students, but lower levels of academic support compared to non-ELL students.

IEP students report higher levels of emotional and social support compared to non-IEP students, but lower levels of academic support compared to non-IEP students.

In 2018 and 2019, junior high and high school students are significantly less likely to report emotional support from adults in their school compared to elementary school students.

In 2019, Black students are significantly less likely to report academic support from adults in their school compared to all other students.
Student Voice

2019 Key Findings

1  ELL Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELL</th>
<th>Non-ELL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELL students report significantly higher levels of student voice compared to non-ELL students.

2  Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Non-Binary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-binary students report significantly lower levels of student voice compared to male and female students.

3  Open-Ended Comments

Some students (N=29) commented on whether teachers elicit or allow for student input in teaching, class content, grading, and projects. In addition, over a hundred students (N=139) used the survey as an opportunity to provide suggestions for improving schools. Comments included actual ideas for improving the school experience and suggested more opportunities for students to provide feedback about classes, resources, teachers, and school policies. The most prevalent theme in student suggestions for improving the school were about additional attention to and support for student mental health (N=64). Students described a lack of resources (and/ or awareness of existing resources) and noted both general student body and personal needs for mental health access. Students described difficult circumstances at school (e.g. overwhelming workload, bullying) and attributed stressors to feelings of anxiety, isolation, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.

“I think you should try to get teachers to give students a chance of what goes on in the classrooms, the students get 0% say in what happens no exceptions, I haven’t even heard of a teacher who has given their student a say in anything.”

“We should have a class about dealing with stress and time management.”

“Make teachers more aware of student mental health and help train them to incorporate that into daily student interaction.”
A higher percentage of Black students report hearing hurtful comments about race from teachers.

A higher percentage of non-binary students report hearing hurtful comments about gender from teachers.

A higher percentage of LGB students report hearing hurtful comments about sexual orientation from teachers.

A higher percentage of ELL students report hearing hurtful comments about immigrants from teachers.

*Hurtful comments about sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades*
Social & Peer Relationships

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

2019 Results: School Attachment and Peer Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Attachment</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Peer Relationships</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Peer Relationships</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016-2019 District Trends

- School Attachment Composite: 80% in 2016, 81% in 2017, 83% in 2018, 84% in 2019
- I feel like I belong in my school: 80% in 2016, 81% in 2017, 83% in 2018, 84% in 2019

2019 Open-Ended Comments

In contrast to the largely positive responses to survey items, student comments about peer relationships (N=196), mostly described negative interactions, a lack of relationships, or disrespectful treatment (N=113), but many described positive interactions and meaningful friendships (N=63). Many students (N=25) described indirect negative peer interactions indirectly, such as hearing rumors and gossip.

- “I feel like my friends really care about me and help me with a lot of problems.”
- “Some people do not have anybody to talk to or sit by at lunch and one people do not have a friend to talk to or that cares about them.”
- “At least what I have seen nobody physically bullies someone they are more likely to talk about them behind their backs.”
For the definition of bullying and harassment provided to students on the survey see the glossary.

**2019 Results: School Bullying and Harassment**

- Appearance: 49%
- Gender: 33%
- Race or ethnicity: 30%
- Disability: 26%
- Sexual orientation: 25%
- Social class: 25%
- Religion: 17%
- Other: 15%
- National origin or immigrant status: 16%

**2018-2019 District Trends**

*Bullying due to sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades*
For the definition of bullying and harassment provided to students on the survey see the glossary.

**2019 Results: Personal Bullying and Harassment**

22% of students report being personally bullied.

### Frequency of Personal Bullying and Harassment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>A Few Times This Year</th>
<th>Once Per Month</th>
<th>Once Per Week</th>
<th>More Than Once Per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Bullying</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Bullying</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Bullying</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019 Results: Hurtful Comments from Students

Sexual Orientation: 77%
Race: 73%
Gender Identity: 67%
Immigrants: 53%
Religious Identity: 53%

2016-2019 District Trends

Hurtful Comments about Race

Hurtful Comments about Gender and Sexual Orientation

Hurtful Comments about Immigrants and Religious Identity

*Hurtful comments about sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades
2019 Results: Open-Ended Comments

Out of the 1,222 survey comments, a vast majority of the comments (N=959) included student perceptions of their peer relationships, attachment to school, social environments, bullying, and student body norms. Many students left non-specific comments about school environments, such as “I like my school the way it is and the people in it,” and “Schools not bad it could be a lot worse,” and “I do not like this school in I don’t like the people in this school,” that were categorized into general positive (N=290), general neutral (N=27), and general negative (N=109).

Bullying (N=302)

Students described different types of bullying, discrimination, and targeted harassment of other students and themselves in school, including verbal bullying (e.g. teasing, threats, gossip, “jokes”) (N=71), physical bullying (e.g. punching, kicking) (N=22), exclusionary bullying (N=20), and cyber bullying (N=14).

Observed and General Bullying (N=166)

Students described witnessing bullying in school, and some of the perceived reasons students are targeted, including appearance, academic and athletic ability, political views, disability, sexual orientation, race, and gender. For example, “Some kid like to make in fun of other kids because they dress different and act different”

Personal Experience (N=114)

Students shared experiences of being a victim or target of bullying, saying, “I get bullied by the same people in gym, being called white trash and un-athletic.”

Belonging (N=271)

Students described general sense of belonging in school and personal experiences related to fitting in at school.

School Attachment and General Belonging (N=119)

Students shared positive and negative perceptions of their schools, with some students sharing positive associations and pride regarding their schools. For example, “My school is a really welcoming place and community” and “I love this school and I don't want leave for six grade.”

Personal Belonging (N=52)

Along with general perceptions of belongingness at school, student’s shared personal experiences of how they fit in, for example, “I have made so many friends that are not the same as me and I like that they are nice to me and care about me. There is someone who people tell him he has no friends so me and my two friends walked up to him and said “that is not true” he said "why" we all said "because you have us" and we all became friends.” Some students described belonging only in certain settings, for example, “I literally only feel free to talk about my issues and identity with other people in a club that happens once a week.”

Social isolation (N=52)

Many students describe lacking companionship, and feelings of isolation and loneliness at school. For example, “I don’t have friends, nobody barley listens to what I have to say unless they have a problem with me, nobody cares about my opinions or ideas or feelings.”

Peer Relationships (N=196) see p. 21
School Attachment

2019 Key Findings

1. Race/Ethnicity Differences Over Time

Black and Latinx students report significantly lower levels of school attachment over time compared to White and Asian students.

2. Gender Differences

Non-binary and female students report significantly lower levels of school attachment compared to male students.

3. Sexual Orientation Differences

LGB students report significantly lower levels of school attachment compared to non-LGB students.

4. FRPL Differences Over Time

FRPL students report significantly lower levels of school attachment over time compared to non-FRPL students.
Lower percentages of non-binary and female students report positive general school peer relations compared to male students. However, a higher percentage of females report positive personal peer relations compared to male and non-binary students.

A higher percentage of Black students report positive general school or personal peer relations compared to White students.

A lower percentage of high school students report positive general school peer relations compared to elementary and junior high school students.

A lower percentage of students whose parents have a high school degree or less report positive general school or personal peer relations compared to students whose parents have an advanced degree.
School Bullying & Harassment

2019 Key Findings

1. Race-based Bullying by Race

Black, Latinx, and Asian students report significantly higher levels of race-based bullying in their schools compared to White students.

2. Immigrant-based Bullying by ELL

ELL students report significantly higher levels of immigrant-based bullying in their schools compared to non-ELL students.

3. Gender-based Bullying by Gender

Non-binary and female students report significantly higher levels of gender-based bullying in their schools compared to male students.

4. Disability-based Bullying by IEP

There are no significant differences in disability-based bullying in their schools between IEP and non-IEP students.

5. Sexual orientation-based Bullying by Sexual Orientation

LGB students report significantly higher levels of sexual orientation-based bullying in their schools compared to non-LGB students.

6. Class-based Bullying by FRPL

FRPL students report significantly higher levels of class-based bullying in their schools compared to non-FRPL students.

*Hurtful comments about sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades
Personal Bullying & Harassment

2019 Key Findings

1. School Differences

Elementary and junior high school students report higher levels of being personally bullied physically and verbally compared to high school students. Elementary school students also report higher levels of being personally bullied socially compared to high school students.

2. Gender Differences

Non-binary students report significantly higher levels of being personally bullied verbally, socially, cyber, and physically compared to male and female students.

3. Sexual Orientation Differences

LGB students report significantly higher levels of being personally bullied verbally, socially, cyber, and physically compared to non-LGB students.
Hurtful Comments from Students

2019 Key Findings

1 Race/Ethnicity Differences Over Time

Hurtful Comments about Race

Asian students are the most likely to report hearing hurtful comments about race from other students.

2 Gender Differences Over Time

Hurtful Comments about Gender

Non-binary students report significantly higher levels of hearing hurtful comments from students about gender compared to male students.

3 Sexual Orientation Differences Over Time

Hurtful Comments about Sexual Orientation

LGB students report significantly higher levels of hearing hurtful comments from students about sexual orientation compared to non-LGB students.

4 Hurtful Comments as “jokes”

Seventy-one students described hearing hurtful and discriminatory comments from students, including slurs, name-calling, teasing, and, most frequently, hurtful “jokes” (N=35). Students have differing perceptions on the acceptability of hurtful comments in the form of jokes, with some perceiving “jokes” about various identities as harmless and reactions as overly sensitive, and some describing negative impacts of hearing and normalizing hurtful jokes.

“Sometimes me and my friends make jokes about race and ethnicity with each other but everyone does it and it is okay with everyone.”

“There are a lot of jokes like “I identify as a table” or something like that. Even though I am cis, I feel like it can be really damaging to people who aren’t because it kind of implies that they’re making it up.”

*Hurtful comments about sexual orientation was only asked of 7th-12th grades
Inclusive Classrooms

This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of inclusive classrooms (See appendix for list of survey items for each topic). Also included are the open-ended comments related to inclusive classrooms provided by students at the end of the survey.

2019 Results: Inclusive Discussions and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusive Content</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities in Class to Talk about Race</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities in Class to Talk about Learning or Physical Abilities</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities in Class to Talk about Gender</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities in Class to Talk about Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016-2019 District Trends

![2016-2019 District Trends](image)

- Inclusive Discussions
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Learning or Physical Abilities

- Inclusive Content
  - 2016: 83%
  - 2019: 84%
2019 Results: Classroom Membership

- Classroom Membership: **77%**
- Unable to Share due to Race: **12%**
- Unable to Share due to Gender: **9%**

2016-2019 District Trends

- Classroom Membership: 70% to 77%
- Unable to Share due to Race: 8% to 9%
- Unable to Share due to Gender: 10% to 13%

2019 Open-Ended Comments

In student comments (N=46) about inclusive classrooms, students described barriers to participating and lacking a sense of belonging in the classroom. Students had contrasting experiences in classrooms, with some describing confidence in their contributions, and some feeling less capable and more self-conscious. Some students commented on the lack of diversity of classroom membership as limiting inclusivity. Tension or feeling unwelcome due to political beliefs was a notable theme within classroom inclusivity (n=33). Students described scrutiny because of conservative political beliefs, and a perception of liberal bias amongst teachers and in school.

---

“Most of the students are accepting of each other, except for a group of boys who are very racist, sexist, and homophobic. They make the classroom uncomfortable for everyone, not just the people affected by their remarks.”

“‘I feel like people whose opinion isn’t the majority don’t feel free to express themselves. My friend (who I won’t name) has "conservative" or "right-wing" views and has, a few times, spoke on those opinions and got verbally attacked.’”
Inclusive Classrooms

2019 Results: Open-Ended Comments

Out of the 1,222 survey comments, many comments (N=298) included student experiences in the classroom setting, including curricula and assignments, inclusiveness, and behavior management.

Curricula and Assignments (N=133)
Many students commented about the academic content of classes, including teaching materials, class activities and discussion, and homework and assignments.

Diversity in Curriculum (N=39)
Thirty-nine students commented on the diversity of the content of the class being taught, including comments about lack of curriculum on students of color, sign language, gender, politics, gender and sexuality diversity, etc. Comments included “We don’t discuss sexuality and gender identity at all in our classes, not even personal development. We only ever talk about straight couples.”

Difficulty of Curriculum (N=30)
Thirty students shared their judgments of the difficulty or ease of class materials and workload, saying “We get so much homework every night, most classes almost every day. It is stressful and time consuming and makes it hard to participate in sports and other activities.”

Inclusiveness (N=124)
Students described their sense of belonging, opportunity, and efficacy to participate in classroom discussions and activities. Students had contrasting experiences in classrooms, with some describing confidence in their contributions, and some feeling less capable and more self-conscious. For example, “Most of the students are accepting of each other, except for a group of boys who are very racist, sexist, and homophobic. They make the classroom uncomfortable for everyone, not just the people affected by their remarks.” Some students commented on the lack of diversity of classroom membership as limiting inclusivity, saying, “the AP and honors classes that I’ve taken were almost entirely comprised of a mix of middle class or above students who were either Asian, Asian-American, or white. I think that the school initiatives to include both lower-income and minority students are a good start, but I still think that more needs to be done to include and encourage every student to take challenging classes.”
Tension or feeling unwelcome due to political beliefs was a notable theme within classroom inclusivity (n=33). Students described scrutiny because of conservative political beliefs, and a perception of liberal bias amongst teachers and in school. For example, “I feel like people whose opinion isn’t the majority don’t feel free to express themselves. My friend (who I won’t name) has “conservative” or “right-wing” views and has, a few times, spoke on those opinions and got verbally attacked” and “There are some teachers and students that act like their political views are the only right views. Some teachers even act like other people are wrong and or stupid if they have a different political view. Many teachers express their political beliefs very openly.”

Behavior Management (N=28)
The comments coded in behavior management included descriptions of classroom disruptions and teacher responses. For example, “I don’t think that teachers always know when students in their class are doing things against school rules or when kids make bigoted jokes. Sometimes, I’m not sure if the teachers don’t hear, or don’t care” and “I am not safe in my school because I do not feel that I am supported by my teachers when it matters most-when someone else is targeting my identity in a broad sense and they receive no disciplinary consequences.”
The percentage of students in elementary, junior high, and high school that report having opportunities in class to talk about race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability vary widely across topic and school level.

Black, Latinx, and Asian students report significantly lower levels of inclusive content compared to White students.

Students with parents who have a high school degree report significantly lower levels of inclusive content compared to students with a parent who has a college or advanced degree.
FRPL students report significantly lower levels of classroom membership compared to non-FRPL students.

Non-advanced learner students report significantly lower levels of classroom membership compared to advanced learner students.

While student reports of feeling unable to share in class due to their race declined among all groups, Black students remained the most likely to report feeling unable to share in class due to race.

While student reports of feeling unable to share in class due to their gender declined among all groups, non-binary students remained the most likely to report feeling unable to share in class due to gender.
This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of the safety and disciplinary environment (See appendix for list of survey items for each topic). Also included are the open-ended comments related to the safety and disciplinary environment provided by students at the end of the survey.

### 2019 Results: Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never or Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traveling Between Home and School</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Around the School</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Hallways and Bathrooms</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Your Classes</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

82% of students agree that their school is welcoming and safe.

### 2017-2019 District Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traveling Between Home and School</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Around the School</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Hallways and Bathrooms</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Your Classes</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Safety and Disciplinary Environment

2019 Results: General and Personal Disciplinary Equity

General Disciplinary Equity 66%

Personal Disciplinary Equity 77%

2016-2019 District Trends

General Disciplinary Equity

2018 2019

69% 66%

Personal Disciplinary Equity

2018 2019

76% 77%
Safety and Disciplinary Environment

2019 Results: Disciplinary Consistency, Strictness, and Transparency

2018-2019 District Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictness</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2019 Open-Ended Comments

Of students who commented on disciplinary practices in school (N=131), the majority (N=71) described inconsistent discipline. Students perceived some types of infractions as inconsistently enforced (such as hate speech) and inequitable distribution of discipline, in which certain individuals and groups receive harsher or more frequent discipline than others. Some students (N=20) perceived the disciplinary practices in school to be overreactions (e.g. delivered in an unnecessarily harsh manner like yelling), while others thought discipline was too lenient (N=38). Students (N=30) also suggested more restorative and less punitive responses to rule breaking would be more effective.

“Some teachers enforce the rules a little too harshly. A student accidentally stepped in the snow, and they had to sit out for two minutes. I get that there’s a punishment for doing it on purpose, but the student didn’t even get to explain.”

“Some teachers treat certain kids differently than others like lessen punishments. Some favor one gender over the other.”

“Probably one of the biggest problems in the school is kids getting in trouble, then not getting to explain that it wasn’t them or that there was another variable involved.”
2019 Results: Responsiveness

- Teachers Clear Bullying: Not Allowed (87%)
- Teachers Stop Bullying (85%)
- School Take Action (80%)
- Students Stop Bullying (58%)

2016-2019 District Trends

- Students Stop Bullying
  - 2018: 62%
  - 2019: 58%
- Teachers Stop Bullying
  - 2018: 78%
  - 2019: 85%
- School Take Action
  - 2017: 84%
  - 2018: 82%
  - 2019: 80%
- Teachers Clear Bullying: Not Allowed
  - 2018: 87%
  - 2019: 87%
Safety and Disciplinary Environment

2019 Results: Restorative Conflict Resolution

- Work Together to Solve Conflict: 76%
- Practice Ways to Settle Conflict: 67%
- Students Can Explain when Accused of Wrong: 68%

2018-2019 District Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Together to Solve Conflict</th>
<th>Practice Ways to Settle Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018: 72%</td>
<td>2018: 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019: 76%</td>
<td>2019: 67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019 Results: Open-Ended Comments

Out of the 1,222 survey comments, many comments (N=615) included student experiences of safety (or lack thereof) and the disciplinary environment.

Safety (N=287)

Nearly 300 student survey comments (n=287) included student perceptions of safety or lack thereof in school. Of these comments, 38 students described feeling safe in school, with comments like “I am new to Iowa City and this school makes me feel safe” and “I feel safe at school. My friends care about me. My teachers care about me.” Thirty-five students described how feelings of safety in school often vary by setting. For example, thirty-one students noted that places in and around school with little to no supervision (e.g. bathrooms, locker rooms, hallways, and in transit to school) felt less safe, for example, “The hallways feel dangerous for many people at our school...right before I went into this hour, someone chucked a plastic bottle and it almost hit me.”

Unsafe Experiences (N=114)

More than 100 students (n=114) described experiences in school in which they felt uncomfortable, scared, and/or unsafe. The most frequently described reason for feeling unsafe in school was due to verbal aggression (n=40), such as yelling, swearing, arguing, name-calling, and threats. Students describe verbal aggression in school, for example, “While classes are going on, I hear kids (Bullies) screaming from the top of their lungs... I’m afraid that they’re going to just break into the classroom and attack me at any moment while that happens.” Students also described feeling unsafe due to physical aggression and fights (n=25), sexual harassment and assault (n=17), and substance use (n=16).

Safety concerns (N=95)

Ninety-five students described concerns about safety at school, including perceptions of inadequate security, anxiety about the possibility of a school shooting, problematic adults and students, and concerns for future harm due to a perceived lack of responsiveness to current safety issues. Students shared concerns, such as, “More security would increase the percentage of people feeling safer” and “please expel [Student name], she has gotten away with so many things and shouldn’t be in his school. She makes everyone feel unsafe.”

Disciplinary Environment (N=222)

More than 200 students (N=222) described personal and observed experiences and interactions related to disciplinary actions, and enforcement (or lack thereof) of rules.

Disciplinary Practices (N=131) (see p. 38 for details)

Of students who commented on disciplinary practices in school (N=131), the majority (N=71) described inconsistent discipline.

Responses to Bullying (N=115)

Students described reactions and response to bullying by teachers (N=74) and students (N=39). Ignoring or being unresponsive to bullying was the most frequent response related to teachers (N=57) and students (N=18). For example, “At the after school program I got physically bullied, and neither the teachers or the students did anything about it.” However, some students also noted by-standing students and teachers intervening. For example, “I do my best to step in and stand up for the disabled people whose disability prevents them from standing up for themselves” and “Teachers do a great job and trying to help stop the source of bullying and resolve conflicts.”
Safety

2019 Key Findings

1. Gender Differences in Safe in Class

Non-binary students report significantly lower levels of always feeling safe in class compared to male and female students, and females report lower levels of always feeling safe compared to male.

2. Racial/Ethnic Differences in Safe in Class Over Time

The disparity between Latinx and non-Latinx students in perceptions of always feelings safe in class increased from 2017 to 2019.

3. ELL Differences in Safe in Class Over Time

The disparity between ELL and non-ELL students in perceptions of always feeling safe in class increased from 2018 to 2019.

4. School Level Differences

A higher percentage of elementary school students report always feeling safe in their class or in the hallways and bathrooms compared to junior high and high school students.
A lower percentage of Black students report general and personal disciplinary equity.

Students in high school are the least likely to report general and personal disciplinary equity.

FRPL students are significantly less likely to report general and personal disciplinary equity.

Non-binary students are significantly less likely to report general and personal disciplinary equity.
### Disciplinary Consistency, Strictness, and Transparency

#### 2019 Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level Differences</th>
<th>ELL Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Consistency</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Transparency</strong></td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Strictness</strong></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary school students report significantly higher levels of disciplinary consistency, transparency, and strictness compared to junior high and high school students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL Differences</th>
<th>FRPL Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Consistency</strong></td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Transparency</strong></td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Strictness</strong></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELL students report significantly higher levels of disciplinary consistency, transparency, and strictness compared to non-ELL students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP Differences</th>
<th>FRPL Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Consistency</strong></td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Transparency</strong></td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Strictness</strong></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IEP students report significantly higher levels of disciplinary consistency, transparency, and strictness compared to non-IEP students.

FRPL students report significantly higher levels of disciplinary consistency, transparency, and strictness compared to non-FRPL students.
Responsiveness

2019 Key Findings

1. School Level Differences

Elementary students report significantly higher levels of responsiveness from the school, teachers, and other students compared to students in junior high and high school.

2. Gender Differences Over Time in School Take Action

Non-binary students are significantly less likely to report that the school takes appropriate action when an incident is reported to them compared to male and female students.

3. Sexual Orientation Differences in Students Stop Bullying

The disparity between LGB and non-LGB students in reporting that students act to stop bullying increased from 2018 to 2019.
Restorative Conflict Resolution

2019 Key Findings

1. School Level Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Junior High</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Together to Solve Conflict</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Ways to Settle Conflict</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Can Explain when Accused of Wrong</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary school students report significantly higher levels of restorative conflict resolution compared to students in junior high and high school.

2. IEP Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IEP</th>
<th>Non-IEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Together to Solve Conflict</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Ways to Settle Conflict</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Can Explain when Accused of Wrong</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IEP students report significantly higher levels of restorative conflict resolution compared to non-IEP students.

3. ELL Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELL</th>
<th>Non-ELL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Together to Solve Conflict</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Ways to Settle Conflict</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Can Explain when Accused of Wrong</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELL students report significantly higher levels of restorative conflict resolution compared to non-ELL students.
This section of the report includes student survey items that capture several aspects of social and emotional learning (See appendix for list of survey items for each topic). Also included are the open-ended comments related to social and emotional learning provided by students at the end of the survey.

### 2019 Results: General and Personal Appreciating Diversity

- **Diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at my school**: 90%
- **Students in this school respect each other’s differences**: 77%
- **Adults in this school respect each other’s differences**: 92%
- **I am accepting of those different than myself**: 96%
- **It is wrong to discriminate against someone because of their race, appearance, culture, religion, or on some other basis**: 95%

### 2017-2019 District Trends

**General Appreciating Diversity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Diversity Important at School</th>
<th>Students Respect Differences</th>
<th>Adults Respect Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Appreciating Diversity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accepting Those Different</th>
<th>Wrong to Discriminate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019 Results: General and Personal Empathy and Perspective-Taking

- **General Empathy**: 66%
- **Personal Empathy**: 94%
- **Perspective-Taking**: 73%

2018-2019 District Trends

**General and Personal Empathy**
- 2018: 62%
- 2019: 63%
- Students in my school act in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of other students.

**Perspective-Taking**
- 2018: 69%
- 2019: 75%
Social and Emotional Learning

2019 Results: Growth Mindset, Self-Management, and Teamwork Relationship Skills

- **Growth Mindset**
  - 2018: 73%
  - 2019: 79%

- **Self-Management**
  - 2018: 63%
  - 2019: 63%

- **Teamwork Relationship Skills**
  - 2018: 79%
  - 2019: 68%

2018-2019 District Trends

- **Growth Mindset**
  - 2018: 73%
  - 2019: 79%

- **Self-Management**
  - 2018: 63%
  - 2019: 63%
Social and Emotional Learning

2019 Results: Open-Ended Comments

Out of the 1,222 survey comments, many students (N=166) described concepts related to social and emotional learning, including their school’s diversity values and personal social values.

Diversity Values (N=112)

More than 100 students shared perceptions of their school’s valuation of diversity. Students described school environment related to many types of diversity, including gender and sexuality diversity, race, religion, and ability. For example, one student described inadequate support / a lack of preparation for gender and sexually diverse students, saying “When someone comes out, the teachers and students act differently around them, they act like that person is dangerous, or they stop talking to them for fear of insulting them. Both happen EVERY TIME SOMEONE COMES OUT. PLEASE FIX THIS.” Another student offers a contrasting perspective, saying, “They could be a little bit more welcoming for the people who aren’t LGBTQ.”

One student described normalization of slurs, saying, “i see and hear people around me ask their black friends if they can have the n-word pass. i think its absolutely stupid, and it doesn’t matter if one person gives you permission to say the n word. if someone around that person who is NOT black and says the n word gets uncomfortable, what are they supposed to do? i myself am a black individual, and every now and then ill say the n word. but seeing people who have slandered the word throughout history start saying it to my face? its unsettling and id prefer if nobody says it, including myself.”

Several students indicated that diversity is publicized as a value of the school, but not practiced, saying “[High School] may have a lot of kids who attend this school who are different and have diverse backgrounds. However, it lacks diversity among teachers and staff members and not everyone is treated equally. You may try to promote equality but that’s different than actually doing something about it.” And, “I would hope in the time to come teachers become less worried about ‘power-struggles’ enfolding in the classroom, and worry more about what kind of example they’re setting for their white students when they do not stop racially charged statements or ‘casual racism’ and how it shows to their non-white students they seemingly don’t care about them and their identity.”

Personal Social Values (N=49)

Forty-nine students shared their personal perspectives and values related to social and emotional skills. Thirty students described pro-social mindsets, such as valuing open-mindedness, empathy, acceptance, cooperation, and collaboration. For example, “I try to be as kind and caring as I can” and “I try to be accepting of all people because everyone can feel the same way when discriminated against and no one should have to feel worse simply because someone makes fun of a trait they retain.”

In contrast, thirty 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, “I feel people who are part of the LGBTQ community are too self expressive. If all straight people were as expressive as they are, they would say they were getting discriminated” and “I don’t see people of the same race as me on my homework because I see a graphing problem with no people. I see what we’re supposed to be learning. It doesn’t matter, why do you care. If you say we shouldn’t be color blind because that could lead to negative effects on other races is silly.”
**General and Personal Appreciating Diversity**

**2019 Key Findings**

1. **School Level Differences**

Elementary school students report significantly higher levels of student and teacher respect for differences compared to students in junior high and high school.

2. **FRPL Differences**

FRPL students report lower levels of general and personal appreciating diversity compared to non-FRPL students.

3. **Gender Differences**

Non-binary students report lower levels of student and teacher respect for difference compared to male and female students.
General and Personal Empathy and Perspective-Taking

2019 Key Findings

1. Gender Differences

- General Empathy: Male 70%, Female 64%, Non-Binary 47%
- Personal Empathy: Male 92%, Female 97%, Non-Binary 91%
- Perspective-Taking: Male 76%, Female 71%, Non-Binary 54%

Non-binary students report significantly lower levels of general empathy and perspective-taking compared to male and female students.

2. School Level Differences

- General Empathy: Elementary 77%, Junior High 64%, High School 60%
- Personal Empathy: Elementary 96%, Junior High 94%, High School 93%
- Perspective-Taking: Elementary 86%, Junior High 82%, High School 72%

Elementary school students report significantly higher levels of general and personal empathy and perspective-taking compared to junior high and high school students.

3. ELL Differences

- General Empathy: ELL 75%, Non-ELL 65%
- Personal Empathy: ELL 92%, Non-ELL 95%
- Perspective-Taking: ELL 82%, Non-ELL 72%

ELL students report significantly higher levels of general empathy and perspective-taking compared to non-ELL students.

4. IEP Differences

- General Empathy: IEP 72%, Non-IEP 66%
- Personal Empathy: IEP 90%, Non-IEP 95%
- Perspective-Taking: IEP 80%, Non-IEP 72%

IEP students report significantly higher levels of general empathy and perspective-taking compared to non-IEP students.
Growth Mindset, Self-Management, and Teamwork Relationship Skills

2019 Key Findings

1. Race/Ethnicity Differences in Growth Mindset Over Time

White, Black, Latinx, and Asian students saw an improvement in growth mindset from 2018-2019, but Black and Latinx students still report lower levels of growth mindset compared to White and Asian students.

2. FRPL Differences in Growth Mindset Over Time

FRPL and non-FRPL students saw an improvement in growth mindset from 2018-2019, but FRPL students still report lower levels of growth mindset compared to non-FRPL students.

3. Gender Differences in Self-Management

Non-binary students report lower levels of self-management compared to male and females, also females report lower levels of self-management compared to males.

4. Sexual Orientation Differences in Teamwork

LGB students report lower levels of teamwork relationship skills compared to non-LGB students.
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.

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

**Advanced Learner:** Student participates in ICCD’s gifted program

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

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

**Race:** White, Asian, Latinx, 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)

**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.
Survey Administration

Survey Administration

In field: February 8 – March 8

A link to complete the survey online was sent to all 5th-12th grade ICCSD student e-mail accounts on February 8, 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.

A total of 6,771 students completed the survey, accounting for an overall response rate of 80%.

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.

Added Survey Items

At least one new survey item were added to the following categories in the 2019 survey.

- Personal Bullying/Harassment
- General Peer Relationships
- Personal Peer Relationships
- Teamwork Relationship Skills
- Perspective Taking
- Restorative Conflict Resolution
- General Empathy
Survey Topics and Survey 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 (3 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.

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

**Personal 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 (3 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.
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.

General/School Bullying

- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Race or ethnicity
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...National origin or immigrant status
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Gender or Gender Identity
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...sexual orientation
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Disability
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Poverty, income level, or social class
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Appearance
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Religion
- At this school, students harass, bully, or intimidate each other because of their...Other

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

- 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 and Materials (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 (2 item composite)

- 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.
- I feel unable to share my views in class because of my gender identity.
Safety and Disciplinary Environment

Safety
- This school is welcoming and safe.
- 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 (2 item composite)
- I know I would receive the same punishment as others for breaking a school rule.
- You are treated unfairly. (reverse coded)

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

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.

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.

General Appreciating Diversity
- 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.

Personal Appreciating Diversity
- 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 (2 item composite)
- 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 (2 item composite)
- It is important to help other people.
- I care about other people's feelings.

Perspective-Taking
- We talk about how our actions affect others.
This section of the report provides details on several aspects of the analysis of the survey data that is presented in the report, including:

- Focus on Significant Group Differences
- Use of Composite Measures
- Assessing Trends Over Time
- Linked Administrative Data
- Survey Sample & Response Rates
- Bullying/Harassment Text Responses
- Open-Ended Response Analysis for Additional Experiences and Information

Focus on Significant Group Differences

This report details mean (average levels) 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 Eignevalue, 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, and 2019. 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 and 2019 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 2019, student survey responses were linked to ICCSD administrative data (FRPL, IEP, ELL, and advanced learner status) 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 the figures page 3 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 1410 respondents who selected “other” as the basis on which students at their school were bullied or harassed. Of these 1410 respondents, 797 also provided text descriptions, 531 of which were valid response. These text responses were categorized into descriptive categories i.e. types, or bases on which, harassment or bullying occurred (109 were solely categorized into the reasons provided in the survey and 422 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 open-ended responses to the final survey question were analyzed qualitatively. Responses were categorized according to the main themes of Student Experiences of School Climate Survey utilized throughout this report. Within these main themes, ideas and topics were thematically organized based on the substantive content of comments.

Two coders used a qualitative coding software (NVivo) to categorize the content from the student comments. Each coder worked independently and each comment was coded separately. The coding was then compared in NVivo. Any themes that did not reach a threshold of 70% agreement between coders were refined until at least 80% agreement was reached.

Survey comments were categorized into all applicable themes. Because of this, there is a higher number of content coded into the themes than total number of student comments. For example, in the single comment below, several themes emerge, 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.”
Qualitative Sample

Students who chose to leave a comment at the end of the survey (N=1,222) 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%), LGB (4%), Parent with More Than College Education (5%), White (3%), Elementary School (9%), Non-ELL (3%), Non-FRPL (4%), Advanced Learner (3%), and Non-IEP (2%).

Number of qualitative respondents (N) = 1,222
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.

By Race
The race of students responding to this survey has remained consistent between 2016 and 2018.

By Sexual Orientation
In 2017, the survey began asking students to indicate their sexual orientation.
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.
By Advanced Learner Status

In 2018, the survey was linked to administrative data which indicates students’ Advanced Learner status.

- **2018**
  - Advanced Learner: 10%
  - Non-Advanced Learner: 24%
  - Not Available: 66%

- **2019**
  - Advanced Learner: 16%
  - Non-Advanced Learner: 82%
  - Not Available: 2%
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.
Sarah K. Bruch, MPA PhD
Sarah K. Bruch is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, director of the Social and Education Policy Research Program at the Public Policy Center, and co-chair of the Charter Committee on Diversity at the University of Iowa. Dr. Bruch’s research focuses broadly on social inequality 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 both a research-practice partnership with two school districts in Iowa and ongoing work with the University of Iowa, Dr. Bruch 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 research assistant in the Social and Education Policy Research Program at the Public Policy Center. Rachel began working on the research-practice partnership in January 2017 as an undergraduate and has continued her work into graduate school. She also has experience working as an intern in the Department of Equity in the school district as well as working as a supervisor and telephone research interviewer at the Iowa Social Science Research Center. She also assisted on research analyzing and reporting the campus climate for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Iowa. Rachel’s own research focuses similarly on educational inequality, particularly how inequality impacts social relations within schools. Her goal is to have a research career examining the relationship between inequality and educational experiences and outcomes and leveraging this research to improve educational policies and practices.

Sanga Kim, PhD
Sanga Kim is an Equity Program Manager at the Iowa City Community School District. She received a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in Education. Her research broadly focuses on social stratification, education policy, and equity and racial diversity in K-16 pipeline. More specifically, she studies the school experiences of low-income and minority students and postsecondary access and preparation of underrepresented groups. She has co-authored several articles published in the following journals: Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Educational Policy, and Teachers College Record.

KaLeigh K. White, MA
KaLeigh White is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Iowa (UI). She also received her MA in sociology from the University of Iowa. Her research interests focus broadly on social inequality and social policy. She is particularly interested in how United States social safety net programs may both alleviate and exacerbate inequality. KaLeigh began working as a graduate research assistant on the research-practice partnership at the UI Public Policy Center in January 2019. Prior to working with the research-practice partnership, KaLeigh worked as a graduate research assistant on the UI diversity, equity, and inclusion campus climate survey and listening session reports for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty/staff.

Tessa Heeren, MSW
Tessa Heeren is a Research Associate 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.
Nicole Nucaro
Nicole Nucaro is a junior in her undergraduate studies double majoring in Ethics and Public Policy and Interdepartmental Studies with a certificate in Resilience and Trauma Informed Perspectives. Her interest in education policy was sparked by Dr. Bruch’s Big Ideas: Opportunity, Equality, and Public Policy in America course. She has enjoyed her experience at the Public Policy Center because it’s allowed her to learn valuable research skills, study inequalities within schools and engage in important conversations about public policy initiatives. After undergraduate, Nicole plans to continue her academic career by attending law school.

Jocelyn Roof
Jocelyn Roof is a second year undergraduate majoring in Sociology and Political Science. She first became interested in the Equity Implemented Partnership when she took Dr. Bruch’s class Big Ideas: Equality, Opportunity, and Public Policy in America, but she has always been interested in social justice and education policy. Jocelyn has served as the Governmental Relations Chair in the University of Iowa Student Government, co-led undergraduate voter registration and political engagement efforts, and served as a resident assistant for incoming students in Currier Hall. In the future she plans to attend graduate school, with the hopes of continuing research on social and education policy and inequality.

Sarah Carmona
Sarah Carmona is a third year undergraduate student studying both Ethics & Public Policy and Political Science. After graduation in May of 2020 Sarah plans to attend graduate school for Criminology. Sarah’s interests lie in the racial disparities seen between students in the school district and is most interested in how these differences affect both their academic achievement and future in general.

Logan Drake
Logan Drake recently graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in ethics and public policy, philosophy, and economics. Next fall he will join the College of Education at Iowa as a student in the Schools, Culture, and Society PhD program. He has previously conducted policy research with the Iowa Policy Research Organization. This work examined Medicaid privatization in Iowa and was presented to state legislators in Des Moines. His work in philosophy has dealt with issues of free will, moral responsibility, freedom of speech, and human rights. Logan sees education as the central policy issue in the US, influencing everything from the unemployment rate to the state of political discourse. He wants to see schools become more equitable while emphasizing individualized learning, a liberal arts curriculum, and community and civic engagement.

Skye Sperry
Skye Sperry is a third year undergraduate study at the University of Iowa, majoring in Neuroscience, with a minor in English and a certificate in Sustainability. She was a student in Dr. Sarah Bruch’s Big Ideas: Opportunity, Equality, and Public Policy in America course, which made her motivated to understand what we are doing in our own communities about disparities between race, gender, sexual orientation, and social class. Working with the Equity Implemented Partnership has given her knowledge on how to use research to drive effective social policy. Once she graduates from the University of Iowa, she hopes to go on to a Master’s or Law program to continue to study creating effective policy, specifically in conservation and environmental policy, so everyone can enjoy a safe, healthy Earth.

Nicole Bennett
Nicole Bennett is a third year undergraduate student majoring in both Criminology and Spanish with a minor in Sociology. Her interest in the Equity Implemented Partnership were sparked after taking Dr. Bruch’s Social Inequalities course in the Spring of 2018 and she decided to join the partnership in the Spring of 2019. Working with the partnership has further developed her interests of social justice and racial disparities in both the legal system and within schools. After graduation in May 2020 she plans to pursue a law degree to practice criminal law and continue studying inequalities within the legal system.
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