Executive Summary

School climate is defined as “the physical and psychological aspects of the school that are more susceptible to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place” (Tableman, 2004). A safe, caring, and engaging school climate has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning and achievement, teacher organizational and professional commitment, and parent involvement and school choice. In recognition of the importance of school climate, in 2011, the Washoe County School District developed and administered the first annual School Climate Survey. The survey is intended to provide schools with data that reflect components of school climate that support a positive learning and working environment and that promote academic success among all students. The annual climate survey allows schools to celebrate strengths, monitor changes, and respond to areas of challenge in their efforts to build a positive, safe, and self-renewing culture that maximizes student learning. The Climate and Safety Surveys also provide the district with data to help measure progress and maintain accountability on objectives that are outlined in the strategic plan.

The annual survey battery consists of four instruments: (1) Student Climate Survey; (2) Student Safety Survey; (3) Staff Climate/Safety Survey; and (4) Parent Climate/Safety Survey. This year marks the fourth annual administration of the Climate and Safety Survey. Highlights of the 2014 methodology are as follows:

**Student Climate/Safety Survey:**
- Completed on school computers with all 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders at all schools between March 24th – June 13th, 2014. Half of all students at each school will complete the Climate Survey and half will complete the Safety Survey.

**Parent Climate/Safety Surveys:**
- *Elementary School Parents* – Emailed to parents on March 10th. Paper Surveys will be distributed to schools on March 3rd with pre-printed envelope for privacy – surveys will be grouped by teachers according to class lists and Connect Ed family language on April 25th.

**School Employee Climate/Safety Surveys:**
- *WCSD School Staff* – Emailed to all school employees on March 24th. Survey is open until June 13th. Teachers complete a longer version of the survey administered to non-instructional staff.

This Implementation Plan describes the primary objectives, methodology, and timeline of the 2014 Climate and Safety Survey. For questions about the WCSD Climate Survey, please contact Laura Davidson at the WCSD Department of Accountability, ldavidson@washoeschools.net.
Implementation Plan for the 2014 WCSD Climate Survey Project

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Project

School climate is defined as “the physical and psychological aspects of the school that are more susceptible to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place” (Tableman, 2004). A safe, caring, and engaging school climate has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning and achievement, teacher organizational and professional commitment, and parent involvement and school choice. In recognition of the importance of school climate, in 2011, the Washoe County School District developed and administered the first annual School Climate Survey.

The survey is intended to provide schools with data that reflect components of school climate that support a positive learning and working environment and that promote academic success among all students. The annual climate survey allows schools to celebrate strengths, monitor changes, and respond to areas of challenge in their efforts to build a positive, safe, and self-renewing culture that maximizes student learning. The Climate and Safety Surveys also provide the district with data to help measure progress and maintain accountability on objectives that are outlined within the strategic plan, Envision WCSD 2015 – Investing in Our Future.

In April 2011, several WCSD departments, including the Departments of Accountability, School Counseling, Family-School Partnerships, and School Police worked together to develop and administer the first annual School Climate Survey to school staff, students, and parents at nearly all schools in the WCSD. This impressive undertaking represented the first attempt to collect systematic data from schools to determine the extent to which their educational environment was conducive to student learning and well-being, promoted family engagement, and supported the efforts of all school employees.

Between March – June 2014, WCSD will again administer the Climate and Safety Surveys to all students, parents, and school employees. This Implementation Plan highlights the primary objectives, methodology, and timeline of the Climate and Safety Surveys. The intention of developing and disseminating the plan is to help document best practices and lessons learned from the past two years of administration and serve as a reference for all stakeholders during the 2014 administration of the School Climate Survey.

1.2. Purpose of the Climate Survey Project

Although terminology and measurement of school climate vary considerably, research consistently finds a positive correlation between better school climate and increased student learning and achievement (Jones et al., 2008). Research also suggests that students who attend schools with a more positive climate are less likely to engage in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking, drug use, truancy, fighting, and weapon carrying than students who attend schools with poor climates (e.g. Denny et al., 2011; Catalano et al., 2004; Rand Corporation, 2004; Cohen, 2001).

A positive school climate has also been found to predict teachers’ higher professional and organizational commitment (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011). Further, parental perceptions of
school climate are an important predictor of parental involvement in school (Seefeldt et al., 1998), parental involvement in children’s at-home learning (e.g., Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sheldon, 2003; Epstein 1996), and parents’ choices about which school to enroll their child (Taske & Schneider, 2001).

Educators and researchers have recognized that perceptions of school climate are comprised of a multitude of different elements. Although there is no single definition of school climate, a recent review of research and writings has suggested there are at least ten dimensions that shape perceptions of the school experience including: Environment, Structure, Safety, Teaching/Learning, Sense of School Community, Relationships, Morale, Peer Norms, School-Home-Community Partnerships, and Learning Community (Cohen, 2006).

Using these dimensions as an overarching framework, Washoe County School District has also aligned items on its Climate and Safety Surveys with several key objectives within the strategic plan, Envision WCSD 2015 – Investing in Our Future. Specifically, the strategic plan states that, “The District will create and implement structures, systems, policies, and procedures that…will be based on a positive, productive culture of meaningful, collaborative relationships and attention to a safe, orderly, and respectful learning and working environment focused on student achievement” (pg. 29). Towards that end, the District has set three objectives that highlight the need for annual data collection of climate and safety measures to maintain accountability and identify areas where further efforts are needed to reach critical milestones:

**Strategic Plan Objectives Supporting Need for Climate Survey**

**4.1.3** Schools will implement the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) model framework to develop action plans and to support initiatives in closing the achievement gap.

- **Milestone:** Increased number of schools using the ASCA evaluation model.

**4.1.6** School safety and strategies for building a positive culture and climate of respect will be embedded into the instructional day through the implementation, development and practice of social and emotional learning and social skills.

- **Milestone:** Increased number of schools that embed strategies for building a positive culture and climate of respect.

**3.2.3** Home and school relationships, parent satisfaction, support for academics, and response to informational needs of families will be assessed using an annual survey of parents and a family engagement index.

- **Milestone:** Increased number of satisfied parents with support for academics and responses to informational needs.
There are four primary goals for the 2014 WCSD Climate and Safety Survey Project to help schools and the school district measure progress on these objectives and milestones:

**WCSD Climate Survey Project Goals**

- **Goal 1**: Provide WCSD and schools with annual data on student, staff, and parent perceptions of school safety, order, engagement, and climate that will help them measure progress and impact on efforts to build a positive and respectful school culture.
- **Goal 2**: Provide WCSD and schools with annual data on students’ social and emotional competencies to help staff measure progress on the adoption of the ASCA framework and progress in implementing social emotional learning strategies district-wide.
- **Goal 3**: Provide WCSD and schools with annual data on parent, student, and staff perceptions of home and school relationships, parent satisfaction, support for academics, and response to informational needs of families.
- **Goal 4**: Provide schools with useful resources to help them review climate data and develop strategies and plans to improve school climate based on their data.

It is hoped that by collecting and disseminating Climate and Safety data that is timely, user-friendly, and useful, WCSD and schools will have the capacity to better identify areas of weakness in school climate and measure progress and impact of efforts to improve those areas over time.

**1.3 Changes to the Climate Survey Project for 2014**

The 2011 implementation of the Climate Survey served as a pilot for all four instruments. Each year since, an item analysis has been conducted to ensure that the composite items were reliable in measuring the intended climate components. Inter-reliability between items within a survey and comparisons of reliability between responses within schools helped to further validate the instrument. The surveys were refined through this analysis and flawed items were removed. Response options were altered to improve the quality of the data provided. This included the removal of a mid-point “neither disagree nor agree” option, addition of “don’t know” and “neutral” responses as needed, and changes to some question roots so that respondents were asked to indicate quantities, rather than agreement to statements. Some minor edits to the wording of

In 2012 and 2013, some schools were provided the option of having students complete the Colorado Student Perception Survey (a teacher rating survey completed by students in grades K – 12) in place of the Student Climate Survey. This will **NOT** be an option available to schools in 2014. Schools can choose to administer this teacher rating survey, but not instead of the Climate Survey.

Additionally, greater efforts were implemented to ensure that a representative sample of parents from throughout WCSD complete the survey. These efforts will include additional
handouts of the survey at public and school events. Greater efforts to build buy-in for the Climate/Safety Surveys were set into motion this and last year. Efforts included:

- Trainings with Parent Involvement Facilitators about the possible uses and importance of the Climate/Safety Surveys;
- Presentation to the Council on Family Engagement;
- Trainings with school counselors to build buy-in and notify counselors of survey dates;
- Presentation to zone leaders and principals to build buy-in and notify administrators of survey launch dates.

Also of note, the window of the Parent Climate Survey has been moved from May to March so that schools will be able to access their reports for use in developing and self-evaluating their Family Engagement Plans, which are due June 30th, 2014. Schools will receive the student and staff reports for their sites in August during the administrator retreat. Reports in 2014 will also include information on how schools rate in comparison to the district as well as other schools at their same level. Further, to ensure that all staff and stakeholders have access to the information, brief reports will be posted online for each school site. Finally, schools will also receive a list of resources (books, articles, websites, training ideas) for each key element of school climate. These resources will provide school staff ideas to discuss during weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings and school improvement planning efforts.

It is hoped that the changes to the instrument, data collection, and reporting processes will help drive increased understanding and use of the data, enhance buy-in and trust in the project, and spark further dialogue about school climate and its relationship to education.

2. Survey Measures

The annual survey battery in the WCSD consists of four instruments: (1) Student Climate Survey, (2) School Safety Survey, (3) Teacher and Staff Climate/Safety Survey, and (4) Parent Climate/Safety Survey. Parents and school employees each complete a one-time survey. Half of each survey is devoted to areas related to overall school climate and half of each survey is devoted to assessing school safety. Because of its length, the one-time survey administered to students is split into two separate instruments. Half of all students at each school complete the School Climate Survey and half of all students at each school complete the School Safety Survey. All surveys take roughly 15-20 minutes to complete. The majority of surveys are completed via computer. However, parents do have the option of completing the Parent Climate Survey via paper-and-pencil.

2.1 Student Climate Survey

Objective 4.1.3 of the WCSD strategic plan calls for the adoption of the ASCA framework for closing the achievement gap – Items that assess the ASCA competencies will be useful in evaluating the implementation of the framework and will provide school counselors with specific areas within the school’s environment that can be amended to improve student competencies. Specifically, there are 18 items that assess American School Counselor Association (ASCA) competencies in the Student School Climate Survey.
In line with the ASCA competencies, student items are grouped into nine climate components:

a. **Staff Fairness and Respect**: This subscale measures teacher and staff respect for students and colleagues, trust in students’ ability to make good decisions, and awareness and respect for rules and school-wide expectations for behavior (e.g. “Teachers and staff at my school treat each other with respect”; “Adults at my school treat all students fairly”).

b. **Student Respect**: This subscale measures how respectful students are of each other as well as teachers and staff, (e.g. “Students at my school care about each other”, “Students at my school treat teachers and staff with respect”, and “Students at this school are often teased or picked on”).

c. **Parent Engagement**: This subscale measures the extent to which students believe their school is welcoming to parents and encourages parents to participate in the learning process (e.g. “Parents and other family members are welcome at my school”, “My school invites my parents or family members to attend school activities”).

d. **Adult Caring**: This scale measures students’ perceptions about how much teachers and staff appear to care about them and listen to their ideas and opinions (e.g. “Teachers and staff at...”)}
my school listen to students’ ideas and opinions”, “At school there is a teacher or adult who will care if I’m not in school”.

e. **Teacher Academic Support:** This scale measures students’ perceptions about how much teachers monitor and discuss their progress, provide help when they are struggling, and set high expectations for their achievement (e.g. “My teachers think I can get high grades in their classes if I try hard enough”, “There is at least one teacher at my school who is willing to give me extra help with school work”).

f. **Student Engagement:** This scale measures students’ perceptions about how much they are challenged at school, how much they look forward to school, and how engaged they are in the learning process (e.g. “I think a lot about what I learn in my classes even when I’m out of school”; “Time seems to pass very quickly in my classes”).

**Student Level Outcomes:** In addition, students are asked to report on their academic commitment, their attitudes about the instrumentality of education, and their social and emotional competence. These measures will provide an indication of how the other six areas of school climate may be linked to students’ academic self-efficacy, their attitudes towards their education, and their ability to control and understand their emotions:

g. **Student Academic Commitment:** This scale measures students’ self-efficacy and their commitment to learning (e.g. “I can get high grades in my classes if I work hard enough”; “If the work in my classes is hard, I can learn it”).

h. **Instrumentality of Education:** This measure provides information about how useful students’ think their education will be in helping them meet their academic, personal, and professional goals (e.g. I will use what I learn in my classes in my future job”, “I learn things in my classes that will help me be successful in life outside of school”).

i. **Social and Emotional Competence:** This measure was developed by the American Institutes of Research and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to determine students’ abilities to understand and control their emotions and make decisions (e.g. “I control myself when I am frustrated, angry, or disappointed”, “If I can’t figure something out, I try different solutions until one works”). Through a grant funded by CASEL, WCSD will be planning and implementing a number of trainings, programs, and other efforts to increase the social and emotional learning of WCSD students and staff over the next few years. Including this measure in the School Climate Survey will help measure the impact of these efforts over time. This measure will also provide a better understanding of how students’ perceptions of their school climate might relate to their social and emotional competence. This inventory was expanded to 30 items for the 2013 administration for the purposes of studying how students’ SEL competencies may predict a range of academic outcomes, including drop-out, test performance, and resilience in the face of barriers to educational success.

Table 1 to the right reports the results of a 2013 reliability analysis of the major scales in the Student Climate Survey. Generally, Cronbach alpha levels above .7 are preferred, and would

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Respect</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Respect</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Engagement</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Caring</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
indicate that students are responding to all of the items in each scale in a consistent manner. All scales met these criteria.

2.2 School Safety Survey

The Safety Survey was developed by Safe and Drug Free Schools and the WCSD Police Department. The Safety Survey is intended to inform targeted deployment of resources for prevention and intervention purposes. Due to the range of information needed, a separate instrument was created for students that is administered independently of the Student Climate Survey. Safety questions pertaining to teachers and staff are embedded within the Teacher and Staff Climate Survey. Safety items are grouped into seven areas:

a. **Physical and Social-Emotional Safety**: These items ask students to report on their perception of safety and experiences of victimization while at school (e.g. “I feel safe on the way to and from school”, “how many times in the last 12 months have you been grabbed, shoved, punched, or kicked by someone being mean”).

b. **Physical Environment**: These items ask students to rate their school’s physical environment, including the maintenance and cleanliness of the school and the amount of vandalism evident on school property (e.g. “My school building is clean”; “Vandalism of school property is a problem at my school”).

c. **Safety Knowledge**: These items ask students to rate their awareness of school safety protocols and their capacity to respond to emergencies (e.g. “In the event of an emergency at school, I know what to do”, “I know who to go to for help if I am bullied in school”).

d. **Behavior**: These measures ask students to report on their drug and alcohol use, participation in violent activities, and other risk-taking behaviors (e.g. “How many times during the past 30 days did you smoke a cigarette?” “How many times during the past 30 days did you bring a weapon, such as a gun or knife, to school?”)

e. **Perception of Drug/Alcohol Risk**: These and the measures listed in f and g were added to the 2013 Student Safety Survey to fulfill grant requirements in association with Join Together Northern Nevada. Five items help assess students’ perception of the risk of harming themselves physically or in other ways when they drink, smoke tobacco, or use drugs (e.g. “How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?”). Items are rated along a four point scale with 1 = No risk; 2 = Slight Risk; 3 = Moderate Risk; and 4 = Great Risk.

f. **Perception of Parent Disapproval of Drug/Alcohol Use**: These four measures were added to the 2013 Student Safety Survey to measure how much their parents would disapprove of their alcohol and drug use (e.g. “How wrong do your parents/guardians feel it would be for you to smoke tobacco?”). Items are rated on a four point scale with 1 = Not at all wrong, 2 = A little bit wrong; 3 = Wrong; and 4 = Very Wrong.
g. **Perception of Peer Disapproval of Drug/Alcohol Use.** These four measures were added to the 2013 Student Safety Survey to measure how much their peers would disapprove of their alcohol and drug use (e.g. “How wrong do your peers feel it would be for you to smoke tobacco?”). Items are rated on a four point scale with 1 = Not at all wrong, 2 = A little bit wrong; 3 = Wrong; and 4 = Very Wrong. In addition, one item “How do you feel about someone your age having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?” was added in 2013. Response options include 1 = Neither Approve nor Disapprove; 2 = Somewhat Disapprove; 3 = Strongly Disapprove; and 4 = Don’t Know or Can’t Say.

### 2.3 Parent Climate Survey

Research has increasingly focused on the importance of family involvement in students’ education. Parental involvement has been shown to promote positive academic outcomes for children (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). However, parents face a number of barriers to engaging in their child’s learning, including at the school-level. Parents’ perceptions of schools are linked to their decisions about where to send their children to school. The parent climate survey asks a number of items related to parents’ perceptions of staff, the school, the education provided to their children, and the communication between home and school.

Parent items are grouped into six areas:

- **a. School Supportiveness:** How welcoming school is to parents, school expectations about parental engagement (e.g. “I feel welcome at my child’s school, “My child’s school sees parents as important partners”).

- **b. School Leadership:** How available and courteous the school’s leadership is to parents (e.g. “The principal makes decisions that are in the best interest of all children”, “The principal was courteous and listened to my concerns”).

- **c. Quality of Education:** Perceptions about the quality of education received, availability and respect given by school staff to parents (e.g. “The teachers set high expectations for my child’s learning”).

- **d. Contact with School Personnel and School-Home Communication:** Quality of school and staff’s communication with parents (e.g. “I am kept informed about my child’s behavior”, “When I’ve asked my child’s teacher for help on how to support my child’s learning, he or she provided me with help”).

- **e. Safety and Behavior:** Perceptions of safety and illegal behaviors on school campuses (e.g. “My child is safe at school”, “There is drug use in my child’s school”)

- **f. School Operations:** Perceptions of school site cleanliness, quality of facilities, quality of bus service provided, and quality of the food options provided (“My school building is clean”, “Healthy food options are provided in the cafeteria”)
2.4 School Employee Climate Survey

WCSD staff receive one of two surveys. Non-instructional staff complete an abbreviated version of the survey given to teachers. In the longer version, teachers are asked to report on six key areas of school climate:

a. **Expectations of Success**: Expectations of student achievement, professional commitment to helping students (e.g. “Teachers and staff set high expectations for students’ achievement; “Teachers and staff at my school do not allow students to give up in class”)

b. **Fairness and Respect**: Respect for diversity and discipline (e.g. “Teachers and staff respect students at my school”; The rules and expectations about student behavior are enforced equally by staff”)

c. **Parent Involvement**: Proportion of students’ parents and family members who are involved in their child’s education, supportive of their efforts, and are aware of their child’s progress (e.g. “How many of your students’ parents attended parent-teacher conferences when you requested them?; “How many of your students’ parents have you met; “How many of your students’ parents/guardians have asked you about ways they can support their child’s learning at home?”)

d. **Home-School Communication**: How welcoming school is to parents, schools’ efforts to update parents/guardians about student progress, involvement of parents in educational process (e.g. “My school is welcoming to parents”; “When teachers at my school contact parents, it is usually to discuss problems with their child’s behavior or academic progress”)

e. **Instructional Focus**: The extent to which high quality teaching is provided to students, how well instruction is differentiated, and how much communication occurs between grade levels and classes (e.g. “How many teachers in this school focus instruction on learning, not just remembering facts”; “How many teachers in this school take responsibility for ensuring that needs of students with special instructional requirements are addressed”)

f. **Staff Collaboration**: How effective is school leadership, how much does school leadership appear to value staff opinion, and how much collaboration and teamwork exists among staff members (e.g. “There is a sense of teamwork among all school teachers and staff” and “The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns”)

g. **Safety, School Pride, and Physical Environment**: Perceptions of physical security, knowledge of safety protocols (e.g. “My school building is clean”, “Teachers and staff are proud to work at this school”)
3. Procedure for Parent, Staff, and Student Climate Surveys

Overview of Implementation Plan for Each Population:

**Student Climate/Safety Survey:**
- Completed on school computers with all graders March 24th – June 13, 2014.
  - Half of all students at each school will complete the Climate Survey and half will complete the Safety Survey.

**Parent Climate/Safety Surveys:**
- *Elementary School Parents* – Emailed to parents on March 10th. Paper Surveys will be distributed to schools on March 3rd with pre-printed envelope for privacy – surveys will be grouped by teachers according to class lists and Connect Ed family language. Closes April 25, 2014.

**School Employee Climate/Safety Surveys:**
- *WCS School Staff* – Emailed to all school employees on March 24th. Survey is open until June 13th. Teachers complete a longer version of the survey administered to non-instructional staff.

3.1 Student Climate/Safety Survey

Parental notification letters will be sent home to all parents of 9th and 11th grade students to provide them information about the Climate and Safety Survey. Parents will have 2 weeks to return the form to their child’s school secretary if they do not want them to participate in the Climate/Safety Survey project.

All 9th and 11th grade students will be invited to participate in the Climate and Safety Surveys. Students will complete the surveys on the computers in their school’s library or computer labs. If requested, the Department of Accountability will also set up a mobile lab of 30-60 iPads and administer the survey for schools. High school administrators can also opt to have 10th and 12th graders complete the survey if desired. If schools with larger school populations (e.g. North Valleys) specifically request to survey a smaller sample of their school, they will only be required to achieve 60% student participation from 9th and 11th graders. However, these high schools must identify one month in advance of survey administration how they intend to select 60% of 9th and 11th graders to ensure that the process does not exclude specific sub-populations.

In March, high school counselors, administrators, library, and computer staff will receive a brief 2-page implementation guide to help them facilitate the process of data collection at their school site. In addition, high school counselors and computer lab staff will receive a one-hour workshop during either their March monthly meetings. The purpose of these training sessions is to provide staff with guidelines for implementation and to develop buy-in for the survey project. During these training sessions, staff will receive guidelines for implementation. Although it will be recommended that counselors have all 9th and 11th grade students complete the survey in the school computer lab during their English classes, school staff will have flexibility to design their own data collection plans.

Survey response rates will be monitored on SurveyMonkey. Any schools that do not achieve at least 85% of student participation will be contacted and asked to report on any
problems that occurred during administration. Additional supports will be provided to any schools who do not meet their 85% target response rate.

3.2 Staff Climate Survey

Staff at all WCSD schools will receive an email inviting them to participate in the 2014 Climate Survey through a link to an online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. Teachers will be directed to a longer version of the survey that will ask more detailed questions about their teaching practices and relationships with students. Non-instructional staff will complete an abbreviated version of the survey. All staff will have until the last day of school (June 13th) to complete the survey. They will receive a total of seven emailed reminders, roughly one reminder each week.

3.3 Parent Climate Survey

The Department of Family-School Partnerships will send a series of pre-communications to parents to notify them about the Climate Survey beginning two weeks prior to the launch of the survey. Pre-communications will include a radio and media tour, emails to parents who list an address in Infinite Campus, and Connect Ed calls. These same communications strategies will be leveraged to again notify parents that the survey is available on the date of the official survey launch. The survey will be open from March 10th to April 25th.

Parents with multiple children in the school district will be asked to respond regarding their oldest child at each school. Parents with children at more than one school level (e.g. one child at an elementary school and one child at a middle school) will be invited to complete a climate survey for their oldest child at each school level. For example, a parent with two children at School A would only complete the survey for the oldest child enrolled at that school. A parent with two children at Elementary School A and one child at Middle School B would be asked to complete two surveys, one for their oldest child at School A and one for their child at School B. Paper surveys and emailed surveys come pre-printed with the name of the child the parent should be responding about.

The Parent Climate Survey itself will be available both online and by paper-and-pencil. Parents will be able to access the link to the online survey either through the email sent to them at the email address listed in Infinite Campus, on the front page of the main WCSD website, and on the Climate Survey web page. The paper survey will be directly mailed home to parents of students enrolled at secondary schools with postage-paid envelopes in which to return the surveys. Paper surveys will be distributed to schools with pre-printed envelopes for privacy to parents of all elementary school students in the district. Surveys will be grouped by teachers according to class lists and Connect Ed family language. Parent Involvement Facilitators will receive an FAQ document and a training session in March to help them administer the survey with parents and developing buy-in for the survey at their school.

Parents who return completed Climate Surveys will be entered into a raffle to win one of several gift certificates and prizes donated for the project. Volunteers from the Volunteer Service Center will open paper surveys and organize by school site. The Department of Family-School Partnerships will monitor the number of surveys returned from each school and send email reminders to schools with low survey responses. Paper surveys will be mailed to assigned vendor for processing by May 2nd.
Appendix A: 2014 Parent/Guardian Notification Form for Student Climate/Safety Surveys

School Climate and Safety Surveys
Parent/Guardian Notification Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that your child will be asked to complete one of two short, confidential surveys in the next few weeks. The Climate and Safety Surveys will be given to all 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 11th grade students. Responses to these surveys will reveal information about students’ experience in their schools and classrooms. These responses are summarized into school reports for principals and teachers to inform their work with children.

- The School Climate Survey will ask students about their perspectives on education, their school, how students treat each other, their relationships with staff members, and their social and emotional skills.
- The School Safety Survey will ask about how safe students feel on school property (school grounds, bus), how often they engage in risky behaviors (drinking alcohol, using drugs), and how well they know school safety procedures.

Your child will be randomly assigned to complete only one of these online surveys in his/her school computer lab sometime between March 24th and the last day of school (June 13th for most students). Each survey takes no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Students will not put their names or any other identifying information (address, phone number, initials) on the Safety Survey. For the School Climate Survey ONLY, student identification numbers will be collected so that WCSD’s Research/Evaluation Dept. can study the link between students’ beliefs about school and their academic outcomes. This would be done solely to improve educational delivery and climate for our students. No one outside of WCSD’s Research and Evaluation Dept. will have access to these ID numbers. Once ID numbers collected and used to link to student achievement data, the data file will be stripped of student ID numbers so that no one can identify a specific student by their ID number.

The surveys are voluntary and students can decide if they want to participate. They can also skip any questions they do not want to answer. For more information, contact your child’s school. An electronic copy of the Climate and Safety surveys are available for your review on the Washoe County School District website at: http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/schools/safe-and-drug-free-schools.

Our goal is to better understand the student perspective as we strive to address the learning needs of all students. Thank you for your cooperation and interest in these efforts. If you have any questions, call Katherine Loudon, WCSD Guidance Counselor Coordinator at 850-8016 or check the Safe and Drug Free Schools website above. Thank you.

IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO TAKE THESE SURVEYS, RETURN THIS BOTTOM FORM TO YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL. YOU DO NOT NEED TO RETURN THIS FORM IF YOU ARE OKAY WITH YOUR CHILD TAKING THESE SURVEYS.

Please return this form to your child’s school within 14 days only if you DO NOT want your child to take part in the Climate or Safety Survey. If you are okay having your child participate, you do not need to do anything else.

[ ] NO, my child may not take part in the Climate or Safety Survey.

Student’s name:________________________ School:___________________ Grade: ____

Parent/Guardian’s signature:_____________________ Date:____________________
References


