



**IMPLEMENTING MEASURES FOR ASSESSING SCHOOL SAFETY AND STUDENTS'
ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION AT SCHOOL**

Fiscal Year 2013

Report

To the

Legislature

As required by

Minnesota Laws 2009

Chapter 96

Article 2

Section 61

COMMISSIONER:

Brenda Cassellius, Ed. D.

**Implementing
Measures for
Assessing School
Safety and
Students'
Engagement and
Connection at
School**

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Upon request, this report can be made available in alternative formats.

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Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to prepare this report was approximately \$600.00.

Implementing Measures for Assessing School Safety and Students' Engagement and Connection at School Workgroup

Final Report

The Minnesota Legislature in 2009 directed the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to convene a work group to make recommendations for a tool for schools to measure student engagement. After several meetings of the large work group, a sub-committee formed to identify an instrument for measuring student engagement. The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI), developed at the University of Minnesota, was chosen. The instrument, in comparison to the 21 other student engagement survey tools reviewed, has high validity and reliability, has been tested for use in program evaluation, and is currently being deployed at districts across the country to monitor individual student engagement.

The work group's subcommittee membership included Sandy Christenson, Birkman Professor of Educational Leadership, University of Minnesota; Jenni Norlin-Weaver, Director of Teaching & Learning, Edina Public Schools; Char Myklebust, Director of Professional Learning, District 287; Maria Steigauf, Teacher, St. Paul Public Schools; Mary Hunt, MDE Special Education Policy; Cammy Lehr, MDE Effective Practices; Sheila Oehrlein, Supervisor, and Nancy Riestenberg, MDE Safety, Health and Nutrition. Subcommittee members reviewed several instruments that directly or indirectly measure student engagement. They received technical assistance from two leading developers of student engagement measurements, Dr. Sandy Christensen who led the development of the SEI and Dr. James Appleton, who has been implementing the SEI in Gwinnett County Schools in Virginia.

The recommendation of the subcommittee to use the SEI to measure student engagement was then passed on to the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) Research Team. In the summer of 2012, the MSS was undergoing revision for online application, so the request to have the SEI included in the survey was timely. The MSS serves many needs, as it provides data for federal and state mandates. In addition, it has served as a data source for researchers' longitudinal projects. Most importantly, survey data is used by school districts and their community partners to inform and drive program planning and improvement.

Before every administration of the survey, the MSS Research Team takes under consideration a variety of suggestions for new question topics, revisions and even some deletions. Because of the extensive survey instrument redesign in this administration, the suggestions were numerous. All agencies involved in the survey agreed that compromises are essential, and that has been true for the SEI questions. The MSS Research team determined that to meet the needs of SEI subcommittee, the MSS 2013 would include the Teacher-Student Relationship scale from the recommended instrument. To obtain additional information regarding educational engagement, indicators suggested from the Child Trends Flourishing Indicators Project were adopted.

A list of the SEI questions and other student engagement questions that are being included in the 2013 version of the MSS is included in an addendum to this report. [To view the full 2013 Minnesota Student Survey](#). As the survey goes completely online in 2016, it is possible that the state will be able to offer districts the full SEI as an optional subset of questions for district and building level use.

The process of incorporating and fully implementing the student engagement indicators in a manner that is useful and manageable for school districts is incremental. The results of the SEI questions from the 2013 MSS will be offered as a report on the MSS website, and a district data set will be available for the school districts that participate in the survey. The state analysis of the SEI indicators included in the 2013 MSS will help provide insight into developing guidance for districts using the small number of questions or the full SEI tool.

Another requirement of the 2009 law was “determine how to report 'safety' in order to comply with federal law.” The U.S. Department of Education provides states with non-regulatory guidance to report data on school safety. The data is submitted as part of *Minnesota’s Consolidated State Performance Report for State Formula Grant Programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Minnesota's data is pulled from the Disciplinary Incident Reporting System (DIRS), MDE's online reporting system for school districts to comply with state and federal reporting requirements for suspensions, expulsions, special education and dangerous weapons. The federal Gun-Free Schools Act requires suspensions and expulsions to be reported by incident type: alcohol-related; illicit drug-related; violent incident without physical injury; violent incident with physical injury; and weapons possession. This data is submitted annually.

Finally, the law directed MDE to post information from the SEI to “the school report cards beginning July 1, 2014.” While MDE no longer posts district report cards on the agency website, an updated data center is available on the website to provide the public timely information on school districts statewide. The data center was designed to provide parents, educators, schools, districts and citizens with easy access to test results, revenue and expenditure data, demographic information and other critical data in a centralized location. The data previously included on the school report card pages is now available there.

See Appendix A for Minnesota Laws 2009, Chapter 96, Article 2, Section 61

See Appendix B for Student Engagement Indicators Questions

See Appendix C for Student Engagement Indicators Work Group Members

Appendix A

2009 Regular Session Laws, Chapter 96--H.F. No. 2, Article 2 – Education Excellence, Sec. 61.

IMPLEMENTING MEASURES FOR ASSESSING SCHOOL SAFETY AND STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION AT SCHOOL

(a) To implement the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.35, subdivision 3, paragraph (d), the commissioner of education, in consultation with interested stakeholders, including parents and teachers among other stakeholders, must convene a group of recognized and qualified experts on student engagement and connection and classroom teachers currently teaching in Minnesota schools to:

(1) identify highly reliable variables of student engagement and connection that may include student attendance, home support for learning, and student participation in out-of-school activities, among other variables; and

(2) determine how to report "safety" in order to comply with federal law.

(b) The commissioner must submit a written report and all the group's working papers to the education committees of the House of Representatives and senate by February 15, 2010, presenting the group's responses to paragraph (a), clauses (1) and (2). The commissioner must submit a second, related report to the education committees of the legislature by February 15, 2013, indicating the content and analysis of and the format for reporting any data collected under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.35, subdivision 3, paragraph (d). The group convened under this section expires December 31, 2013.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment and applies to school report cards beginning July 1, 2014.

Appendix B

Student Engagement Indicators Questions

Student Engagement Indicators Questions

Overall, adults at my school treat students fairly.
Adults at my school listen to the students.
My teachers are there for me when I need them.
The school rules are fair.
Overall, my teachers are open and honest with me.
I enjoy talking to the teachers here.
I feel safe at school.
Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person, not just as a student.

The tests in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.
Most of what is important to know you learn in school.
The grades in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.
What I'm learning in my classes will be important in my future.
After finishing my schoolwork, I check to see whether I understand what I'm doing.
Learning is fun because I get better at something.
When I do well in school it's because I work hard.
I feel like I have a say about what happens to me at school.

Other students at school care about me.
Students at my school are there for me when I need them.
Other students here like me the way I am.
I enjoy talking to the students here.
Students here respect what I have to say.
I have some friends at school.

I plan to continue my education following high school.
Going to school after high school is important.
School is important for achieving my future goals.
My education will create many future opportunities for me.
I am hopeful about my future.

My family/guardian(s) are willing to help me.
When something good happens at school, my family/guardian(s) want to know about it.
My family/guardian(s) want me to keep trying when things are tough at school.

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Appendix C

Implementing Measures for Assessing School Safety and Students' Engagement and Connection at School

Student Engagement Indicators Work Group Members

Name	Title	Organization
Jim Angermeyer	Director of Research & Evaluation	Bloomington Public Schools
Meghan Barp	Program Manager	Greater Twin Cities United Way
Mary Cecconi	Executive Director	Parents United for Public Schools
SandraChristenson	Birkman Professor	University of Minnesota
Emanuel Dolo	Research Director	MN Minority Education Partnership
Jill Eulberg	Program Specialist	MN School Safety Center
Abdulahi Farrah	Somali Outreach Worker	Richfield Public Schools
Marquita Fox	Diversity Specialist	Hopkins Public Schools
Jennifer Godinez	Associate Director	MN Minority Education Partnership
Marjorie Grevious	Community Impact Manager	Greater Twin Cities United Way
Angie Judd	High School Specialist	MN Department of Education
Al Judson	Principal	Park Rapids Public Schools
Deb Landvik	Parent Involvement/ESEA	MN Department of Education
Cammy Lehr	Effective Practices	MN Department of Education
Janell Mellgen	Teacher	Seven Hills Charter School
Char Myklebust	Director of Professional Learning	District 287
Jenni Norlin-Weaver	Director of Teaching & Learning	Edina Public Schools
Peggy Poitra	Assistant Education Director	Shakopee Mdewakanton
Alex Poppy	School Social Worker	Brooklyn Center Public Schools
Mike Rabideaux	Superintendent	Fond Du Lac Ojibwe Schools
Michael Resnick	Professor, Konopka Chair	University of Minnesota
Willametta Saydee-Tarr	Liberian Outreach Worker	Robbinsdale Public Schools
Regina Seabrook	Teacher	South Washington Public Schools
Cindy Skalsky	Safe & Drug Free Schools	Fergus Falls Public Schools
Paul Snyder	Program Coordinator	Konopka Institute, University of MN
Maria Steigauf	Teacher	Saint Paul Public Schools
Sandra Suarez	Educational Director	El Colegio
Koua Vang	Director	Long Tieng Academy
Nancy VanHorn	Special Education	Prior Lake Savage Public Schools
Cathy Wagner	Information Technology	MN Department of Education
Barb Ziemke	Parent/Parent Advocate	PACER Center
Cindy Zwicky	Instructional Facilitator	Minneapolis Public Schools
Staff		
Carol Thomas	Director, Safety, Health & Nutrition	MN Department of Education
Karen Carlson	Supervisor, Safety, Health & Nutrition	MN Department of Education
Ann Iweriebor	Administrative Support	MN Department of Education
Ali Anfinson	Results Measurement Specialist	MN Department of Education
Nancy Riestenberg	School Climate Specialist	MN Department of Education
Heather Britt	Facilitator	