SCHOOL CLIMATE REPORT

2021-22

Linn-Mar Community School District

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the results of the School Climate Survey administered to 7th through 12th-grade students in the Linn-Mar Community School District. A total of 1,786 students completed the survey, resulting in a 52% response rate. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on student experiences of the school environment to guide district decision-making on school climate improvement efforts. This initiative helps to execute upon the District Strategic Plan of 2019-20, particularly on the action plan of Diversity and Inclusion: "Linn-Mar employees and students will be treated with dignity and respect, feel valued, make meaningful contributions, and benefit from differing perspectives."

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Most students report positive relationships with teachers and there are few disparities across various dimensions of teacher-student relationships.**

   a. Students are more likely to agree that teachers care about their learning (95%) and treat them with respect (90%) compared to agreeing that teachers treat them the same as other students (79%) and that they trust their teachers (78%).
   b. Female and non-binary students report less trust in teachers compared to male students, and Oak Ridge students report less trust than Excelsior and Linn-Mar High students.
   c. There are also differences in mentorship whereby students from lower social class background and Oak Ridge students report lower levels of mentorship.

2. **Nearly 20% of students report being personally bullied and 40% report seeing someone else being bullied.**

   a. Out of the reasons provided, bullying is most often related to appearance, gender, and sexual orientation.
   b. Nearly half of non-binary students report being personally bullied and 80% of these students report it was due to their gender and/or sexual orientation.
   c. Black, Asian, and Multi-racial students who were bullied or saw bullying are more likely to say the bullying was related to race compared to White students.

3. **Most students agree the curriculum is inclusive and that they feel like a valuable classroom member, but less than half of students report having opportunities in class to talk about race, gender, and sexual orientation.**

   a. Opportunities in class to talk about race, gender, and sexual orientation are less likely to occur in Excelsior and opportunities to talk about disability are less likely to occur in Linn-Mar High.
   b. Most students report that the curriculum is inclusive, however, non-white students are less likely to agree.
   c. About 76% of students feel they are valuable classrooms members, but this is significantly lower for non-binary students.

d. Additionally, 26% of Black students and 22% of Latino students report they feel unable to share in class due to their race and 48% of non-binary students report they feel unable to share due to their gender.

4. Seventy-two percent (72%) of students report always or most of the time feeling physically safe in school and 63% of students report always or most of the time feeling emotionally safe in school. Students with a socially marginalized identity are less likely to feel safe in school.

    a. When describing how they define physical safety, students indicated physical safety is being free from violence, danger, harm, and fear in schools.
    b. Emotional safety, as defined by students, is being able to openly express emotions and thoughts, not experiencing bullying or hurtful comments, and having positive mental and emotional health.
    c. Most students say they know what the rules (96%) and know what kind process will follow if they break a rule (78%). They are more likely to agree that rules are consistent (79%) than rules are strict (68%).
    d. About 70% of students agree discipline is fair and this is lower for Black, Latino, and Multi-racial students.

5. Most students feel like they belong at school (79%), but this varies significantly by social group whereby students with a socially marginalized identity feel less likely to belong.

    a. Around 50-60% of students report having chances to decide what is best for the class or school, having opportunities to express concerns, and having power to make change.
    b. While most students report diversity, equity, and inclusion is important at their school (84%), only half of students agree that students respect each other's differences (51%).
    c. In open-ended comments, some students wanted greater inclusion and equity for socially marginalized students in schools while other students wanted identities and politics out of school.
    d. Students report relatively low levels of practicing social and emotional skills, particularly Linn-Mar High students.

CONCLUSION

Improving school climate is one of the proven ways to benefit students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. Most 7th-12th LMCSD grade students are experiencing a positive school climate, however students with a socially marginalized identity, particularly non-binary and non-white students, often experience a more negative school climate. From the results of the survey, focus areas for interventions may include improving LGBTQ+ and non-white student experiences, developing social and emotional skills, increasing student voice in decision-making, and improving responsiveness to bullying and harassment. Schools can make purposeful efforts, in collaboration with stakeholders and guided by data and evidence, to improve equity and inclusion in schools.

INTRODUCTION

School Climate

Students encounter a variety of experiences in school that can both positively and negatively affect their academic, social, and emotional development. School climate refers to how members of the school community experience their educational environment, including aspects of interpersonal relationships, safety, teaching and learning, and discipline. Schools that are safe, supportive, and relationally strong have positive impacts on student well-being.

Research has 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. School districts are increasingly focusing on school climate improvement efforts through engaging with stakeholders and collecting relevant data.

School climate surveys are a recommended tool to measure student perceptions of the school environment. When assessing student experiences, disaggregating data and attending to differences between social groups is particularly important to understanding achievement gaps and disciplinary outcomes. Results of the surveys can be used to identify areas of strength and improvement, monitor progress towards equity goals, and guide district decision-making and building-level improvement planning. School climate measurement is a recommended step towards improving equity in students' experiences of school.

District Context

The Linn-Mar Community School District (LMCSD) serves approximately 8,000 students in seven elementary schools, two intermediate schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The district, like the state of Iowa, has seen an increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of their population. The district is made up of 82% White students, 8% Black students, 1.5% Latino students, and 8% Asian students. About 23% of students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch.

The Linn-Mar Strategic Plan of 2019-2020 outlines key focus areas for the district to accomplish the mission of inspiring learning, unlocking potential, and empowering achievement. This school climate initiative helps to execute upon these key initiatives:

1. Destination Linn-Mar Action Plan: Diversity and Inclusion - "Linn-Mar employees and students will be treated with dignity and respect, feel valued, make meaningful contributions, and benefit from differing perspectives."

2. Student Success Action Plan: "Every student will experience high quality instructional practices."

Linn-Mar Strategic Plan 2019-2020

Student Success Action Plan
- Adults will enhance their awareness of social-emotional learning through professional development.
- All learning will be aligned with rigorous academic standards.
- Every student will experience high quality instructional practices.

LM. Destination Linn-Mar Action Plan
- Talent Value: Invest in employees by attracting, supporting, and retaining high-quality staff through a valuable employee experience.
- Diversity and Inclusion: Linn-Mar employees and students will be treated with dignity and respect, feel valued, make meaningful contributions, and benefit from differing perspectives.
- Culture: Connect with the Linn-Mar community to foster a sense of pride to ensure a world class education for our students.

Spirit. **Opportunity. Future»**

Future Focused Action Plan
- Completion of Hazel Point and Boulder Peak Intermediate Schools.
- Establish new start/dismissal times for 2020-21 school year.
- Approve new SAVE Revenue Purpose Statement via referendum in November election.
- Update 10-year Capital Improvement Plan.

MISSION: Inspire Learning. Unlock Potential. **Empower Achievement.**

LM. LINN-MAR Community School District

In December 2021, the LMCSD Board released a statement on equity and inclusion addressing ongoing discussions surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion within the school district. The Board stated it is a top priority to create a safe learning environment for students and has begun efforts to address inclusiveness and belonging in schools. This school climate survey is an important step in progressing towards district equity goals.

METHODS

Survey Instrument

The 2021-22 School Climate Survey was developed in collaboration with several partners: Rachel Maller and Chad Rhym, University of Iowa graduate students; Kingsley Botchway II, DEI Consultant; Sarika Bhakta, CDE, President of Nikeya Diversity Consulting; Anthony Arrington, CDE, Top Rank Partner; the LMCSD DEI Committee; and LMCSD administration. Survey items were taken or modeled after nationally implemented and validated school climate survey instruments. Survey domains cover the topics of teacher-student relationships, bullying, inclusive classrooms, safety and disciplinary environment, and social and emotional environment. The survey also includes demographic items asking students to report their school, grade, gender, race, and highest level of parent education level (as a proximal measure for socioeconomic status). See Appendix B for the full survey instrument.

Survey Administration

A link to complete the survey online was sent to all 7th to 12th-grade students starting on December 13th and closing on December 22nd, 2021. Responses were anonymous and students were allowed to skip questions they preferred not to answer. The total number of respondents was 1,786 students with an overall response rate of 52%. The response rate by middle school was 75% and by high school was 39%.

Survey Analysis

Responses were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported into a statistical software program (Stata) to undergo data cleaning, recoding, and analysis. Measures that used the response categories of "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree" were recoded to "Agree" or "Disagree" for analysis. The open-ended questions were qualitatively coded.

This report details average levels (mean) of student reports of perceptions in school. It highlights differences or disparities in group averages only when there is a statistically significant difference between two groups. See Appendix B for more information on data cleaning, recoding, and analysis.
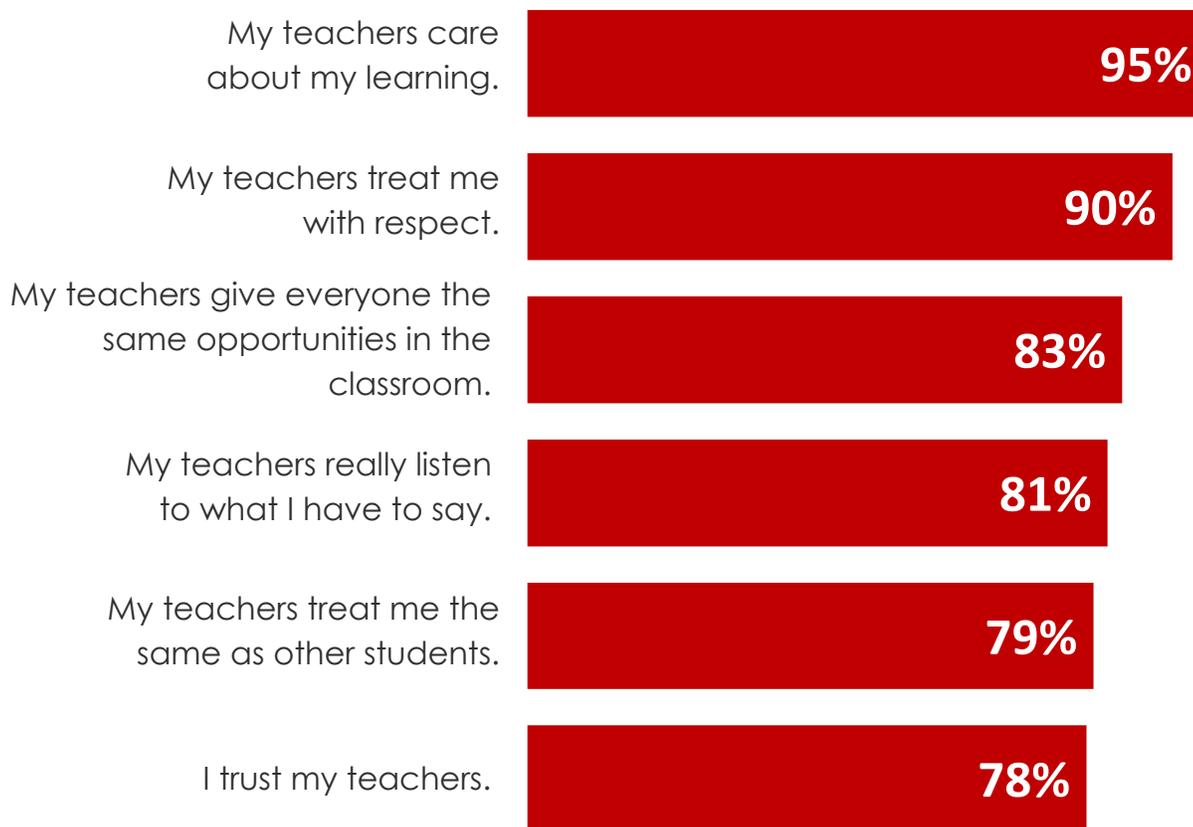
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Number of Respondents = 1,786

	Survey Sample		District Population (7th-12th-grade)	
	Percent	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**
School				
Excelsior MS	28%	495	19%	632
Oak Ridge MS	23%	407	16%	544
Linn-Mar HS	49%	881	65%	2176
Not Reported	<1%	3	-	-
Grade				
7th	25%	441	17%	595
8th	25%	454	17%	592
9th	13%	228	17%	599
10th	15%	276	16%	569
11th	11%	194	16%	563
12th	11%	190	16%	540
Not Reported	<1%	3	-	-
School Type				
Middle School	51%	902	34%	1187
High School	49%	881	66%	2271
Not Reported	<1%	3	-	-
Gender				
Male	44%	789	51%	1752
Female	47%	842	49%	1706
Non-Binary*	6%	108	-	-
Not Reported	3%	47	-	-
Race				
White	71%	1,262	82%	2822
Black	4%	71	9%	315
Latino	3%	51	2%	61
Asian	7%	127	7%	245
Multi-racial	8%	150	-	-
Other	1%	25	<1%	5
Not Reported	6%	100	<1%	10
Parent Education				
High School Degree	12%	210	-	-
College Degree	33%	593	-	-
Graduate Degree	32%	570	-	-
Not Reported	23%	413	-	-

Non-Binary includes non-binary, transgender, gender non-conforming or gender fluid, questioning

RESULTS

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Most students experience positive relationships with teachers. More students agree that teachers care about learning (95%) and treat them with respect (90%) compared to teachers treating them the same as other students (79%) and having trust in their teachers (78%).

My teachers care about my learning.	**95%**
My teachers treat me with respect.	**90%**
My teachers give everyone the same opportunities in the classroom.	**83%**
My teachers really listen to what I have to say.	**81%**
My teachers treat me the same as other students.	**79%**
I trust my teachers.	**78%**

86% of students agree they have **at least one adult in their school that they can go to for trust and advice.**

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS (CONT.)

Teacher-student relationships are mainly consistent across demographic groups. There are only some notable gender, class, and school level differences for some dimensions.
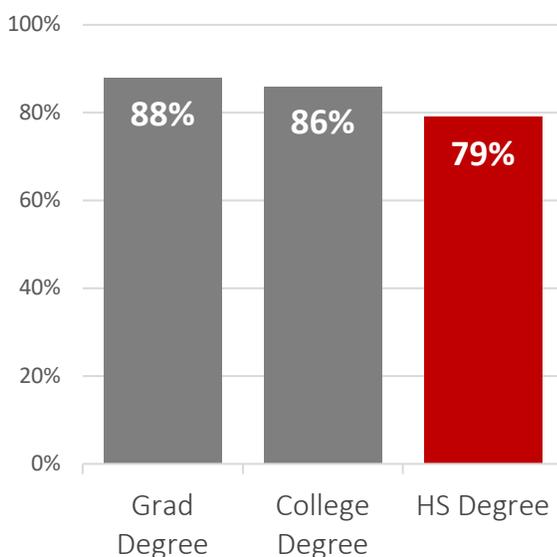
Non-binary students are less likely to agree that **teachers listen to what they have to say** compared to male and female students.
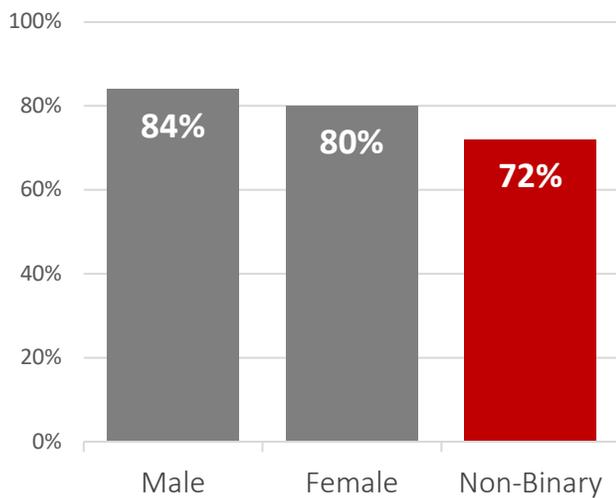
Non-binary and female students are less likely to agree they **trust their teachers** compared to male students.
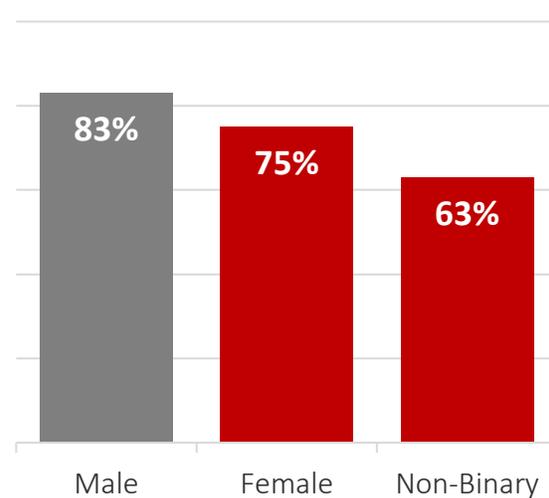
Students whose parents have a high school degree are less likely to **have an adult they go to for trust and advice**
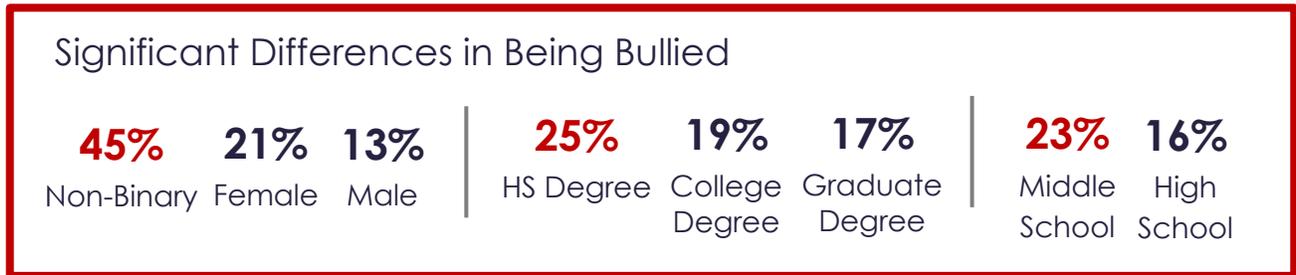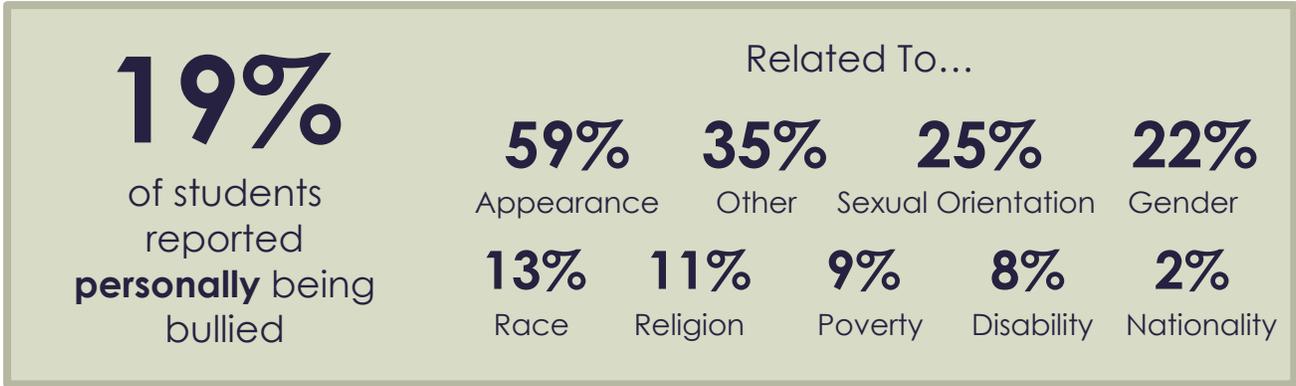

Linn-Mar High students are less likely to agree **teachers care about their learning** (93%) compared to Excelsior (96%) and Oak Ridge students (97%).

Oak Ridge students are less likely to **trust their teachers** (72%) compared to Excelsior (78%) and Linn-Mar High students (80%).

Oak Ridge students are less likely to **have an adult they trust and go to for advice** (81%) compared to Excelsior (88%) and Linn-Mar High students (87%).
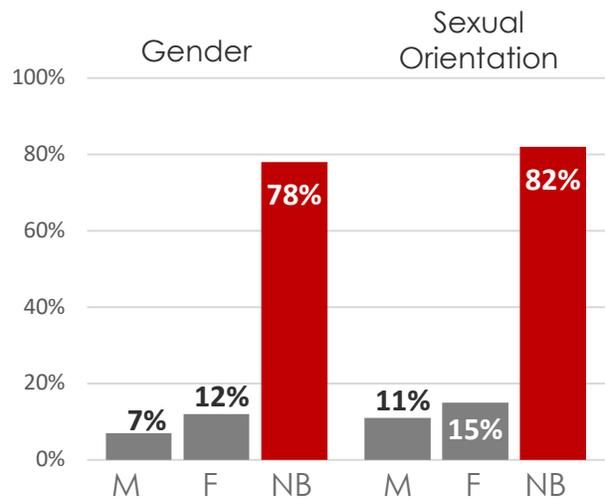
BULLYING

About one in five students have been bullied and this varies significantly by gender, class, and school level. Bullying related to sexual orientation and gender is higher for non-binary students while bullying related to race is higher for non-white students.

19%
of students reported **personally** being bullied

Related To…

59% Appearance	**35%** Other	**25%** Sexual Orientation	**22%** Gender
13% Race	**11%** Religion	**9%** Poverty	**8%** Disability	**2%** Nationality

Significant Differences in Being Bullied

45% Non-Binary	**21%** Female	**13%** Male	**25%** HS Degree	**19%** College Degree	**17%** Graduate Degree	**23%** Middle School	**16%** High School

Black, Asian, and Multi-racial students who were bullied are more likely to **be bullied due to their race** compared to White students.
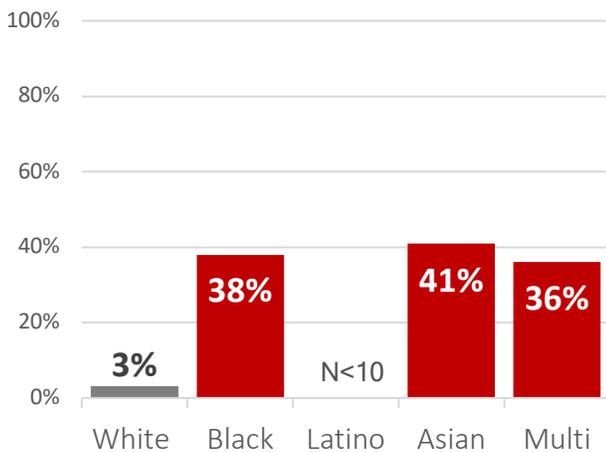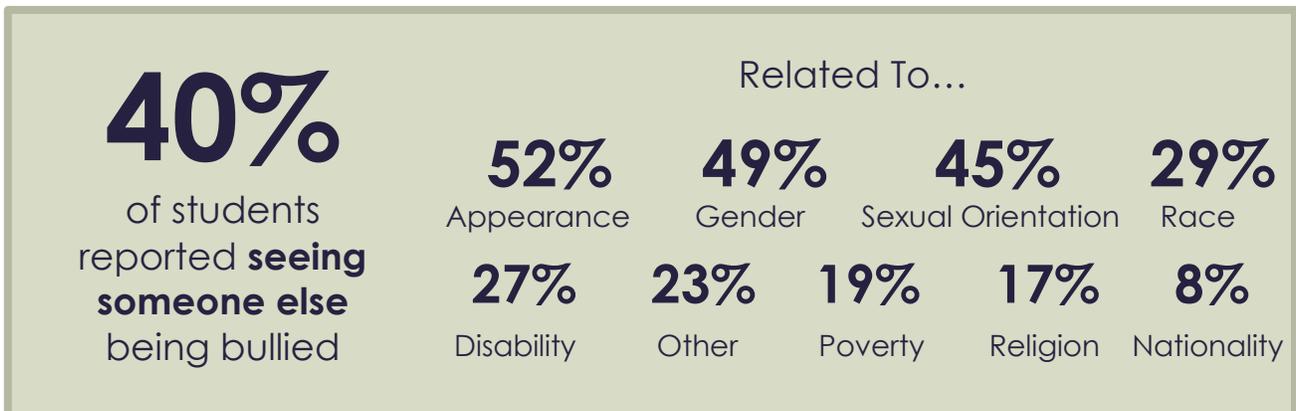
Around 80% of non-binary students who were bullied selected it was **due to their gender and/or sexual orientation.**

White 3% | Black 38% | Latino N<10 | Asian 41% | Multi 36%

Gender: M 7% | F 12% | NB 78%
Sexual Orientation: M 11% | F 15% | NB 82%

BULLYING (CONT.)

About two in five students have seen someone else being bullied and this is rate higher for non-binary students and middle school students. Seeing bullying due to various identities is higher for high school students, non-binary students, and female students.

40%
of students reported **seeing someone else** being bullied

Related To…

52% Appearance   **49%** Gender   **45%** Sexual Orientation   **29%** Race

27% Disability   **23%** Other   **19%** Poverty   **17%** Religion   **8%** Nationality

Significant Differences in Seeing Someone Being Bullied

58% Non-Binary   **44%** Female   **33%** Male | **42%** Middle School   **36%** High School

Black, Asian, and Multi-racial students who have seen bullying are more likely to say the **bullying was due to race** compared to White students.

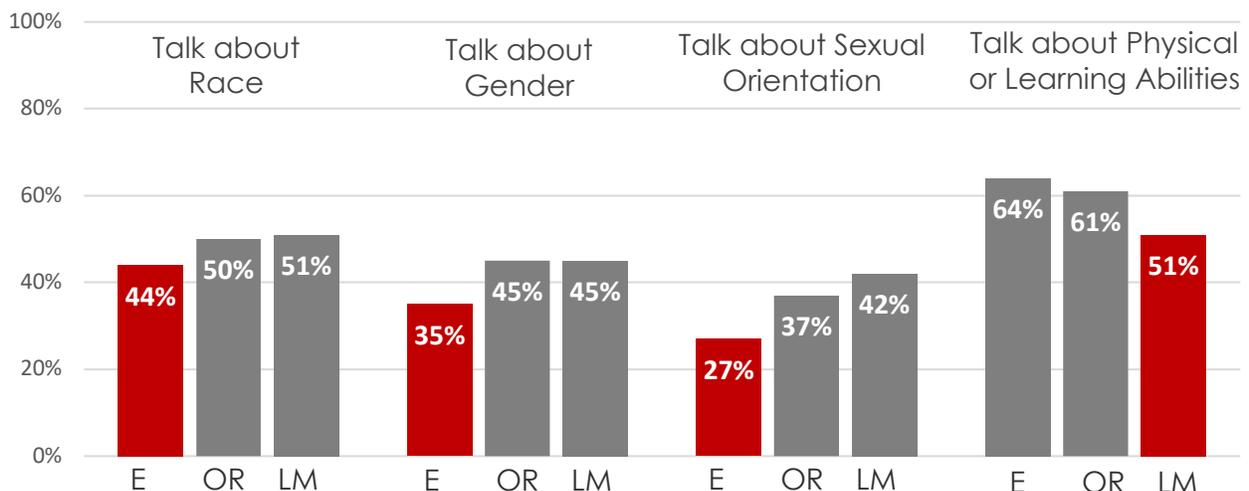| Race	Percentage
White	27%
Black	43%
Latino	32%
Asian	38%
Multi	40%
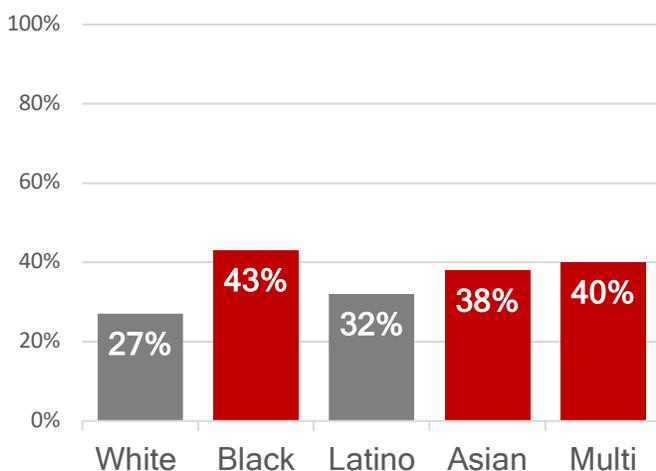
While high school students report an overall lower average of seeing bullying compared to middle school students, they are more likely to report the bullying they see is related to race, nationality, poverty, disability, sexual orientation, and gender.

INCLUSIVE DISCUSSIONS

Around 40-60% of students agree there are opportunities in class to talk about race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and this varies by school level and gender.

Opportunities to Talk about Differences in Physical or Learning Abilities	**57%**
Opportunities to Talk about Race	**49%**
Opportunities to Talk about Gender	**42%**
Opportunities to Talk about Sexual Orientation	**37%**

Excelsior students are less likely to agree there are opportunities to talk about race, gender, and sexual orientation in class compared to Oak Ridge and Linn-Mar High students, except for physical and learning

	Talk about Race			Talk about Gender			Talk about Sexual Orientation			Talk about Physical or Learning Abilities		
	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM
	44%	50%	51%	35%	45%	45%	27%	37%	42%	64%	61%	51%

Female and non-binary students are less likely to agree **there are opportunities to talk about gender and sexual orientation** in class compared to male students. *(Female students about 10% less than male students and non-binary students about 20% less than males)*

INCLUSIVE CONTENT

77%
of students agree they see people of many races, cultures, and backgrounds represented in their schoolwork

69%
of students agree their teachers use examples of races, cultures, and backgrounds that are like theirs

Male	82%
Female	74%
Non-Binary	64%

White	76%
Black	57%
Latino	55%
Asian	46%
Multi	52%

White	80%
Black	61%
Latino	74%
Asian	64%
Multi	70%

HS Degree	63%
College Degree	74%
Grad Degree	69%

High School	74%
Middle School	79%

High School	73%
Middle School	66%

CLASSROOM MEMBERSHIP

76% of students agree they are a valuable classroom member

10% of students agree they are unable to share views in class due to their race

13% of students agree they are unable to share views in class due to their gender

Non-binary students are less likely to agree they are a **valuable classroom member** compared to female and male students.

Students whose parents have a HS degree are less likely to agree they are a **valuable classroom member.**

79%	77%	52%
Male	Female	Non-Binary

81%	78%	64%
Graduate Degree	College Degree	HS Degree
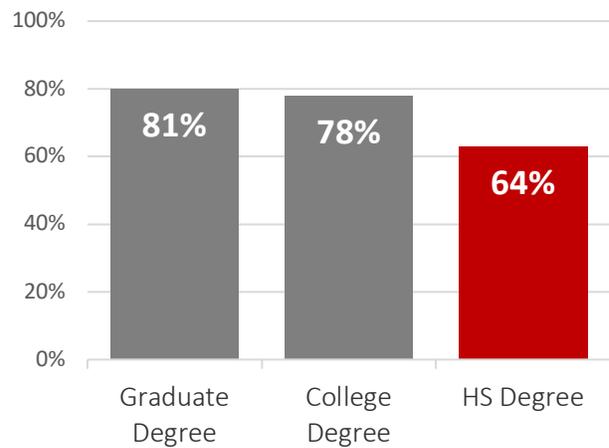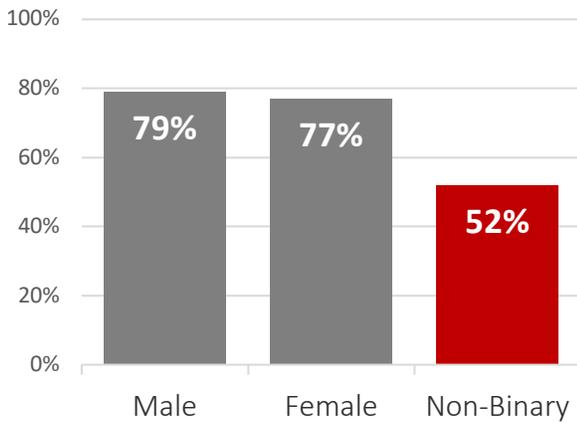
Black and Latino students are more likely to agree they are **unable to share due to race** compared to White students.

Non-binary students are more likely to agree they are **unable to share due to gender** compared to female and male students.

8%	26%	22%	16%	15%
White	Black	Latino	Asian	Multi

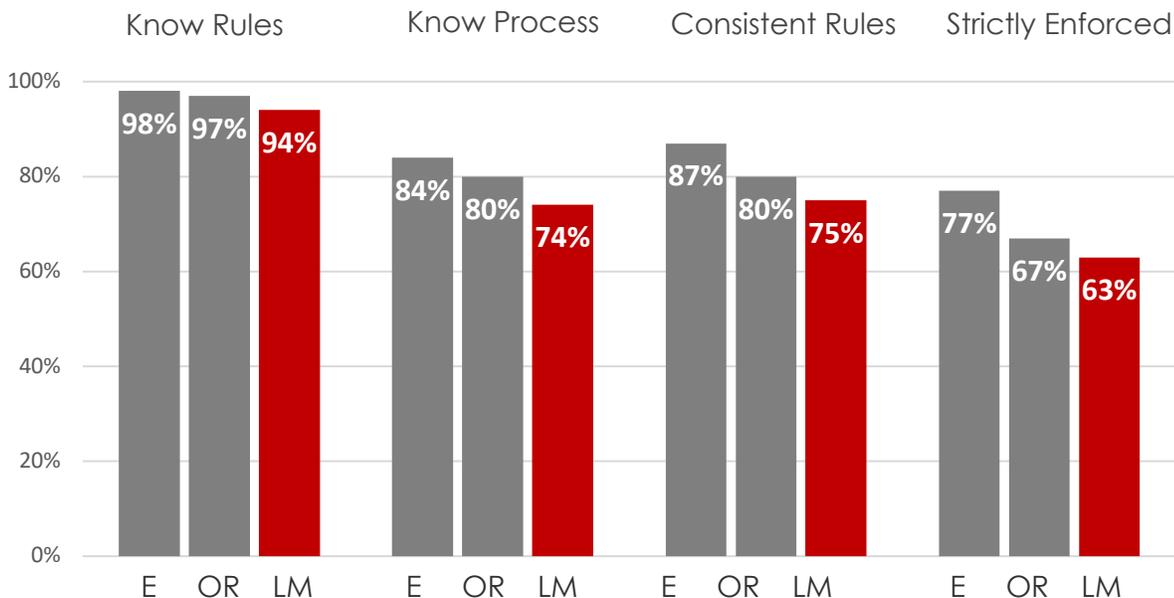|		
12%	9%	48%
Male	Female	Non-Binary
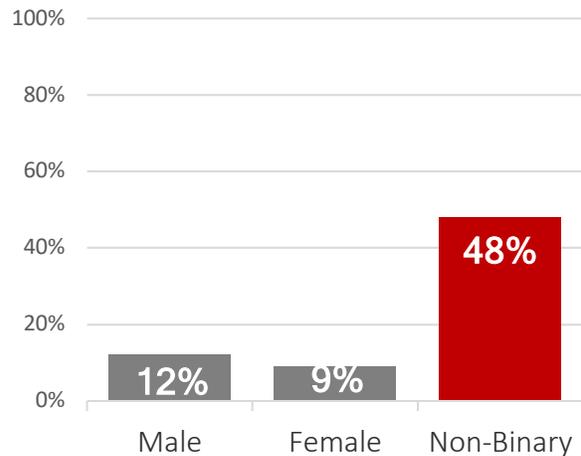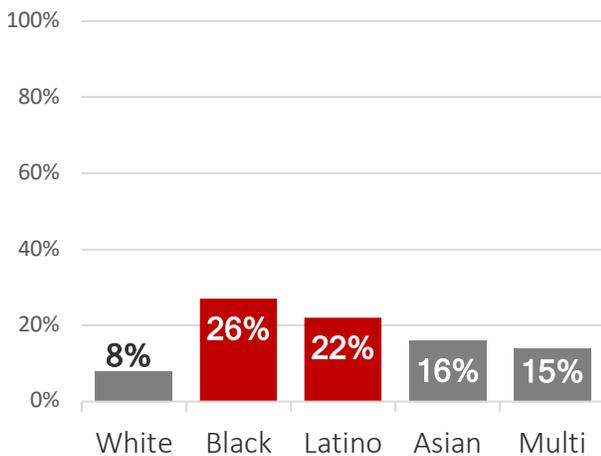
DISCIPLINARY TRANSPARENCY, CONSISTENCY, AND STRICTNESS

Nearly all students (96%) agree they know what the rules are, while a little over three-fourths of students agree they know the process that will follow when a rule is broken and that rules are consistently enforced.

I know what the rules are.	**96%**
If a school rule is broken, I know what kind of process will follow.	**78%**
The school principal and teachers consistently enforce school rules.	**79%**
The school rules are strictly enforced.	**68%**

Linn-Mar High students are less likely to agree that they know the rules, they know the process that follows breaking them, and that rules are consistent and strict compared to Excelsior and Oak Ridge school students.

	Know Rules			Know Process			Consistent Rules			Strictly Enforced		
	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM
	98%	97%	94%	84%	80%	74%	87%	80%	75%	77%	67%	63%

DISCIPLINARY FAIRNESS

71%
of students agree punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are

70%
of students agree students are treated fairly when they break school rules

Black and Multi-racial students are less likely to agree punishment is the same and students are treated fairly compared to White and Asian school students.
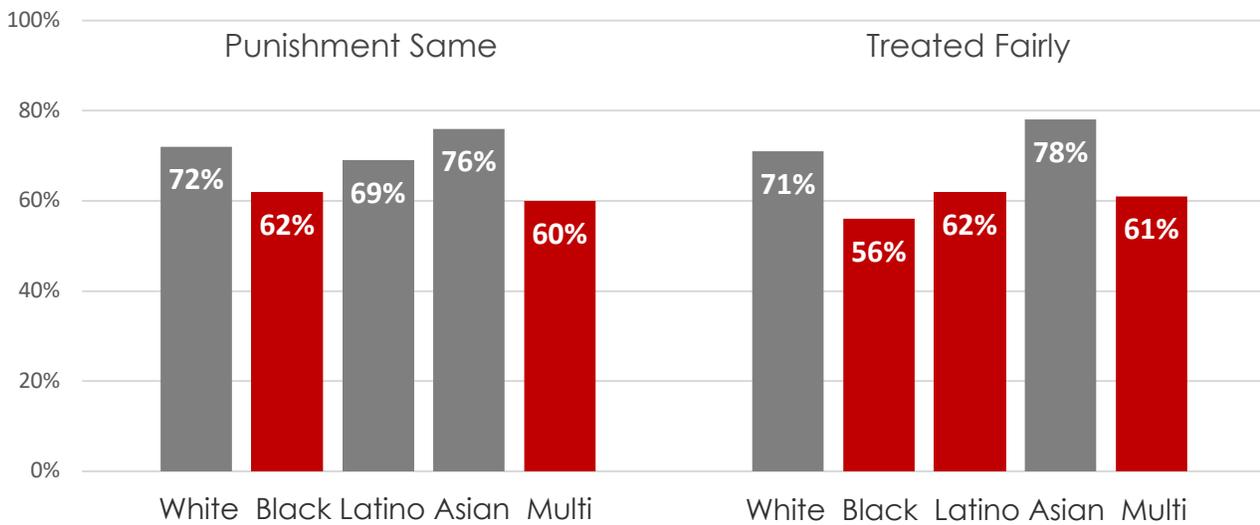

Non-binary students are less likely to agree punishment is the same and students are treated fairly compared to male students.
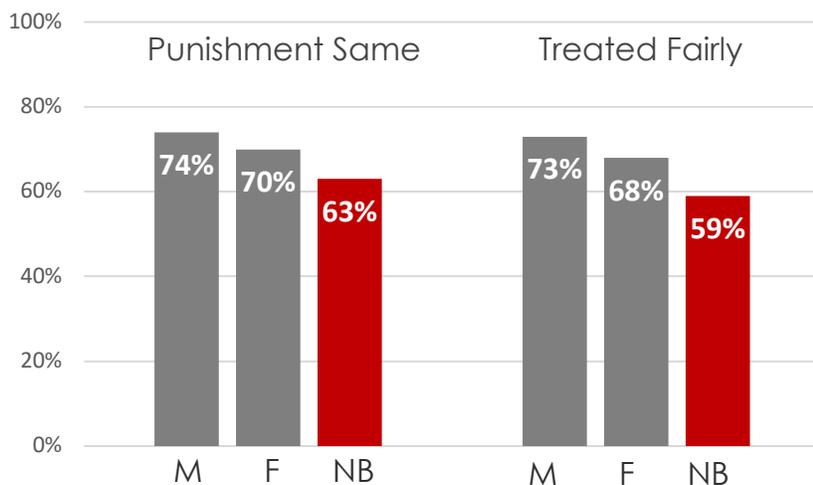
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

About 60-75% of students agree they resolve conflicts collaboratively and positively. This is lower for Linn-Mar High students, female students, and non-binary students.

Teachers and students work together to address behavior problems or conflicts.
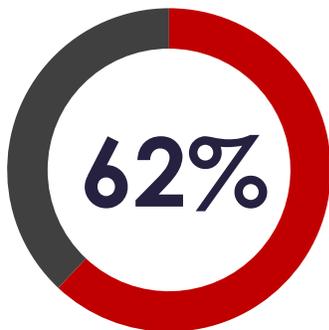
74%
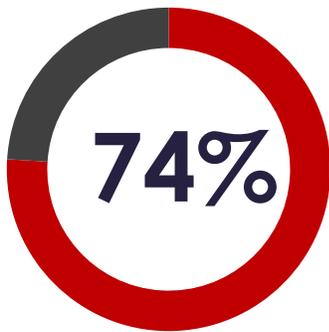
Male	**76%**	Excelsior	**79%**
Female	**76%**	Oak Ridge	**74%**
Non-Binary	**58%**	Linn-Mar	**72%**

We practice ways to settle conflicts so that everyone can be okay with the result.

65%
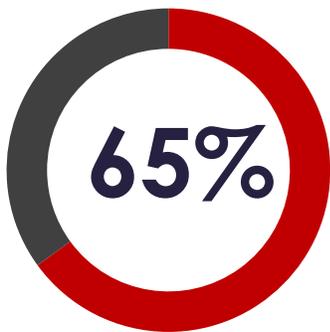
Male	**71%**	Excelsior	**71%**
Female	**62%**	Oak Ridge	**64%**
Non-Binary	**45%**	Linn-Mar	**62%**

When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to explain.

62%

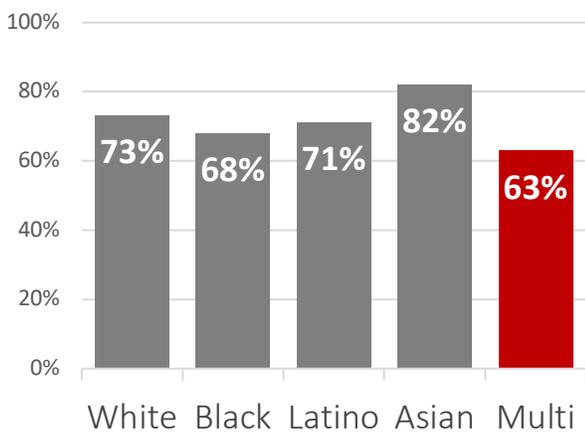|			
Male	**68%**	Excelsior	**61%**
Female	**59%**	Oak Ridge	**68%**
Non-Binary	**52%**	Linn-Mar	**61%**

PHYSICAL SAFETY

About 72% of students always or most of the time feel physically safe at school and this varies by race, gender, class, and school.
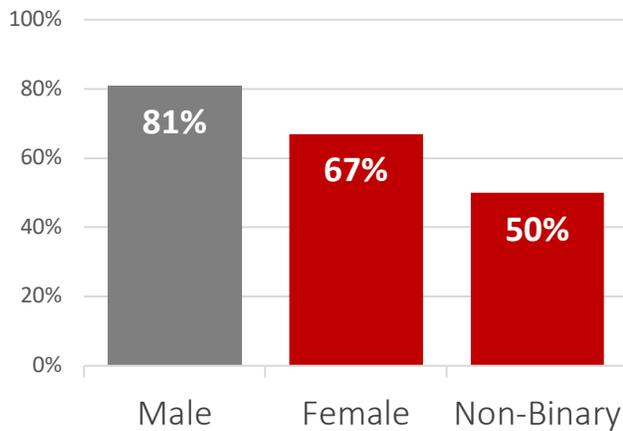
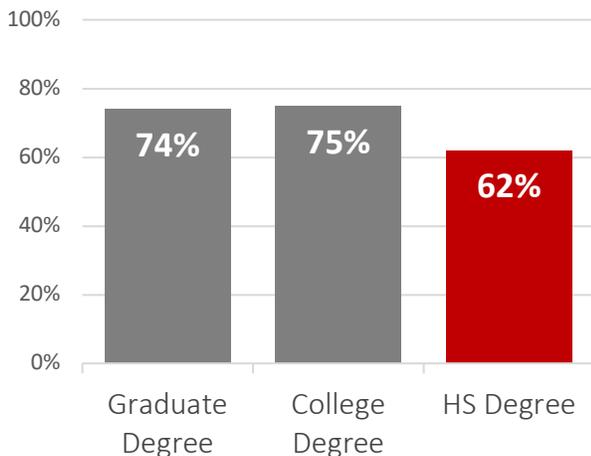*How often do you feel physically safe at your school?*

Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
27%	45%	20%	5%	3%

Multi-racial students are less likely to feel physically safe always or most of the time.

White	Black	Latino	Asian	Multi
73%	68%	71%	82%	63%

Female and non-binary students are less likely to feel physically safe always or most of the time.

Male	Female	Non-Binary
81%	67%	50%

Students whose parents have a HS degree are less likely to feel physically safe always or most of the time.

Graduate Degree	College Degree	HS Degree
74%	75%	62%

Linn-Mar High students are less likely to feel physically safe always or most of the time.

Excelsior	Oak Ridge	Linn-Mar
77%	75%	68%
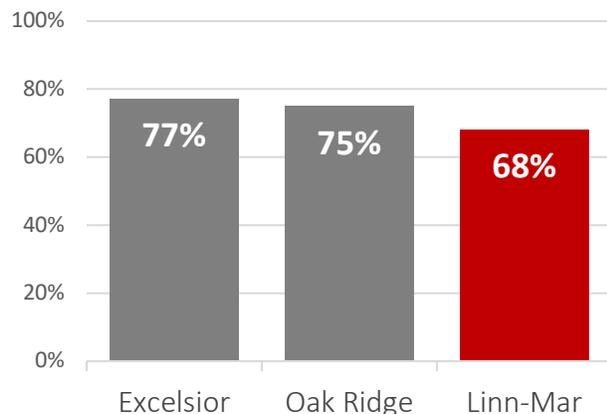
HOW DO STUDENTS DEFINE PHYSICAL SAFETY?

A total of 1,220 students provided useable responses to the open-ended question, *"In a few words, please describe how you would define physical safety."* Most students focused on the absence of fear, threats, and violence as physical safety. Students also described physical safety as a general sense of safety and comfortability.

No Violence, Danger, or Threats (838 comments, 69% of total comments)

Students largely defined physical safety as **not being in danger or not being hurt in school**. While most comments were broad in describing not being harmed, such as *"not in danger"*, and *"not getting hurt"*, others mentioned more specific forms of violence such as not being hit, pushed, and punched, no fights, no shootings, no weapons, and not being killed. Some students specifically mention the hallway as a place where pushing occurs, for example, *"Many people push each other in the halls, if you happen to be by a person who gets shoved you will also get shoved."* Overall, students described physical safety as being free from violence, harm, and physical attacks in school.

Students also described that physical safety is **not being afraid of or worried about getting harmed at school.** For example, one student said, *"Being able to walk around the school or be in class and not be scared of what's going to happen,"* and another said, *"There's no fear of being physically harmed in any way."* Not having to worry that someone is going to hurt you, an aspect of mental well-being, is strongly tied to students' definitions of physical safety.

Students' feelings of physical safety come partly from **threats**, mostly threats of being physically attacked but also gun threats and shooting threats. One student said, *"No threat of being assaulted,"* while another said, *"Feeling safe to come to school with no threat of crisis such as shootings or 'getting jumped'"* Students describe that not feeling threatened in school is an important part of physical safety.

No Bullying or Harassment (80 comments, 7% of total comments)

Students described a physical safe environment as a **bullying-free zone**. For example, "*not about to be bullied or made fun of,"* and *"Safe from bullies."* Students also mentioned forms of **harassment** they experience, particularly related to sexual orientation, gender, and race. For example, *"people threatened to beat up and shoot trans/gay people. I am both,"* and *"I don't feel safe because I feel like I could get hurt by my sexuality or race."* Harassment also includes non-consensual touching and sexual harassment, for example, *"Asking before they touch me or not touching me at all,"* and *"not being touched in ways you don't want to be touched."*

Sense of Safety (343 comments, 28% of total comments)

Students wrote simply *"feeling safe"* and *"being safe physically"* as their definition for physical safety. They also described a **general sense of comfortableness**, *"Being comfortable, and knowing what's going on in my surroundings."* Having adults and **teachers in the school care** and address safety concerns is another important aspect of physical safety. One student said, *"the teachers always make sure that you are in a safe environment and the counselors are always open to talk."* Overall, students described how feeling safe, having support around them, and having ways to protect themselves contribute to physical safety at school.
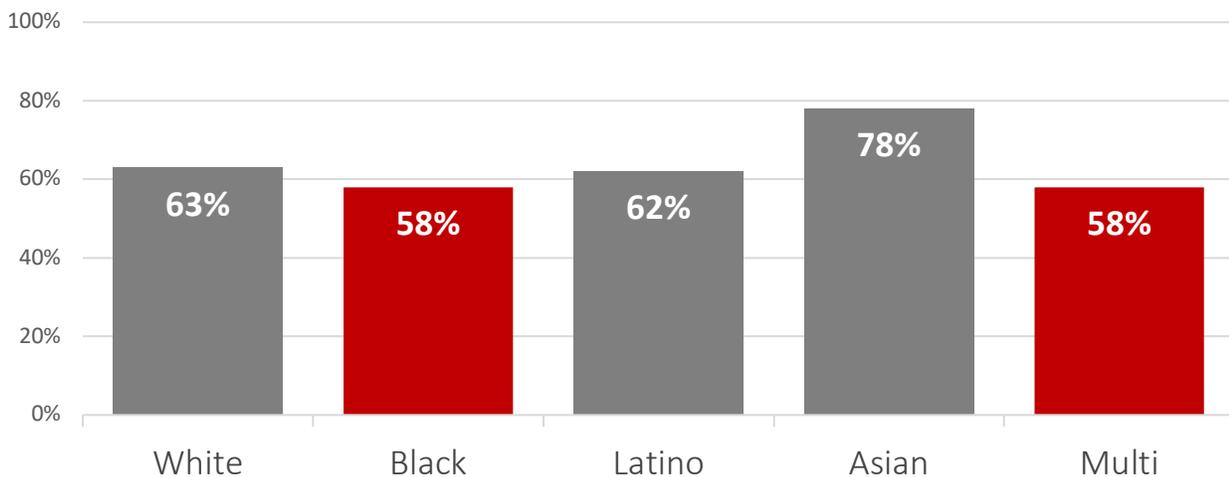
EMOTIONAL SAFETY

About 62% of students always or most of the time feel emotionally safe at school and this varies by race and gender.

How often do you feel emotionally safe at your school?
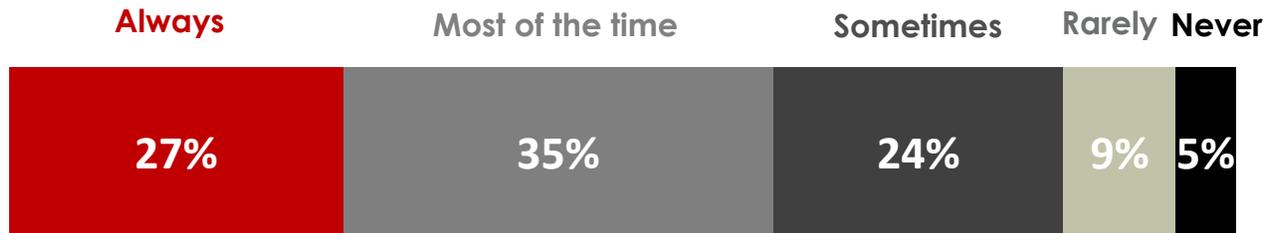
Always	**Most of the time**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
27%	35%	24%	9%	5%

Black and Multi-racial students are less likely to feel emotionally safe always or most of the time compared to Asian students.

White	Black	Latino	Asian	Multi
63%	58%	62%	78%	58%

Non-binary and female students are less likely to feel emotionally safe always or most of the time compared to male students.

Male	Female	Non-Binary
78%	55%	20%
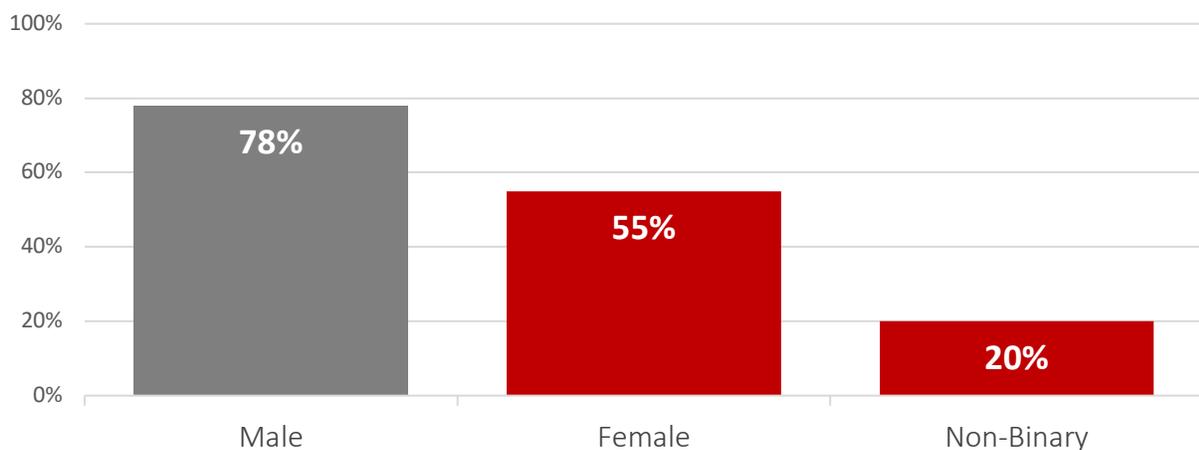
HOW DO STUDENTS DEFINE EMOTIONAL SAFETY?

A total of 1,205 students provided useable responses to the open-ended question, *"In a few words, please describe how you would define emotional safety."* Most students focused on being able to openly express their emotions, having positive mental and emotional health, and not being bullied or hearing hurtful comments.

Openly Express Emotions (432 comments, 36% of total comments)

Students described wanting the **ability to express their emotions and thoughts openly** without the judgment of others. For example, one student said, "*Being able to share my emotions without fear of ridicule or dismissal - I, like most students, only feel this way around a select group,*" and another student said, *"Feel comfortable sharing thoughts and feelings."* This theme suggests that vulnerability and an environment where students could comfortably "*talk openly,*" "*be themselves,*" and "*express their opinions and feelings*" serves as an important aspect of emotional safety.

No Bullying or Hurtful Comments (384 comments, 32% of total comments)

Another common theme was **not being bullied** or being harmed emotionally/mentally. For example, one student said, *"being bullied emotionally,"* and another said, "*Not having to worry about people bullying me."* Students described wanted to not hear "*cruel and or mean comments*", *"name-calling"*, and *"slurs"*. One student summarizes this theme well, saying, *"emotional safety is when you can feel safe from bullying or any type of abuse that will affect your life."*
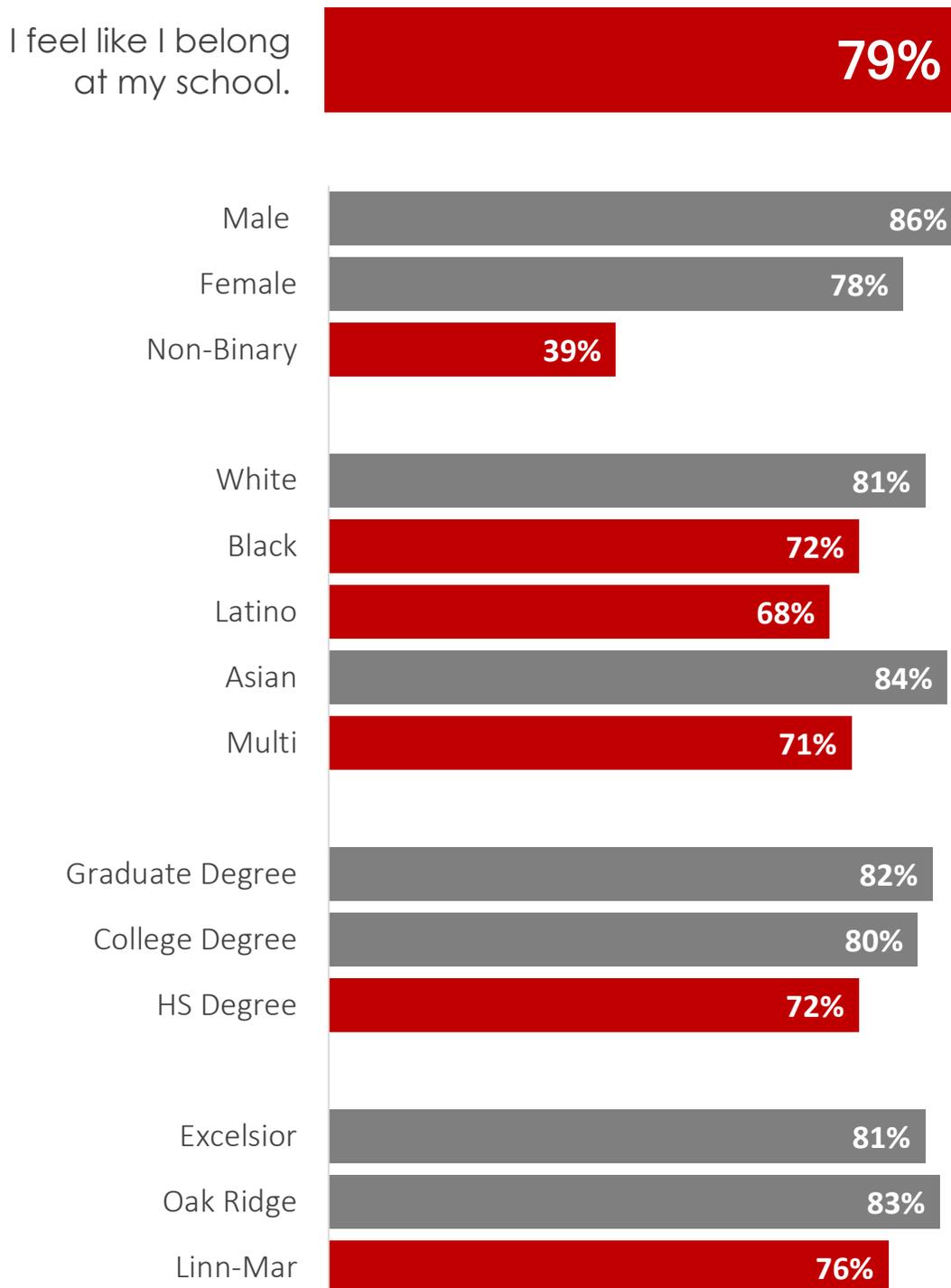
Positive Mental Health (352 comments, 29% of total comments)

Students' mental health is a major aspect of emotional safety. Students mentioned, "*Mental health or well-being,*" *"Being able to go to school happy,"* and "*Being emotionally stable throughout school."* They described not wanting to feel sad, anxious, mad, and lonely and wanting to feel happy and content in school. The students were aware of how day-to-day experiences within school affected their well-being and vice versa.

> *"Emotional safety is when you can feel safe from bullying or any type of abuse that will affect your life." – LMCSD student*

SENSE OF BELONGING

Nearly 80% of students agree they belong at their school, and this is lower for non-binary students, Black, Latino, and Multi-racial students, students in a lower social class, and Linn-Mar High students.

|	
I feel like I belong at my school.	**79%**
Male	**86%**
Female	**78%**
Non-Binary	**39%**
White	**81%**
Black	**72%**
Latino	**68%**
Asian	**84%**
Multi	**71%**
Graduate Degree	**82%**
College Degree	**80%**
HS Degree	**72%**
Excelsior	**81%**
Oak Ridge	**83%**
Linn-Mar	**76%**

STUDENT VOICE

About 50-60% of students agree they have a voice in school. Student voice is mainly consistent across demographic groups.
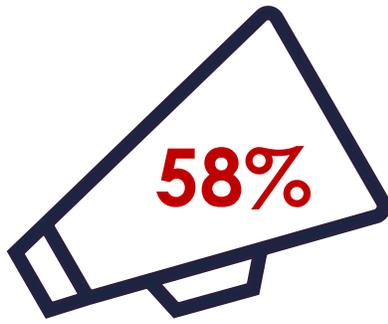
58%

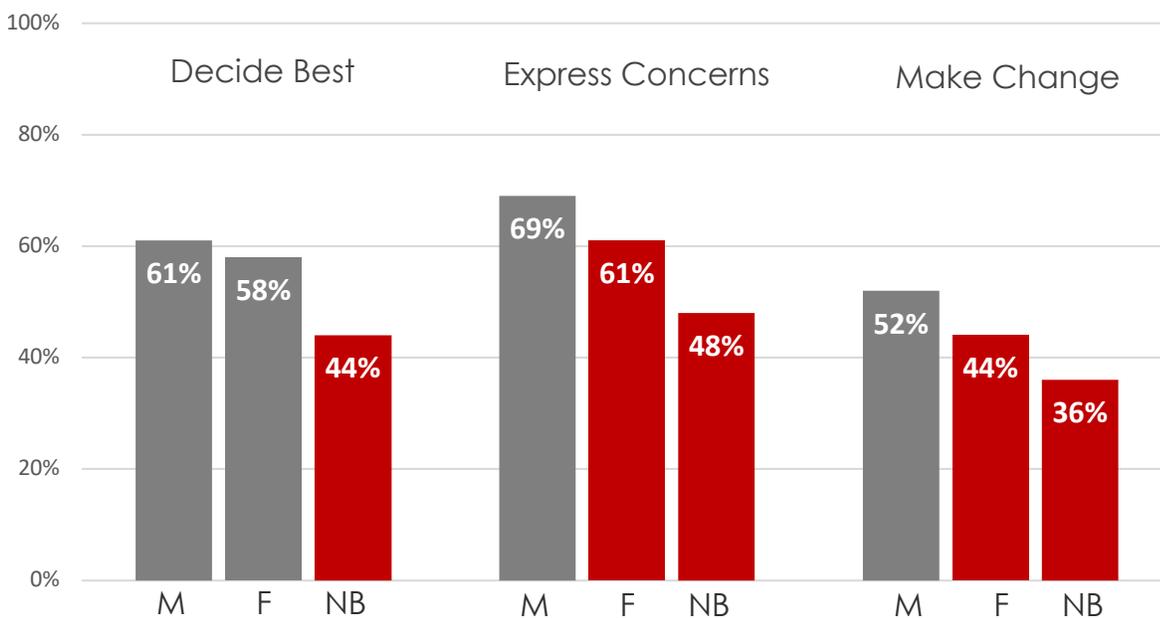I have chances to help decide what is best for the class or school.

64%

I have opportunities to express concerns to my school.

47%
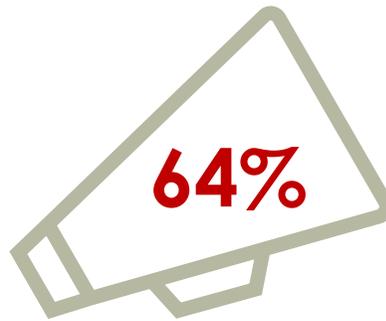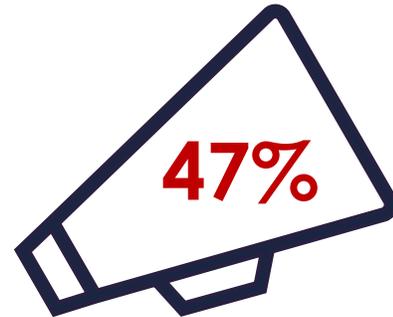
I have the power to make change in my school.

Non-binary and female students are less likely to agree they have a voice at school compared to male students.

Decide Best

- M: 61%
- F: 58%
- NB: 44%

Express Concerns

- M: 69%
- F: 61%
- NB: 48%

**Make Change**

- M: 52%
- F: 44%
- NB: 36%

Oak Ridge students are less likely to agree they have chances to decide what is best for the class or school (53%) compared to Excelsior (62%) and Linn-Mar High students (59%).

INCLUSIVE CLIMATE

Most students agree diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at their school, however only half of students agree students respect each other's differences. Perceptions of an inclusive climate varies by race, gender, and class.

## Diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at my school.

84%
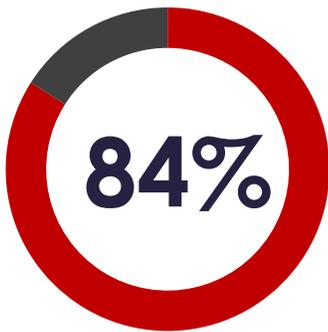
		White	86%	Grad Degree	83%
Male	88%	Black	71%		
Female	83%	Latino	82%	College Degree	86%
Non-Binary	72%	Asian	82%	HS Degree	78%
		Multi	73%		

Students in this school respect each other's differences.

51%
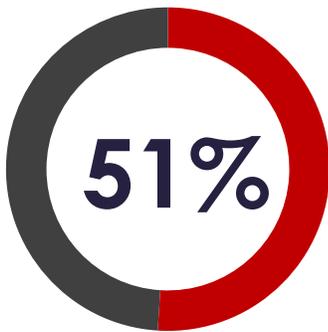
Male	66%	Excelsior	56%	Grad Degree	51%
Female	40%	Oak Ridge	56%	College Degree	51%
Non-Binary	22%	Linn-Mar	45%	HS Degree	39%

Adults in this school respect student identities.

87%
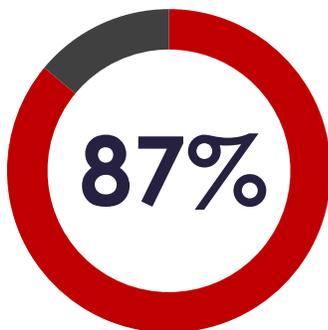
		White	88%	Grad Degree	87%
Male	90%	Black	82%		
Female	84%	Latino	78%	College Degree	90%
Non-Binary	78%	Asian	90%	HS Degree	80%
		Multi	75%		

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Around 60-70% of students agree they practice social and emotional skills and there are gender and school level differences.

We talk about how our actions affect others.	**70%**
We talk about the importance of understanding our feelings and the feelings of others.	**64%**
We talk about ways to help us control our emotions.	**62%**
Students in my school act in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of other students.	**58%**

Linn-Mar High students are less likely to agree they practice social and emotional skills compared to Excelsior and Oak Ridge students.
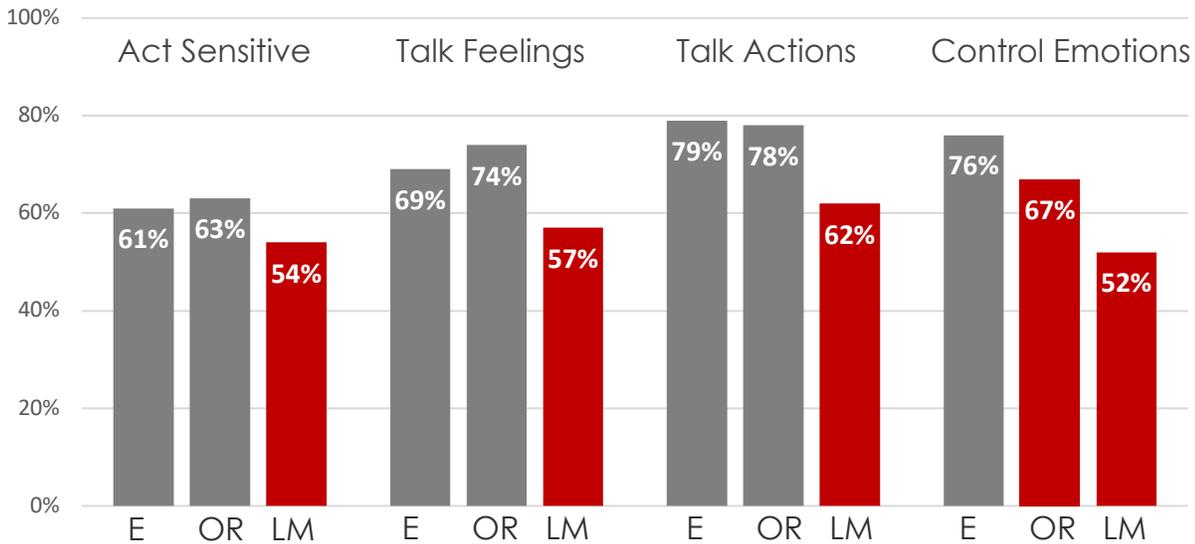
	Act Sensitive			Talk Feelings			Talk Actions			Control Emotions		
	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM	E	OR	LM
	61%	63%	54%	69%	74%	57%	79%	78%	62%	76%	67%	52%

Female and non-binary students are less likely to agree they practice social and emotional skills compared to male students.
(Female students about 10% less than male students and non-binary students about 20% less than male students)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A total of 294 students provided useable responses to the open-ended question, "*Do you have any other information you would like to share about your experiences in your school or your school climate?*" Most students focused on a divisive culture, acts of bullying, safety concerns, and a lack of responsiveness from leadership.

Divisive Culture (134 comments, 46% of total comments)

Students expressed concerns that the diversity/equity/inclusion policy changes across the district resulted in a **divisive culture among students**. This divide has translated into physical activities such as the tearing down of posters representing trans-awareness and acts of physical intimidation and threats especially imposed on those who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community.

The students who did criticize their school's "newfound" focus on equity and inclusion described curriculum changes as allowing for "too much politics," and preferred "normal school."

"Why are we allowed to decorate our school in rainbows but not in American pride?"

- **LMCSD student**

Bullying (69 comments, 23% of total comments)

Students expressed that bullying was often influenced by **homophobia or transphobia**. Students also note that there is a common use of homophobic slurs that are used especially in the hallways. The respondents reported that the symbolism of flags or posters were the catalysts behind acts of bullying.

"There has been a little less LGBTQ+ support going on and a few slurs have been said that hurt a lot of people." – LMCSD student

Safety (30 comments, 10% of total comments)

Students frequently suggested that the **fear of gun violence** and general rumors of violent possibilities amongst peers as troubling. Students would note that the volume of mass shootings threats is worrisome and that the administration should take rumors and threats more seriously.

"There was a gun threat directly against me, however the school did not handle it correctly and barely did anything. Another threat this year occurred, and same thing happened. If there was to be an actual unsafe situation, Linn-Mar would NOT handle it correctly."

- **LMCSD student**

Respondents brought up concerns about safely avoiding **fighting in the hallways** along with general pushing and shoving that occurred at random intervals. Acts of violence were also noted to be provoked by what some students consider their self-identity, again, this sentiment is especially expressed by those within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Responsiveness (50 comments, 17% of total comments)

Students frequently reported concerns over the **responsiveness of school leadership** about violence and bullying. Students often expressed that they want their opinions and beliefs to be validated by their school administration. Several respondents noted that "nothing has changed" regarding issues present within the schools.

"I've been seeing someone get bullied for a while and I have talked to adults at the school about it many times and nothing has changed." – LMCSD student

CONCLUSION

Creating a positive, safe, and supportive school climate can help students thrive in their social, mental, emotional, and physical development. Schools can create a positive school climate through a coordinated, purposeful effort.

This report provided an assessment of student experiences of the school climate that can guide district decision-making. Most students are experiencing a positive climate, however students with a socially marginalized identity often experience a more negative school climate. With the changing demographics of the school district, LMCSD must urgently address the inequitable experiences faced by marginalized groups.

You are here

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. (2016). Quick guide on making school climate improvements. Washington, D.C.

Recommendations

1. Utilize the DEI Committee in collaboration with stakeholders to **choose and implement school climate interventions** based on school climate data, achievement and discipline data, and evidence-based best practices.

   a. Prior to choosing initiatives, conduct focus groups with socially marginalized groups to gather additional information.

2. From the results of the survey, **focus areas for interventions** may include improving LGBTQ+ and non-white student experiences, improving social and emotional skills and emotional safety, increasing student voice in decision-making, and improving responsiveness to bullying and harassment.

3. Utilize school climate surveys bi-annually (once every two years) along with qualitative data to **evaluate** if school climate improvements have made an impact on student perceptions and to **continually inform decision-making**.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. About the Survey Analysis

Appendix B. Survey Instrument

APPENDIX A. ABOUT THE SURVEY ANALYSIS

Data Cleaning

Data cleaning involves identifying and removing incomplete responses. The raw data had a total of 1,963 cases. Responses were dropped if respondents opened but didn't fill out any of the survey, if they only filled out the demographic section of the survey, if they completed only half or less than half of the survey, or if they provided inappropriate or vulgar responses to all open-ended questions (indicating a lack of taking it seriously). The total sample left was 1,786 respondents (dropped a total of 177 cases).

Response Rates

Response rates are calculated by comparing the number of people in a population (all 7th to 12th-grade LMCSD students) to the number of people who completed the survey. The table below shows the survey response rate by school level.

School Level	Number of Respondents	Student Population	Response Rate
Middle School	**895**	**1187**	**75%**
7th grade	441	595	74%
8th grade	454	592	77%
High School	**888**	**2271**	**39%**
9th grade	228	599	38%
10th grade	276	569	49%
11th grade	194	563	34%
12th grade	190	540	39%
TOTAL	1786	3458	52%

Data Coding

Data coding involves creating variables for all the survey measures. The original 7 option response for gender was recoded to three categories: Male, Female, and Non-Binary. Responses were coded Non-Binary if they selected "transgender male" (n=21), "transgender female" (n=5), "genderqueer or gender non-conforming" (n=36) and "questioning" (n=20). Open-ended responses for "My identity is not listed" (n=42) were recoded to Non-Binary if they reported non-binary, genderfluid, agender, demi girl, or all (n=26), Male if they indicated male (n=2), and Not Reported if they wrote in inappropriate answers such as "mayonnaise" or "helicopter pilot" (n=12).

The original nine option response for race was recoded to six categories: White, Black, Latino, Asian, Multi-racial, and Other. Responses were coded Multi-racial if they reported at least two races or selected multi-racial. Responses were coded to "Other" if they selected "Middle Eastern or North African" (n=10), "Pacific Islander" (n=1), and "Native Indian or Alaska Native" (n=5). Open-ended responses for "My identity is not listed" (n=55) were recoded to the appropriate category if they indicated it (n=34) and Not Reported if they wrote inappropriate answers, said "American", or said they didn't know (n=16). Responses were coded as Not Reported if they indicated more than 5 races or selected prefer not to answer.

The original five option response for parent education was recoded to three categories: HS Degree ("Less than high school or high school graduate", n=104 or "Some college", n=106), College Degree ("College Graduate", n=519 and "Some post-graduate", n=74), Graduate Degree ("Graduate or professional degree", n=570). Responses were set to Not Reported if they selected "Prefer not to answer" (n=409).

Survey items measured using the 4-item Likert scale were recoded to a binary variable: Agree ("Strongly Agree" and "Agree") or Disagree ("Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree"). Summary statistics were tabulated to provide the average level (mean) of agreement for all survey measures.

Statistical Analysis

The report highlights differences or disparities in group averages only when they are statistically significant differences. 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.

It should be noted that this report does not highlight the non-significant group differences in measures. It should be assumed if it is not included in this report there was no significant group difference for a particular demographic and survey measure.

"Other" Bullying Response

There were 120 respondents who selected "other" as the basis on which they were bullied. Of these 120 respondents, 45 provided text descriptions. These text responses mentioned mental health/illness, weight or height, grades/academics, political views, personality or hobbies, names, speech, and not knowing .

There were 162 respondents who selected "other" as the basis on which they have seen another person being bullied. Of these 162 respondents, 70 provided text descriptions. These text responses mentioned not being sure or knowing why, personality, behavior, weight or height, political opinions, and just to be mean.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Pre-Coding

For the qualitative analysis, the three open-ended questions were separated and organized into three different excel spreadsheets to avoid overlap of coding. To maintain objectivity and avoid potential bias as analysts, it was important to review each individual response before performing any data analysis to provide helpful context into potential themes that were present in student responses. This pre-coding stage is a critical research step to allow the researchers to genuinely become familiar with the data without allowing for potential predispositions about coding to appear in the analysis stage. Therefore, the themes provided in this report were authentically selected and chosen from the student responses and attitudes themselves.

Coding and Analysis

After the pre-coding stage, each response was coded line-by-line through an inductive and grounded-theoretical approach, meaning that for every viable student response, we assigned "codes" that were then categorized into sub-themes and themes that represented the sentiments from the students. This procedure was used for each question. After each response was coded and organized into themes, codes were then counted and organized by frequency as provided in the qualitative section of this review.

Responses that were considered non-viable were not included in the analysis. This included students who left questions blank or wrote-in responses that were non-related to the question asked. Themes from each respective question were then divided by the total number of viable responses from the question as a whole to provide a percentage of total responses.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

In Qualtrics, the survey included page breaks after questions. Choose your level agreement questions used a response matrix of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers to the questions in this survey are used to improve experiences of all students in the district.

- There are no "right" or "wrong" answers.
- Choose the one response that best fits your thoughts and experiences.
- If you don't understand or would prefer not to answer a question, you can skip to the next question.
- Your responses will be kept private.

What grade are you in?

○ 7th grade

○ 8th grade

○ 9th grade

○ 10th grade

○ 11th grade

○ 12th grade

What school do you attend?

○ Excelsior Middle School

○ Oak Ridge Middle School

○ Linn-Mar High School

What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender male

○ Transgender female

○ Genderqueer or gender non-conforming

○ Questioning

○ My identity is not listed _____

○ Prefer not to answer

What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ African American or Black
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian or Asian American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino/a
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ My identity is not listed _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What is the highest level of schooling achieved by your parent or guardian?

- ○ Less than high school or high school graduate
- ○ Some college
- ○ College graduate
- ○ Some post-graduate
- ○ Graduate or professional degree
- ○ I don't know

Choose your level of agreement for the next statements about your school and teachers in general. At my school…

My teachers care about my learning
My teachers treat me the same as other students.
My teachers give everyone the same opportunities in the classroom.
My teachers really listen to what I have to say.
My teachers treat me with respect.
I trust my teachers.

Is there at least one adult in your school that you trust and go to for advice?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Have you been bullied at your school?

○ Yes
○ No

Was any of the bullying related to your...(choose all that apply)

☐ Race or ethnicity

☐ National origin or immigrant status

☐ Gender or gender identity

☐ Sexual orientation

☐ Disability

☐ Poverty, income, or social class

☐ Religion

☐ Appearance

☐ Other _____

Have you seen someone being bullied at your school?

○ Yes
○ No

Was any of the bullying related to their...(choose all that apply)

☐ Race or ethnicity

☐ National origin or immigrant status

☐ Gender or gender identity

☐ Sexual orientation

☐ Disability

☐ Poverty, income, or social class

☐ Religion

☐ Appearance

☐ Other _____

Choose your level of agreement for the next statements about what is discussed in your classes.

There are opportunities in class to talk about race.

There are opportunities in class to talk about gender or 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.

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about what you learn in your classes.

I see people of many races, cultures, and backgrounds represented in my schoolwork.

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

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about your experiences in class.

I see myself as a valuable member of the classroom.

I feel **unable** to share my views in class because of my race.

I feel **unable** to share my views in class because of my gender or gender identity.

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about school rules and disciplinary actions. In my school...

I know what the rules are.

If a school rule is broken, I know what kind of process will follow.

The school principal and teachers consistently enforce school rules.

The school rules are strictly enforced.

The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.

Students are treated fairly when they break school rules.

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about addressing conflicts in your school. During my school day...

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.

How often do you feel physically safe in your school?

○ Always

○ Most of the time

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

In a few words, please describe how you would define physical safety.

_____

_____

_____

How often do you feel emotionally safe in your school?

○ Always

○ Most of the time

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

In a few words, please describe how you would define emotional safety.

_____

_____

_____

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about your experiences in school.

I feel like I belong in my school.

I have chances to help decide what is best for the class or school.

I have opportunities to express concerns to my school.

I have the power to make change in my school.

Choose your level of agreement with the next statements about your experiences in school.

Diversity, inclusiveness, and equity are important at my school.

Students in this school respect each other's differences.

Adults in this school respect student identities.

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.

We talk about how our actions affect others.

We talk about ways to help us control our emotions.

Do you have any other information you would like to share about your experiences in your school or your school climate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____