What you need to know: Administering the School Climate Survey (SCLS) Pilot Webinar

QUESTION AND ANSWER SUMMARY

On February 26th and March 3rd, 2015, the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) hosted a webinar called *What You Need to Know: Administering the School Climate Survey (SCLS) Pilot.* The goal of the webinar was to describe the process and preparation needed to administer the School Climate Survey Pilot and answer any questions or concerns participants in the pilot may have. Attendees included project directors, IT staff and evaluators from SCLS pilot sites. During the session, the presenters (**Sally Ruddy, Samantha Neiman, and Yan Wang,** American Institutes for Research) answered several questions from participants. The Center has prepared the following Webinar Q/A Summary with responses to the questions. For additional information, please email or call the Center (ncssle@air.org; 1-800-258-8413).

> *Please note the content of this summary was prepared under a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, to the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This Q/A summary does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the U.S. Departments of Education, nor do they imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.*

1. I've had a few grantees ask whether sampling is okay and how they would go about doing it. For example, what percentage of students is acceptable?
   a. Sally: We recommend doing a census survey for students because it's the least disruptive to the school environment, pulling out intact classrooms to computer labs, etc. However, it is ok to administer the SCLS survey to a sample, as long as the sample is representative of the population. We recommend consulting a sampling statistician for detailed information about drawing the sample and about the number of completed surveys necessary for appropriate analyses to be run
2. Is the survey offered in Spanish?
   a. Sally: Yes, the parent and student surveys are both available in Spanish.
3. How long do you anticipate the surveys will take to complete?
   a. Yan: The student survey will take one class period. There are more items for students in the pilot than there will be in the final version of the survey, but all

students in the pilot will not answer all items, so it can be taken in one class period. This includes the estimated time needed to escort students from classrooms to computer labs and for students to log into the survey Staff surveys will take around 30 minutes, but because we want staff to plan for enough time to read the instructions and log into the survey, we say it will not take more than an hour. Parent surveys shouldn't be more than 30 minutes including reading the instructions.

4. How many minutes are you using for estimated class period? We are assuming a class period to be 50-60 minutes.

5. Can the survey administrator be the same person as the survey coordinator?
   a. Sam: Generally speaking, if a district is hosting a survey, the survey administrator will oversee the administrations across the entire district, whereas the survey coordinators will be building specific. If a school wants to host their own administration independent of the district, it is possible for those to be the same people.
   b. Sally: There should be one survey administrator at district level and one survey coordinator/contact person in each school building.

6. Have literacy levels of parents and students been taken into consideration? It may take longer for some students to complete the survey. At what level is the parent survey written?
   a. Yan: We conducted cognitive interviews with parents and students, so reading levels were taken into account.
   b. Sally: Parents will be taking the survey on their own so they can take as long as they need. For students who generally need accommodations such as more time, you should offer those accommodations to those students. If a student doesn't finish, he or she can come back during a makeup date that should be set up for absent students as well as those who do not finish. Each school or district is free to schedule this however they feel is most efficient for schools, but it needs to be completed within the administration window.

7. We have 2 middle schools and 1 high school. Do they have their own 2 week period or do they all share the same 2 week period?
   a. Sally: They all share the same window, as well as parents and staff, if possible. If circumstances prevent a shared window, they can be staggered, if necessary.

8. Is there a reason all of the schools have to have the same period? Each school gets to choose their own state testing window. This will be problematic as we have eight schools at different buildings involved.
   a. Sally: It is good to have the same window because you're asking what climate is in the building at a certain point in time. It's a snapshot. You are asking respondents to give you their perceptions now about how things have been in

school up to that point. That is why it is best to have everyone answer questions in same time period. If you have some people taking it in April and some in May, you do not know what may have happened that may change feelings.

   b. Sam: Also, if a district is hosting the survey that will go across multiple buildings, they cannot get results until all the surveys are in. So turnaround time is also a reason.

   c. Sally: If you have specific issues within your district that you really need to have some wiggle room around, please let us know and we'll work with you the best we can to help make sure things are done in the right way. We are telling you what best practices are but realize there are many different situations.

9. Is the PDF of the SCLS questionnaires different from one sent a month ago?

   a. Sally: No, it is the same one.

10. School starts August 3. What is the estimated month we would receive data?

   a. Yan: Districts will have their school data immediately after the window closes; it is on your server. Also, item frequencies are immediately available as well. However, we have to wait until all schools and all 4 respondent groups complete the survey to start the analysis for producing scale scores.

   b. Sally: We have to get all of the data back from all of the pilot schools and analyze them so we can create the scale scores and send them back to you. It takes time for data to be cleaned and to run analyses. September 2015 is the best estimate we have right now.

11. As the system is web-based, how would a district go about installing the survey software?

   a. Yan: You need to get in touch with district IT staff in charge of the district server. Software needs to be installed on the server and there needs to be a web address assigned by the IT staff so respondents can access the survey from a computer. We will provide a user guide for installation for IT staff. If there are special configurations of district servers, we can have one-on-one calls to go through the steps and help IT staff set up.

   b. The SCLS user guide is at: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/scls

12. How much space is necessary for storage on the server?

   a. Yan: The platform is 2.73 GB. In terms of storage space, it depends on the size of the respondents in the district. We recommend at least another GB to host responses, so about 4GB in total. In general it's not a huge amount.

13. Is there a contact for IT specific questions (i.e., installation of the platform, etc.)? I suspect our IT director will have questions.

   a. Yan: Email schoolclimate@air.org or call 1-844-849-5252.

   b. Sally: If you have specific questions about IT, leave that in the message so when you get a call back we have people on the line who can answer your questions.

14. What data systems can this survey be linked to?
    a. Sally: The SCLS platform itself can't be linked with any data system. However if your district exports the student raw data and preserves the linkage between usernames and student names, the survey data can be linked to state, district, or school databases containing student records such as achievement, graduation, absenteeism, etc.

15. Is there an expectation that there is only one parent/guardian survey response per student? How do we control for this?
    a. Yan: Districts need to make this decision for themselves. Usernames are needed to get into the parent survey, so if you only give one parent username per student then you can control for who is responding.

16. Please verify that tablets, i-phones, etc. are o.k. We were told earlier that the survey MUST be administered on a hard-wired computer.
    a. Sally: iPhones/ tablets etc. are ok; hardwired computer not required. The student surveys should not be done on smartphones. Tablets are ok for students, but in a controlled environment only. Parents and staff can complete it on phones, tablets, or computers.

17. What is considered an acceptable response rate for the parent survey?
    a. Sally: Parents are a difficult group to get to respond to surveys. Some say if you can get to 50% response rate, you are doing really well. Just get as many as you can; use creative ways to contact and engage parents in the survey. The slides from today's webinar show a link to a NCSSLE webinar on increasing parent and staff response rates, at
    http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/events/webinar/increasing-staff-and-family-survey-response-rates

18. As far as planning the administration "window", we have been told that there is simply no availability between March 23 and mid-May, as that is the Spring MAPS testing window. Will you consider extending the window? We are a Transformation grantee.
    a. Sally: I think the best thing to do would be to schedule a time Yan and I can talk to you and see what we can work out. At the end of the webinar there will be a slide with email addresses and we will set something up.

19. Is this survey anonymous?
    a. Sam: We need to make a distinction between anonymous and confidential. Anonymous means there is no possibility of tracing any responses back to the respondent. With SCLS there is actually a way to link student usernames to individual students, but that would have to happen outside the platform. That is, an education agency would need to assign usernames to students and keep track of those assignments

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b. Yan: The system will generate a random username. If you give the usernames randomly out to students, parents, and staff and do not keep track of which person is receiving which username, then the survey will be anonymous because you won't have information on who is associated with a randomly generated username. Note that in the parent and staff surveys, usernames are removed from the data file so that there is no possibility to trace responses back to an individual respondent using a username even if you know which person the username is given to.

c. Sally: Included in the user guide are sample confidentiality agreements that anyone with access to the data or usernames should sign. Each person with access to the data is responsible for making sure that confidentiality is upheld.

20. How can responses and respondents stay anonymous when linking to a school database?

a. Sally: If the education agency links student responses to existing data systems it means that they have kept track of which usernames were assigned to which students and therefore the survey is not anonymous, but it is confidential. Anyone who has access to the SCLS data or usernames should sign confidentiality pledges (found in the user guide).

21. Can we just use the student responses to the survey alone and NOT compare their survey results to other items (academic performance or race or poverty)? Meaning is it ok to not export the raw data and link it to an external dataset?

a. Sally: Yes. You do not have to link student data to an external database. That feature is available if folks want to do that but you don't have to do it.

b. Sam: I think the concern here is about IRB approval and it will be needed if data are being linked to student demographic information. There are some basic demographic questions in the student survey such as gender, grade, race/ethnicity, etc. already so you don't have to link to an external database for these demographic variables; they are available within the platform. So even if you choose not to link your data you will still have information from your respondents about these demographics. We recommend that you follow your education agency's policy's concerning IRB requirements.

c. Yan: If you do not link the student usernames with student names outside the system, then the results are actually anonymous. In the system, if a single sub-group has fewer than 10 responses, you will not see the results for that subgroup. For example, if you have 5 Asian students who answer an item, you will not be able to see a report of Asian students, as those data will be suppressed by the system. So there is low disclosure risk. I would suggest checking with your local IRB regulations to see what is required or what kind of IRB package is required.

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      d. Sally: There is detailed information in the user guide you will have that talks in more detail about this question: if there are only so many cases within a subgroup, those data will be suppressed. If you have additional questions about this, please reach out to us.

22. Will we receive the raw data, say in Excel?

      a. Yan: Yes, you can export the data into a .CSV file which can be opened in Excel.

23. We can use a random sample? Do we need to include every grade level served by the program in the study? For example, could we survey 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th grades? If we can use a random sample, what size of sample would we need?

      a. Sally: For Project Prevent, because you have a GPRA measure for student engagement that means every grade in your participating schools needs to be surveyed every year. We did ask the Department about this and we sent out a question and answer document about a week or so ago so for you. If you have further questions you can contact your TA Specialist.

      b. Sally: It's not that the sample needs to be random. It needs to be *representative,* and what size you need depends. You need to have enough of a sample that you can do the necessary analysis. You need to talk with your evaluator or your sampling statistician or an expert in that field about what you need to do.

24. Are we able to just administer the parent surveys and no other respondent groups? Will you allow us to just participate in the pilot if we only want to do the parent/guardian survey at this time?

      a. Yan: In the platform you can actually choose which survey you want to do, so yes you can survey only the parent/guardian if you choose to. We do not have additional requirements for the pilot administration.

25. Just to be clear for Project Prevent, every grade level should be surveyed every year correct?

      a. Yes, every grade, every year, from your participating schools.