



Compendium of Frequently Asked Questions

This resource will be continuously updated in response to new questions and as new features become available on the NJ SCI Platform.

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I. NJ SCI Platform and General Programmatic Questions

What is the School Climate Change Process (SCCP)?

The School Climate Change Process (SCCP) is based on a behavioral consultation model designed to promote changes in systems and behaviors. The SCCP is part of a theory of action that involves a range of critical steps for success and conditions that support the development and implementation of a comprehensive school climate improvement plan.

Schools begin the SCCP by forming a high-functioning School Climate Leadership Team (SCLT) comprised of diverse school stakeholders that drives and monitors improvement efforts. Teams collaborate to collect and analyze school climate data from multiple school stakeholders and use these and other data to drive goal development and alignment of strategies to goals to build a comprehensive and coordinated strategic plan. Development of this comprehensive strategic plan requires ongoing communication and collaboration with school community stakeholders. This helps to ensure equitable access to data and feedback throughout the change process and is essential for achieving goals. Once schools begin to implement their plans, they evaluate progress and make necessary modifications based on new data and information collected. Schools continuously cycle through this process of collecting data and evaluating progress over the course of several years. Research suggests systemic, positive changes related to school climate improvement typically take three to five years (Cawelti, 1999; Protheroe, 2011).

Leadership support and coordination at the district level is vital to starting and continuously cycling through the SCCP. District leaders champion the importance of this work in the community and enact leadership skills and competencies to drive the SCCP, including aligning a district's vision and values to school climate goals and priorities, engaging various key stakeholders, and providing structures and supports to enable individuals and teams to effectively and efficiently facilitate school climate improvement activities. Equity, particularly as it relates to communicating and engaging with school community stakeholders, is prioritized throughout each element of the SCCP and is attended to by both district- and school-level leaders. For more information, [click here](#) to view a brief learning module.

What is the NJ SCI Platform?

The NJ SCI Platform (pronounced NJ "sky") is a free, web-based application designed to support district- and school-level school climate improvement efforts. The application provides district- and school-level workspaces for members of the school climate leadership teams. The platform provides School Climate Leadership Teams (SCLT) with team development resources, data collection tools, automated reporting features, guided data analysis and prioritization support, goal-setting resources, evidence-based strategy and intervention resources, and tools for monitoring progress towards goals and implementation quality. The NJ SCI Survey is the main source of data for driving school climate improvement efforts. The NJ SCI Survey and Platform enable districts and schools to take a "blue sky" approach to imagining the possibilities for improving their cultures and climates for all school community stakeholders.

What is the NJ SCI Survey?

The New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey was developed by the School Climate Transformation Project (SCTP) via a collaboration between Rutgers University and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The NJ SCI Survey is a comprehensive instrument designed to help schools identify school climate strengths and needs and use these data to create strategic plans to improve conditions for teaching and learning. [Click here](#) to view domains, or major areas of school climate, covered on the NJ SCI Survey for all stakeholder groups. The NJ SCI Survey is administered to all stakeholders through the new, web-based NJ SCI Platform. The survey and associated communication tools are available in multiple languages for students and parents and caregivers.

The NJ SCI Survey will replace the New Jersey School Climate Survey (NJSCS), following a pilot with selected districts in 2022, to support schools in implementing the School Climate Change Process (SCCP). Revisions to this instrument have

been guided by a rigorous review of current research literature and analyses of previously collected NJSCS data from schools across New Jersey. The NJ SCI Survey development process included an expansive stakeholder input process to ensure the survey would meet the current and emerging needs of K-12 schools in the state of New Jersey.

What topics are covered on the NJ SCI Survey?

The domains, or conditions for learning, on the NJ SCI Survey were developed after a comprehensive review of the research literature and best practices for measuring school climate. In addition, the developers engaged diverse community stakeholders from across the state of New Jersey, representing various organizations and roles, to ensure the constructs covered best represent the needs and priorities in the state.

[Click here](#) to view domains, or major areas of school climate, covered on the NJ SCI Survey for all stakeholder groups.

How can my district/school get started using the NJ SCI Platform?

The Superintendent, Charter School Lead, Chief School Administrator (CSA), or an individual authorized by law to sign agreements on behalf of the entity, must sign Terms of Use on behalf of their district or school to authorize access for staff to the NJ SCI Platform.

Can someone other than Superintendent sign the Terms of Use for the NJ SCI Platform to authorize district use?

Our system requires that the individual who completes the Terms of Use on behalf of the district holds one of the following roles: Superintendent, Acting Superintendent, Chief School Administrator, or Charter School Lead, or being an individual authorized by law to sign agreements on behalf of the entity. Other district personnel may review the Terms of Use prior to having the Superintendent sign them on behalf of the district or entity. The individual who signs the Terms of Use also receives the Superintendent log-in credentials and most expansive permissions, which allows them to onboard additional authorized users in the district. Charters or other non-traditional organizations with unique leadership structures may reach out to njscisupport@rutgers.edu for support in considering who is authorized to sign the Terms of Use and occupy specific roles within the NJ SCI Platform.

What school districts are eligible to use the NJ SCI Platform?

The opportunity to participate in the pilot phase of the NJ SCI Platform during spring 2022 was communicated statewide in fall 2021. Interest forms may also be submitted by staff interested in bringing the NJ SCI Platform to their district at www.njschoolclimate.org. Districts invited during the initial pilot that complete the authorization requirements are eligible to take the survey during spring or fall of 2022.

New Jersey public school districts, including approved private schools for students with disabilities (APPSDs), will be eligible to use the NJ SCI Platform when it is opened statewide. The expected statewide opening is during the 2022-2023 school year.

If a district authorizes use of the NJ SCI Platform, does every school in the district have to participate?

All schools in the district are eligible, but are not required, to use the pilot survey if the Terms of Use for the NJ SCI Platform are signed. The Superintendent and/or District Climate Coordinator (DCC) should communicate with all school principals to assess interest and decide which schools will participate in the pilot.

Completing the Terms of Use is not an obligation to use the survey instrument at any point, but will allow any school climate team in the district that is authorized by the Superintendent to use the NJ SCI Platform for team development, survey administration, and additional features when they are made available.

How many districts in New Jersey are using the NJ SCI Platform?

During the pilot phase, over 50 districts will participate from all over the state. The platform is scheduled to be open for statewide use during the 2022-2023 school year.

What should a district do first after their Superintendent has signed the Terms of Use for the NJ SCI Platform?

Districts should appoint a district-level staff member(s) to serve as District Climate Coordinator (DCC). Using tools and resources on the NJ SCI Platform, District Climate Coordinator(s) can provide support to School Climate Leadership Teams in the School Climate Change Process. This involves using NJ SCI Survey data to identify needs and track progress over time. District-level staff focused on data, diversity equity and inclusion, school culture and climate, or social and emotional learning may be well-positioned for the role. Given their primary roles as leaders of building-level efforts, School Principals and other school-based staff cannot be designated as DCCs. Large districts may appoint multiple District Climate Coordinators, as needed, based on capacity and other considerations at the district level. For support in selecting a DCC in your district, [click here](#).

What can I expect as a user while the NJ SCI Platform continues to be developed and enhanced over time?

Users can expect to see new and exciting features at different points in time throughout 2022 and beyond. The SCTP will continue to improve upon existing workspaces and design new features and resources based on platform user feedback as well as alignment with best practices associated with the steps in the School Climate Change Process. Please help inform this improvement process by using the “Share Feedback” button on the NJ SCI Platform or by reaching out to us at njscisupport@rutgers.edu to share feedback or comments about your experience as a user on the platform.

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II. Access, Onboarding, and Team Development

Who can be granted access to the NJ SCI Platform, and how do they get access?

District and/or school leaders can decide which individuals with district-issued email accounts are granted access to the NJ SCI Platform and what level of authorization they receive related to data collection, analysis, and planning. When a user is added, an invitation will be sent to the user directly from noreply@njschoolclimate.org. We recommend safelisting this email address and checking spam filters and other mechanisms if the invitation is not received within a few minutes of sending.

All users aside from the Chief School Administrator (CSA)/Superintendent/Charter School Lead, who signs the Terms of Use on behalf of the district, will acknowledge individual “Terms and Conditions” of platform use. The CSA/ Superintendent/Charter School Lead and District Climate Coordinator(s) will have permissions to create school sites, add School Principals to the system, and view school-level data and strategic plans across buildings.

School Principals and the School Climate Leadership Team (SCLT) Chair(s) will have permission to add SCLT members and launch the NJ SCI Survey. School-level Data Coordinators will have permission to launch and manage the NJ SCI Survey administration along with the School Principal and designated Team Chair(s). All other school team members will have the ability to view school level data and develop/edit strategic plans through the system. Any district-level staff added to the system, aside from the Superintendent and DCC, will also have access to all school-level sites. All users should be added to the NJ SCI Platform using a district-issued email account in order to best manage access.

Why should we form a School Climate Leadership Team (SCLT) on our platform workspace if we do not have one already?

The NJ SCI Platform supports the formation of a School Climate Leadership Team (SCLT) at each participating school in the district to lead the School Climate Change Process. Developing or forming a SCLT from either an existing School Safety/School Climate Team or other related team in your building is essential to effectively implementing steps in the School Climate Change Process. Teams collaborate to collect and analyze school climate data and use these and other data to drive decisions related to a comprehensive and coordinated strategic plan.

Can Team Roles be changed once they are established?

We recommend that a diverse and representative team be formed for effectively enacting all steps in the School Climate Change Process. Once formed, we have a fun and practical activity to support teams in designating roles, even if some individuals were fulfilling the roles of Team Chair or Data Coordinator temporarily. The activity can be repeated as team composition changes or new members are added. Principals and Team Chairs can change designated Team Roles in the system for team members at any time.

Should we appoint a district-level school climate team (i.e. District Climate Leadership Team)?

Each school district will have an associated NJ SCI Platform district site, and the platform provides resources to support district-level staff in the data analysis and planning process. The more leadership support and coaching capacity your district can offer to schools as they navigate this multi-year process, the better. Developing a team of leaders at the district-level, which includes Principals from participating schools, ensures sustainability of efforts to improve school climate and provides the opportunity for district administrators to collaborate and support the varied needs of individual School Climate Leadership Teams.

Are the NJ SCI Survey and Platform designed with accessibility in mind?

The NJ SCI Survey is compatible with Text-to-Speech readers, and school staff administering the survey to students are encouraged to provide appropriate accommodations to ensure all students can participate in taking the survey while still taking steps to preserve anonymity. The NJ SCI Survey Reporting features have been checked for contrast and to be colorblind-safe using Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. Additional improvements will be made based on user feedback on overall look and feel as well as accessibility.

Can parents/caregivers who are involved in board of education and/or school initiatives be provided access to the NJ SCI Platform/data reports?

District and/or school leaders can decide which individuals with district-issued email accounts are granted access to the NJ SCI Platform and what level of authorization they receive related to data collection, analysis, and planning.

Parents, caregivers, and community members should only be granted access to the NJ SCI Platform using district-issued email addresses, which can be deactivated when their official involvement or role with the district/school comes to an end. These users will acknowledge the same responsibilities as staff users with respect to appropriate uses of data.

Can students be provided access to the NJ SCI Platform/data reports?

Promoting student involvement and leadership in the process of improving school climate is an excellent practice. As with other sensitive matters the school climate team may discuss, such as HIB, you will need to use discretion regarding access to data reports and other materials and discussions for the students. Many of the data displays and metrics in the reports are excellent teaching tools for promoting data literacy and an understanding of data visualization principles, and can be used to support student involvement in discussions of strengths and needs, as well as root causes and potential interventions. However, students should not be given direct log-in access to the NJ SCI Platform as team

members at this time. We may in the future explore alternate “permission levels” that align with updated Terms and Conditions for a student user to provide students with access to live reporting features of some data and share resources for how to discuss results, and particularly disaggregated data, in sensitive and responsible ways. Students can certainly reference the static PDF reports, featuring overall means for domains and items, that can be downloaded from the platform, as well as view the interactive reporting features (and future goal setting and planning tools) alongside adult leaders on the School Climate Leadership Team.

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III. **NJ SCI Survey (Instruments)**

Who can take the NJ SCI Survey?

The NJ SCI Survey is designed for students in grades 3-12, school staff, and parents and caregivers.

The NJ SCI Survey is available for Students Grades 3-5 and Students Grades 6-12. Students in Pre-K to second grade should *not* take the NJ SCI Survey, but staff and parents/caregivers in a school serving those grades can take the survey. In the future, the platform will offer resources for assessing perceptions of climate among younger students. The survey and platform are designed to meet accessibility requirements, and school staff should provide necessary supports and accommodations to students with disabilities so that all students have an opportunity to participate in the survey.

The Staff Survey is designed to be used with all staff members in the building. Roles are listed out and are categorized as Certified and Non-Certified for disaggregation purposes. The Parent and Caregiver survey can be used by one or more adult caretakers with a child in the school.

Adults who are both staff and parents/caregivers in the district may take the survey for both groups. Parents and caregivers with more than one child in a school are able to (but not required to) complete the survey for each child if they feel their children have varying experiences within the school.

When should the NJ SCI Survey be administered?

The NJ SCI Survey is designed to be reliable and flexible to time of year. It is recommended that schools avoid surveying in September, when new routines are typically being established and new students are acclimating to the building. The survey can be used any day of the week, but schools should avoid scheduling on days where student impressions of the school environment may be highly affected (e.g., Halloween, day of a big game, standardized testing when stress may be higher). Periods immediately following major crises should also be avoided, when possible. Schools may decide to wait a few weeks after a major policy change or scheduling shift to allow routines to reform.

How often should the NJ SCI Survey be administered during a single school year?

While there is no restriction on the number of times a school can deploy surveys in a school year, one well-executed survey administration per school year with ample participation is typically sufficient to facilitate the process of identifying needs and setting goals for strategic planning. Subsequent survey administrations should be planned thoughtfully with sufficient time elapsed between them for interventions to have a measurable impact. It is *not* recommended that schools administer the NJ SCI Survey more than twice per year to avoid respondent fatigue and to maximize the likelihood that school- and district-level teams have time to use the data effectively.

Can we decide which parts of the survey, or specific domains, to administer to select stakeholder groups?

Visit www.njschoolclimate.org to see an informational flier overviewing the domains, or conditions for learning, featured on the NJ SCI Survey. The surveys are meant to be taken in one sitting and include all the domains listed, which together reflect the overall quality of school climate. The NJ SCI Survey cannot be edited or changed in the NJ SCI Platform, and you may not use or change the materials outside of the platform and attribute those revised materials to the SCTP. Respondents have the option to skip any items while taking the survey and “Not Applicable” responses are offered for specific items.

To ensure the NJ SCI Survey best meets the needs of NJ schools, the development process included a thorough review of recent research and practice, insights from school climate work in New Jersey schools, and input from educational experts, organizations, and school-based staff. In the future, the NJ SCI Platform will offer additional supplemental and companion school climate assessments and will allow schools and districts to upload related local data.

Districts and/or schools may decide not to survey a specific stakeholder group during a survey deployment, although only data collected during the same survey deployment can be viewed in a comparison view across stakeholder groups within the data report. For example, if a school decides not to survey parents and caregivers until later in the school year, their data will appear in a separate report and will not have comparative data viewable in the same report for students and staff. Please note that stakeholders can opt out of the survey, skip any item on the survey, or stop taking the survey at any time.

How long does it take to complete the NJ SCI Survey?

The NJ SCI Survey is new and has not yet been widely tested with a diverse group of stakeholders. The districts participating in the pilot of the instrument and their feedback and participation will be essential to refining the instrument and having a sense of the average length of time to complete the surveys. After the NJ SCI Pilot is complete and the instruments are finalized based on the results, it will be possible to provide more specific estimates of the time required for various stakeholders to complete the survey.

Generally, we recommend leaving a typical single-block class period (about 40-45 minutes) for students to take the NJ SCI Survey. This includes setting up technology, delivering instructions, answering questions, and providing the password to students taking the survey. Students requiring extended time should be provided with the accommodation (up to 24 hours, after which student survey links will close for security purposes). We suggest administering the survey to students within 5 consecutive school days (i.e. one full school week), if possible.

For staff, we recommend providing time during the scheduled workday, such as during a Faculty Meeting, PLC, or other release period. The staff version of the survey has additional domains focused on perceptions of professional support and the work environment and is longer than the other surveys. For that reason, we recommend the time allotted is at least equivalent to a single-block class period. We recommend allowing staff to survey within 7-10 consecutive days.

Parents and caregivers should be given the longest window of possible dates to participate to allow flexibility in starting and completing the survey. We recommend surveying parents and caregivers within 14 consecutive days, but additional time can be given if needed.

Staff and parents/caregivers may start the survey and return at a later time to their survey in progress if the survey is kept open in the browser.

Will the survey and related communications be available in languages other than English?

During the pilot, the NJ SCI Survey and communication templates will be available for students and parents/caregivers in English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. Following this pilot year and the finalization of the instruments, the survey will be translated into additional languages based on need.

Can we share copies of the surveys with stakeholders prior to the administration period?

Schools can easily share links to PDF preview copies of the Student Surveys (Grades 3-5, 6-12) with the community using links provided in sample parental notification letters. It is recommended that these links are easily accessible for review during the notification process.

By request, schools can receive PDF preview copies of the surveys for adults (Staff and Parents/Caregivers), but discretion should be used to limit access to the questions on an as-needed basis, as most individuals reviewing the surveys will also be asked to participate. Reviewing all the items beforehand, rather than reacting to them in the moment while taking the survey, could influence respondents' answers and have a priming effect.

You are welcome to share the NJ SCI Pilot Survey items with the school board, and the public, with the considerations described above in mind. If you receive any feedback or hear any concerns, please feel free to pass the information on to us, and feel free to refer individuals with questions about the instrument to njscisupport@rutgers.edu.

The New Jersey School Climate Survey had a “Neutral” option for Students Grades 6-12, Staff, and Parents/Caregivers. Why has it been removed?

All response sets on the NJ SCI Survey are on a four-point Likert scale, most of which capture perceptions ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The developers of the survey did not include a “neutral” option based on input and feedback from stakeholders, and in particular, the school leaders that use the data to inform plans to improve school climate. Items on the surveys were carefully designed to be relevant to stakeholders in the school community and therefore stakeholders are expected to have either a generally positive or generally negative perception on topics measured in the items, even if those perceptions are not very strong. By removing a neutral option, school leaders are better able to understand how stakeholders are feeling and where improvements need to be made. Preliminary research suggests that removing a neutral option from surveys does not negatively impact the quality of the data collected. Similar instruments, including the U.S. Department of Education School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), do not provide users with a “neutral option.” Instructions are provided on NJ SCI Survey pages to remind respondents they may skip any item on the survey for any reason, including if they do not know how to answer an item or would prefer not to. “Not Applicable” options are also provided for select items.

Are there items on diversity, equity, and inclusion on the survey?

While we do not extract a specific Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) domain, there are DEI items integrated within the domains for all stakeholder groups which will also be highlighted and reported in their own tab in the data report. In addition, the data insights reported by the system will elevate patterns among demographic groups to provide additional equity-oriented data for decision-making.

What is the “Supports for Social and Emotional Learning” domain on the NJ SCI Survey actually measuring?

The NJ SCI Survey measures conditions in schools that support social and emotional skill development among students using a specially designed domain called “Supports for Social and Emotional Learning.” It has long been shown through research and practice that social-emotional and/or character development have a positive impact on a variety of outcomes related to school climate, individual student well-being and confidence, and achievement. The development of this new cutting-edge construct began in response to New Jersey’s development of [SEL Competencies and Sub-competencies](#) in 2017 and is informed by our work in schools and input from stakeholders in the development of the

new instrument. The NJ SCI Survey draws on the latest research and practice to ask about school-wide and classroom practices that help staff model, and students develop and enact, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. In addition to their relationship with positive outcomes in school, these are critical skills to prepare students for success in their path after high school, and top skills that are sought by employers. Schools where SEL is infused and embedded across content areas and aspects of school life promote prosocial and inclusive behaviors, setting the stage for a better overall climate and supportive conditions for teaching and learning to occur.

The survey captures the perceptions of different groups about how comprehensively SEL is infused and embedded throughout the school day. It does not ask students questions about their own actions or beliefs, and the data are presented collectively so that individual responses cannot be identified or tracked over time. When goals are set related to this domain, schools can monitor the overall domain score for different stakeholder groups as well as individual items on the survey related to SEL implementation.

Some stakeholders have mistaken the intent of the SEL competencies as being designed to teach students *what* to think and feel, instead of helping them to become more aware of their own thoughts and feelings, and how to self-regulate so they are responding to those thoughts and feelings appropriately in school. A component of what our survey measures is the extent to which stakeholders like parents and caregivers have input on how SEL is taught, and how SEL has been adapted to meet the cultural needs of the community in a way that honors and values various beliefs and ways of being.

Can anyone identify respondents on the surveys?

The survey is anonymous (no names are collected at any time, and data are redacted for groups of fewer than ten respondents to protect anonymity), and participation is voluntary (a student, staff, parent can opt out at any time without penalty during administration). All items are close-ended. “Not Applicable” options are available for select items and participants have the ability to skip any item.

How will the data from the NJ SCI Survey be used by Rutgers University? Will district data be shared?

The data collected through the NJ SCI Platform are stored on highly-secured servers located in the United States. The only people who will have access to your districts' data reports are district staff members authorized by the superintendent and/or principal(s) through invitation to the platform, Rutgers staff at the School Climate Transformation Project (consultants and researchers who are certified in handling sensitive data), and web developers who are similarly certified and experienced in managing data through their work on multiple projects with Rutgers University. The data from all participating schools will be combined and de-identified to not include school names, in order to be used to statistically validate the pilot survey and explore statewide trends.

While the New Jersey Department of Education sponsors the NJ SCI Platform, no individual school data will be shared with NJDOE. The department will have access to the names of districts which have authorized access to the NJ SCI Platform, but no additional information about those districts. Data from the system will eventually be used to report statewide trends and insights to the NJDOE to support informed decision-making (see following question and answer).

Are benchmarking data available to compare how our school/district are doing with others?

The NJ SCI Survey is a new instrument that is currently being piloted. Once the instrument is finalized and validated, and access to the NJ SCI Platform is expanded for statewide use, the School Climate Transformation Project at Rutgers University will use de-identified and disaggregated data to explore statewide trends.

Once a sufficiently representative sample of data are collected across the state, and the instrument's reliability over several administrations has been established, the possibility of providing normalizing data or benchmarks among comparable types of schools and districts will be explored. The NJ SCI Platform has been built with the capability to provide users with system insights in data reports, which may possibly include benchmarking data in the future.

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IV. Survey Administration and Reporting (Logistics)

Who can deploy the NJ SCI Survey to stakeholders in our school community?

Given best practices schools should take to plan for effective survey administration, we recommend that school-level team members, particularly the Data Coordinator(s), deploy surveys for their respective schools. The Data Coordinator manages survey administration and other data collection and works closely with the Team Champion and Team Chair to ensure efficient and effective data collection and analysis. Specifically, the Data Coordinator reviews and follows best practices guidance for survey administration, including helping to schedule administration at the school, training staff to help collect student data, distributing survey links using sample letters, and monitoring data responses.

The NJ SCI Platform is designed to allow for district-level support and coordination while providing autonomy and flexibility to individual schools. Because surveys are deployed at the school-level, district-level users, including the District Climate Coordinator (DCC), will not see the "Deploy in My School" button in the table of available surveys unless they are a member of the School Climate Leadership Team in a respective school's site. District Climate Coordinators can support schools in their efforts to coordinate survey administration across the district to ensure they schedule on a similar time frame. If they wish to support schools more directly, they should reach out to principals about joining their school/team site and elevating the team role to "Data Coordinator" to enable district staff members to deploy surveys on the respective schools' sites.

How do participants access the survey?

The survey administration process for the NJ SCI Survey is likely simpler than others because respondents are not provided unique codes or individual log-in information. This method makes the process of accessing the survey easier for respondents and increases their trust that the survey is in fact anonymous. Instead, the platform features tutorials and written guidance to facilitate the process of creating shareable survey links for each stakeholder group in the school. A school team member acting as the Data Coordinator in their respective school can set up a survey deployment by selecting a time frame and the versions of the survey needed (Grades 3-5, 6-12, Staff, Parents/caregivers). A unique password can be set for the school community, although generic passwords are generated by the system, and in either case passwords can later be changed. The system creates hyperlinks to the survey interface (similar to Qualtrics or a web-based program) and provides auto-generated communications to stakeholders (translated into the languages mentioned above) with school-specific information about the survey (survey links, time frames, persons to contact). The system allows users with permissions to view or deploy surveys to see a breakdown by stakeholder group of response rates while the surveys are live. Once schools are done with survey administration, they can close their links to generate and view data reports.

The NJ SCI Survey can be completed using computers, tablets, smartphones, or other similar electronic devices. Given the responsive technology used on the NJ SCI Platform, and the need to protect anonymity of respondents, the NJ SCI Survey and other associated assessments cannot be completed using paper/pencil surveys.

Can participants take the survey more than once?

Our system does not require individual codes to enter the survey links. This protects anonymity and helps respondents feel confident that their responses cannot be traced back to them, while reducing barriers to participation. We recognize this may raise the concern of "ballot-stuffing" or individuals taking the survey more than once. There are limited situations where we encourage individuals to take the survey more than once. If a parent/caregiver has multiple children in the same building and feels the children have significantly different experiences of school climate, they may take it more than once to reflect those perceptions. If a staff member also has a child in the building, they may take both versions of the survey. While there is no way to prevent an individual from taking the survey more than once, we hope those types of circumstances would be unusual, and from our experience administering climate surveys for years, we believe that they are. The school can set relatively tight survey windows to prevent this activity: for example, giving staff a specific faculty meeting to complete the survey and changing the survey password before offering make-ups to those who missed it. The same could be done for students, who should be taking the survey in the building, through an extended homeroom administration or class time, during a one or two-day survey window.

Should students who miss the survey be permitted to make it up?

It is good practice to offer a make-up day for students who were not in school on the days the survey was administered. As a first step, students who missed it on an earlier day of the planned administration may have the opportunity to take it on subsequent days. Schools may change the password before distributing the links to students who missed the original administration period, and only provide it to those students. Supervision should always be provided for those students taking the make-up survey, which may mean allowing those students to report to an alternate centralized location during specials, study halls, or other periods at their discretion (such as an auditorium with a proctor). Staff planning administration can also set up a live, virtual make-up format where students can make up the survey during a defined window with an adult present and proctoring as they would in a classroom. At the least, ensure there is a staff member familiar with the survey who is available on-call to answer questions or concerns from students during the make-up window (if, for example, all students do the make-up survey in the same class the original administration occurred, but know that they can go to a counselor for support if they need it). Students requiring additional support and/or accommodations may need different make-up circumstances as well. We recommend that students always take the survey when they are in the building, and as a reminder, the student survey is disabled between 6pm to 6am for new entries. Staff that will support student survey administration should review the following guidelines [here](#).

When and how will our district/schools receive our data reports for the NJ SCI Survey?

Your District Climate Coordinator(s) will work with school principals and school-level data coordinators, as appropriate, to set dates for a planned administration period for stakeholders using the NJ SCI Surveys (students, staff, and parents/caregivers). District and school leaders can check participation rates periodically within the NJ SCI Platform and communicate reminders to take the survey. Once the school leaders have decided there is sufficient participation, they will be able to close the survey and access the platform's live reporting, data comparison, and analysis features. The data reporting features use automated and responsive technology to provide guidance, suggestions, and data insights to school climate teams as they navigate the reports and identify strengths and potential areas of need.

The NJ SCI Platform online system will store data and allow you to view results directly on the platform interface, along with data analysis tools. For a preview of the reporting interface, please visit the [NJ SCI homepage](#). Toward the middle of the page, you will see a photo carousel which provides a preview of the reporting interface that schools will see once reports are generated by the system. The data can be downloaded as a static PDF report if needed. Districts and schools using the system can request an Excel spreadsheet of their data by direct request, but demographic responses will not be included in the spreadsheet to protect anonymity.

Can the data be compared in the system across schools in the same district?

Members of the District Climate Leadership Team can compare domain and item mean scores and the number of respondents across schools in the district on the District Comparison tab in the Data Collection and Reports Workspace in the district site. District-level users can select from a list of available deployments across schools and determine which they want to view side-by-side. Alternatively, schools can select to view Comparison Reports which meet pre-determined criteria of being collected within the same deployment or being the most recently collect data in each school in the same school year. Comparison Reports contain district-wide averages on domains and items to support district-level data discussions and strategic planning. Members of the district team can also access each school's data reports through the school's site to view additional data, including frequency distributions for items and domains, as well as disaggregated mean scores.

Do parents and caregivers need to provide consent for their child(ren) to take the NJ SCI Survey?

School staff are responsible for administering the NJ SCI Survey to stakeholders using the survey links and support materials provided through the NJ SCI Platform. As such, it is the school's responsibility to decide how to inform parents and caregivers about their child's participation in the NJ SCI Survey. Rutgers University does not provide or require any permission forms for surveys used for standard educational practice as part of our project/the SCTP. However, we provide guidance for notifying parents/caregivers about the survey which consider New Jersey statutory law. The following is an excerpt from the Survey Administration Guidelines that is available to schools on the NJ SCI Platform:

The SCTP believes it is best practice for schools to notify parents and caregivers about students' participation in school climate surveys. New Jersey currently has statutory law with respect to active parental consent (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34) and passive parental consent (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34.1). Please be advised that some items on the student surveys may require that schools conduct a passive consent process in accordance with these laws. While the administration guidelines provided include examples of suggested language for communicating with parents and caregivers about the survey and facilitating the passive consent process, it is the district's and school's sole responsibility to comply with any and all laws with respect to the administration of the NJ SCI Survey. As stated in the Terms of Use signed by your district's Superintendent/Chief School Administrator, your district/school should consult its local board and counsel for guidance on compliance with all applicable laws and policies relating to parental consent for surveys.

Why is it recommended that parents and caregivers be notified about student surveys at least two weeks prior to their start date?

The two-week recommendation and supportive materials we offer are based on requirements in an updated NJ statute related to parental consent (see question above). You should defer to your local board and counsel when complying with laws or policies related to parental notification/consent, as we cannot interpret the law on behalf of schools/districts.

In the platform, you have the ability to select unique Start and End Dates for the different stakeholders so you can begin survey administration of staff and parents/caregivers earlier or later than the students, as needed.

How can we share the data from the NJ SCI Platform with the broader community?

Development of this comprehensive strategic plan requires ongoing communication and collaboration with school community stakeholders at various stages. The NJ SCI Platform provides learning modules, resources, and suggested monthly activities to help with each step in the process, including communicating with staff and parents about survey outcomes, potential school climate goals, and plans of action. There are also several ways to share your data with other stakeholders outside of the team (e.g., community members, board members) without authorizing their access to the

platform. These include exporting PDF copies of the data reports, taking screenshots of pages/disaggregated views of interactive reporting feature, and other data display features (e.g., graphs) that the system generates.

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V. **Pilot and Validation**

What changes may occur to the survey as a result of the pilot?

After a sufficient sample of schools and districts have participated in the pilot, we will engage various statistical tests to confirm that the survey is performing well and that the constructs, or domains that are captured by the items on the survey, are measuring what they are intended to measure. The current revision of the survey was informed by the results of statistical tests on the New Jersey School Climate Survey (NJSCS), this survey's predecessor, from various years of data across different cohorts of schools. It was also informed by stakeholder input and feedback, and advancements in school climate research.

After statistical analyses are conducted using data from schools participating in the pilot, we anticipate that the domains will stay the same, but items may be removed or revised if the analyses reveal that they do not meaningfully capture what they are intended to measure or if items are deemed redundant. Using data to inform revisions to the survey and paring down the survey where necessary is beneficial because it reduces the amount of time required to complete the survey and ensures items are adequately measuring conditions for learning as intended. Based on results from the analyses, it is also possible that some items may move from one domain to another if the data suggest they are a better conceptual fit. These changes will be clearly outlined before your school and/or district collect additional data following the pilot study or set interim goals. We are excited that your district will be part of the process of creating a valid, reliable, and cutting-edge instrument that is customized to the needs of our state.

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VI. **Data Ownership and Security**

Where and how are the data collected through the NJ SCI Platform stored?

The data collected through the NJ SCI Platform are stored on highly-secured servers located in the United States. The only people who will have access to your districts' data reports are district staff members authorized by the superintendent and/or principal(s) through invitation to the platform, Rutgers staff at the School Climate Transformation Project (consultants and researchers who are certified in handling sensitive data), and web developers who are similarly certified and experienced in managing data through their work on multiple projects with Rutgers University. Aggregated data sets (de-identified to not include school names) will be used to statistically validate the pilot survey. The following technical information on data storage and security appears in the "Terms of Use for NJ SCI Platform Use" for superintendents:

"Data Security. 1. Rutgers will implement and maintain reasonable administrative, physical and technical safeguards ("Safeguards") which attempt to prevent any collection, use or disclosure of, or access to District Data that this Agreement does not expressly authorize, including, without limitation, an information security program that meets commercially reasonable industry practice to safeguard District Data. Such information security program includes: (a) physical security of all premises in which District Data will be processed and/or stored; and (b) reasonable precautions taken with respect to the employment of, access given to, and education and training of any and all personnel furnished or engaged by Rutgers to perform any part of the services hereunder. 2. Rutgers has implemented administrative, technical, and physical security procedures to protect information stored in our servers, which are located in the United States. It uses security safeguards such as physical access controls to buildings and files, at-rest data encryption, and in

transit data encryption using HTTPS with TLS 1.3 to help prevent unauthorized access to the information it maintains. Despite this, neither the Internet nor any data storage system can be guaranteed to be 100% secure."

How can data be removed or deleted from the system?

As outlined in the Terms of Use signed by Superintendents, Charter School Lead persons, and Chief School Administrators, data entered in the system by district- and school-level users, including survey data, are property of the school district. As such, the NJ SCI Platform enables users with appropriate permission levels to remove and delete data. Data removal and deletion should only be done when absolutely necessary and involves a system of checks and warnings to ensure data are not accidentally deleted.

School Principals have the authority to remove NJ SCI Survey deployments, including associated data, using the trash can icon that appears within their view of the Data Collection and Reporting Workspace, under the Survey Deployments tab. This function may be used if a survey deployment was created erroneously, or an error was made in the scheduling of a deployment that could not be corrected through the use of the edit button. Superintendents can also see the trash can icon within a school's workspace to remove data from their respective school site; however, Superintendents should check in with School Principals to notify them if data will be removed from their school site. Superintendents can also permanently delete a deployment and any associated data that were removed from the school workspace in their district-level Manage Deleted Data Workspace. The data are automatically deleted from the servers, and all back up data is manually purged. All data permanently deleted by the Superintendent/CSA in the Manage Deleted Data Workspace are not recoverable.

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