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Dear Parents and Guardians,

This January, our District schools will participate in the [New Jersey School Climate Improvement](#) (NJ SCI) Survey, developed and administered by Rutgers University, to gather multiple perspectives on the experiences of our students, staff, and parents/guardians/caretakers. We want to serve you well, and your participation in this survey platform will assist us.

School Climate Defined

To better understand the information we are collecting, it is essential to define school climate. According to the *New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Strategy Resource*, school climate “...encompasses the dynamic and diverse feelings, perceptions, and experiences of school community members and...relates to the quality or experience of how it feels to be a part of the school community from each person’s unique identity and perspective.”

Dimensions of school life associated with school climate include the following:

- Safety
- Relationships
- Academic environment
- Organizational structures/supports

The items above interact with varying levels in the school environment. School culture reflects values, norms, practices, and traditions within the community, while school climate can shift over time through sustained strategic efforts. We aim to establish the baseline school climate across all Somerset Hills School District schools and classrooms. It is time to execute this work to this extent.

Data Collection - Why is it Important?

Collecting data is essential to understanding our District and its schools’ strengths and needs, and to understanding what it feels like to be a member of the school community. Having data collected from a third party using a validated school climate instrument provides the District with assurance of data integrity and makes it actionable.

The project includes interactive data reports with insights and the ability to compare perceptions within and across schools and by groups (e.g., grade, gender, race/ethnicity). Data analysis features also enable exploration of school climate strengths and needs, with tools for goal setting, strategic planning, and interactive graphs to monitor progress over time.

Who is being Surveyed?

The District will be surveying the following District stakeholders in January:

- Students grades 3-12



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- Parents of all students
 - All staff members

Utilizing Survey Information

School and district staff will be able to view survey responses on a password-protected online platform. Individual responses to the survey are aggregated for group-level reporting (No one will have access to individual respondents' answers).

When will my Child Be Surveyed?

Student survey administration will take place from January 5, 2026, through January 16, 2026. You can preview the items on the student survey(s) here: [Students Grades 3-5 Survey](#); [Students Grades 6-12 Survey](#).

Is surveying my Child Required?

This is an opportunity for us to learn about your child's views of the school, but your child is not required to participate in the survey.

How Long Will The Survey Take?

The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Questions

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jaime Walker at jwalker@shsd.org. If you would prefer that your child not participate in the survey, please complete this brief [form](#), which will be shared with the building principal. If you do not respond, it will be deemed that you approve of your child participating in the survey if your child chooses to participate.

I look forward to seeing you around the District and wish you a Happy Holiday season.

Sincerely,

Brian Brotschul, Ed. D.

Superintendent of Schools

Somerset Hills School District