

Inequalities in school climate in California

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Structured Abstract:

Purpose: School climate, or the physical and social conditions of the learning environment, has implications for academic achievement.

Methodology: We examine how school climate varies by school-level characteristics in California using administrative data and the California School Climate Survey.

Findings: Staff at secondary schools, schools in large cities, schools that serve low-income populations, Hispanic- and Black-majority schools, and/or low-performing schools reported less positive school climates than their counterparts elsewhere, paralleling other education inequity trends.

Implications and value: We encourage educators to recognize and work to overcome systematic inequities in positive school climate in order to create social contexts that nurture students' academic progress.

Keywords: California, inequalities, organizational culture, secondary schools, school climate, urban areas

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Running Heads:

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Abstract:

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Methodology: We examine how school climate varies by school-level characteristics in California using administrative data and the California School Climate Survey.

Findings: Teachers/staff at secondary schools, schools in large cities, schools that serve low-income populations, Hispanic- and Black-majority schools, and/or low-performing schools reported less positive school climates, including staff/student relationships, norms and standards, student facilitative behaviors, and perceived safety, than their counterparts, paralleling other education inequity trends.

Implications and value: We encourage educators and school leaders to use data-driven and evidence-based strategies to overcome systematic inequities in positive school climate in order to create social contexts that nurture students' academic progress and teacher retention particularly in historically under-resourced schools.

Introduction:

Since no general consensus on how to theorize and define school climate exists (Anderson, 1982), we define school climate broadly as encompassing both the physical and social aspects of the learning and teaching environment. More specifically, this can entail school culture, social milieu, organizational structure, and physical conditions, as well as the values and beliefs held by and the relationships among its teachers, students, and other staff (Fisher *et al.*, 2006; Freiberg, 1998; Freiberg, 1999). Observable measures of school climate include discipline strategies and school leadership (Van Houtte, 2005). School culture adds how all of the different school stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, families, and community members, interact with each other (Cohen *et al.*, 2009). School climate researchers have focused on identifying the non-cognitive and environmental barriers to teaching and learning that may exist at schools, and identifying the resources, strategies, structures, and practices that can be put in place to mitigate or eliminate these barriers by fostering the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual support that enables all students to achieve in school (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Patton *et al.*, 2006; Zullig *et al.*, 2010).

School climate has shown to be positively associated with student academic performance in reading, writing, and math (Jia *et al.*, 2009). Yet, education policies, practice, and teacher education efforts by and large continue to lack a systematic focus on school climate reform (Cohen *et al.*, 2009), even though it could serve as an effective solution for improving student achievement through a number of different pathways (Jerald, 2006; Lezotte, 1991; Anderson, 1982).

A positive school climate provides students with adequate and appropriate supports, structure and opportunities for learning to help mitigate the nonacademic barriers to learning that

students may encounter (Benard, 2004; Resnick *et al.*, 1997; Thapa and Cohen, 2013). These schools have climates that are safe, caring, participatory, and responsive or supportive (for a review, see Cohen *et al.*, 2009). Such a positive school climate has been associated with improving student connectedness, engagement, attendance, classroom behavior, academic aspirations and performance, as well as reducing substance abuse and violence (Hanson *et al.*, 2003; Blum *et al.*, 2002; Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Eccles *et al.*, 1993; Eccles *et al.*, 1997; Rumberger, 1987).

Specific dimensions of school climate appear to be particularly effective for improving academic achievement and reducing student risk behaviors (LaRusso *et al.*, 2008) and improving mental and physical health (Payton *et al.*, 2008). In this paper, we focused on four dimensions of school climate: staff/student relationships, norms and standards, student learning-facilitative behaviors, and perceived safety. Though there is no consensus on which dimensions of school climate are essential to measuring school climate validly, we believe that these four dimensions align with much of the empirical reviews over time (Thapa and Cohen, 2013). These dimensions have shown to interrelate and there is strong evidence documenting their impact on a number of student and school-level outcomes. For example, trusting relationships between administrators, teachers and students has been shown to be an essential aspect of building effective school communities (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). To the extent that students feel safe, cared for, and appropriately supported by teachers, academic motivation and achievement should increase (Anderman, 2002; Freiberg, 1999; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1989; Haynes *et al.*, 1997; Lee and Smith, 1999; McNeely *et al.*, 2002; Osterman, 2000; Rutter *et al.*, 1979; Rutter, 1983; Sherblom *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, caring relationships influence perceived safety (Bosworth *et al.*, 2011) and academic achievement (Crosnoe *et al.*, 2004).

School leadership such as principals can play a critical role in shaping instructional and inclusive-facilitative leadership, thereby influencing academic norms and standards as well as building and sustaining a culture of trust and respect (Bryk, 2010; Thapa *et al.*, 2003; Lezotte, 1991). Feeling safe on school campuses including bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, as well as teachers feeling unsafe have also been linked to support and structure enforced by leadership, that is consistent enforcement of school roles and availability of caring adults (Gregory *et al.*, 2012; Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Fonagy *et al.*, 2005; Gottfredson *et al.*, 1989).

School climate may also affect staff/teacher satisfaction, a growing concern in California (Futernick, 2007; Gandara *et al.*, 2003) and across the country, with implications for teacher retention. With a transient workforce—and the teachers serving high-poverty schools being disproportionately transient—this has implications for school leadership and educational equity. One survey of California teachers found that teachers rated teaching and learning environment as more important than compensation when choosing whether to stay or change schools (Futernick, 2007). Dissatisfied teachers who left, particularly in high poverty schools, cited lack of support, meaningful participation, and collegiality, as well as unclean and unsafe environments. Among those who stayed, the quality of staff relationships and opportunities to participate in decision-making at the school were most important. In order to attract and retain high-quality teachers to California public schools, researchers recommend creating a supportive environment where teachers feel like they have the opportunity to be successful (Perez *et al.*, 2007). Staff satisfaction in turn is associated with student performance. Staff feelings of belonging, of leadership support, perceived positive school climate, and collaboration are all strongly associated with student proficiency in math and reading (Sherblom *et al.*, 2006).

Also, positive school climate has been considered particularly important for racial minority and poor students (Booker, 2006; Watkins and Aber, 2009) suggesting differences by school-level or individual student-level characteristics. In fact, positive school climate has shown to mitigate the negative impact of the socioeconomic context on academic success (Astor *et al.*, 2009). Particularly in underperforming schools, where generally risk factors congregate, it becomes important to improve school climate. A number of studies have documented the disproportionate impact of school climate on students of color (Gregory *et al.*, 2011).

Given the impact of school climate on student and teacher outcomes, differently by school-level characteristics, measuring specific dimensions of school climate could indeed powerfully inform work towards achieving educational equity. We use the California School Climate Survey, which gathers information about staff perceptions of their school climate, to assess differences in school climate by school-level characteristics across California that are available through other state government data sources. This descriptive study, though correlational and ecological in nature, is unique in its access to a statewide dataset that includes surveys completed by a broad swath of educators and school staff across California. California demographics reflect the United States' future: California is currently a majority-minority state, and minority births recently outpaced non-Hispanic white births nationally; these demographic shifts also help make the California context of particular interest.

Methods:

Data Sources and Sample:

The data for this study come from the California School Climate Survey conducted in elementary, middle, and high schools between fall 2005 and spring 2007, since schools are

recommended to complete the survey once every two years. The California School Climate Survey, minimally, is administered to all certificated staff working in grades 5 through 12 at schools that are also administering the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS); all schools receiving Title VI funding are required to complete the survey as part of a mandate through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. At these same schools it is also administered to all personnel working in the areas of health, prevention, and safety. All school staff members are asked 43 questions covering eight dimensions of school climate; however at the time of this study, four particular dimensions with high face validity were selected based on conceptual and empirical literature on relationships, school norms, and safety (Cohen *et al.*, 2009).ⁱ

This study examined whether there were any differences in school climate and other variables by school staff response rate (see Appendix Table 3). Response rates were calculated by dividing the number of staff respondents to the survey, as measured using scanned surveys, by the number of total certified staff in each school, as supplied by the California Healthy Kids Survey district coordinator.

The California School Climate Survey (CSCS), California Basic Educational Data Systems data files (CBEDS), and the Academic Performance Index research files (API Research files) for 2005/06 and 2006/07, were merged for the purposes of this paper. The CSCS data were matched with school-level population area and demographic data from CBEDS, as well as with school-level performance data from the API Research files (downloaded from the California Department of Education website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/filessethsch.asp>). Data were aggregated to the school level and merged with the staff-level CSCS dataset.

Since the data we used for this paper are now six years old, we compared the California public school student population between the time that these data were collected (2006-2007

academic year) and the most recent academic year for which data exist (2012-2013 academic year) and found that the population is relatively similar. In particular, using publicly available data from the California Department of Education's Educational Demographics Unit, in the 2012-2013 school year, a majority (52.7%) of California public school students (n=6,226,989) were Hispanic or Latino; the next largest racial/ethnic group was non-Hispanic white (25.5%), followed by non-Hispanic Asian (8.6%), non-Hispanic African American (6.3%), non-Hispanic Filipino (2.5%), and non-Hispanic multi-racial (2.4%). In the 2006-2007 academic year (one of the years of data collection for this study), there were approximately the same number of students (n=6,286,943), and comparable ordering of the most prevalent racial/ethnic groups: 48% of students were Hispanic or Latino, 29.4% were non-Hispanic white, 8.1% were Asian, 7.6% were non-Hispanic African American, 2.7% were multi-racial or no response, and 2.6% were Filipino.

Measures:

School climate scales:

To assess staff perceptions of school climate, four school climate scales were developed using the CSCS dataset, based on prior theory and research (Anderson, 1982; Blum *et al.*, 2002; Eccles *et al.*, 1993; Rumberger, 1987), high face validity or conceptual relevance in the literature (Cohen *et al.*, 2009), exploratory factor analysis (Gabriel, 2006), and confirmatory factor analysis (O'Malley, 2012). We conducted Cronbach's alpha analyses to confirm that factors previously identified were still appropriate in this dataset. These include: a) *norms and standards* that encourage academic success (mean of 7 items on whether school is a supportive and inviting learning place, sets high academic standards, promotes academic success, and involves most

parents in events, $\alpha=0.87$); b) *positive staff-student relationships* (mean of 6 items on how many adults really care about students, pay attention or listen to them, believe they can be a success, treat them fairly or want them to do their best, $\alpha=0.93$), c) *student engagement* in behaviors that are facilitative to learning, including learning readiness and motivation (mean of 5 items on how many students are healthy, physically fit, arrive alert and rested, are motivated to learn, well-behaved and involved in extracurricular activities, $\alpha=0.82$); and d) *staff and student safety* (mean of 9 items on whether school is a safe place for students and staff; and how big a problem is bullying, fighting, abuse of staff, etc., $\alpha=0.88$). All scales had Cronbach's alphas above 0.80, which indicates good internal reliability. A higher score on a school climate scale indicates a more positive and supportive school climate. For more details on school climate measures and psychometric properties, see Appendix Table A1.

School characteristics:

We classified schools' urban/rural status using the U.S. Census Bureau's classification scheme for population areas: large urban city (population greater than 250,000), mid-size urban city ($25,000 < \text{population} \leq 250,000$; most suburban areas), and town/rural area. Socioeconomic status (SES) of schools was measured by the percentage of students eligible for participation in the free or reduced-price meal program, averaged across the 2005/06 and 2006/07 years. Schools were grouped into quintiles based on the state distribution of the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. Racial/ethnic composition was based on percentage of a school's students identified as White, Hispanic, Black, and/or Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino, and then the plurality or majority racial/ethnic group (for example, $>50\%$) was used to classify schools according to the predominant racial/ethnic group enrolled. School-level academic

performance was based on the Academic Performance Index, a composite measure of a school's academic performance calculated by the California Department of Education that weights a school's student subject-specific scores on California standards-based tests and other indicators. The study averaged 2005/06 and 2006/07 scores and then grouped schools into quintiles based on the state distribution of scores.

Data Analysis:

We provide means of school climate characteristics stratified by school type (elementary/middle/high school) and further stratified by school demographics (urban/rural status, school socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic composition) and academic performance. We used the complex survey procedures in SAS 9.1 to perform statistical tests and estimate standard errors that account for the clustering of staff within schools. To test for statistical significance between groups, a global F-test was first calculated for differences across all the categories of the school characteristic. If the global F-test was statistically significant at the 5% level, all pair-wise comparisons were conducted using proc survey regression procedure with Bonferroni-adjusted P-values (Holm 1979) to account for multiple hypothesis tests.

To assist in the interpretation of study findings, we calculated effect sizes to gauge the magnitude of differences found in the school climate variables (Cohen, 1988). Because all analyses involved comparing more than two groups (e.g., five academic performance quintiles), we represented the standardized differences by multiplying Cohen's f by 2, which is comparable to the standardized difference calculated for two groups when the number of observations per cell is equal (Cohen, 1988), so that the effect size estimate represents the average difference in means between categories on the grouping variable in standard deviation units (further

methodological detail available upon request). We used general guides (Cohen, 1988; Lipsey and Wilson, 1993) to describe the magnitude of relationships, with effect sizes of 0.10–0.30 reflecting a “small” difference, 0.31–0.60 a “moderate” difference, and 0.61 or greater representing a “large” difference.

Results:

From 2005-2007, 81,709 staff in 4,437 California schools completed the survey. Of those staff respondents, 45% were from 2,938 elementary schools, 23% from 835 middle schools, and 32% from 664 high schools. A majority (79%) of the respondents were teachers and 21% school administrators, counselors, librarians, security, and other staff. The average response rate was 57.6% in elementary schools, 53.4% in middle schools, and 50.1% in high schools (Table 1). More detailed information about response rates and missing data is available in appendix table 3.

--insert table 1 about here--

The sample consisted of ethnically, socio-economically, and geographically diverse elementary, middle, and high schools. A majority (66.2%) of schools sampled were elementary schools, with fewer middle (18.8%) and high (13.4%) schools. A majority (72.5%) of schools were located in mid-size cities with roughly even proportions in large cities (11.6%) and smaller towns or rural areas (9.1%). The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, a proxy for the socioeconomic status of the school, varied from 0–100%, with the highest percentage of students in elementary schools (50.9%), followed by those in middle schools (46.3%) and those in high schools (35.3%). Most schools were majority White: 65.5% of the high schools, 54.3% of the middle schools, and 52.6% of the elementary schools. The next most common racial/ethnic school majority was Hispanic: 28.3% of high schools, 39.9% of middle

schools, and 42.3% of elementary schools were majority-Hispanic students. Few schools were majority Asian: 5.0% of high schools, 4.9% of middle schools, and 4.1% of elementary schools. Even fewer were majority Black: 0.5% each of the elementary, middle, and high schools.

Staff at secondary schools, schools in large cities, schools that serve low-income populations, Hispanic- and Black-majority schools, and low-performing schools reported less positive school climates than their counterparts.

School type:

There was a statistically significant difference in staff perceptions of each of the school-climate characteristic between elementary, middle and high school (F-test p-value < 0.001) (Table 2). The statistically significant differences were also meaningful: the average difference across school types was large for staff and student safety, moderate for staff/student relationships and norms, and small for student learning-facilitative behaviors.

--insert table 2 about here--

Overall, elementary school staff reported a school climate that was more supportive of learning, more positive, and safer than the school climates reported by middle and high school staff. Elementary school staff reported more positive staff/student relationship quality, student learning-facilitative behaviors, school norms and standards, and staff and student safety than staff in middle and high schools (table 2). Middle school and high school staff reported similar, equally low levels of student learning-facilitative behaviors and staff and student safety; but, compared to their high school counterparts, middle school staff reported higher levels of staff/student relationship quality and school norms and standards that promote academic success.

Urban/rural status:

Staff perceptions of school climate characteristics, on average, differed across elementary, middle, and high schools in large urban cities, mid-sized cities, and town/rural areas, for all school types (table 3). School staff in large cities generally perceived the school climate as less positive than staff in mid-size cities and towns/rural areas, and these differences were larger and more consistent in middle and high schools than in elementary schools. However, the average differences in most school-climate characteristics by population area were small, with only the average difference in staff and student safety across large urban cities, mid-size cities, and towns/rural areas in middle and high schools being moderate.

--insert table 3 about here--

Staff in large cities generally perceived lower levels of positive school climate characteristics than school staff in mid-sized cities and towns/rural areas. Again, these differences were more pronounced and consistent in middle and high schools than in elementary schools. Staff in elementary schools located in large cities reported lower average levels of student learning-facilitative behaviors and staff and student safety than staff in mid-sized cities and towns/rural areas (table 3, top panel) and lower staff/student relationship than staff in towns/rural areas. Elementary school staff in mid-sized cities reported similar levels of school-climate characteristics as staff in towns/rural areas. Staff in middle schools and in high schools located in large cities reported lower average levels of each of the school climate measures, compared to their counterparts in mid-sized cities and towns/rural areas. Middle school staff in mid-sized cities as compared to those in towns/ rural areas reported lower levels of staff and student safety, but similar levels of staff/student relationships, student learning-facilitative behaviors, and school norms/standards. As compared to high school staff in towns/rural areas,

those in mid-sized cities reported lower average levels for each school-climate measure except school norms/standards.

Socioeconomic composition:

School climate perceptions of staff differed across schools with different socioeconomic status. Each school climate characteristic was associated with the percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced-priced meals (overall F-test p-value < .001 for each characteristic) (table 4). The average differences were large for student learning-facilitative behaviors in all school types and for staff and student safety in middle and high schools. SES differences were moderate for staff and student safety in elementary schools and for staff/student relationships and norms/standards in elementary and middle schools. SES differences were small in high schools for staff/student relationships and school norms/standards.

Staff in high SES schools reported higher levels of positive school climate characteristics than staff in low SES schools. In elementary schools, staff reports of school climate characteristics were statistically significantly incrementally lower across each SES quintile as the proportion of students eligible for free/reduced-price meals went up (table 4). In middle and high schools, staff reports of school climate characteristics were statistically different across the three high-SES quintiles, but were similar to each other across schools in the two low-SES quintiles (61–80% vs. 81–100%). Middle school staff reports of student learning-facilitative behaviors, norms/standards, and staff and student safety were similar in the last two low-SES groups (61–80% and 81–100%) (table 5b). In high schools, average scale scores for all four school-climate measures were similar in the last two low-SES groups, and staff/student relationships and school norms/standards were similar across schools with the three lowest SES groups.

--insert table 4 about here--

Staff in schools serving higher percentages of low-income students reported lower positive school climate characteristics, compared to their counterparts. In elementary schools with higher percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, staff at schools reported comparatively lower levels of school climate characteristics. Staff in middle and high schools with more than 60% of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals reported a less positive climate in all areas except staff/student relationships, compared to staff in schools with higher socioeconomic status.

Racial/ethnic composition:

Staff perceptions of school climate differed across schools with different racial/ethnic composition, for each school type (Table 5). These differences were mostly large in magnitude, except for staff/student relationships. Staff in Asian-majority and White-majority schools reported significantly higher levels of positive school climate characteristics compared to staff in Hispanic- and Black-majority schools. Furthermore, Asian-majority schools exhibited higher student learning-facilitative behavior on average, compared to staff in the other three racial/ethnic groups, across all school types, and higher averages on norms/standards and staff and student safety in high schools. Black-majority schools exhibited the lowest average school climate scores for school norms and standards, student learning-facilitative behavior, and safety at the elementary school level; the lowest average scores on staff/student relationships and student learning-facilitative behavior at the middle school level; and, at the high school level, the lowest average scores on school norms/standards that encourage academic success.

--insert table 5 about here--

Academic performance:

Staff perceptions of school climate differed across low- and high-performing schools. For each of the school climate characteristics assessed, there was a statistically significant difference across low- and high-performing schools, within each school type (Table 6). Staff-reported levels on the school-climate characteristics were higher in high-performing schools than low-performing schools. The average difference across school performance categories was large for student learning-facilitative behaviors, school norms/standards, and staff and student safety; and moderate for staff/student relationships.

--insert table 6 about here--

Staff reports of school climate characteristics were incrementally higher across each quintile as school-level academic performance increased in elementary schools (table 6), with similar results among middle schools and high schools, with the exception that staff/student relationships was not statistically different in the top two performance quintiles for middle schools, and in high schools, school norms and safety were not statistically different across the two lowest performance quintiles.

Discussion:

Using a statewide sample of schools with diverse students, staff and schools, we examine variations in staff perceptions of four dimensions of school climate across elementary, middle, and high schools by school-level socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic composition, urban/rural area, school type and academic performance. Others have found that successful academic and behavioral development is associated with each of the four dimensions identified in our factor analysis: norms and standards (Angrist *et al.*, 2012), positive student-staff relationships (Roorda *et al.*, 2011), facilitating student learning through health promotion and related activities

(Clayton *et al.*, 2010), and student and staff safety (Milam *et al.*, 2010). In general, more negative staff perceptions of school climate were associated with schools that were urban, poorer, majority Hispanic, majority Black, and lower performing, as has been observed elsewhere. Our findings also support prior research that elementary schools tend to have a more positive school climate than middle and high schools, with high schools having the worst perceived environments (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Hanson *et al.*, 2003). We acknowledge that not all teachers within the same school will necessarily share the same perception of the school climate; for example, others have found that teacher perceptions of school climate vary by teacher age (Mitchell *et al.*, 2010). However, we were interested in the overall perceived school climate for each school.

The differences (based on effect sizes) in school climate were largest by racial/ethnic composition, socioeconomic status and academic performance, followed by school type and urban/rural area. This suggests that, although these characteristics often cluster together, school climate differences are less of an urban/non-urban issue and more related to other demographic and academic factors. Though numerous studies over fifty years have examined various aspects of school climate (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008; Klem and Connell, 2004; Beets *et al.*, 2008; Weiss, 1999), a growing but limited body of research is explicitly considering a school's racial/ethnic composition and socioeconomic make-up, as well as other individual and ecological-level measures, when studying school climate (Roscigno *et al.*, 2006; Cohen *et al.*, 2009). Our analyses align with other studies' finding associations between area-level socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic composition, safety, achievement and school climate measures (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Condrón, 2009; Halvorsen *et al.*, 2009; Roscigno, 2000; Lee,

2002; Lee, 2004). The urban-rural differences in school climate observed were smaller than those found in previous studies (e.g., Roscigno *et al.*, 2006).

For staff and student safety, however, the difference across schools was moderate, underscoring the importance of improving school safety in large urban cities. Staff and student safety varied considerably by school characteristic, with high schools, lower-income schools, predominantly minority schools, and low-performing schools having the worst scores, agreeing with previous literature (Osher *et al.*, 2010). This highlights the importance of reducing disparities in school safety, since school safety is in turn directly linked to learning, teacher retention and positive youth development (Bowen and Bowen, 1999; Youngblade *et al.*, 2007). Evidence-based policies and promising programs that help promote individual assets within a supportive school environment, such as restorative justice or positive behavioral intervention supports, merit further study as a possible intervention, especially as these policies are being developed to target disadvantaged school contexts in particular (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Osher *et al.*, 2010).

The association between racial/ethnic composition and school climate is striking and merits more nuanced inquiry. We must better understand the context within which these minority-majority schools are operating, including, for example, how lower access to educational resources and meaningful opportunities (Condron, 2009; Raudenbush *et al.*, 1998) may mediate the relationship between racial/ethnic composition of a school and school climate.

There were strong associations between socioeconomic quintile and school climate: effect sizes were mostly moderate, with high effect sizes observed for student learning-facilitative behaviors across all school types, and staff and student safety across middle and high schools. A growing body of research has documented great implications of exposure to

concentrated disadvantage at an area level (in school and neighborhoods) on lower achievement and graduation rates (Wodtke *et al.*, 2011; Osher *et al.*, 2010). Given our finding of an association between school-level socioeconomic characteristics and school climate, school climate may mediate or mitigate the relationship between school-level socioeconomic status and academic success (Fonagy *et al.*, 2009). However, for high schools, staff/student relationships and school norms did not vary much by socioeconomic status, suggesting that some school climate domains may be more sensitive to socioeconomic status.

School climate disparities may have implications for academic disparities: schools with a more positive school climate also had a greater percentage of students performing better, and the effect sizes were large. Others have also observed an association between positive school climate and higher achievement in schools (Cohen *et al.*, 2009). There may be numerous mechanisms by which school climate may influence achievement. For example, schools with poorer school climate have shown to have higher levels of violence and student substance abuse (Bosworth *et al.*, 2011), which is in turn associated with student achievement (Jeynes, 2002); positive school climate is also associated with teacher retention (Cohen *et al.*, 2009), which may be associated with student achievement as well (Wayne and Youngs, 2003). Though not the primary focus of this study, research suggests that some aspects of school climate may be more closely associated with academic performance than others (Stewart, 2008). Additionally, some dimensions of school climate may be relevant for certain subgroups. For instance, we hypothesize that elementary schools, which tend to focus on social-emotional learning more than middle and high schools, will emphasize positive, trusting relationships more within their school climate, or that the school climate perceptions of students who have been involved in school discipline situations will be more affected by school norms and standards.

In sum, this associational study uses data from robust diverse sample of schools statewide to confirm that inequalities in school climate exist by school-level characteristics and achievement: generally more urban, poorer, black and Hispanic majority schools tend to have worse school climates. We encourage school practices and policies locally and nationally to unpack the association of specific positive climate measures and school-level social and academic characteristics.

Limitations:

This study offers a first foray into utilizing this instrument and merged dataset for describing California schools and informing future research and policy, but had several limitations. We utilized cross-sectional, observational data, limiting our ability to make causal inferences, and data were aggregated on the school level. The survey response rate across schools and districts ranged from 50-58%, which could affect the study's internal and external validity, but this is to be expected in survey research (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). We also emphasize that this research focused on staff perceptions of school climate, which may differ from student and/or parent perceptions of school climate (Booth and Sheehan, 2008). For example, we noticed that the school climate measures in which participants rated their own work (e.g., staff/student relationships) tended to have higher values than other measures of school climate that emphasized the students or the school. We encourage future researchers to triangulate insights from students, parents, and staff when analyzing school climate.

Implications for Research and Practice:

Implications for research:

Building on this study and others identifying inequalities in school climate, we encourage future studies to employ advanced multilevel methods and mixed methods studies to examine how and why racial/ethnic and SES compositional factors matter for school climate. Theories informed by the ecology of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) could help explain how specific school climate dimensions may mediate and modify the relationship between upstream school-level characteristics and student-level achievement, including for instance, identifying ecological place-based measures of school climate versus individual perceptions aggregated to the group-level (Cohen *et al.*, 2009) and using additional metrics of school staffing (DeAngelis and Presley, 2011). We examined the unique role of each school-level characteristic separately, but schools are often simultaneously high poverty, high minority, and low achievement, so we encourage future researchers to consider developing a construct measuring concentrated disadvantage to see how this relates to positive school climate. Researchers could also use path analysis to understand how these different variables interrelate.

Similarly, the mechanisms for the social disparities observed need to be further examined and accounted for in future studies. For example, school climate could modify the effect of student-level characteristics (immigrant status, intelligence, exposure to violence) and/or academic curricula on student achievement. Very few studies have examined school change over time, incorporating both individual developmental and ecological perspectives, a key to understanding school improvement processes and efforts. We encourage future researchers to conduct this type of longitudinal and hierarchical analysis. Finally, we need more rigorous evaluations of various school-level programs and interventions to improve school climate, especially those targeting schools serving historically disadvantaged students.

Implications for practice:

Though our study is restricted to California, its size and diversity of students and schools can inform regional, state and national policies and practices. Given the disparities we observed, we encourage practitioners to prioritize improving school climate and safety in middle and high schools, as well as schools with student populations that are high poverty and/or high minority.

However, in order to do this, we need to better understand and identify potential interventions to improve school climate particularly within the context of most ‘disadvantaged’ schools. At the fiscal policy level, the unequal distribution of financial resources (Lee, 2004; Raudenbush *et al.*, 1998) has already been recognized as a key concern for physical school climate (facilities and geographic sites) (Cohen, 2010), and the physical school setting affects both quality of staff/student relationships and the school’s social environment (Uline *et al.*, 2010). At the school level, professional development and support especially for teachers in most disadvantaged schools (Lowry, 2010; Moore, 2010), principal leadership (Robinson, 2010), and realignment of administrative structure (DiPaola and Guy, 2009) can help improve staff perceptions of climate. Ensuring safer school environments through evidence-based school-based violence prevention programs particularly in high-risk middle schools (Milam *et al.*, 2010), and community schools is another holistic strategy for minimizing inequalities in school climate (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Ideally, statewide and/or national policies would set school climate standards and provide an infrastructure to provide necessary supports and best practices to meet those standards could systematically and equitably ensure safe, supportive and effective schools (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Osher *et al.*, 2010).

Schools have the power to unite, nurture, and educate children and youth of all ages, race/ethnicities, class and low and high-risk levels. Ensuring all students and staff learn and work

in positive school climates will help us reach educational equity – a universal human right, which has lifelong health, economic and societal implications.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics, 2005/06-2006/07

	All schools		Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
Total Number of Schools	4437		2938		835		664	
Total Number of Staff respondents	81,709		36,536		18,440		25,737	
Average number respondents per school	36.2		12.4		22.0		38.6	
Average response rate per school	55.7%		57.6%		53.4%		50.1%	
Urban/ Rural status								
Large Urban City	517	11.6%	323	11.0%	112	13.4%	82	12.3%
Mid-size city/ urban fringes	3216	72.5%	2179	74.2%	605	72.5%	432	65.1%
Town and rural areas	403	9.1%	254	8.6%	66	7.9%	83	12.5%
Unknown	302	6.8%	182	6.2%	52	6.2%	67	10.1%
Percent of schools with majority racial/ethnic composition								
Non-Hispanic White	2433	54.8%	1545	52.6%	453	54.3%	435	65.5%
Hispanic	1765	39.8%	1244	42.3%	333	39.9%	188	28.3%
African American	23	0.5%	15	0.5%	4	0.5%	4	0.6%
Asian/ Filipinos/ Pac Islanders	194	4.4%	120	4.1%	41	4.9%	33	5.0%
Other*	22	0.5%	14	0.5%	4	0.5%	4	0.6%
Average% of students on free and reduced lunches in schools [^]								
0-20%	1057	23.8%	658	22.4%	205	24.6%	194	29.2%
21-40%	951	21.4%	621	21.1%	178	21.3%	152	22.9%
41-60%	857	19.3%	565	19.2%	163	19.5%	131	19.7%
61-80%	868	19.6%	598	20.4%	153	18.3%	115	17.3%
81-100%	653	14.7%	465	15.8%	127	15.2%	61	9.2%
Unknown	52	1.2%	31	1.1%	9	1.1%	11	1.7%
Average% of schools with low to high academic performance [^]								
0-20%	816	18.4%	515	17.5%	132	15.8%	15	2.3%
21-40%	808	18.2%	564	19.2%	163	19.5%	36	5.4%
41-60%	857	19.3%	552	18.8%	169	20.2%	143	21.5%
61-80%	905	20.4%	578	19.7%	174	20.8%	205	30.9%
81-100%	1000	22.5%	698	23.8%	188	22.5%	254	38.3%
Unknown	52	1.2%	31	1.1%	9	1.1%	11	1.7%

Data Source: California School Climate Survey, Healthy Kids Survey, California Basic Educational Data System, and Academic Performance Index Research Files 2005/06-2006/07. *Other includes American Indians, mixed race, and no response.

^Cut-offs for API quintiles, socioeconomic status quintiles, school connectedness and school support terciles or categories are based on state distribution for each variable.

Table 2. School Climate Characteristics, by School Type, 2005/06-2006/07

	All schools n=80,713 (N=4436)	Elementary n=36,536 (N=2938)	Middle n=18,440 (N=835)	High Schools n=25,737 (N=664)		
School Climate Characteristic	Mean (SD)				F-value p-value	Effect Size [^]
Staff/ student relationships (1-5)	4.27 (0.62)	4.45 (0.56) ^{a,b}	4.21 (0.63) ^b	4.06 (0.62)	620.5, <0.01	0.53
Std learning-facilitative behaviors (1-5)	3.57 (0.54)	3.66 (0.54) ^{a,b}	3.52 (0.54)	3.49 (0.52)	75.7, <0.01	0.28
School norms and standards (1-4)	3.25 (0.50)	3.39 (0.46) ^{a,b}	3.17 (0.51) ^b	3.11 (0.49)	316.6, <0.01	0.49
Staff and student safety (1-4)	3.23 (0.54)	3.45 (0.45) ^{a,b}	3.07 (0.56)	3.04 (0.54)	467.9, <0.01	0.71

Data source: California School Climate Survey, 2005/06-2006/07.

Small n is the number of staff, and large N is the number of schools in the sample.

^a Post-hoc comparison between elementary and middle school is statistically significant at 0.05 level using Bonferroni method correction for multiple comparisons (3).

^b Post-hoc comparison between elementary or middle schools and high school is statistically significant at 0.05 level using Bonferroni method for multiple comparisons (3).

[^] The effect size was computed based on Cohen's d (see Appendix A for the detailed computation formula). It represents the average difference in the school climate variable across groups of schools in standard deviation units, where 0.10-0.30 is defined as small, 0.31-0.60 as moderate, and >0.60 as large.

Table 3. School Climate Characteristics by Population Area and School Type, 2005/06-2006/07

	Large Urban City	Mid-size City	Towns/Rural Area	F-test F-value, P-value	Effect Size^A
Elementary Schools					
Staff/ student relationships	4.42 (0.57) ^b	4.45(0.56)	4.49(0.54)	3.76, p<.05	0.10
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.59 (0.56) ^{a,b}	3.67(0.54)	3.68(0.48)	4.24, p<0.01	0.16
School norms and standards	3.35 (0.48)	3.39(0.46)	3.39(0.43)	1.48, p=0.23	0.10
Staff and student safety	3.37 (0.48) ^{a,b}	3.46(0.44)	3.49(0.40)	7.07, p<.01	0.17
Middle Schools					
Staff/ student relationships	4.10(0.66) ^{a,b}	4.21(0.63)	4.25(0.64)	5.43, p<0.01	0.21
Student learning- facilitative behaviors	3.41 (0.55) ^{a,b}	3.53(0.54)	3.54(0.52)	5.85, p <.01	0.24
School norms and standards	3.08 (0.54) ^a	3.17(0.51)	3.18(0.52)	3.49, p <.05	0.21
Staff and student safety	2.90 (0.59) ^{a,b}	3.08(0.56) ^b	3.19(0.50)	12.04, p<.01	0.43
High Schools					
Staff/ student relationships	3.99(0.62) ^{a,b}	4.05(0.62) ^b	4.13 (0.59)	6.57,p<0.01	0.19
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.39(0.52) ^{a,b}	3.49(0.52) ^b	3.58 (0.46)	9.36,p<0.01	0.30
School norms and standards	3.03(0.50) ^{a,b}	3.10(0.48)	3.14 (0.46)	3.51, p<0.05	0.20
Staff and student safety	2.90(0.57) ^{a,b}	3.04(0.54) ^b	3.18(0.48)	11.33,p<0.01	0.42

Data source: California School Climate Survey and California Basic Educational Data System, 2005/06-2006/07

^A The effect size was computed based on Cohen's d (see Appendix A for the detailed computation formula). It represents the average difference in the school climate variable across groups of schools in standard deviation units, where 0.10-0.30 is defined as small, 0.31-0.60 as moderate, and >0.60 as large.

***p<.001

Table 4. School Climate Characteristics by Socioeconomic Status and School Type, 2005/06-2006/07

% of Students Eligible for Free and/or Reduced-priced Meals							
<i>Means</i>							
Staff Perceptions of School Climate Characteristics	<20% Lowest Poverty	21- 40%	41- 60%	61- 80%	81-100% Highest Poverty	F-test	Effect Size [^]
Elementary schools							
Staff/ student relationships	4.61	4.52	4.44	4.36	4.29	88.3***	0.41
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	4.07	3.76	3.56	3.41	3.35	442.9***	0.97
School norms and standards	3.57	3.47	3.36	3.27	3.20	137.4***	0.58
Staff and student safety	3.70	3.55	3.42	3.29	3.20	249.2***	0.60
Middle schools							
Staff/ student relationships	4.37	4.27	4.18	4.08	3.98	48.6***	0.45
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	3.88	3.61	3.40	3.26	3.20	230.4***	0.94
School norms and standards	3.37	3.24	3.11	3.00	2.97	65.3***	0.60
Staff and student safety	3.40	3.18	2.99	2.80	2.77	141.4***	0.86
High schools							
Staff/ student relationships	4.16	4.05	4.00	3.95	3.96	19.8***	0.28
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	3.72	3.49	3.36	3.23	3.22	115.6***	0.79
School norms and standards	3.23	3.09	3.04	3.00	2.99	22.9***	0.30
Staff and student safety	3.27	3.02	2.92	2.79	2.79	68.6***	0.73

Data source: California School Climate Survey and California Basic Educational Data System, 2005/06-2006/07

^A The effect size was computed based on Cohen's d (see Appendix A for the detailed computation formula). It represents the average difference in the school climate variable across groups of schools in standard deviation units, where 0.10-0.30 is defined as small, 0.31-0.60 as moderate, and >0.60 as large.

***p<.001

Table 5. School Climate Characteristics, by School's Racial/Ethnic Composition and School Type, 2005/06-2006/07.

Racial/ethnic Composition ^A						
Staff Perceptions of School Climate Characteristics	Means				F-test	Effect Size ^B
	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian		
Elementary schools						
Staff/ student relationships	4.53	4.35	4.28	4.55	70.0***	0.44
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.82	3.43	3.28	3.90	301.5***	1.07
School norms and standards	3.48	3.26	3.06	3.52	112.2***	0.83
Staff and student safety	3.55	3.31	3.06	3.69	123.4***	0.68
Middle schools						
Staff/ student relationships	4.29	4.09	3.89	4.24	50.2***	0.51
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.68	3.29	3.09	3.75	207.6***	0.85
School norms and standards	3.27	3.03	2.95	3.25	45.3***	0.52
Staff and student safety	3.23	2.85	2.73	3.28	83.5***	1.00
High schools						
Staff/ student relationships	4.10	3.94	3.66	4.10	24.0***	0.62
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.57	3.26	3.14	3.74	77.1***	1.03
School norms and standards	3.15	2.99	2.64	3.19	22.3***	0.75
Staff and student safety	3.12	2.82	2.61	3.17	43.2***	0.96

Data source: California School Climate Survey and California Basic Educational Data System, 2005/06-2006/07

^A The majority racial/ethnic group in the school is used to categorize schools into racial/ethnic composition groups (e.g. if 51% of the students in a school are African American, or the majority racial/ethnic group is African American, then the school's racial/ethnic composition is classified as African American. Asian includes Filipinos and Pacific Islanders.

^B The effect size was computed based on Cohen's d (see Appendix A for the detailed computation formula). It represents the average difference in the school climate variable across groups of schools in standard deviation units, where 0.10-0.30 is defined as small, 0.31-0.60 as moderate, and >0.60 as large.

***p<.001

Table 6. School Climate Characteristics, by School Academic Performance and School Type, 2005/06-2006/07.

School Academic Performance							
<i>Means</i>							
Staff Perceptions of School Climate Characteristics	<20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%	F-test	Effect Size ^A
Elementary schools							
Staff/ student relationships	4.26	4.36	4.47	4.52	4.61	112.4***	0.44
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.32	3.41	3.60	3.76	4.06	523.4***	0.98
School norms and standards	3.15	3.27	3.38	3.48	3.58	188.0***	0.66
Staff and student safety	3.16	3.30	3.45	3.55	3.70	303.4***	0.63
Middle schools							
Staff/ student relationships	3.95	4.09	4.20	4.32	4.35	49.9***	0.48
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.16	3.28	3.43	3.64	3.89	241.9***	0.98
School norms and standards	2.90	3.03	3.14	3.28	3.36	213.8***	0.66
Staff and student safety	2.66	2.86	3.02	3.24	3.39	135.7***	0.94
High schools							
Staff/ student relationships	3.93	3.86	3.94	4.00	4.16	29.2***	0.42
Student learning-facilitative behaviors	3.06	3.12	3.22	3.40	3.71	161.1***	1.16
School norms and standards	2.79	2.89	2.98	3.04	3.23	40.8***	0.79
Staff and student safety	2.52	2.64	2.78	2.95	3.36	85.9***	1.29

Data source: California School Climate Survey and Academic Performance Index Research Files, 2005/06-2006/07

^A The effect size was computed based on Cohen's *d* (see Appendix A for the detailed computation formula). It represents the average difference in the school climate variable across groups of schools in standard deviation units, where 0.10-0.30 is defined as small, 0.31-0.60 as moderate, and >0.60 as large.

****p*<.001

Appendix Tables

Table A1. School Climate Scale Names, Items, Score Ranges, and Reliability Coefficients.

Scale	Items	Valid N	Range	Alpha
Staff/Student Relationships (6 items)	Adults at this school really care about all students. Adults at this school acknowledge and pay attention to students. Adults at this school want all students to do their best. Adults at this school listen to what students have to say. Adults at this school believe that every student can be a success. Adults at this school treat all students fairly.	80,439	4.27(1-5)	0.93
Student Learning-Facilitative Behaviors (5 items)	Students at this school are healthy and physically fit. Students at this school arrive at school alert and rested. Students at this school are motivated to learn. Students at this school are well-behaved. Students at this school are involved in extra-curricular activities or enrichment opportunities.	80,327	3.57(1-5)	0.82
School-level Norms and Standards (7 items)	This school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn. This school sets high standards for academic performance for all students. This school promotes academic success for all students. This school fails to involve most parents in school events or activities. This school is a supportive and inviting place to work. This school encourages opportunities for students to decide things like class activities or rules. This school fosters an appreciation of student diversity and respect for each other.	80,657	3.25(1-4)	0.87
Staff and Student Safety (9 items)	How much of a problem is harassment or bullying among students. How much of a problem is physical fighting between students. How much of a problem is verbal or physical abuse of school staff by students. How much of a problem is gang-related activity. How much of a problem is weapons possession. How much of a problem is vandalism (including graffiti). How much of a problem is theft. This school is a safe place for students. This school is a safe place for staff.	80,119	3.2 (1-4)	0.89

Data source: California School Climate Survey, 2005/06-2006/07. Notes: Response options for items for staff/student relationships and student learning-facilitative behaviors were: nearly all (5), most (4), some (3), few (2) and almost none (1); for school-level norms and standards and last two items for staff/student safety were: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1); for staff/student safety were: insignificant problem (4), mild (3), moderate (2), and severe problem (1).

Table A2. School Characteristics, Variable Names, Labels, Data Sources and Operationalization.

Variable Name	Labels	Data Source	Operationalization
Population Area	<p>1=large urban city (pop >250,000)</p> <p>2=medium-sized city or urban fringes (includes mid-size city with pop < 250,000, urban fringes of a large city, and urban fringes of a mid-size city).</p> <p>3=town (includes large and small towns with population of greater than and equal to 25,000, less than 25,000 and greater than 2,500), and rural area either inside or outside a metropolitan area.</p>	<p>California Department of Education's California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS) 2005/06-2006/07</p>	<p>The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau's classification scheme was used for locating schools in eight categories of population areas. We combined categories 2-4, 5-8 to examine differences by large urban city, medium city-urban fringes, and town/rural area. Note, due to small sample size, and provide reliable estimates, towns and rural areas were combined.</p>
Socioeconomic Status	<p>Three-year average of the proportion of students who participate in the free and reduced-price meal program. This was categorized into quintiles: 0-20%, 21-40% (lowest poverty), 41-60%, 61-80%, and 81-100% (highest poverty).</p>	<p>CDE's California Basic Education Data System 2005/06-2006/07</p>	<p>The proportion of students who participated in the free and reduced-price meal program in 2005, 2006, and 2007 were averaged, to determine a school-level mean. And based on a univariate distribution by school type, quintiles were created; where higher value meant higher students in poverty.</p>
Racial/ethnic Composition of Schools	<p>Percent schools with majority or plurality of each race/ethnicity. The four dominant racial/ethnic groups were used: African American, non-Hispanic White, Asian/Pacific Islander/ Filipino and Hispanic. Asian category combined pacific islanders and Filipinos.</p>	<p>CDE's CBEDS enrollment by race/ethnicity datafile. Downloaded from</p>	<p>Schools with a majority or more than 50% of a particular race, i.e. White, were labeled as predominantly White. Then, for 23% of the schools that did not have a clear majority (>50%), the race/ethnicity of students with the highest% in the school was considered the 'predominant' group for that school.</p>
School-level Academic Performance	<p>Three-year school average of the academic performance index (API score) was calculated from 2005, 2006 and 2007 base API. The API is on a scale of 200 to 1000.</p> <p>Schools were classified into API quintiles (20% intervals), 0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%. Higher% meant higher mean academic performance at the school-level.</p>	<p>Academic Performance Index Research Files 2005/06-2006/07</p>	<p>The base API, which ranges from 300-1000, summarizes a school's, an LEA's, or the State's performance on the Spring 2006 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). It serves as the baseline score of performance. It is calculated from the performance of individual students on several tests including the CST in ELA and Math in grades 2-11, CST in science, life science, history-social science, CAT/6 survey, and CAHSEE in ELA and Math taken in different grade.</p>

Table A3. Differences in School Climate and Other School-level Characteristics by Staff Response Rates and School Type

	Missing	Low Response Rate ≤25%	Medium Response Rate 26-75%	High Response Rate >75%	F-test
Elementary Schools (n=2546)	392	811	1002	733	
Staff/ student relationships	4.41	4.44	4.47	4.45	2.5 [^]
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	3.61	3.68	3.70	3.62	8.3***
School norms and standards	3.33	3.37	3.41	3.39	2.2
Staff and student safety	3.40	3.45	3.47	3.44	2.1
Students on free/reduced meals	49.5	51.4	47.0	54.2	7.1***
School's Academic Performance	778.6	771.9	784.8	759.2	11.3***
Urban/ rural area	2.01	1.87	1.94	2.04	18.9***
Racial/ethnic composition	1.49	1.56	1.47	1.61	5.4**
Middle Schools (n=721)	114	215	362	144	
Staff/ student relationships	4.15	4.15	4.27	4.20	4.7**
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	3.43	3.50	3.56	3.49	2.8 [^]
School norms and standards	3.08	3.10	3.20	3.17	6.2**
Staff and student safety	2.93	3.04	3.11	3.08	1.5
Students on free/reduced meals	44.8	48.3	43.0	47.6	2.2
School's Academic Performance	73.3	729.1	741.7	731.2	2.3
Urban/ rural area	1.92	1.85	1.93	2.04	8.1***
Racial/ethnic composition	1.43	1.61	1.54	1.55	0.5
High Schools (n=577)	87	204	283	90	
Staff/ student relationships	3.98	4.00	4.08	4.06	5.6**
Std learning-facilitative behaviors	3.41	3.44	3.52	3.47	4.0*
School norms and standards	3.03	3.05	3.13	3.10	5.6**
Staff and student safety	2.93	2.97	3.07	3.03	4.7**
Students on free/reduced meals	39.5	35.6	28.6	35.7	4.7**
School's Academic Performance	707.2	711.0	730.3	715.0	2.8 [^]
Urban/ rural area	1.92	1.89	1.98	2.07	6.0**
Racial/ethnic composition	1.41	1.46	1.50	1.30	2.8 [^]

[^]p<0.10,*p<0.05,**p<0.01,***p<0.001

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ⁱ The other 16 survey questions intended for all school staff were designed to probe four other school-climate dimensions: how positive, supportive, and collaborative the working environment is for staff; the degree to which the school experienced problems related to 14 student behaviors or conditions (e.g., truancy, substance use, violence, harassment, gang membership, poor mental health); the nature, communication, and enforcement of school rules/policies; and the availability of health and counseling services for students. In addition to the 43 survey questions asked of the entire school staff, the survey includes 22 questions to be answered only by "practitioners," those who provide services or instruction

related to health, prevention, discipline, safety, or counseling. These questions assess the level of student programs, services, and teacher professional development related to learning supports. The results can be compared to the level of need as indicated by staff perceptions from the first section of the school climate survey and by self-reported student perceptions captured through the Healthy Kids Survey.