

## **Notice about the School Climate Surveys**

It is important for administrators to review the items in these measures before deciding to use them, particularly because some of the student demographic questions ask what some may consider sensitive questions. The Secondary version asks students about their gender/gender identity (response options: female, male, transgender, I prefer not to answer) and sexual orientation (response options: heterosexual (straight), gay or lesbian, bisexual, I prefer not to answer). The Elementary version asks students about their gender/gender identity without a transgender response option (response options: female, male, other, I prefer not to answer) but does not ask about sexual orientation. These questions (or similar ones) are used in many school climate surveys, including the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System and California's Healthy Kids Survey. It is important to assess perceptions of school climate from youth from gender and sexual minority groups because research shows that these students are at increased risk for bullying victimization, dropout, and suicide.

Here are some points regarding the survey:

- The survey is fully anonymous. Students are not asked to provide their names, and their responses are not tracked in any way beyond creating the scores.
- To preserve anonymity, scores for groups with fewer than 5 respondents are not displayed on reports.
- At this point, team members and coordinators are not able to download individual responses.
- These items (and all demographic items) are already set with "I prefer not to answer" as the default response. Students would have to change their responses to one of the other options to answer differently.
- School or district teams that prefer students not to answer these questions can either instruct students to leave these items as "I prefer not to answer" or skip all demographic questions, or alternatively, administer the survey via paper and pencil and omit these questions.