



Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions

2022–2023 SCHOOL YEAR

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Table of Contents

Document Control	4
Executive Summary	5
Objective	6
Maryland School Survey Information	10
General Questions	11
Survey Design.....	12
Survey Administration.....	13
Reporting	15
Accessibility Features and Accommodations.....	15
APPENDIX A: Student Accessibility Features and Accommodations	18
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE Non-Disclosure Agreement.....	19

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Document Control

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Document History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
v2023.1	January 2023	Updated for the 2022–2023 survey administration

Changes from the Prior Year

Updated the format of the document.

Executive Summary

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Performance Reporting publishes an annual Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions. The Office of Performance Reporting and Accountability publishes this manual to ensure the agency's data collection, transmission, and verification processes all comply with relevant federal and state guidelines. For example, the Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions outlines how each local education agency (LEA) organizes and documents data for the survey administration. It also defines key concepts related to the data collection. Additionally, it provides answers to commonly asked procedural questions including corresponding due dates and timelines.

The intended audience for this manual is LEA administrators and staff assigned to provide data for the survey administration. Stated within the manual are also multiple causes for separation along with guidance on how to encode the previous work experience prospective employees may have earned from outside the State of Maryland. Providing this level of transparency to stakeholders and constituents alike on the staff reporting for local agencies is a high priority for MSDE. This is because current trends in educational research consistently show timely access to fair and reliable data matters.

More specifically, research compiled from the Data Quality Campaign (DQC)—the country's most compelling and vocal advocate on P-20W¹ educational data—accounts for how vital a role data plays in determining educational success for individuals, families, educators, and the broader community. "At the same time, policymakers, researchers, and education and workforce leaders depend on aggregate data to see the 'big picture' of how schools and institutions are effectively meeting individuals' needs. With access to data, they can identify best practices and promote policies and programs that are shown to improve outcomes for individuals. Leaders need data to see where gaps between student groups persist and allocate resources where they are most needed. In these ways, state leaders can leverage data to create more effective and equitable education and workforce systems."² As a result, MSDE remains steadfast in its commitment to producing the Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions and making it accessible to the public.

¹ P-20W refers to pre-school, elementary and middle schools, high school, college, and workforce.

² For more information, see this article from the DQC: "[Who Uses Education Data?](#)"

Objective

The Maryland School Survey is an annual survey that informs local education agencies (LEAs), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and families about the learning environment at each public school in the State of Maryland. The survey measures school climate and safety through a set of research-based survey questions. LEAs administer the survey questions to two populations each school year: students in grades 5–11 by school, and teachers or other staff members (“instructional staff”) by school who may provide instruction to students.

Information from the survey will be used to ensure that schools across the state promote climates that support student learning. It will also deliver feedback about the quality of local instruction to instructional staff at each LEA and school, as well as to students and their families.

LEAs administer the computer-based survey each spring. English and Spanish versions of the student survey are available. Accommodations for students who may need assistance from proctors or other school staff to take the survey are also available.

Please refer to the [Maryland School Survey Frequently Asked Questions](#) document on the Maryland Public Schools website for more information about the Maryland School Survey. Items in that document explain the survey’s design and administration, reporting, and accessibility features and accommodations.

Q: What is “school climate”?

The [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, defines *school climate* as follows:

“School climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student’s educational experience. A positive school climate is the product of a school’s attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community no matter the setting—from Pre-K/Elementary School to higher education.

A positive school climate is critically related to school success. For example, it can improve attendance, achievement, and retention and even rates of graduation, according to research. School climate has many aspects. Defining a framework for understanding school climate can help educators identify key areas to focus on to create safe and supportive climates in their schools.”

More information and resources related to school climate can be found online at the center’s [School Climate Improvement website](#).

About This Document

This document was produced by MSDE, Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Performance Reporting, Office of Performance Reporting and Accountability. The intended audiences for the manual are the general public.

The document is intended for use with other documentation, including:

- Documentation published on the [Maryland School Survey section](#) of the Maryland Public Schools website;
- The current [Maryland Student Records System Manual](#);
- The [Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, & Accommodations Policy Manual](#).

When viewing this manual electronically, press Ctrl+F on Windows or Command+F (⌘+F) on Mac to search for specific keywords.

Contact Information

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Timeline and Due Dates

Date	Activity
Nov-Dec 2022	2022 Maryland School Survey Results released
Feb-Apr 2022	2022 Maryland School Survey Operational Administration
Feb-Apr 2023	2023 Maryland School Survey Operational Administration
TBD	2023 Maryland School Survey Results released

Relevant State and Federal Requirements

State Law

- **“The Blueprint.”** [The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Act of 2020](#) revised State education policies in five areas: Early Childhood Education, High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and School Leaders, College and Career Readiness Pathways, More Resources to Ensure that All Students are Successful, and Governance and Accountability. Data from the Maryland School Survey may be used to meet various reporting requirements authorized through this act. The Blueprint was developed through recommendations from the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (also known as the Kirwan Commission).
- **Program of education accountability.** [Education Article 7-203 \(c\) of the Annotated Code of Maryland](#) (as amended by the Protect Our Schools Act of 2017) requires MSDE to include Maryland School Surveys in its education accountability program, i.e., the Maryland Accountability System. Details about the how the Maryland School Survey is used in this system are listed under the “Maryland Accountability System” section below.

Federal Law

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). This act, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, establishes national policies on equity and access for all students to a free appropriate public education. MSDE addresses how it would meet Maryland’s ESSA requirements in the [Maryland ESSA Consolidated State Plan](#).

Subsequent Reporting

Maryland Accountability System

The Maryland School Survey informs the School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator in the Maryland Accountability System, which is reported annually in the [Maryland Report Card](#). Data submitted in the Maryland School Survey comprise one of the three accountability measures for Maryland’s SQSS indicator. A total of 10 possible points is earned based on the percent of the whole indicator, i.e., 10 possible points out of 35 total points for the SQSS indicator). The possible points for the student survey are 7. The possible points for the instructional staff survey are 3.

Federal Reporting

Data provided are reported to the U.S. Department of Education through the [EDFacts Initiative](#) in the file “FS202 – School Quality or Student Success Indicator Status”.

Other Reporting

In addition to meeting the requirements of both state and federal law, the information collected via the Maryland School Survey also supports:

- The statewide longitudinal data system, which is maintained by the [Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center](#);
- The comparison of school climate data among LEAs; and
- The use of data to inform education policies and practices, and to better align public school standards and curricula with postsecondary education and career opportunities.

LEA Responsibilities

Each LEA's responsibilities in the Maryland School Survey are:

- To maintain accurate information throughout the survey process;
- To adhere to all reporting timelines (see "Timeline and Due Dates");
- To address all errors generated when loading data files into MODE; and
- To respond promptly and accurately to all edits from MSDE.

MSDE Responsibilities

The responsibilities of MSDE in the Maryland School Survey are:

- To check data for consistency;
- To complete all data checks accurately;
- To adhere to reporting timelines; and
- To promptly return data to the LEAs for clarification, correction, and verification.

Confidentiality

- The Maryland School Survey is confidential and secure. Only students and instructional staff with a username and password provided by an LEA will have access to the survey.

Maryland School Survey Information

LEAs administer the Maryland School Survey across five different versions. Each is intended for a different group of users.

1. **MSDE Accountability School Survey ED** – English version for instructional staff.
2. **MSDE Accountability School Survey EMS** – English version for students in grades 5–8.
3. **MSDE Accountability School Survey EMS – Spanish** – Spanish version for students in grades 5–8.
4. **MSDE Accountability School Survey HS** – English version for students in grades 9–11.
5. **MSDE Accountability School Survey HS – Spanish** – Spanish version for students in grades 9–11.

The survey responses for each group are collected separately during the survey’s administration window, which usually takes place from mid-February to mid-April.

Please refer to the [Maryland School Survey section](#) of the Maryland Public Schools website for more information about the survey.

General Questions

Q1. What is the Maryland School Survey?

A1. Describing a school with traditional measures such as academic achievement, graduation rate, and attendance is important, but these alone cannot capture the quality and character of school life. That is why the Maryland accountability system also includes a School Survey of students and instructors. The survey is intended to provide information to support a positive learning and working environment that promotes success for all students.

Q2. Why did the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) implement this survey?

A2. Maryland's stakeholders have long recognized that test scores alone do not provide a full picture of teaching and learning in any one school. Under legislation (Protect Our Schools Act of 2017), MSDE is required to include a school climate survey of students and instructors as part of the State's ESSA plan.

Q3. What does the survey ask?

A3. The School Survey asks students and instructional staff questions about their perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and activities in school in four topic areas.

The School Survey also asks instructional staff questions about the quality of instructional feedback.

Q4. Who takes the survey?

A4. All 5th- through 11th-grade students participate in the survey.

Instructional staff in any grade participate in the survey.

Q5. Are students required to participate in the survey?

A5. Yes. MSDE wants to ensure that all students' input is heard. In addition, schools must be responsible for the experiences of all their students, not just some of them. It is very important that all students participate. Therefore, all students must be provided the opportunity to respond. However, students are not required to answer questions, and may submit the survey without responding to some or all of the questions if they choose.

There are two participation exceptions detailed in [Q28] and [Q29] that apply to students with the most significant disabilities and English Learners.

Q6. Why do teachers take the survey?

A6. All instructors will have the opportunity to respond to the Maryland School Survey during the same time period as students. MSDE wants to ensure that all instructors' input is heard. It is very important that all instructional staff participate. Information from the survey will ensure that schools across the state promote a climate that supports student learning and that instructors receive important instructional feedback.

Survey Design

Q7. Who developed the survey?

A7. The survey design was led by MSDE in collaboration with experts at [Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic](#) (REL Mid-Atlantic). A steering committee, which included a superintendent-designated representative from every LEA in the state, gave important direction and input at every stage in the design process.

Q8. What will the survey measure?

A8. The Maryland School Survey for students will measure four domains: safety, environment, engagement, and relationships. Each domain looks at topics and together the domains and topics will provide valuable information about each school's learning environment.

The **safety domain** has four topics and asks students if they feel safe from violence (physical and emotional), bullying, and controlled-substance abuse. The **environmental domain** has three topics and asks students about their instructional and physical environment, if school rules are clear and fair, and if good behavior is supported and rewarded. The **community domain** has two topics and asks students if they are treated equally and they have the opportunity to participate in all school activities, including those that occur outside of the regular school day. The **relationships domain** has two topics and asks students about the nature of teacher-student and student-student relationships and if their school has a culture of caring and respect.

The Maryland School Survey for instructors measures the same four domains and topics with additional questions on instructional feedback.

Q9. What types of responses will students need to provide?

A9. All responses will use the same four-point scale of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

Q10. What type of questions does the Maryland School Survey ask students or instructors?

A10. Questions ask about the way that the individual feels about the school. For example, a student might be asked if students at the school respect others who are different from them, but not whether they personally have been treated with respect (or whether they have personally mistreated others).

Q11. How many questions are on the survey?

A11. Elementary and middle school students in grades 5-8 take a survey with 53 questions. High school students in grades 9-11 take a survey with 54 questions. Instructors take a survey with 72 questions.

Q12. How long will it take for students to complete the survey?

A12. The survey is untimed. Most students should complete the survey within 30 minutes once they have logged in to the system.

Q13. Who can see the survey questions?

A13. Because schools are being held responsible for the results, it's important that the survey questions are confidential. Survey questions are not available to the public. Only Survey Administrators, Proctors, Accommodators, and School Test Coordinators who sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement are permitted to administer or participate in the administration of the Maryland School Survey.

Q14. Can you provide examples of the questions?

A14. The following links provide examples of the types of questions that can be found in the School Survey:

- [ED School Climate Survey](#)
- [Delaware School Climate Surveys 2019-2020](#)

Survey Administration

Q15. When is the survey administration window?

A15. For the 2022-2023 school year, the Maryland School Survey will be administered for both students and instructors between February and April.

Q16. How will students access the survey?

A16. Survey participants will receive a username and password which they will be prompted to enter at a login page. The username will be the student's state ID. The password will be assigned by the LEA and provided to the student at their school. A generic login will be available for students new to the building.

The results of the survey are part of the school accountability system; therefore, survey questions are confidential. Only Survey Administrators, Proctors, Accommodators, and School Test Coordinators (STC) who sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement will be permitted to administer or participate in the administration of the Maryland School Survey.

Q17. Does the survey have a timeout feature?

A17. Yes. For survey participants who leave the computer for a prolonged period of time or who forget to close the browser before leaving, the session will automatically log the participant out after 60 minutes of inactivity.

Q18. Who can administer the survey?

A18. While the Maryland School Survey is not an assessment, MSDE requires that Survey Administrators be eligible to administer a state assessment. The Survey Administrator must be an employee of the LEA and be trained by the STC. School principals and other school administrators cannot administer the survey. Staff serving as accommodators or proctors, who are not eligible to be a Survey Administrator, must be under the direction of an eligible Survey Administrator.

LEA-level personnel who hold a Maryland Teaching Certificate may support a school by administering the survey. They must be trained by the STC in the given school unless the LEA allows them to be trained by the Local Accountability Coordinator (LAC).

Note: Eligible Survey Administrators, proctors, and/or accommodators may not serve in the same room as a student who is a family member or resides within the same dwelling.

Q19. What applications (apps) will be used to administer the online survey?

A19. The survey is web-based and does not require any applications beyond a web browser.

Q20. How will students access the survey system?

A20. The survey is computer-based and students can access it through any internet browser on any device. Phones will not be used to take the survey. The grade specific surveys and Instructional Staff survey will be accessible from links that are available from the [Maryland School Survey section](#) of MSDE website. Each LEA may offer students and instructors the ability to link from their county webpage.

Q21. What happens if a student transfers into a school during the survey window?

A21. If the student has not already taken the survey, the receiving school should provide the opportunity for the student to participate in the survey. A generic login will be available in the new school.

Q22. What if a student's login and password do not work?

A22. If, for some reason, a student's login and password do not work, the school should provide a generic login for the student.

Q23. Do all students get the same survey?

A23. Students are given the survey based on their grade level. Grades 5 through 8 are given the elementary/middle school survey. Grades 9 through 11 are given the high school survey. If a school has both middle and high school grades, each student will be assigned the survey appropriate for their grade. A student will not be able to select a survey that is not grade appropriate.

Q24. What days are allowed or not allowed for administering the survey?

A24. Students and instructors may take the survey during any school day during the administration period in order to provide as many opportunities as possible to participate in the survey. This is not an assessment so, therefore, you may offer the survey on any school day. An LEA may choose to suspend testing on religious holidays listed on the State Testing Calendar or other local calendars.

Reporting

Q25. When will schools and LEAs receive the results from the survey?

A25. The Maryland School Survey is part of the school quality and student success indicator in each school's accountability report card. Information from the survey will ensure that schools across the state promote a climate that supports student learning, and that instructors receive important instructional feedback. Results from the survey will be available as part of the state's accountability reporting system and can be viewed on the [Maryland Report Card](#).

Q26. What will be reported to schools and LEAs?

A26. Maryland School Survey results are provided at the school level. Results are also provided by student groups when the student groups are sufficiently large enough to ensure confidentiality.

Accessibility Features and Accommodations

Q27. What accessibility features and accommodations are available on the survey?

A27. The survey does not have individualized accessibility features or accommodations built into the online platform. Accessibility features and accommodations that are generally used in the classroom should also be used for the Maryland School Survey to ensure all students are provided the opportunity to participate.

Because the survey does not include a text-to-speech feature, students who normally use this feature on assessments may have the survey read to them in groups of no more than 10 students. The Survey Administrator will need a Generic Proctor Login from the STC. This login should be treated as a secure document.

For guidance on providing accessibility features and accommodations, see Appendix A: SAMPLE Guidance on Student Accessibility Features and Accommodations.

Q28. Can students who take an alternate assessment for state accountability purposes take the survey?

A28. Students who participate in an alternate assessment for state accountability purposes should have the opportunity to take the survey. Therefore, if it is practical for the student to attempt the survey with the same support given during instruction, then they should be given the opportunity to participate.

Q29. Are first-year English Learners who are exempt from the state ELA assessment required to take the survey?

A29. Students who are English Learners and are exempt from the MCAP ELA assessment during the school year should have the opportunity to take the survey. These students may need additional support that would have been provided on the other MCAP assessments in Math, Science, or Social Studies. Therefore, if it is practical for the student to attempt the survey, they should be given the opportunity.

MSDE will also provide a Spanish-language version of the survey instrument.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Student Accessibility Features and Accommodations

The goal of the Maryland School Survey is to understand aspects of each school's climate. The Maryland School Survey should be administered so that all students have access to the survey questions using supports provided during instruction and assessment. Whenever possible, students should complete the survey independently without assistance from proctors or other school staff. However, in some cases, students may require or be eligible to receive proctor assistance while completing the survey.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and English Learner (EL) Plans are eligible to receive supports and accommodations to ensure they can access the same academic and non-instructional materials as their peers. Additionally, students who utilize accessibility features on state assessments may also benefit from specific supports. These accessibility features and accommodations, generally used in the classroom and/or on assessments, should also be implemented on the Maryland School Survey to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate. Schools should review this guidance to ensure the appropriate accessibility features and accommodations are implemented for students participating in the Maryland School Survey.

For information on accessibility features and accommodations, please refer to the [Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Policy Manual](#).

Note: The Maryland School Survey will not have the technical ability to provide Text-to-Speech. Students using this feature on other assessments may have a human reader to provide this accommodation. For the administration of the Maryland School Survey, students may be placed in groups of no more than 10 to provide this accommodation.



APPENDIX B: SAMPLE Non-Disclosure Agreement

This form must be signed by all individuals who administer or participate in the Maryland School Survey. These individuals may include:

- School Test Coordinators (STCs) or Survey Administrators (SAs);
- Persons designated as proctors;
- Instructional assistants or other personnel who provide accommodations to students with disabilities and/or students who are English Learners (EL);
- Teachers or others who support survey administration or who have access to its materials;
- State-appointed representatives participating in state-approved development or review activities; and
- Anyone else with access to survey materials or involvement in administrations.

Only persons who are employees or agents of the school district and who have signed this form may supervise, administer, proctor, or assist with the administration of the survey. The school system must retain completed forms on file as specified in Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.04.03.

It is my understanding that the content of the Maryland School Survey is confidential. I agree to maintain the security and confidentiality of the survey just as I would for a Maryland State assessment as outlined in COMAR 13A.03.04. As part of the COMAR regulations, I understand that I am:

- *Not to duplicate survey materials for any reason except as authorized by MSDE directly or through the Local Accountability Coordinator (LAC).*
- *Not to make ANY TYPE of notes as a result of my access to the survey. This includes notes pertaining to topics, content, and/or the structure of the survey unless directly authorized to do so by MSDE.*
- *Not to provide any part of the survey for examination or other use by any other party.*
- *Not to disseminate any of the survey materials to any other party.*
- *Not to discuss the topics and/or specific content of the survey with any other party.*
- *NOT to provide or alter answers, provide verbal or nonverbal clues, coach, hint, or in any way influence responses to the survey.*

I have read the above and agree to the terms as applicable. I understand that violations of administration and security provisions may include invalidation of survey results, cost assessed to my district, disciplinary actions against me by my district, and/or certificate suspensions or revocations by the MSDE as applicable.

Name: _____

Title: _____

LEA/School/Agency: _____

Project: Maryland School Survey

Signature: _____

Date: _____