

# SY 2021-22 Accountability Manual FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions about Indicators, Metrics, and Procedures for Accountability

EOC Staff have prepared this FAQ, in collaboration with SCDE, to answer questions that we have received about the SY 2021-22 Accountability Manual and the metrics and procedures surrounding the indicators described in its pages. Note that, as additional questions are raised by stakeholders, this FAQ might be updated with additional information. The most current version of this document will be hosted on the EOC website, at <https://eoc.sc.gov/educators>, and will be labeled with the most recent date on which it was updated. Please compare the date at the top of this page to the date displayed next to the link to this FAQ on our website to see if you are reading the most current version.

## Climate Survey Participation and the School Climate Indicator

- 1. Although primary school report cards do not use results from the Teacher School Climate Survey for ratings, should the primary schools have their teachers complete a survey?**

Yes. All teachers associated with any school in the state should be invited to take the survey, regardless of whether the School Climate indicator is reported on the report card associated with that school. School and district leaders will receive summarized responses received from personnel at that school, even if those responses aren't used for accountability purposes. In addition, all teachers continuously employed by the district from the 45<sup>th</sup> day of school to the end of the survey administration period will be included in the results displayed on the district report card and all teachers continuously employed in the state will be included on the state report card, even if those teachers were not reported on a school report card.

- 2. Can “stand alone” career centers have their teachers complete a teacher climate survey?**

Absolutely! As mentioned in the response to question 1 above, all continuously employed teachers will have their responses represented on the appropriate district report card and on the state report card, even if their response isn't included on a school report card. More importantly, all responses will be included in the summarized data given to school and district leaders, even if they don't meet the requirements to be included in the School Climate indicator for accountability. These data can provide school and district leaders with valuable information to inform continuous improvement efforts.

- 3. I thought that district and state report cards reported the mean of school-level School Climate metrics; wouldn't that mean that anyone whose response is not reported on a school report card shouldn't need to take the survey at all?**

The version of the Accountability Manual that was released on January 31 *did* describe that comparison metrics for the district (and state) were to be calculated as the mean of the same metric that was reported for all schools within the district (or state). However, this was corrected in the version of the manual that was released on March 15 and is available on the [EOC website](#). The previous approach could potentially leave the perceptions of teachers with no designated home school unreported. District and state climate indicators are now calculated in the same way as school-level indicators, including all students and teachers in the district (or state).

**4. I've been comparing the teachers listed in my PCS file with my active teachers in PowerSchool and they don't match. Which list should I follow? Who takes the survey and who counts in our participation rate?**

These are great questions! There's also kind of a lot to this answer, so I'll include a bullet-point summary at the end to use as a quick reference. Let me answer this question in three parts:

**4.a. Who is required to complete the Teacher Climate Survey?**

The "What Teachers are Included in the Indicator" section on p. 49 of the Accountability Manual describes which teachers are included in the indicator. The number of teachers who are included in the indicator is used as the denominator for the fraction that determines the school's participation rate and therefore could be described as required to take the survey. Thus, there are three basic attributes for teachers who are required to complete the survey.

First, the teacher must be continuously employed at the school from the 45<sup>th</sup> day to the last day of the survey administration period, with no break in employment at the school. Thus, if the teacher comes to the school after the 45<sup>th</sup> day or left the school and came back before the survey administration, then their responses will not be used in the School Climate indicator, and they will not be counted in calculating the participation rate. If a teacher is continuously employed at a school from the 45<sup>th</sup> day to the beginning of the survey administration period but leaves the school before the end of the survey period, then they are only counted in the calculation of the participation rate if they already completed the survey before they left.

Second, for the purposes of the School Climate indicator, teachers are defined as professional certified staff (PCS) eligible to receive teacher supply monies per the most current code list posted at <https://ed.sc.gov/finance/financial-services/pcs-information/>. Thus, anyone at the school who is referred to as a teacher and/or who provides instruction to students but who is not eligible to receive teacher supply monies may complete the survey but will not be included in the indicator or calculated in the participation rate.

Finally, if a teacher has assignments at multiple schools, then their responses will only be included in the School Climate indicator for the school designated as their home school. It is probably advisable for school and/or district leaders to inform teachers with multiple assignments how to determine which school their responses will be associated with so that they know which school climate to think about as they respond to the survey.

**4.b. Who should be invited to complete the Teacher Climate Survey?**

All teachers at the school who have an active PowerSchool account should be invited to complete the Teacher Climate Survey. Because the survey is administered via Ecolect, a PowerSchool account is required to complete the survey. Thus, if there are any teachers who are *required* to complete the survey (see question 4.a) but who don't have a PowerSchool account, one should be created for them. That said, all teachers at the school should be invited to take the survey, even if not required for accountability, because their perceptions and voice are important to record, and their responses will provide important

information to inform continuous improvement efforts. School and district leaders should encourage the broadest participation possible among teachers.

**4.c. How will the EOC and SCDE know which teachers belong in which groups?**

Teachers' employment dates and eligibility for teacher supply monies will be determined via the PCS system, and teachers' school assignment is determined from PowerSchool. Note that the data in each of these systems might be the responsibility of different offices or personnel, depending on the school or district.

**4.d. Can you please summarize this information more succinctly?**

Absolutely! As I mentioned earlier, there is a lot here. In summary:

- If a teacher is continuously employed at the school from the 45<sup>th</sup> day to the end of the survey period, then they are required to complete the survey and count in the participation rate, regardless of whether they completed the survey.
- If they are continuously employed at the school from the 45<sup>th</sup> day to the beginning of the survey period but leave before the end of the survey period, then they only count in the participation rate **if** they complete the survey.
- If a teacher leaves the school before the survey, then they should not be *able* to respond to the survey (since they no longer have access to PowerSchool).
- If a teacher comes to the school after the 45<sup>th</sup> day (*or* if they start before the 45<sup>th</sup> day, go away for a while, and then come back) and are at the school during the survey period, then the following things are true:
  - They **may** complete the survey (and are, in fact, encouraged to do so).
  - Their responses **will** be included in the data made available to the school and the district for continuous improvement purposes.
  - They **will not** be included in the calculation of the participation rate.
  - Their responses **will not** be reported on report cards or used for accountability.
- Teachers' employment dates and eligibility for teacher supply monies will be determined via the PCS system.
- Teachers' school assignment is determined from PowerSchool.

**5. I have noticed that students without continuous enrollment have the School Climate Survey in their portal under Forms even though students need to be continuously enrolled to be included in accountability. Do all students take the survey regardless of their continuous enrollment status?**

Yes, all students should be invited to take the survey. In much the same way that all students take the annual achievement test even if they have not been continuously enrolled in the same school, all students should be given an opportunity to complete the Student School Climate Survey. Their perceptions and voice are important to record, and their responses will provide important information to inform continuous improvement efforts. The bullet points in item 4.b above (except for the last two bullets about employment and school assignment) apply in the same way for students, as well. Students' continuous enrollment for the purpose of accountability will be determined using enrollment records in much the same way that it is for achievement testing.

- 6. Is student participation rate calculated at the school level, or at the grade level? I am asking because some seniors do not have a class on campus, and they are typically hard to get to complete a survey. Their response rates may be lower.**

Student participation rate is calculated at the school level. Although maximum participation is encouraged at every grade level, higher participation rates among students in earlier grade levels could help offset the challenge of getting these hard-to-reach seniors to respond to the survey.

- 7. If a student or teacher chooses “No answer”, is that the same as leaving an answer blank?**

Sort of. Respondents are offered the “No answer” option to allow them to opt-out of a question. Of course, the survey is set up to require the items to be answered so that none of the items are overlooked or missed by accident. However, respondents can provide “No answer” to any or all items which is effectively the same as skipping the item.

- 8. If a student or teacher has one or more blank or “No answer” answers, then does that survey count as if it weren’t taken at all and won’t help us meet the goal of 80% participation?**

This is not the case. Participation is defined as submitting a survey, not as responding to all survey items. This is because forcing a respondent to mark an answer for an item that doesn’t apply to them can lead to inaccurate data and could even cause the participant to leave the survey and not submit anything at all. If a respondent submits a survey, they count toward your participation rate, no matter how complete or incomplete their responses are.

- 9. I am at a virtual school. Since the items in the Social-Physical Environment (SPE) factor aren’t reported or used in calculating the indicator for online or virtual schools (see p. 48), does it matter if students leave those items blank since they will be thrown out?**

To clarify, responses to items in the SPE section aren’t “thrown out” for virtual schools, you *will* receive these data. These items will simply not be reported on school report cards and will not be used to calculate ratings for online and virtual schools.

For an item like “The hallways at my school are kept clean,” this is reasonably straightforward. There is no telling how each respondent might interpret and respond to that item, making the responses extremely difficult to understand and use. However, your faculty, staff, and school leaders might still be very interested in students’ responses to the “Students from different backgrounds get along well at my school” item.

You might also wish to tell your students in advance to interpret some items so that they are more useful to you. For example, the “Broken things at my school get fixed” item could be interpreted to mean that software glitches and account problems are resolved quickly. Then, student responses to this item could give you some useful insights into how students perceive the quality of technical support provided at your school.