



Research on Lowering Violence in Communities and Schools

FAQs for School District Leadership

Background

The U.S. Department of Justice has awarded a five-year research grant to the American Institutes for Research (AIR), working in partnership with Virginia Tech University, and a group of nationally recognized school safety experts to examine the root causes of school violence and explore the relationships among school safety (physical, social, and emotional), community safety, and student outcomes in rural, urban, and suburban schools in California. The study will explore how the capacities and commitment of staff, parents, students, schools, and the larger community influence school safety and student outcomes. The study will begin working with middle and high schools who agree to participate in the study from fall 2018 through winter 2021, beginning with an online school climate survey. A \$10,000 stipend will be available to any school district who agrees to participate.

For more information, visit us online: air.org/resolv

Why is our district being asked to participate?

The research team has pre-selected a group of California school districts who meet our eligibility criteria based on school and community demographic information.

What districts are being invited to participate?

The list of districts is confidential, and results from the study will not identify names of specific school districts. If your district joins the study, you will know what other districts are participating in the research.

What grade levels will be asked to participate?

The study is limited to schools serving youth in grades 6-12.

Do our schools need to have had previous experience with research?

No. Schools do not need to have previous experience with research.

What are the incentives for participation in this study? Do we have to pay to participate?

Participating school districts will receive a stipend of \$10,000.

What can we do with our stipend? Are there restrictions on what the school district can use it for?

The stipend can be used for whatever purpose each district chooses, but it cannot be used for food, beverages, raffles, entertainment, or lotteries and should follow the guidelines provided on the Department of Justice website: <https://nij.gov/funding/Pages/research-participant-costs-and-incentives.aspx>

How will the study help the schools in my county and across the state?

The findings will help schools and communities improve their ability to adopt an effective school safety approach for working with the community to address the root causes of school violence.

How can our county use the results from the study to inform our Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP)?

Data collected as part of this study can be used to inform planning to address the priority goals related to school climate, student engagement, and parent engagement.

How many schools in our district must participate? What if only some of them want to participate?

While we hope all middle and high schools in the district will want to participate, it is up to the district to decide which middle and high schools participate in the study.

How long will school districts need to be in the study?

Each school district needs to agree to a three-year commitment, from winter 2019 through winter 2021, to participate in the study.

What if we want to stop participating in the study? What are the consequences?

This research is voluntary and you can withdraw your district and return the \$10,000 stipend at any time.

What will school districts need to do if they agree to participate?

School districts will need to:

- implement an online school climate survey once a year for three years, with students, parents, and staff;
- provide access once a year for three years to de-identified (no names) student-level data on academic performance, school discipline, and safety incidents (after parents give consent to data access); and
- allow the researchers to observe the school setting and conduct two sets of interviews and focus groups (Year 1 and Year 3) with staff, students, and parents (after individuals consent to the process).

What online school climate survey is going to be used?

The research team will work with each district to identify what online school climate survey is currently in use and whether it can be used for the research study. There are additional questions specific to this research study that will be added to the school climate survey.

What if our district is not using an online school climate survey now?

If no online school climate survey is currently in use, we will help the district implement a free school climate survey called the Ed School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS), developed by AIR through the U.S. Department of Education and pilot-tested with California schools in 2017. More information on the EDSCLS can be found at this website:

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls>

Can school districts participate if they do not use an online school climate survey?

No. Unfortunately, we do not have enough funding to collect survey data in-person using paper-based survey instruments.

Will districts have opportunity to change the surveys to fit our school's context?

Yes. The online school climate surveys that are available in California allow schools to add new questions at the end of each survey. There is no ability to delete existing questions that come with these surveys.

Will districts have opportunity to see the surveys before they are used?

Yes. The research team will review the surveys with the districts and school leadership before they are used.

Can districts pilot the surveys with groups within our schools?

No. The surveys have already been piloted with students, staff, and parents in California, and changes have been made to the surveys based on their feedback.

Who needs to complete the survey?

Students, parents, and school staff will be asked to complete the survey.

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The surveys will take 10-30 minutes to complete.

What languages will the survey be available in?

The answer depends on which online school climate survey is used. If using the California Health Kids Survey (CHKS) or the ED School Climate Survey (EDSCLS), student and parent surveys are available in English and Spanish. EDSCLS and CHKS staff surveys are only available in English.

When will participants need to complete each survey?

Each school year, beginning in 2018-19 and ending in 2020-21 (three times), the survey will be administered to the same students, parents, and staff who agree to participate in the research. The research team will work with each district to determine the best time to administer the surveys based on local conditions and schedules.

When will districts see results from the survey? Will we get early updates?

Every year, after each survey round, the research team will create a report for each school and host a community forum to share results from the study. At the end of the study a final report will combine results from all the participating schools and be shared with each district for comment.

How will information about students, staff, and parents be kept confidential?

Although the research study collects survey and other data from individuals, the research team will not see student names and all reporting will be at the school district level, combining information across individuals. Community, school district, and school names will not be revealed in the final, public report, or in any scholarly articles generated from this study in the future.

How will data from individuals be used?

All data collected from the school district and other sources will be de-identified, or stripped of names by the school, before sharing with the researchers.

Will anyone help districts use study results to improve school safety plans?

Yes. AIR’s research team will support efforts by each district to use results from the study to inform school safety planning.

Are districts expected to change things in our school based on the research results? Will anyone support us in these changes?

No. It will be up to the school district and participating schools to decide how they would like to use the results this research to inform implementation, financing, and evaluation of current and future school safety efforts.

What if districts have questions and need to contact the researchers?

You may contact the Principal Investigators for the research study, Patricia Campie (pcampie@air.org) or Anthony Peguero (anthony.peguero@vt.edu), for more information. The research team will schedule regular communications with each district team. The study is also being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at AIR. The IRB is responsible for making sure the study team follows all federal regulations regarding privacy and data sharing laws and protections for human subjects involved in research studies. The AIR IRB Chair can be contacted at IRBChair@air.org.