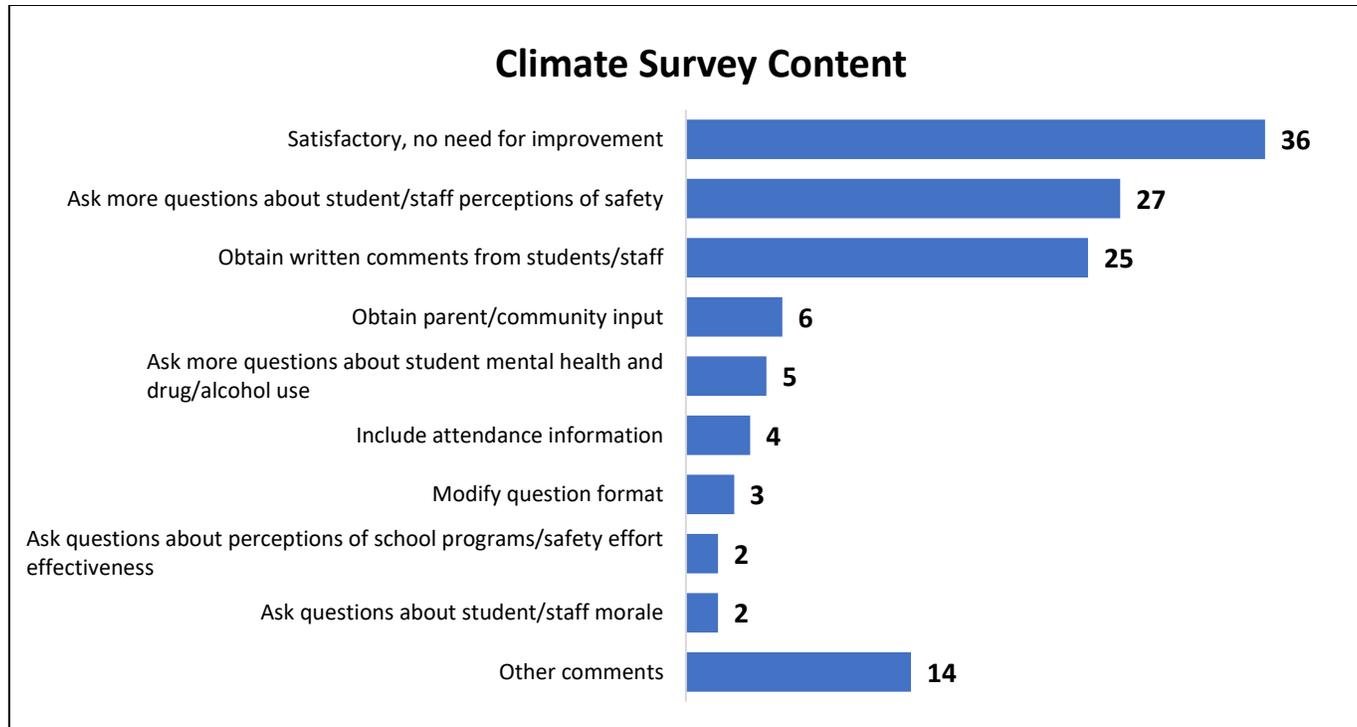


Practical Findings from the Virginia School Climate Survey

How do school administrators perceive survey content?

In 2018, all 322 high school principals were asked for their feedback on the Virginia Secondary School Survey administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Approximately 88% (283) of the principals completed the survey and answered one or more questions, with most respondents expressing positive views of the survey. When asked, “What would you like to see in the school climate report that would help improve the school?” there were 161 responses. The chart summarizes the most frequent feedback on survey content.



Themes from Administrator Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 school and division-level administrators. Administrators indicated they thought the current survey addresses important content but that they would like more information about students' and teachers' perceptions of relationships within the school community and the degree of their connectedness and engagement. In addition, administrators would like more questions related to mental health, drug/alcohol use, and race/equity/culture. For example, one principal noted, “I like to hear if they like the school, if they feel welcomed in the school. I like hearing if they care about other students or if they feel like other students care about them. And whether the teachers and administration care about them.” Another said, “I would like to see something on things that get at whether or not students feel comfortable being who they are, or have they experienced instances where someone has said something inappropriate about their race or their culture. I think that speaks to a student's feeling of safety in their school. Belongingness. Whether or not they feel welcomed in this community.” Finally, administrators indicated that questions that provide context would be useful. For example, an administrator indicated, “only 16 teachers participated in the survey. You wonder who the 16 are. Are they the ones who struggle with kids or you know have issues or are they the ones who don't have any issues with kids and they're good at making relationships.”

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey was administered in the spring of 2018 as part of the annual School Safety Audit (§ 22.1-279.8.A) by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) in the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. This project was supported by grant #NIJ 2017-CK-BX-007 awarded to the University of Virginia by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the researchers at the Youth Violence Project of the University of Virginia and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Center for School and Campus Safety at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>.