

MEETING CALIFORNIA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA NEEDS

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Rationale:

The following describes tasks to implement an expansion of the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) that would result in better data to understand issues that involve:

- Meeting the needs of special education students effectively
- Recruiting and retaining special education instructors

Goals:

- Provide data, through a systematic statewide collection system
- Guide improvement of both local and state special education programs and policies
- Use survey results as a tool for reflection on school practices and for district technical assistance

Fundamental Concerns:

- How school conditions, experiences, and attitudes differ among staff with special education responsibilities compared to other staff
- The level of support school staff receive
- How well schools are perceived to be meeting the needs of special education students

Related Tasks:

- Instrument development
- Survey administration and support of the data collection infrastructure
- Preparation of local reports and a data handbook
- Analysis and reporting of aggregated survey results statewide
- Support materials and website development

Overview to the Survey

California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and California School Climate Survey (CSCS)

The California Department of Education (CDE) has created the nation's most extensive, comprehensive system for providing local education agencies with data on school climate, student engagement, and nonacademic learning barriers and supports. This system is based on two complementary surveys — the *California Healthy Kids Survey* (CHKS) for students and the *California School Climate Survey* (CSCS) for school staff. LEAs are required to administer

these two surveys simultaneously at least once every two years in compliance with Title IV provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.¹

The *California School Climate Survey* (CSCS) is administered online to administrators and all certificated staff (grades 5 and above, on a voluntary basis) in the same schools and at the same time as the CHKS. For the first three years of the survey (2004-2007), it was completed by 698 districts, 6,612 schools, and 107,603 staff. The dataset for these years includes results from 3,222 elementary schools, 926 middle schools, 732 high schools, and 448 non-traditional schools.

The survey was developed and first implemented in fall 2004 to fulfill the NCLB mandate to conduct an anonymous teacher survey of the incidence, prevalence, and attitudes related to drug use and violence. CDE expanded the focus to collect data from all staff to guide school improvement efforts in general. To this end, the CSCS consists of 48 questions which factor into scales that measure the level to which staff perceive their school to have: (1) a *positive, safe learning environment*; (2) *norms and standards* that encourage academic success; (3) positive intra-staff and staff-student *relationships*; and (4) students *behaviors that facilitate learning*, including being ready and motivated to learn. It also asks staff to report on the degree to which 13 student behaviors pose a problem to the school.

In addition, a second part of the CSCS consists of 21 items assessing the presence of student programs, supports, and services answered only by *practitioners* who provide services or instruction related to health, prevention, discipline, safety, or counseling. Districts can also add questions of their own choosing to meet other local data needs. In this sense, the CSCS is not just survey but a data system that districts can use to collect any information needed to guide school improvement.

The CSCS provides an unprecedented opportunity to understand the learning climate and challenges of California schools in regard to special education as perceived by staff, and the factors associated with variations in these perceptions. Results can be viewed online at any time, (and the number of respondents who have completed the survey monitored in real time). District, county, and state coordinators/monitors receive passwords to enable them to review the data as appropriate. All results are further aggregated into a single dataset for analysis at a variety of levels (district, county, region, statewide, etc.).

Currently only one question on the CSCS relates to special education. Practitioners (health, counseling, prevention, safety) are asked to report on the level of services for students with disabilities or other special needs. Approximately six-in-ten staff in traditional schools (ranging from 56% in elementary to 60% in high school) reported that a lot of special education services were provided. The rate dropped by almost half to 34% among continuation schools. This is one of the few service-related questions in which the percentage is lower in continuation than regular high schools.

¹ The surveys were developed by WestEd under contract to CDE. WestEd provides technical assistance to schools in collecting, processing, reporting, and using the results. Information is available at the website www.wested.org/chks.

The following tables describe tasks, actions, and timelines to implement an expansion of the California School Climate Survey (CSCS):

TASK #1: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS:
1. Revision to CSCS: Additions to demographics section: Ask staff to identify whether they are SE teachers, paraprofessionals , or serving special education students. TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008
2. Insert 3-4 key questions for <u>all staff</u> as submitted to CSCS by Leadership Team TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008
3. Promote and market CHKS/CSCS - Discuss with ISES Workgroup and SPED Leadership Team TIMELINE: DECEMBER 2008 - JUNE 2009
4. Development of SPED Branching Module by Dr. Patt Kearly, CSU, Sacramento TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008- JANUARY 2009
5. Finalize Module (Expert Panel and Focus Group) California Comprehensive Center Collaboration TIMELINE: DECEMBER, 2008 – FEBRUARY 2009
6. Program Module Online and Pilot Test: Final pilot test in a unified district. Based on results, modifications will be made to the final version of the module and procedures as needed. TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008- JULY 2009

TASK #2: SURVEY ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT OF THE DATA COLLECTION INFRASTRUCTURE

ACTIONS: (TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008- JULY 2009)
1. Technical assistance and Infrastructure support of the entire data collection system
2. Connect to Compliance Monitoring School climate survey is viewed as a “suggested improvement strategy.”
3. Development of Communication Network
4. Modification of Guidebook: The <i>CSCS Guidebook</i> and all support materials describing the survey will be modified with references to the SPED module and the reasons why it was added
5. Develop Local Data Memorandum of Understanding: It is CDE’s policy, based on the strong feelings of school districts, that no CHKS/CSCS data be made publicly available until the districts receive their results and have time to review and release them publicly. It is for this reason that CHKS/CSCS reports are not publicly posted until November of the following year. To insure this occurs, all district special education directors will be required to sign a Data Memorandum of Understanding.
6. Roll-out Presentation: Explanation of the special education module questions, the data received (and how), the support materials received, and state plans for using the data will be reviewed.

TASK #3: PREPARATION OF LOCAL REPORTS AND A RESOURCE HANDBOOK

ACTIONS: (TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008- JULY 2009)

1. Prepare Summary Comparison Report of Tables: As each district completes its CSCS with the Special Education module, a report consisting of tables, modeled on the 2004-06 CSCS State Report, that disaggregates the results by the special education status of staff for the district and three school levels: elementary, middle, and high schools will be prepared. This will enable a district to immediately compare its results side-by-side across school levels in a single report, versus the separate reports that can be generated online. It will group the results by topic, rather than the question-by-question layout of the online reports, and contain summary tables highlighting key findings, for quick reference, and results for multi-item scales. This user-friendly report will facilitate data comparison and dissemination.

2. Prepare monthly PDFs: After survey completion, special education reports will be sent to SPED directors. The email will be copied to CDE and the appropriate county official so they will know that the report was produced.

3. Preserve confidentiality: No data can be reported if there are less than 5 SPED respondents in a district or school level. Thus, if a unified district has 13 respondents, but only reaches the 5-person criteria in high school, it would get a report with results for the district as a whole and high schools, but not other school levels. (All data, however, will be used in the aggregated county and state reports.) No local dataset will be made available that potentially might enable a staff person to be identified.

4. Develop and Disseminate Survey Resource Handbook: The California Comprehensive Center has agreed to produce a Survey Resource Handbook for Special Education Personnel that will discuss the questions on the CSCS in the context of the issues facing special education, particularly in regard to local practice. Following the completion of this handbook, it will be disseminated to each district special education director along with his or her survey results in tables

TASK #4: ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF AGGREGATED SURVEY RESULTS STATEWIDE

ACTIONS: (TIMELINE: JULY 2009 – JUNE 2010)

1. Analyze: Aggregated data set statewide across schools
(Data not available until Fall 2009, full set available Fall 2010)

2. Policy analysis- implications and recommendations

TASK #5: SUPPORT MATERIALS AND WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS: (TIMELINE: AUGUST 2008- JULY 2009)

1. Create Project/CDE Website: Website Portal webpage development to include: district access to data/reports, survey module, all support materials, and all analyses. In 2009, this can easily be converted into a public website.