

Dr. Bruce Law
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*Assistant Superintendent
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Tammy Prentiss
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*Director of
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Bill Eagan
*Chief Financial
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TO: Dr. Bruce Law, Superintendent
FROM: Pam Bylsma
Assistant Superintendent for Academics
DATE: November 13, 2014
RE: Learning Conditions Survey Instrument

Senate Bill 7 required that the Illinois State Board of Education establish and administer a survey of school climate and learning conditions on a biennial basis, beginning with the 2012-13 school year. This year, District 86 is scheduled to provide our students, parents, and staff with a mandated learning conditions survey. The purpose of this memo is to secure approval from the District 86 Board of Education to administer an alternative assessment to the state's survey tool, which is called the 5Essentials Survey. Over the past two years, this survey instrument met with a substantial amount of unfavorable feedback from Superintendents across the state.

A few of the major concerns about the 5Essentials Survey included the security of its administration, which lacked private user log-ins, the types of questions asked, which were originally designed for Chicago city schools and were out of touch with suburban or rural schools, the layout of the survey, which confused students by directing them to use their birthdates to answer questions related to different curricular areas that those students might not have courses in, and the data analysis, which drew program and leadership conclusions that appeared extreme or unfounded when compared to the actual responses or when considering the limited number of items related to the school culture component being judged.

As a result, on June 13, 2014, Public Act 98-0647 was passed. This act amended the School Code to provide all school districts with the option of selecting an alternative assessment from a list of survey instruments pre-approved by the State Superintendent. Districts choosing to administer an alternate survey of learning conditions instrument must meet the following conditions:

- *Administer the survey on a district-wide basis,*
- *Pay for the survey with district funds,*
- *Secure approval of the use of the survey from the collective bargaining unit,*
- *Secure approval from the Board of Education,*
- *Administer the survey over the designated timeframe of January 12 through March 13, 2015, and*
- *Share the results with the State Board for inclusion on the 2014-15 School Report Card.*

It is my recommendation that District 86 opt out of administering the 5Essentials Survey and, instead, use the top-rated alternative survey, which is the National School Climate Center's Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI). This survey was thoroughly vetted at the state level, independently evaluated by reputable entities, and reviewed by me. I am confident that this assessment tool will yield reliable, valid, and useful information for our schools. The cost to our district for administering the CSCI to our students, parents, and staff is \$6,470.00.

As required by law, we have presented this survey as our recommended alternative to the 5Essentials Survey to our teachers' association, in our case the presidents of the Hinsdale High School Teachers Association John Bowman and David Lapetino. They support using the CSCI as our state mandated Learning Conditions Survey.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.