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# HOW ARE SCHOOLS USING THE PARENT AND PERSONNEL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS?

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# How are Schools Using the Parent and Personnel School Climate Surveys?

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## Introduction

School climate can be defined as shared norms, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and behaviors that shape interactions between and among students, teachers, parents and administrators (Emmons, Corner, & Haynes, 1996; Lindstrom Johnson, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2016). Measuring school climate is important because of its effects on student outcomes (Anderson, 1982; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). School climate impacts the effectiveness of academic programming and student achievement for all students, especially those with academic and behavior risks. Further, positive school climate has been linked to several important outcomes, including improved student self-esteem and self-concept, decreased absenteeism, enhanced risk prevention, reduced behavioral problems and disciplinary actions (in-school and out-of-school suspension), and increased school completion (Bear, Gaskins, Blank, & Chenm, 2011; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2016). Establishing and maintaining a positive school climate benefits all students, including students with disabilities, English Learners, and students from economically disadvantaged families and culturally and racially diverse groups (Center on PBIS, 2016).



When school personnel and parents complete school climate surveys, results can inform team action planning to improve perceptions of school climate.

Further, school climate data can assist in considering questions related to equity, disproportionality, and cultural responsiveness and appropriateness. The freely-available School Climate Survey Suite offered in PBIS Assessment ([pbisapps.org/pbisassessment](https://pbisapps.org/pbisassessment)) includes the Georgia Elementary School Climate Survey for students in Grades 3-5, the Georgia Secondary School Climate Survey for students in Grades 6-12, the Georgia Personnel School Climate Survey, and the Georgia Parent/Guardian School Climate Survey. This brief will focus on the key features and implications of the Personnel and Parent Surveys. [A previous brief described administration and average scores from the Student Surveys.](#)

### **The Georgia School Climate Survey: Personnel**

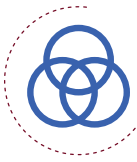
This survey is brief, reliable, and valid for assessing perceptions of school climate among school personnel (Georgia Dept. of Ed, La Salle, & Meyers, 2014). The Georgia School Climate Survey: School Personnel provides schools with an overall understanding of how staff perceive school climate within six subscales: staff connectedness, structure for learning, school safety, physical environment, peer/adult relationships, and parental involvement. The survey includes 29 items scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). For all items on all surveys, higher scores represent more positive school climate perceptions. School teachers, administrators, and other personnel complete the survey without training either



on or off campus. The time to complete the survey is approximately 15-20 minutes.

### **The Georgia School Climate Survey: Parent**

This survey is brief, reliable, and valid for assessing perceptions of school climate among parents (Georgia Dept. of Ed, La Salle, & Meyers, 2014). The Georgia School Climate Survey: Parent provides schools with an overall understanding of how parents perceive school climate within five subscales: teaching and learning, school safety, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, and parent involvement. The survey includes 21 items scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). For all items on all surveys, higher scores represent more positive school climate perceptions. Parents, caregivers, or guardians of enrolled students complete the survey without training either on or off campus. The time to complete the survey is approximately 10-15 minutes.



## Recommendations for Recruitment

It can be useful to provide various options for parents to complete the school climate surveys including online links, school- based computers, and paper surveys where technology may be limited. Schools may also opt to provide access during school events (e.g., parent nights, PTA meetings) to increase parent participation.

To understand how schools are using the Personnel and Parent surveys, this evaluation brief aims to answer the following questions:

1. How many times per year do schools administer the School Climate Surveys?
2. What are the average school climate scores for Personnel and Parents?
3. Do ratings of school climate vary by demographic group?

## Sample Participants

For this evaluation brief, the Personnel sample consisted of approximately 34,270 survey participants across 1,031 schools, 365 districts, and 31 states

that assessed staff perceptions of school climate for the 2017-18 to 2019-2020 school years. The Parent sample consisted of approximately 49,267 survey participants across 699 schools, 274 districts, and 29 states that assessed parent perceptions of school climate for the 2017-18 to 2019-2020 school years. School climate data were obtained from the PBISApps database, and school demographic data were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

## How Many Times Should Schools Administer the School Climate Surveys Per Year?

It is recommended that the surveys be completed twice per academic year. Generally, the first administration should be completed within the first 45 days of the school year, and the last administration should be completed within the last 45 days of the school year; however, frequency may vary based on intervention and progress monitoring timelines determined by school teams.





## Ratings Across Personnel Demographic Groups

Average staff ratings of overall school climate for each grade taught, gender identity, and racial/ethnic group are represented in Table 1. The standard deviation refers to typical deviation from the average rating of school climate for each group; most members of that group would score between one SD above and below the average value.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of School Personnel Participants**

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Grade</b>				
K-5	11,356	33.0	3.24	.37
6-8	4,863	14.1	3.08	.39
9-12	5,298	15.4	3.05	.38
<b>Gender Identity</b>				
Female	23,971	69.9	3.17	.39
Male	5,360	15.6	3.14	.40
Other	63	0.2	2.99	.49
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White	26,308	76.8	3.17	.38
Black or African American	1,411	4.1	3.08	.49
Asian	423	1.2	3.22	.45
American Indian or Alaskan Native	493	1.4	3.10	.47
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	111	0.3	3.14	.47
Hispanic or Latino	1,707	5.0	3.21	.44

*n*=sample size; %=percentage; *SD*=standard deviation



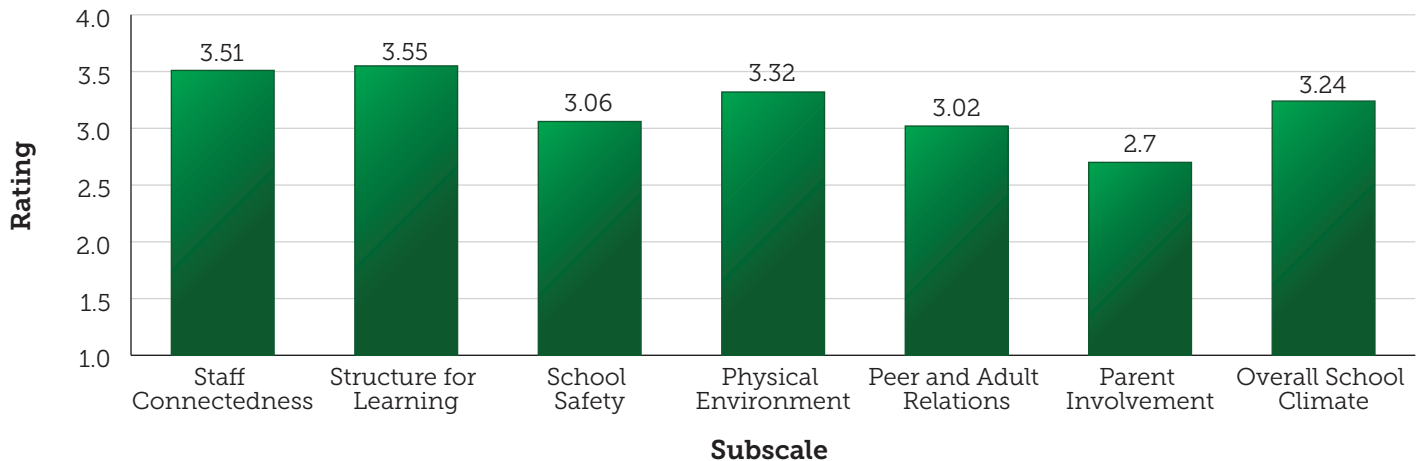
**Table 2. School Climate Means of School Personnel Participants**

The school personnel survey is made up of six subscales; Table 2 presents individual mean subscale ratings. The overall school climate means and standard deviations appear on Table 1. Figures 1–3 display the relationship between subscale means.

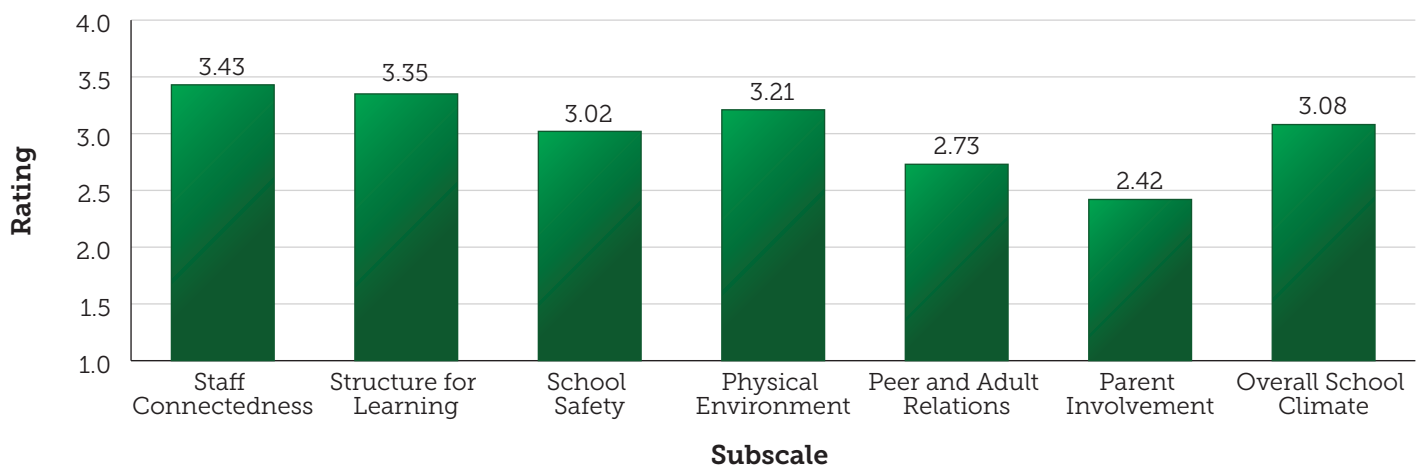
Subscale	Elementary School Staff		Middle School Staff		High School Staff	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Overall School Climate	3.24	.37	3.08	.39	3.05	.38
Staff Connectedness	3.51	.54	3.43	.55	3.38	.53
Structure For Learning	3.55	.51	3.35	.55	3.27	.53
School Safety	3.06	.38	3.02	.39	3.02	.38
Physical Environment	3.32	.52	3.21	.54	3.15	.56
Peer and Adult Relations	3.02	.55	2.73	.59	2.85	.54
Parent Involvement	2.70	.76	2.42	.74	2.26	.75



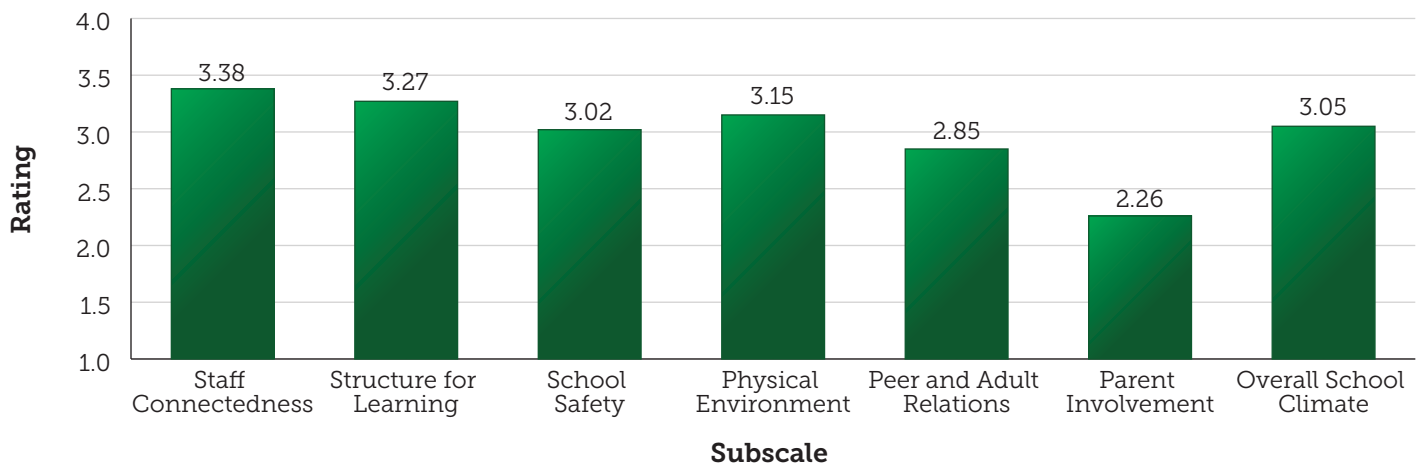
**Figure 1. Elementary School Personnel Subscale Mean Ratings**



**Figure 2. Middle School Personnel Subscale Mean Ratings**



**Figure 3. High School Personnel Subscale Mean Ratings**





## Ratings Across Parent Demographic Groups

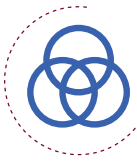
Average parent ratings of overall school climate for each student grade, student enrollment program, gender identity, and racial/ethnic group are represented in Table 3. The standard deviation refers to typical deviation from the Average rating of school climate for each group; most members of that group would score between one SD above and below the average value.

**Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Parent Participants**

Demographic	n	%	Mean	SD
<b>Grade</b>				
K-5	33,928	89.7*	3.55	.50
6-8	13,605	30.3*	3.34	.54
9-12	10,612	25.1*	3.24	.54
<b>Student Enrollment Program</b>				
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	7,581	15.4	3.45	.55
Gifted/Honors/Advanced Placement	5,205	10.6	3.32	.49
<b>Gender Identity</b>				
Female	32,654	66.3	3.47	.52
Male	13,505	27.4	3.47	.53
Other	227	0.5	3.37	.58
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White	37,209	75.5	3.47	.50
Black or African American	5,864	11.9	3.47	.61
Asian	910	1.8	3.53	.52
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1,363	2.8	3.43	.57
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	254	0.5	3.50	.57
Hispanic or Latino	5,471	11.1	3.50	.58

\*Participants were able to select more than one grade; n=sample size; %=percentage; SD=standard deviation

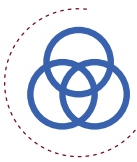




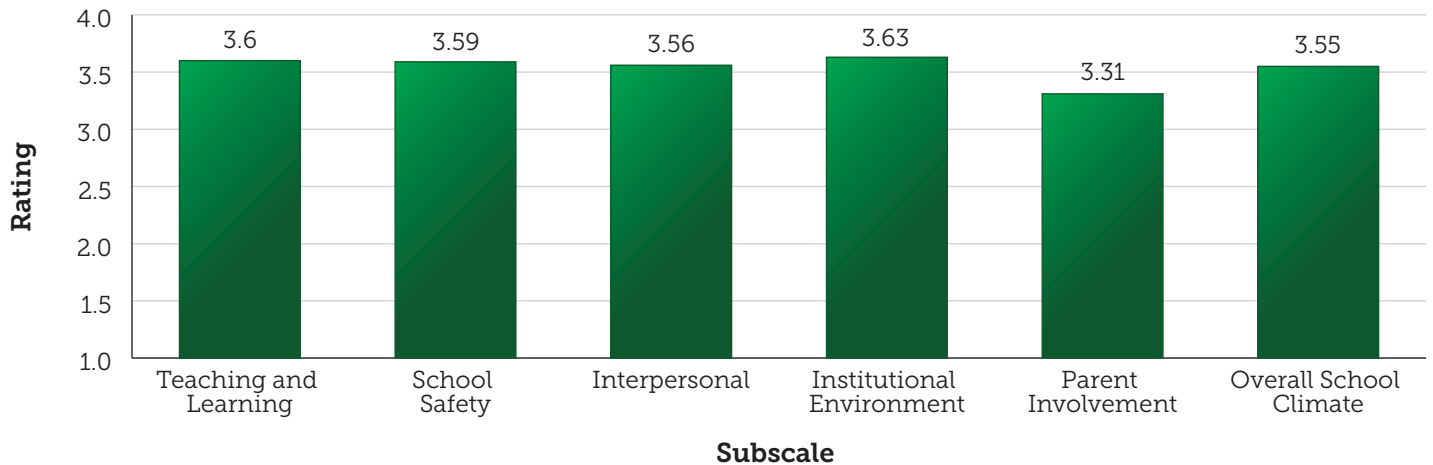
**Table 4. School Climate Means of Parent Participants**

The parent survey is made up of five subscales; Table 4 presents individual mean subscale ratings. The overall school climate means and standard deviations appear on Table 3. Figures 4–6 display the relationship between subscale means.

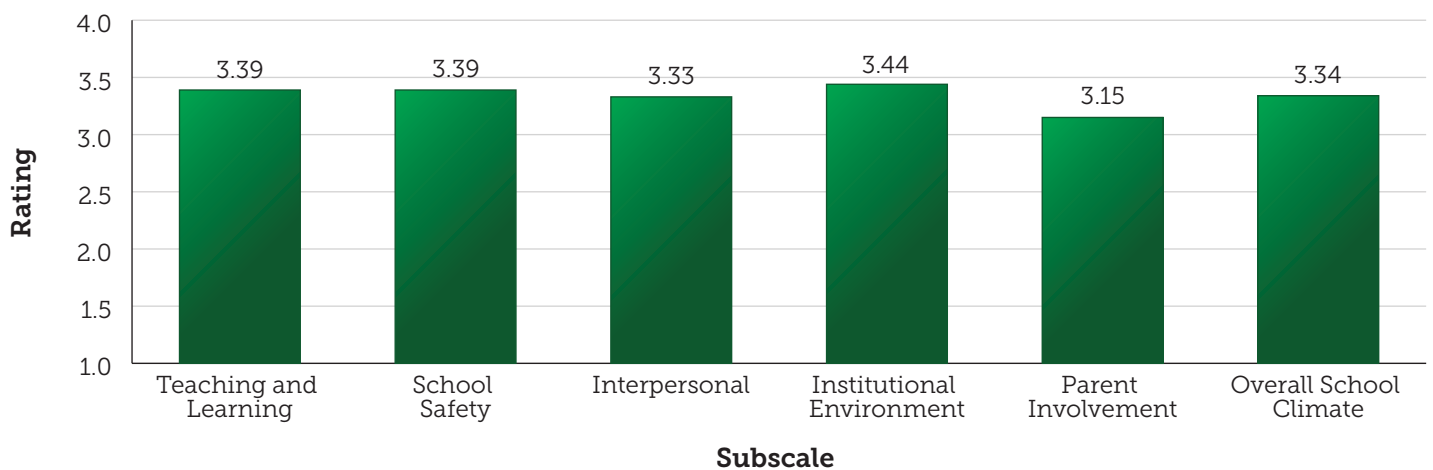
Subscale	Elementary School Parent		Middle School Parent		High School Parent	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Overall School Climate	3.55	.50	3.34	.54	3.24	.54
Teaching and Learning	3.60	.67	3.39	.72	3.29	.72
School Safety	3.59	.62	3.39	.68	3.30	.67
Interpersonal	3.56	.59	3.33	.65	3.21	.67
Institutional Environment	3.63	.56	3.44	.61	3.33	.63
Parent Involvement	3.31	.62	3.15	.67	3.06	.72



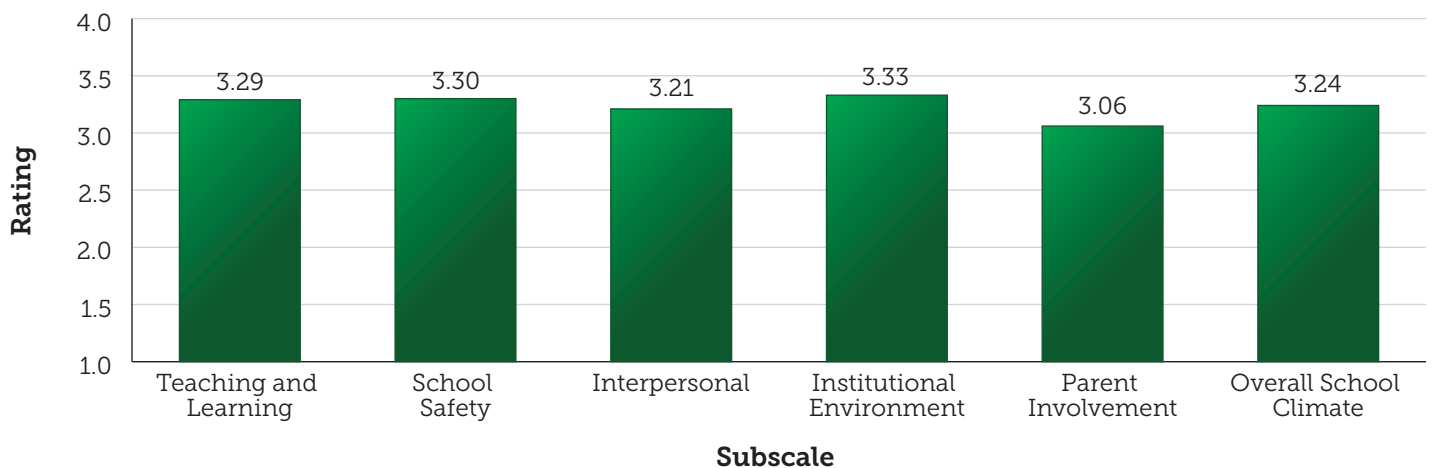
**Figure 4. Elementary School Parent Subscale Mean Ratings**



**Figure 5. Middle School Parent Subscale Mean Ratings**



**Figure 6. High School Parent Subscale Mean Ratings**





## Discussion

School climate has increasingly become recognized as a critical component of effective schools. The Georgia School Climate Surveys provided through PBIS Assessment can be useful for schools because they have been psychometrically validated, are of no cost to schools, provide immediate data feedback, and can be completed within a reasonable amount of time. The School Climate Surveys have been available for only a few years; however, with continued use, schools will increasingly be able to use school climate data alongside other school data examined on a regular basis (e.g., attendance, discipline, disproportionality).

Such processes will inform the degree to which states, districts, and schools require support in streamlining important data when making decisions about targeted strategies and interventions to support school improvement for all within the school community.

## Recommendations

**Overall data analysis.** We recommended that school teams collect school climate data in the fall (e.g., after 4 weeks of school) and spring (e.g., 4 weeks before the end of school). Teams can initially examine overall data to determine the degree to which school personnel and parents within the school community perceive a positive school climate. Interpretations of overall averages should be interpreted alongside the national means reported above.

Still, states, schools, and districts should also monitor localized trends, as various contextual influences (e.g., interventions, turnover, negative incidents) can affect school climate positively or negatively. School-wide



data trends can inform efforts where there is a general consensus in personnel and parent experiences.

If personnel or parents rate the overall climate as negative, schools should examine the degree to which PBIS is being implemented with fidelity and evidence-based interventions and strategies are being utilized. Establishing a strong Tier 1 system, in which personnel and parents perceive the environment is safe, predictable, and supportive, is an essential first step.

Although overall data can be useful in getting a pulse of the school, schools can disaggregate data and examine specific items that have a particularly negative impact on school perceptions, especially if data indicate low ratings of school climate.



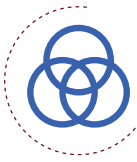
**Subgroup analysis.** PBIS Assessment also allows school teams to disaggregate data by grade, gender identity, and race/ethnicity. School climate data allow schools to understand how various groups including school personnel and parents feel about their school environment and having such information can improve the degree to which we implement targeted strategies and interventions to support school personnel and parents.

For example, in the data examined for this brief, it is evident that among teachers (*Mean* = 2.5), classified staff (*Mean* = 2.69), certified staff (*Mean* = 2.65), and administrators (*Mean* = 2.62) that parental involvement was the lowest rated area. This data suggests that

intentional efforts should be focused on defining family involvement and considering feasible ways for families to be a part of the school. Subscale analyses across groups also revealed that while teachers (*Mean* = 2.89), certified, (*Mean* = 2.96) and classified (*Mean* = 2.96) staff also reported the lowest ratings in the area of peer and adult relationships, this was not the case for administrators (*Mean* = 3.13). Administrators often interact with students in different ways than classroom teachers and other staff; these data suggest that school leadership should ensure that school-wide systems are in place to establish clear expectations and promote positive relationships. See Table 5 for a summary.

**Table 5. School Climate Means of Staff Participants by Job Classification**

Subscale	Teacher		Classified Staff		Certified Staff		Administrator	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Overall School Climate	3.14	.38	3.19	.42	3.19	.39	3.26	.38
Staff Connectedness	3.43	.54	3.42	.56	3.44	.52	3.62	.49
Structure For Learning	3.43	.53	3.44	.57	3.42	.54	3.37	.56
School Safety	3.02	.38	3.08	.40	3.08	.36	3.17	.32
Physical Environment	3.22	.54	3.30	.58	3.32	.54	3.31	.53
Peer and Adult Relations	2.89	.56	2.96	.60	2.96	.56	3.13	.53
Parent Involvement	2.50	.77	2.69	.79	2.65	.78	2.62	.80



## Conclusion

School teams increasingly use school climate data to understand the perceptions and experiences of individuals within the school. The Georgia School Climate Surveys provide a comprehensive series of surveys to gather such information at the student, parent or guardian, and personnel perspective. The aim of this evaluation brief was to (a) describe the school climate surveys available through PBIS Assessments, (b) share data to help schools interpret school climate scores, and (c) identify and offer suggestions for school teams on how to utilize school climate data within a PBIS Framework.



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