



What are School Conditions measures?

School conditions play a large role in shaping students' learning and experiences. Things like a school's climate and learning environment, teaching quality, rigor of instructional materials and discipline policies can impact how well students do. Schools and districts often collect information about these conditions through surveys, observations, and other methods. Many school systems already use this data to change their practices, adjust supports and help students, but there's still

more to learn about the best ways to do so. We know that better school conditions lead to better student experiences and outcomes, but we're still figuring out the most effective ways to use this information to improve schools for all students.

Some of the most commonly collected data about school conditions include:

School-family engagement: Research shows strong school-family engagement practices are associated with improved student engagement, such as increases in student motivation, participation and attendance, as well as increases in high school graduation and college enrollment. How well do schools and districts involve families in school decisions about their children's education? What kind of information should schools and districts collect to know if they are doing this well and where they need to improve?

Some common data points that can help include: Responses to parent and/or family surveys; number of parents and/or families attending school-related events and/or activities; rate of chronic absenteeism; and number of family engagement events.

Inclusive environments: Research indicates that learning in inclusive school environments is closely linked to positive student outcomes such as increased motivation, engagement, and persistence. Inclusive environments affect the ways in which students perceive and engage in their community and their own sense of belonging within a school. How effectively do schools create environments where all students feel a sense of connection and belonging? What specific factors should schools examine to assess the impact of their climate, culture and curriculum on students' perceptions of inclusion?

Some common data points that can help include: Responses to validated student and teacher belonging surveys; surveys that measure the percent of students who feel they belong at their school, percent of students who feel students at their school show them respect or percent of students who feel connected to adults at their school.

Placement in rigorous coursework: Schools systems have a responsibility to ensure that all students have access to and can succeed in rigorous coursework regardless of their background. Research shows that students who have access to honors, advanced and college preparatory courses are better prepared for college coursework, matriculation and graduation and have higher long-term income earnings. Taking these courses helps students stay engaged,

attend school more regularly and improves their self esteem. How do schools and districts ensure that every student has the opportunity to enroll and succeed in these courses?

Some common data points that can help include: Number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered in each school, disaggregated information about the number of students eligible to enroll, who enroll and who succeed in these courses at each school, disaggregated information about students who pass rigorous exams such as AP/IB or complete dual credit courses.

Teacher retention: Retaining teachers at the same school every year is essential for both the students and school success. Research shows that students benefit academically and socially from consistent teacher-student relationships. How do schools and districts incentivize, track and address teacher retention needs to support both teachers and improve student outcomes? What data and strategies should districts employ to understand root causes of teacher turn-over, and assess the impact of teacher retention on student outcomes?

Some common data points that can help include: Percent of teachers recruited; percent of teachers retained; percent of teachers of color in the district and across schools; distribution of highly qualified and rated teachers across the district; percent of teachers holding a positive view of school leadership; and disaggregated information regarding teacher retention.

Education First is supporting districts to expand the kinds of data they collect and improve how they are used to support students and school improvement. To do so, we recommend district leaders start by:

- **Setting a vision for the kinds of information that is critical for your school communities to know and measure progress against.** Districts should identify the critical school conditions that matter for improving their students' learning and experience and develop systems to collect and use this information.
- **Engaging the Community authentically:** Districts should involve teachers, students, and families in discussions about school conditions to ensure the data collected is relevant and actionable for different audiences, and that any actions taken will have a positive impact on the school community.
- **Encouraging a data-driven culture:** Districts should focus on building a culture where data is used to drive continuous improvements across the system, offer professional learning on interpreting and using data for decisionmakers and encourage collaboration among stakeholders.
- **Communicating progress transparently:** Districts should communicate the importance of school conditions data and progress regularly and transparently, and identify goals within strategic plans to build capacity and infrastructure to refine and improve the kinds of data they collect and use to impact student outcomes.