



Maryland School Survey

Frequently Asked Questions
2025-2026 School Year

Division of Assessment and Accountability

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Document Control Information

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DOCUMENT HISTORY

Document Version	Date	Summary of Change
1.0	January 2024	Updated for the 2023–2024 survey administration
2.0	January 2025	Updated for the 2024–2025 survey administration
3.0	January 2026	Updated for the 2025–2026 survey administration

Purpose

The Maryland School Survey is an annual survey that informs families, local education agencies (LEAs), and MSDE about the learning and working environment at every public school in the State of Maryland. The survey, which is conducted as part of the State’s accountability system, measures different dimensions of school climate through a set of validated and reliable survey items. LEAs administer the survey to two populations each school year: students in grades 5–11 and teachers or other staff members (“instructional staff”) who may provide instruction to students.

Describing school performance with traditional measures such as academic achievement, graduation rate, and attendance is important, but these metrics alone cannot capture the quality and character of school life. That is why the Maryland accountability system also includes a school survey of students and instructional staff. Survey results are incorporated into the School Quality and Student Success indicator of the Maryland School Report Card.

LEAs conduct a computer-based administration of the survey every spring, usually from mid-February to mid-April. Accommodations are available for students who may need assistance from proctors or other school staff to take the survey. Different versions of the survey instrument are available based on the population:

- English Survey for Elementary School/Middle School Students
- Spanish Survey for Elementary School/Middle School Students
- English Survey for High School Students
- Spanish Survey for High School Students
- English Survey for Instructional Staff

Survey responses for each group are collected separately during the survey administration window. Information from the survey is used to support schools across the State in creating a learning environment that promotes success for all students. Because all topic scores are benchmarked, they can be compared to one another within a school and across schools. School leaders can rely on topic scores to inform decisions on how to prioritize one area over another.

This document contains guidance about the survey’s purpose and content, administration and reporting, and accessibility features and accommodations. Please refer to the Maryland School Survey Support Guidance document on the MSDE website for additional information. To look at the types of questions included in the survey, please see the Maryland School Survey Item Banks posted on the [MSDE website](#).

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document was produced by MSDE's Division of Assessment and Accountability. The intended audience for the document is the general public.

The document is intended for use with other documentation, including:

- Documentation published on the [Maryland School Survey section](#) of the Maryland Public Schools website;
- The current [Maryland Student Records System Manual](#);
- The [Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, & Accommodations Policy Manual](#).

When viewing this manual electronically, press Ctrl+F on Windows or Command+F (⌘+F) on Mac to search for specific keywords.

RELEVANT STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

State Laws

- “The Blueprint.” [The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act of 2020](#) revised State education policies in five areas: Early Childhood Education, High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and School Leaders, College and Career Readiness Pathways, More Resources to Ensure that All Students are Successful, and Governance and Accountability. Data from the Maryland School Survey may be used to meet various reporting requirements authorized through this act. The Blueprint was developed through recommendations from the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (also known as the Kirwan Commission).
- Program of education accountability. [Education Article 7-203 \(c\) of the Annotated Code of Maryland](#) (as amended by the Protect Our Schools Act of 2017) requires MSDE to include Maryland School Surveys in its education accountability program, i.e., the Maryland Accountability System. Details about the how the Maryland School Survey is used in this system are listed under the “Maryland Accountability System” section below.

Federal Laws

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). This act, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, establishes national policies on equity and access for all students to a free appropriate public education. MSDE addresses how it would meet Maryland's ESSA requirements in the Maryland ESSA Consolidated State Plan.

SUBSEQUENT REPORTING

Maryland Accountability System

The Maryland School Survey informs the School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator in the Maryland Accountability System, which is reported annually in the Maryland Report Card. Data submitted in the Maryland School Survey comprise one of the three accountability measures for Maryland's SQSS indicator. A total of 10 possible points is earned based on the percent of the whole indicator, i.e., 10 possible points out of 35 total points for the SQSS indicator). The possible points for the student survey are 7. The possible points for the instructional staff survey are 3.

Federal Reporting

Data provided are reported to the U.S. Department of Education through the [EDFacts Initiative](#) in the file “FS202 – School Quality or Student Success Indicator Status”.

Other Reporting

In addition to meeting the requirements of both state and federal law, the information collected via the Maryland School Survey also supports:

- The statewide longitudinal data system, which is maintained by the [Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center](#);
- The comparison of school climate data among LEAs; and
- The use of data to inform education policies and practices, and to better align public school standards and curricula with postsecondary education and career opportunities.

Confidentiality

The Maryland School Survey is confidential and secure. Only students and instructional staff with a username and password provided by an LEA will have access to the survey.

Timeline and Due Dates

File Name	Due Date
2026 Maryland School Survey Administration: Opening Date	February 16, 2026
2026 Maryland School Survey Administration: Closing Date	May 01, 2026
2026 Maryland School Survey Results released	Fall 2026

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **What is the Maryland School Survey?**

Describing a school with traditional measures such as academic achievement, graduation rate, and attendance is important, but these alone cannot capture the quality and character of school life. That is why the Maryland accountability system also includes a School Survey of students and instructors. The survey is intended to provide information to support a positive learning and working environment that promotes success for all students.

2. **Why did the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) implement this survey?**

Maryland's stakeholders have long recognized that test scores alone do not provide a full picture of teaching and learning in any one school. Under legislation (Protect Our Schools Act of 2017), MSDE is required to include a school climate survey of students and instructors as part of the State's ESSA plan.

3. **What does the survey ask?**

The School Survey asks students and instructional staff questions about their perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and activities in school in four topic areas.

The School Survey also asks instructional staff questions about the quality of instructional feedback.

4. **Who takes the survey?**

- All 5th- through 11th-grade students participate in the survey.
- Instructional staff in any grade participate in the survey.

5. **Are students required to participate in the survey?**

Yes. MSDE wants to ensure that all students' input is heard. In addition, schools must be responsible for the experiences of all their students, not just some of them. It is very important that all students participate. Therefore, all students must be provided the opportunity to respond. However, students are not required to answer questions and may submit the survey without responding to some or all of the questions if they choose.

6. **Why do teachers take the survey?**

All instructors will have the opportunity to respond to the Maryland School Survey during the same time period as students. MSDE wants to ensure that all instructors' input is heard. It is very important that all instructional staff participate. Information from the survey will ensure that schools across the state promote a climate that supports student learning and that instructors receive important instructional feedback.

Survey Design

7. Who developed the survey?

The survey design was led by MSDE in collaboration with experts at [Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic](#) (REL Mid-Atlantic). A steering committee, which included a superintendent-designated representative from every LEA in the state, gave important direction and input at every stage in the design process.

8. What will the survey measure?

The Maryland School Survey for students will measure four domains: safety, environment, engagement, and relationships. Each domain looks at topics and together the domains and topics will provide valuable information about each school's learning environment.

The **safety domain** has four topics and asks students if they feel safe from violence (physical and emotional), bullying, and controlled-substance abuse. The **environmental domain** has two topics and asks students about their behavioral and academic supports and physical environment. The **community domain** has two topics and asks students if they are treated equally and they have the opportunity to participate in all school activities, including those that occur outside of the regular school day. The **relationships domain** has two topics and asks students about the nature of teacher-student and student-student relationships and if their school has a culture of caring and respect.

The Maryland School Survey for instructors measures the same four domains and topics with additional questions on instructional feedback.

9. What types of responses will students need to provide?

All responses will use the same four-point scale of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

10. What type of questions does the Maryland School Survey ask students or instructors?

Questions ask about the way that the individual feels about the school. For example, a student might be asked if students at the school respect others who are different from them, but not whether they personally have been treated with respect or whether they have personally mistreated others.

11. How many questions are on the survey?

Elementary and middle school students in grades 5-8 take a survey with 53 questions. High school students in grades 9-11 take a survey with 54 questions. Instructors take a survey with 72 questions.

12. How long will it take for students to complete the survey?

The survey is untimed. Most students should complete the survey within 30 minutes once they have logged in to the system.

13. Who can see the survey questions?

Because schools are being held responsible for the results, it's important that the survey questions are confidential. Survey questions are not available to the public. Only Survey Administrators, Proctors, Accommodators, and School Test Coordinators who sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement are permitted to administer or participate in the administration of the Maryland School Survey.

14. Can you provide examples of the questions?

Examples of the types of questions included in the School Survey can be found in the Maryland School Survey Item Banks, posted on the [MSDE website](#).

Survey Administration**15. When is the survey administration window?**

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Maryland School Survey will be administered for both students and instructors between February and April.

16. How will students access the survey?

Survey participants will receive a username and password which they will be prompted to enter at a login page. The username will be the student's state ID. The password will be assigned by the LEA and provided to the student at their school. A generic login will be available for students new to the building.

The results of the survey are part of the school accountability system; therefore, survey questions are confidential. Only Survey Administrators, Proctors, Accommodators, and School Test Coordinators (STC) who sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement will be permitted to administer or participate in the administration of the Maryland School Survey.

17. Does the survey have a timeout feature?

Yes. For survey participants who leave the computer for a prolonged period of time or who forget to close the browser before leaving, the session will automatically log the participant out after 60 minutes of inactivity.

18. Who can administer the survey?

While the Maryland School Survey is not an assessment, MSDE requires that Survey Administrators be eligible to administer a state assessment. The Survey Administrator must be an employee of the LEA and be trained by the STC. School principals and other school administrators cannot administer the survey. Staff serving as accommodators or proctors, who are not eligible to be a Survey Administrator, must be under the direction of an eligible Survey Administrator.

19. What applications (apps) will be used to administer the online survey?

The survey is web-based and does not require any applications beyond a web browser.

20. How will students access the survey system?

The survey is computer-based, and students can access it through any internet browser on any device. Phones will not be used to take the survey. The grade specific surveys and Instructional Staff survey will be accessible from links that are available from the Maryland School Survey section of MSDE website. Each LEA may offer students and instructors the ability to link from their county webpage.

21. What happens if a student transfers into a school during the survey window?

If the student has not already taken the survey, the receiving school should provide the opportunity for the student to participate in the survey. A generic login will be available in the new school.

22. What if a student's login and password do not work?

If, for some reason, a student's login and password do not work, the school should provide a generic login for the student.

23. Do all students get the same survey?

Students are given the survey based on their grade level. Grades 5 through 8 are given the elementary/middle school survey. Grades 9 through 11 are given the high school survey. If a school has both middle and high school grades, each student will be assigned the survey appropriate for their grade. A student will not be able to select a survey that is not grade appropriate.

24. What days are allowed or not allowed for administering the survey?

Students and instructors may take the survey during any school day during the administration period in order to provide as many opportunities as possible to participate in the survey. This is not an assessment. You may offer the survey on any school day. An LEA may choose to suspend testing on religious holidays listed on the State Testing Calendar or other local calendars.

Reporting**25. When will schools and LEAs receive the results from the survey?**

The Maryland School Survey is part of the school quality and student success indicator in each school's accountability report card. Information from the survey will ensure that schools across the state promote a climate that supports student learning, and that instructors receive important instructional feedback. Results from the survey will be available as part of the State's accountability reporting system and can be viewed on the Maryland Report Card.

26. What will be reported to schools and LEAs?

Maryland School Survey results are provided at the school level. Results are also provided by student groups when the student groups are sufficiently large enough to ensure confidentiality.

ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES AND ACCOMMODATIONS**27. What accessibility features and accommodations are available on the survey?**

The survey does not have individualized accessibility features or accommodations built into the online platform. Accessibility features and accommodations that are generally used in the classroom should also be used for the Maryland School Survey to ensure all students are provided the opportunity to participate.

Because the survey does not include a text-to-speech feature, students who normally use this feature on assessments may have the survey read to them in groups of no more than 10 students. The Survey Administrator will need a Generic Proctor Login from the STC. This login should be treated as a secure document.

For guidance on providing accessibility features and accommodations, see Appendix A: SAMPLE Guidance on Student Accessibility Features and Accommodations.

28. Can students who take an alternate assessment for state accountability purposes take the survey?

Students who participate in an alternate assessment for state accountability purposes should have the opportunity to take the survey. Therefore, if it is practical for the student to attempt the survey with the same support given during instruction, then they should be given the opportunity to participate.

29. Are first-year English Learners who are exempt from the state ELA assessment required to take the survey?

Students who are English Learners and are exempt from the MCAP ELA assessment during the school year should have the opportunity to take the survey. These students may need additional support that would have been provided on the other MCAP assessments in Math, Science, or Social Studies. Therefore, if it is practical for the student to attempt the survey, they should be given the opportunity.

MSDE will also provide a Spanish-language version of the survey instrument.

Appendix A: Student Accessibility Features and Accommodations

The goal of the Maryland School Survey is to understand aspects of each school's climate. The Maryland School Survey should be administered so that all students have access to the survey questions using supports provided during instruction and assessment. Whenever possible, students should complete the survey independently without assistance from proctors or other school staff. However, in some cases, students may require or be eligible to receive proctor assistance while completing the survey.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and English Learner (EL) Plans are eligible to receive supports and accommodations to ensure they can access the same academic and non-instructional materials as their peers. Additionally, students who utilize accessibility features on state assessments may also benefit from specific supports. These accessibility features and accommodations, generally used in the classroom and/or on assessments, should also be implemented on the Maryland School Survey to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate. Schools should review this guidance to ensure the appropriate accessibility features and accommodations are implemented for students participating in the Maryland School Survey.

For information on accessibility features and accommodations, please refer to the [Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Policy Manual](#).

Note: The Maryland School Survey will not have the technical ability to provide Text-to-Speech. Students using this feature on other assessments may have a human reader to provide this accommodation. For the administration of the Maryland School Survey, students may be placed in groups of no more than 10 to provide this accommodation.