

Belonging, well-being & mental health

A district guide to
considering measures



A district guide to choosing measures

This guide helps district leaders compare tools for understanding school conditions, belonging, well-being and mental-health concerns. Use it to narrow a shortlist and document the requirements for a pilot.

01 Begin with a decision

Name the decision that could improve support for learning and development. Review existing information before adding another survey.

02 Find a useful candidate

Compare options on pages 5–7; check exact forms and limits on pages 8–16. Plan participation and response, then complete the decision record on page 19.

03 Know the coverage

Most profiles concern adolescent self-report, with limited elementary options. No K–2 student-voice measure is profiled.

This resource supports tool selection. Screening for mental-health concerns requires qualified review and a response plan.

Connect student experience to adult responsibility

Use evidence to understand how students are doing and what schools make possible for them.



Listen to students

Do students feel accepted? Can they get help? How are they feeling and functioning? Invite them to explain what helps them participate in learning and what gets in their way.

Examine the conditions

Look at relationships, classroom routines, accessible learning and available support. Belonging connects a student's experience with a setting adults can help change.

A score can start an inquiry. It cannot, by itself, explain a cause or prescribe a response.

Check fit before you choose a tool

For each candidate, record what is verified, what remains uncertain and who will resolve the gap.

Decision

Specify the group-improvement or individual-support decision. One instrument rarely serves every purpose.

Exact form

Match the respondent, age, language, edition, delivery mode and scoring instructions.

Evidence

Check support for this interpretation with these students. Research on a related form does not establish validity for the selected form.

Permission

Confirm the intended use and mode. A public download does not grant administration, digital copying or adaptation rights.

Delivery and response

Plan access supports, staff time, costs and an owner for the response. Free materials can still require paid services or permission.

School conditions and belonging

For questions about the school day, relationships and whether students feel valued.

Option and profile	Students	What it adds	Check before a pilot
EDSCLS Page 8	Grades 5–12	A fuller picture of engagement, safety and environment.	73 questions; about 20–30 minutes. School-level scores need careful interpretation.
Panorama climate Page 9	Grades 3–5 or 6–12	A brief view of everyday school climate.	Four or five items by grade. Use the specified LCAP form; exact equivalence to related research is unverified.
Panorama belonging Page 10	Grades 6–12	Feeling understood, respected and valued at school.	Legacy five-item form. The revised 2024 scale has four items; keep versions separate.

Positive well-being

The scope of the question matters. School experience, broader functioning and recent feelings call for different measures.

Option and profile	Students	What it adds	Check before a pilot
SSWQ Page 11	Current form: grades 6–12	Joy of learning, connection, purpose and efficacy at school.	16 items. Reviewed evidence is strongest in middle school; use the school form.
EPOCH Page 12	Development studies: ages 10–18	Broader positive functioning across adolescent life.	20 items. Connectedness extends beyond school. Follow registration instructions.
WHO-5 Page 13	School-study ages: 11, 13 and 15	Recent positive mental well-being over two weeks.	Five items. These study ages are not a universal age range. No automatic youth referral rule is given here.

Mental-health concerns

These options require trained interpretation, confidential follow-up and access to fuller assessment.

Option and profile	Students	What it adds	Check before a pilot
SDQ Page 15	Youth form: about ages 11–17	Emotional and behavioral concerns, attention, peers and prosocial strengths.	25 core items. Confirm qualifying paper use, digital authorization and scoring terms.
RCADS-25 Page 16	Youth form: ages 8–18	Focused anxiety and depressive symptoms.	25 items. Institutional service use requires written permission. Follow the short-form scoring guide.

The response pathway comes first

Name the staff who will review responses, the review schedule, and how students will receive support. Confirm participation and privacy arrangements before collection.

ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)



U.S. Department of Education / NCES

What makes a supportive school day difficult for students?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Students in grades 5–12. Student questionnaire.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Engagement, safety and environment, including relationships and support.

ACCESS AND TIME

73 numbered questions. About 20–30 minutes. Free forms. Districts provide delivery, analysis and staff time.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Choose a school condition to investigate with students, assign an adult response, and revisit the relevant topic.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Research supports many student-level interpretations. School-level aggregation and disability comparability need care.

LIMIT A climate measure for improvement. Avoid individual diagnosis and ranking schools from a single aggregate score.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Panorama School Climate



Panorama Education / LCAP guide forms

How do students experience everyday school life?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Grades 3–5: four items. Grades 6–12: five items.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Perceptions of fairness, peers, school energy and teachers’ enthusiasm.

ACCESS AND TIME

Use the linked LCAP forms with attribution. The instruments are free. Platform and delivery services are separate.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Use the brief results to focus a conversation about one everyday school condition and agree on a feasible response.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Related-form middle-school research includes special education groups. Exact LCAP item equivalence is unverified.

LIMIT Preserve the grade-specific form and response scales. This brief scale cannot cover every safety or well-being concern.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Panorama Sense of Belonging



Panorama Education / legacy secondary form

Do students feel understood, respected and valued here?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Grades 6–12.
Legacy five-item form.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Connection to adults, peer respect,
mattering and school membership.

ACCESS AND TIME

Five items. Use the linked LCAP guide with attribution. No platform purchase required. Pilot timing and comprehension.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Compare whose experiences differ, ask students what sits behind the pattern, and identify a relationship or practice to change.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

A large publisher dataset supports the legacy topic. Check disability comparability and accessible administration.

LIMIT Keep versions consistent. The revised 2024 four-item scale is different. A belonging score does not diagnose a condition.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire

Tyler L. Renshaw, Anna C. Long and Clayton R. Cook

Do students experience connection, purpose and joy at school?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Current form: grades 6–12. School version, March 2024.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Joy of learning, connection, educational purpose and academic efficacy.

ACCESS AND TIME

16 items about the past month. CC BY 4.0. Use and share with credit. Pilot completion time locally.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Consider each of the four school-related domains alongside instructional access and opportunities to succeed.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Original and replication studies support middle-school use. Review evidence for upper grades and learning differences.

LIMIT The school and college questionnaires are different measures. Scores neither diagnose a condition nor explain its causes.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being

Margaret L. Kern and colleagues

Where do adolescents experience strengths and need support?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Development studies: ages 10–18.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness and happiness.

ACCESS AND TIME

20 items. Free noncommercial use with credit. Follow the form’s registration instruction. Pilot timing.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Discuss the five domains in context, including relationships and opportunities beyond school. Identify support within the district’s reach.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Ten development studies included 4,480 adolescents. Validation for specific learning differences was not established.

LIMIT Connectedness extends beyond school. Perseverance is not an ADHD screen. Low scores should prompt inquiry, not blame.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

WHO-5 Well-Being Index

World Health Organization / 2024 English form

How have students been feeling over the past two weeks?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. School-survey evidence at ages 11, 13 and 15.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Recent positive mental well-being, including positive affect and vitality.

ACCESS AND TIME

Five items. CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, with attribution. Commercial use needs permission. Pilot accessible completion.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Pair recent feelings with school-context evidence. Arrange follow-up before collecting identifiable responses.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

A 43-country adolescent study supports measurement. Local language and disability comparability still need review.

LIMIT No youth referral cutoff is prescribed here. A score cannot diagnose depression or establish what caused a change.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Well-Being Index

**Center for
Whole-Child Education**

ASU Mary Lou Fulton
Teachers College
Arizona State University

Developed by Turnaround for Children / resources now at ASU

How are students feeling and functioning this week?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Grades 6–12.
Secondary 12-item form.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Feelings and functioning over the past week, followed by conversation.

ACCESS AND TIME

12 items. Publisher estimates a few minutes. Free school-use route with Toolbox registration for downloads.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Offer a conversation with a trusted adult and a feasible response. Decide who reads responses before inviting students to share.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Development drew on research; a completed public technical validation report was not found in this review.

LIMIT A check-in companion with limited measurement evidence. Avoid clinical screening, school rankings or precise growth claims.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Educator guide](#)



Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire

Robert Goodman / Youthinmind

Who may need further emotional or behavioral support?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Youth self-report. About ages 11–17.
Standard English (USA).

WHAT IT MEASURES

Emotions, behavior, attention, peer relationships and prosocial strengths.

ACCESS AND TIME

25 core items. Qualifying nonprofit paper use is free. Digital copies need authorization. Verify scoring costs and terms.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Consider within a professionally supervised screening process, with confidential follow-up and access to fuller assessment.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Population research includes multiple informants. Do not assume comparable scores across disability groups.

LIMIT Use the correct respondent form and check comprehension. A screening result does not provide a clinical diagnosis.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

RCADS-25



Bruce F. Chorpita and Susan H. Spence / UCLA Child FIRST

Do anxiety or depressive symptoms warrant professional follow-up?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Youth self-report. Ages 8–18. English (US), 25-item form.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Broad anxiety and depressive symptoms. Separate caregiver form exists.

ACCESS AND TIME

25 items. No end-user fee under a limited license. Institutional service use needs written permission before use.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Qualified mental-health staff may consider focused screening when confidential follow-up and fuller assessment are available.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Original youth study included school and clinic samples. Disability comparability for this short form remains unverified.

LIMIT Use the 25-item scoring guide and plan sensitive-response follow-up. The score cannot diagnose or assess suicide risk.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Include students who learn and communicate differently

Involve students with varied language, attention, sensory and learning needs when planning the pilot.

Try the response process

Ask students how they understand the wording, recall period and response options. Check more than whether they can open the form.

Arrange access supports

Use documented supports where available; record local adaptations separately. Changes to wording, informant or delivery may change what scores mean.

Look for missing voices

Review who participated, skipped items or could not finish before comparing groups. Missing responses may call for another access route.

Interpret with students

Ask what the results miss and what adults should change. Include families and relevant specialists.

A translation or short form alone does not establish accessibility or comparable scores.

Set the response before the first question

Before collection, confirm the exact form, use terms, participation requirements and who may access responses. For an individual check-in, name the adult who will respond.

Group improvement

Discuss privacy-protected summaries with students. Assign an adult to lead a change and report back. Anonymous surveys cannot support follow-up with a particular respondent.

Identified screening

Assign qualified staff to confidential review. Establish how sensitive responses will be handled and how students will receive support.

Check the pilot

Record comprehension, access, participation and student/staff burden. Did the evidence inform the intended decision? Did the promised response happen?

Decide before expanding

Continue when evidence is useful and the response is deliverable. Revise fixable access or burden problems. Stop when essential conditions remain unmet.

Set the review date before launch. A score change alone does not establish an intervention's effect.

The decision before the pilot

Complete one record for each candidate. Record what remains unresolved before deciding to proceed.

The decision and the information already available

What will adults decide? What gap would new collection fill?

Students, candidate and exact form

Age/grade, respondent, version, language and delivery mode.

Evidence, access and permissions to resolve

What supports this use? Who could be excluded? Who will resolve each open question?

The response and its owner

Group improvement / individual check-in / identified screening. Who responds, by when, and with what capacity?

The pilot decision

Proceed / hold / decline. Record the reason, staff time and remaining costs.

The next review

Owner and date. What would lead us to continue, revise or stop? How will students hear what changed?

Confirm participation, privacy and follow-up arrangements before collecting responses.

Resources for the next decision

Delaware school climate

Free scales for students in grades 3–12, with staff and family forms. Scoring services outside Delaware are separate.

[Open climate resources](#)

School mental-health screening

NCSMH guidance supports planning for staffing, participation, data handling and follow-up.

[Open screening guide](#)

Belonging in adult practice

BCI research examines interpersonal and instructional support in mathematics classrooms. Protocol access, training and permissions remain unresolved.

[Read the research](#)

Student privacy and participation

Federal PPRA guidance supports district review of survey requirements alongside applicable local rules.

[Open PPRA guidance](#)

Psychological Sense of School Membership

Carol Goodenow / original 18-item PSSM

Who feels accepted, respected and supported at school?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Adolescent self-report. Original research in middle school and junior high.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Personal membership, acceptance, inclusion and support at school.

ACCESS AND TIME

18 items. Linked public form requires author permission. Free district use and completion time remain unverified.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

After confirming permission and local fit, explore belonging with students and examine relationships and school practices.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Adolescent research warrants further consideration. Negative wording and translated versions require care.

LIMIT Permission and free district use remain unverified. Confirm the authorized form and scoring before use or comparison.

[Form & permission](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Social Emotional Health Survey–Secondary

UC SANTA BARBARA

UCSB / SEHS-S-2020 / May 2025 scoring packet

Which strengths and relationships can schools support?

STUDENTS AND FORM

Student self-report. Separate studies support grades 6–8 and 9–12.

WHAT IT MEASURES

Belief in self and others, emotional competence and engaged living.

ACCESS AND TIME

36 items. Confirm permission for district use and completion time. Platform and scoring costs may differ.

A POSSIBLE DISTRICT USE

Discuss strengths and supports with students, then examine relationships and learning conditions.

EVIDENCE AND INCLUSION

Current-form studies cover middle and high school. Older-form learning-disability evidence may not transfer.

LIMIT A strengths score cannot diagnose a condition. Current-form comparability across disabilities remains incompletely established.

[Forms & guide](#)

[Research evidence](#)

Scope and source boundaries

This guide curates options for district consideration. It does not rank instruments or assign a universal quality score.

Basis for selection

Purpose, population, evidence, permitted use, burden and distinct contribution. Original forms, research and provider terms govern profiles. Directory records are discovery leads.