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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



DIANA S. DOOLEY
SECRETARY OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

August 30, 2013

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

CALIFORNIA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY

On behalf of the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Health and Human Services Agency, we encourage all local educational agencies to participate in the California Healthy Kids Survey (Survey). The Survey allows students to express how they feel about their school experience on a number of topics that are available from no other source. The Survey is the largest statewide survey of its kind and has led to a better understanding of student health behaviors and their relationship to academic performance. Participating in the Survey has benefits for teachers, administrators, students, parents, state policymakers, and entire communities. We strongly urge you to take advantage of this valuable tool and the means of assistance that are available.

The Survey gathers data about students who experience bullying, poor mental health, or alcohol or substance use; students who are truant or at risk of dropping out; students who have participated in or have been a victim of violence at school or in gangs; and students who are struggling academically. This data is essential to understanding the school climate and guiding school improvement decision-making. It also enables districts to focus on their most vulnerable populations, such as foster youth and others with exposure to risk factors in their home or after-school environment.

The Local Control Funding Formula requires districts to create a local control and accountability plan, including consideration of school climate as measured by surveys of pupils, parents, and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness. The Survey can help districts meet that requirement by collecting important data about school climate. Many schools already utilize the Survey school climate data in their Single Plan for Student Achievement and their school improvement plans.

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The data collected by the survey can be used for many other purposes. The results of the Survey can help schools create a strong anti-bullying policy that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, as required by recent legislation (AB 9, "Seth's Law"). The data collected is also valuable for schools and communities as they leverage their resources. Many schools report the Survey data played a critical role in justifying their applications for state, federal, and private foundation grants.

Because of developmental milestones and changes in health-risk behaviors over time, the Survey typically is administered in grades 5, 7, 9, and 11. The direct costs of administering the Survey are minimal due to subsidization from the CDE. In addition, because of the widespread use of Survey data in the community, many county offices of education, alcohol and drug programs, and public health offices have been able to support schools in continuing survey administration. Some examples of possible funding sources include the Tobacco Use and Prevention Education grants and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment block grant.

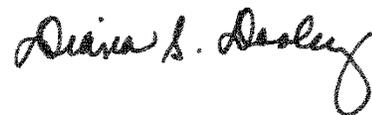
The Survey can be customized to meet local needs and is a powerful tool to identify areas of school strengths and weaknesses. We encourage you to visit the California Healthy Kids Survey Web site at <http://chks.wested.org/> to review the Survey questions, see the frequently asked questions, and view available Survey modules. To sign up for Survey administration, please contact the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey System by phone at 888-841-7536.

For additional information about the Survey, see the attached document. If you would like more information or have any questions, please contact Hilva Chan, Education Programs Consultant, CDE Coordinated School Health and Safety Office, by phone at 916-319-0194 or by e-mail at hchan@cde.ca.gov.

We thank you in advance for considering administration of the Survey. We hope you will agree that its benefits for improving school climates and student interactions and services are worthwhile.



Tom Torlakson
Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education



Diana Dooley
Secretary
California Health and Human
Services Agency

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Attachment
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