

# National Center for School Engagement Policy and Practice Assessment

## Introduction

The National Center for School Engagement Policy and Practice Assessment is designed to help school teams assess the extent to which school level practice is aligned with policy set by the school district, school administration or classroom teachers. Ultimately, these data help to illuminate critical factors that contribute to whether or not students are engaged and connected to their school community—and whether there are policies in place that intentionally foster or unintentionally undermine student attendance, attachment and achievement.

There are three versions of the assessment tool, one each for high schools, middle schools and elementary schools. There are thirteen sections to the survey, one for each of the following categories of questions, which appear in alphabetical order.

- ❖ Absences
- ❖ Academic support
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Class levels
- ❖ Discipline
- ❖ Disengaged Students
- ❖ Enrollment, Transfers and Credits
- ❖ Grading Practices
- ❖ School climate
- ❖ Student Activities
- ❖ Supportive Services
- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ Transition support

Generally, each school, or a large number of schools in a district will participate in the assessment. The most effective way to complete the survey is for each school to assemble a team of three to four people including the principal and at least one lead teacher to discuss the questions and arrive at *consensus* regarding the appropriate answers. Each school submits one, and only one, survey. Each substantive question about a practice at your school is followed by a question that asks about the origin of that practice. Is it in accordance with a policy set by the school district, by the school or by teachers? Or perhaps it does not reflect a policy at all, but just the culture or common practice at the school.

There are two valuable aspects to the work. The first is the discussion among school team members that is required in order to reach consensus on the answers to the survey questions. It is important, therefore, to have individuals who represent a wide spectrum of views contribute to the process. It will become apparent if there are areas in which a common understanding of policy and/or practice is lacking, allowing school staffs to clarify and even rethink the school's approach. The second is the analysis that the National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) will provide regarding your school and district policies. NCSE will report your school's answers to each question, compared to the aggregate answers provided by all schools in your district. NCSE will also provide an assessment of overall strengths and recommendations for improvement for each school. For the district, NCSE will indicate items for which there appears to be a lack of understanding of district policy among schools and areas in which district policy could be enhanced to promote the Three As of School Engagement – Attendance, Attachment and Achievement.

**The rest of this document contains a sample of questions from each section of the high school survey. It is not the full document. To learn more about the assessment, contact:**

**Finessa Ferrell, Director**  
[fferrell@schoolengagement.org](mailto:fferrell@schoolengagement.org)  
(303) 837-8466 x 107

**Jodi Heilbrunn, Senior Research and Policy Analyst**  
[jheilbrunn@schoolengagement.org](mailto:jheilbrunn@schoolengagement.org)  
(303) 837-8466 x 128



**NCSE** | National Center for School Engagement

~ Promoting attendance, attachment and achievement

# NCSE AAA Policy & Practice Assessment: High School Level

## Background

\* 1. School name

\* 2. School district

\* 3. State

State:

\* 4. Our school is best described as a/an:

Elementary School

Comprehensive Middle School

Alternative Middle School

Comprehensive High School

Alternative High School

Combined Elementary/Middle School

Combined Middle/High School

K-12 School

## 1) Absences

1. How, if at all, do unexcused absences affect a student's final class grade INDEPENDENTLY of the quality of his/her work?

- They have no effect
- Above a fixed number, (e.g. 5 or 6), students receive an F unless they follow procedures to regain credit
- Above a fixed number, (e.g. 5 or 6), students receive an F and there is no possibility of regaining credit
- Teachers decide and there is little consistency

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Can students make up classroom work and missing homework due to an EXCUSED absence?

- Yes, always
- Yes, usually
- Sometimes
- Not usually
- No, never
- Teachers decide and there is little consistency

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 2) Academic Support

1. Is a monitored study period available as a class? (Check all that apply.)

- Yes, required for all or almost all students
- Yes, required for a particular grade
- Yes, required for struggling students
- Yes, available to all who sign up, but not required
- Yes, but they fill up so not all students who want one can have one
- Available for struggling students only
- No, we do not have these

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. If students have a study period, do they have access to their teachers during this time?

- Not applicable/No study hall
- Generally yes
- Generally no
- Only if a teacher's schedule happens to coincide

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- Not applicable/No study hall
- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 3) Bullying

1. Are common locations and times for bullying identified and monitored?

Yes, using a systematic approach

Yes, but informally

Not usually

No

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

District policy

School policy

Teacher decision

Just the way things are done here

3. Are students allowed to change their schedule or switch classes to avoid bullying?

Yes, whenever bullying occurs repeatedly

On special occasions arranged with counselor subject to principal approval, etc.

No

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

District policy

School policy

Teacher decision

Just the way things are done here

5. Are all reported incidents of bullying investigated?

Yes, all or most are investigated

Some are investigated

A few are investigated

Rarely or never

Only if they involve physical bullying

## 4) Class Levels

1. Are core classes available at different levels of challenge?

- All or almost all are
- Most are
- Some are
- None or almost none are

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Whose approval is required to determine which class level a student should take? (Check all that apply.)

- NA / No different levels
- Student
- Parent
- Previous teacher
- Counselor

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

# NCSE AAA Policy & Practice Assessment: High School Level

## 5) Discipline

1. When students are absent from class due to suspension, are these absences excused or unexcused?

- Excused
- Unexcused
- It depends on how many suspensions the student has had

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. For which of these offenses may a student be suspended?

	Yes	No	Sometimes
Being rude to staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disrupting a classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dress code violations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Failure to complete assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physically harming another student or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening another student or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vulgarity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

5. When students are suspended, where do they go? (Check all that apply.)

- Monitored, in-school suspension program
- Monitored, out-of-school suspension program or center
- Unmonitored, out-of-school suspension/They stay home or go where they want

## 6) Disengaged Students

1. Are struggling students advised to seek a GED? (Check all that apply.)

- Never as long as they are still enrolled
- Sometimes, if they create problems in the school
- Sometimes, if they are unable to do the academic work
- Sometimes, if they need to work
- Only after they have dropped out

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. What is your response to a student, UNDER the age of compulsory attendance, who indicates he/she intends to drop out of school? (Check all that apply.)

- Counsel him/her about alternative schools
- Counsel him/her about alternatives within this school, e.g. part time, credit recovery etc.
- Counsel student to re-engage him/her
- Counsel him/her about legal requirement to attend school
- Warn that legal action will be taken
- Other (please specify)

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here



## 7) Enrollment, Transfers and Credits

1. When students transfer into your school, are steps taken to place them in academically appropriate courses?

Yes, all the time

Yes, most of the time

Sometimes

Not often

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

District policy

School policy

Teacher decision

Just the way things are done here

3. Can students who enroll in the middle or late in a semester earn credit for demonstrating mastery of the course material?

Yes, we do this.

No, we have no system for assessing mastery in these cases.

No, we do not do this.

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

District policy

School policy

Teacher decision

Just the way things are done here

## 8) Grading Practices

1. Can a teacher give an "Incomplete" for a course rather than an "F"?

- Yes, our teachers frequently do this
- Yes, but our teachers rarely do this
- Yes, under special circumstances
- No

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Can students turn in late homework (regardless of whether they were absent) and receive credit?

- Yes, full credit at any point in the semester.
- Yes, full credit for a limited period of time.
- Yes, partial credit at any point in the semester.
- Yes, partial credit for a limited period of time.
- Sometimes.
- Rarely.
- Never or almost never.
- Teachers decide and there is no consistency.

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 9) School Climate

1. Do you have an open campus, and if so, are students monitored as they leave?

- Open for all students, effective monitoring
- Open for all students, no or ineffective monitoring
- Open for some students, effective monitoring
- Open for some students, no or ineffective monitoring
- No open campus, effective monitoring
- No open campus, no or ineffective monitoring

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Do you survey students to measure school climate at your school?

- Yes, at least annually
- Yes, every few years
- We have done it, but not on a regular basis
- We have not done it, but have concrete plans to do it this year
- We have never measured school climate

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 10) Student Activities

1. Are fees charged to the student to participate in extra-curricular activities? If yes, are they routinely waived based on need?

- No, there are never or rarely fees
- Yes, fees are routinely charged and rarely waived
- There are fees and they can be waived based on need

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Are afterschool programs allowed to use the building during non-school hours?

- Yes, always or almost always
- Sometimes depending on the program
- Sometimes depending on available space
- In theory, but it rarely works out
- No, it is not allowed

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

5. Is there a "late bus" or other transportation provided to students who want to participate in afterschool activities?

- Yes, it is available to all our students
- Yes, but it does not serve all the areas in which our students live
- No

## 11) Supportive Services

1. Are students allowed to arrange classes to accommodate work schedules?

- Yes, we work to make this possible for our students
- Yes, they are allowed to, but it doesn't work out very often
- Only under special circumstances
- No, this is not allowed

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Are students allowed to arrive late or leave early to take care of younger siblings?

- Yes, we work to make this possible for our students
- Yes, they are allowed to, but it doesn't work out very often
- Only under special circumstances
- No, this is not allowed.

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 12) Teachers

You are almost done!

1. Do teachers have hallway duties during passing periods?

- Yes, we have systematic hallway monitoring by teachers
- Yes, it is common, but not systematically organized
- Sometimes
- Infrequently or never

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Do teachers frequently greet students by name?

- Most or all teachers do
- Many teachers do
- Some teachers do
- Only a few teachers do

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

## 13) Transition Support

This is your last section!

1. Does the new entering class visit your school before the start of their first year in your school?

- Visits are scheduled for all students
- Visits are scheduled for most students
- Visits are possible, but few students do them
- No, visits are generally not scheduled

2. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here

3. Do transfer students visit your school before they start classes?

- Visits are scheduled for all transfer students
- Visits are scheduled for students who transfer at the start of the school year
- Visits are scheduled for all transfer students regardless of when they transfer to our school
- Visits are possible, but few transfer students do them
- No, visits are generally not scheduled

4. Your answer to the above question represents... (Check all that apply.)

- District policy
- School policy
- Teacher decision
- Just the way things are done here