School Climate in California

Ninth Graders with High Levels of School Connectedness: 2015-2017; Showing Counties
Students with High Levels of School Connectedness, by Sexual Orientation: 2015-2017

Definition: Level of school connectedness among public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs, by sexual orientation (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 32.2% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had high levels of school connectedness).

Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

What It Is
On kidsdata.org, student-reported data on school climate include:

- Level of academic motivation: This scale is based on student responses to four questions about being interested in schoolwork and being motivated to do well, understand new things, and do better at school.
- Level of school connectedness: This scale is based on student responses to five questions about feeling safe, close to people, and a part of school, being happy at school, and about teachers treating students fairly.
- Level of total school supports: This scale is based on student responses to three questions about having caring relationships with adults at school, three questions about having high expectations from adults at school, and three questions about having opportunities for meaningful participation at school.

These indicators are derived from the California Healthy Kids Survey and are available by grade level (7, 9, 11, and non-traditional), gender, parent education level, and sexual orientation.

Why This Topic Is Important
When school climate is positive—for example, when students feel safe and connected to school, and when they have caring relationships with adults and meaningful ways to participate—students are more likely to succeed academically and engage in healthy behaviors. When schools support students’ social, emotional, and physical needs, behavioral problems can be avoided and academic performance improves. Improving school climate also is a promising strategy to narrow achievement gaps between lower and higher income students and among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. California law now requires school districts to address school climate as part of the Local Control and Accountability Plans.

How Children Are Faring
In 2015-2017, an estimated 60% of California 7th graders, 46% of 9th graders, 42% of 11th graders, and 34% of non-traditional students had high levels of school connectedness.
### Definition:
Level of total school developmental supports for public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 38.4% of California 7th graders had high levels of school supports).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

### Students with High Academic Motivation, by Level of School Connectedness: 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Level of academic motivation among public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs, by level of school connectedness (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 15.4% of California students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs with low levels of school connectedness had high levels of academic motivation).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

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Levels of school supports—which reflect student reports about the quality of their relationships with adults at school and their opportunities for meaningful participation—also varied by race/ethnicity and level of parent education; e.g., 28% of Hispanic/Latino students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs statewide were estimated to have high levels of school supports in 2015-2017, compared with 38% of white students, while 25% of students whose parents did not finish high school had high levels of school supports, compared with 38% of students with a parent who completed a college degree.

**View references for this text and additional research on this topic:**
https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/101/school-climate/summary