

Another Way to Look at School Effectiveness

Key question for Mom or Dad at school pickup or return home:
“Did you have any fun in school Today?”

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Ask almost any school principal or superintendent how they evaluate a school's success, and they will undoubtedly bring up scores on standardized achievement tests. If test scores are low, they will blame it on the student population (low income, dual language, or unfavorable home background situations).

While I have no argument with the value of test scores, I believe that there are other concerns that have equal or even more importance in looking at schools' effectiveness. Although the following considerations might be viewed as “soft” data, my experience visiting hundreds of schools over my career leads me to believe they can tell us a great deal about this topic. This is why I *always* asked my children the above question upon arrival home from school.

Measuring school climate and culture should rely on well-implemented surveys of students, parents, and educators. The results can also be used to identify areas of needed improvement.

The first, and perhaps most important factor, is students' enjoyment about being in school. Anything we enjoy doing inevitably leads to higher levels of engagement and the enjoyment of the learning process itself. If students “hate school,” it is primarily because the focus on test scores and a resulting worksheet mentality have turned our schools into massive memorization factories.

Over the years, we have developed several instruments that can be used to examine how students and teachers feel about school and learning. Please feel free to adapt, translate, or use these instruments in any way that will help you gain information about the effectiveness of your school.

Classroom Climate Inventory

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Classroom-Climate-Inventory.pdf>

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Oxford-Happiness-Questionnaire.pdf>

Student Engagement Scale (Teacher Edition)

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Student-Engagement-Scale-Teacher-Edition.pdf>

Student Engagement Scale (Student Edition)

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Student-Engagement-Scale-Student-Edition.pdf>

Learning Environment Profile

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Learning-Environment-Profile-3rd-ed.pdf>

Opportunities for Imagination, Creativity and Innovation

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Opportunities-for-Imagination-Sample.pdf>

Expression Style Inventory

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2025/05/Expression-Style-Inventory.pdf>

The Interest-A-Lyzer – Elementary

https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2022/08/The_Interest-A-Lyzer_Elementary.pdf

The Learning Styles Inventory

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2024/11/The-Learning-Styles-Inventory-Ver-III-ES.pdf>

Imagination, Creativity, and Innovation Scale

<https://gifted.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/961/2023/03/ICI-Scale.pdf>

Critical Thinking Self-Assessment

https://www.ucenmanchester.ac.uk/media/filer_public/5e/0e/5e0ebb4e-9c1b-4e08-bc2f-1aacac4fb757/selfevaluation-critical-thinking.pdf