MINNESOTA
STUDENT SURVEY

Minnesota Student Survey Tip Sheet: Confidentiality

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is the primary source of comprehensive data on young people at the state, county, and local level in Minnesota and is the only consistent source of statewide data on their health and well-being. It provides valuable information about issues vital to the health, safety, and academic success of young people. The survey is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous on the part of students.

Tips for assuring students about confidentiality

This survey asks many questions, including those on sensitive topics such as family experiences, substance use, sexual health (high school only), feelings of safety, and more. Students may have concerns about whether their responses will be confidential, especially if they have been told that their web activities on school-issued devices can be tracked. Here are some tips for providing assurances:

- Remind students that **the survey is anonymous**, and let them know that they will not be asked to enter their name, identification number, or any other identifying information.
- Assure students that **their individual responses cannot be seen by any school staff**. The people who will see the responses are not school staff. They will add up all the responses and nobody will know which responses are yours or how you answered. Even if a school tracks web activity, this does not give the school access to a student's individual responses or any identifying information. Web IP addresses will not be traced or connected to students' computers or tablets for this survey.
- The survey asks students to identify their race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Let students know that **results will not be reported to schools by these demographics unless there are a large enough number of students in specific demographic groups to ensure confidentiality**. Also, remind students they can skip any questions they don't want to answer.
- **Space students apart** so that individual responses cannot be seen by other students.
- **Avoid walking around the room** so that students don't feel like their responses might be seen.
- **Students can take a short break from the survey and come back later as long as their survey session is not expired or the device, they are taking the survey will not go to sleep mode**. The survey needs to be completed in one sitting since the survey is anonymous and students will not have individual access codes. The survey will be active for 4 hours after students start the survey unless they complete the survey, or they close the browser, or their devices goes to sleep mode or become inactive.

Resources

Help with survey administration

If you have questions or need help, please contact:

- Minnesota Department of Education: mde.studentsurvey@state.mn.us
- Book office hours with an MDE staff to get help: Virtual office hours
- Find survey administration instructions, parent notification letters, tip sheets and more: MSS 2025

Help for students who have a heightened response to some survey questions

- **Know what resources are available on-site**. This may be a guidance counselor, school social worker, school nurse, or other on-site adult the student has a close relationship with.
- **Refer to the** Student Crisis Resource Handout **and resources listed on the MSS website**. Share this sheet with students as needed.
- **Refer to** the Minnesota Student Survey Tip Sheet: Trauma-Informed Survey Administration for additional information.