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For Immediate Release:

School Environment Matters: Taylorville CUSD 3 Administers Illinois 5Essentials Survey to Improve Student Learning

Students, teachers and parents weigh in on school climate and learning conditions

Taylorville Schools will join the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in the thirteenth statewide survey of school climate and learning conditions. The survey provides a unique opportunity for students, teachers and parents to have a voice in improving their schools. From February 3, 2026 students and teachers will be invited to participate in a 30-minute research-based survey to help identify strengths and weaknesses in their school's learning environment. The parent survey supplement will also be administered during the same survey window. These surveys will serve as an opportunity for schools to reflect on progress since the last statewide implementation.

The Illinois 5Essentials Survey provides a comprehensive picture of a school's organizational culture in an individualized report measuring five "essentials" critical for school success:

- Effective Leaders
- Collaborative Teachers
- Involved Families
- Supportive Environment
- Ambitious Instruction

Over thirty years of research at the University of Chicago in more than 400 schools has shown that schools that were strong on at least three of the 5Essentials were 10 times more likely to make substantial gains in improving student reading and math than schools that were weak on three or more of the Essentials. Those differences remained true even after controlling for student and school characteristics, including poverty, race, gender, and neighborhood characteristics. Strength on components within the Essentials also correlated with increased teacher retention, student attendance, college enrollment, and high school graduation.

Generated from a rigorous analysis of student and teacher survey responses, 5Essentials Reports demonstrate that what students and teachers say about their schools can serve as important indicators for school success. In the inaugural 2012-2013 statewide Illinois 5Essentials Survey, 87 percent of all schools in the state met the 50-percent participation threshold to receive a 5Essentials Report, with participation from more than 70 percent of all teachers and eligible 6th through 12th graders across Illinois. Starting in 2018-19, fourth and fifth grade students were also included in the 5Essentials survey administration. In 2025, 93 percent of schools qualified for a report.

All district schools, including alternative schools that fall under the district's domain, are required to participate in a school learning conditions survey every year. Starting in school year 2018-19, the survey will be required annually. The survey was deemed a key component to balanced accountability under the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan by stakeholders, which resulted in state legislative changes requiring the survey annually.

State legislation (105 ILCS 5/2-3.153) allows school districts the option to select an alternative to the 5Essentials from a pre-approved pool for the 2020-21 administration. Selection of an alternative required school board and local union approval and was at the district's own expense. Details on survey alternatives can be found on the State Board's website: https://www.isbe.net/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx

Taylorville has consistently participated in the statewide 5Essentials Survey and is opting to administer the survey to teachers and students again this year to continue tracking and informing progress.

Principals and superintendents will receive their 5Essentials Reports in May. Survey results will also be reported publicly on the UChicago Impact Reporting Website in June and on the State School Report Card website in the fall. An optional parent survey supplement is available to all schools as a supplement to the 5Essentials Survey for teachers and students—results from the parent survey supplement will be included only in the individual school 5Essential Reports. Since 2013-14, the Illinois 5Essentials Survey has been normed using the 2012-13 statewide results so that all schools can demonstrate progress over time. As with last year, the 2025-2026 Illinois 5Essentials Survey will be normed using the 2024 statewide results.

On behalf of the Illinois State Board of Education, UChicago Impact is providing Illinois 5Essentials to schools statewide. Teachers, students, and parents may complete the Illinois 5Essentials Survey online. For more information visit: www.5-essentials.org/illinois.