How do we define school culture and climate?

School climate refers to the overall atmosphere, environment, and quality of life within a school, including aspects such as safety, relationships, and academic expectations. It encompasses the physical, emotional, and social aspects of the school experience, as well as the perceptions and attitudes of students, staff, and parents.
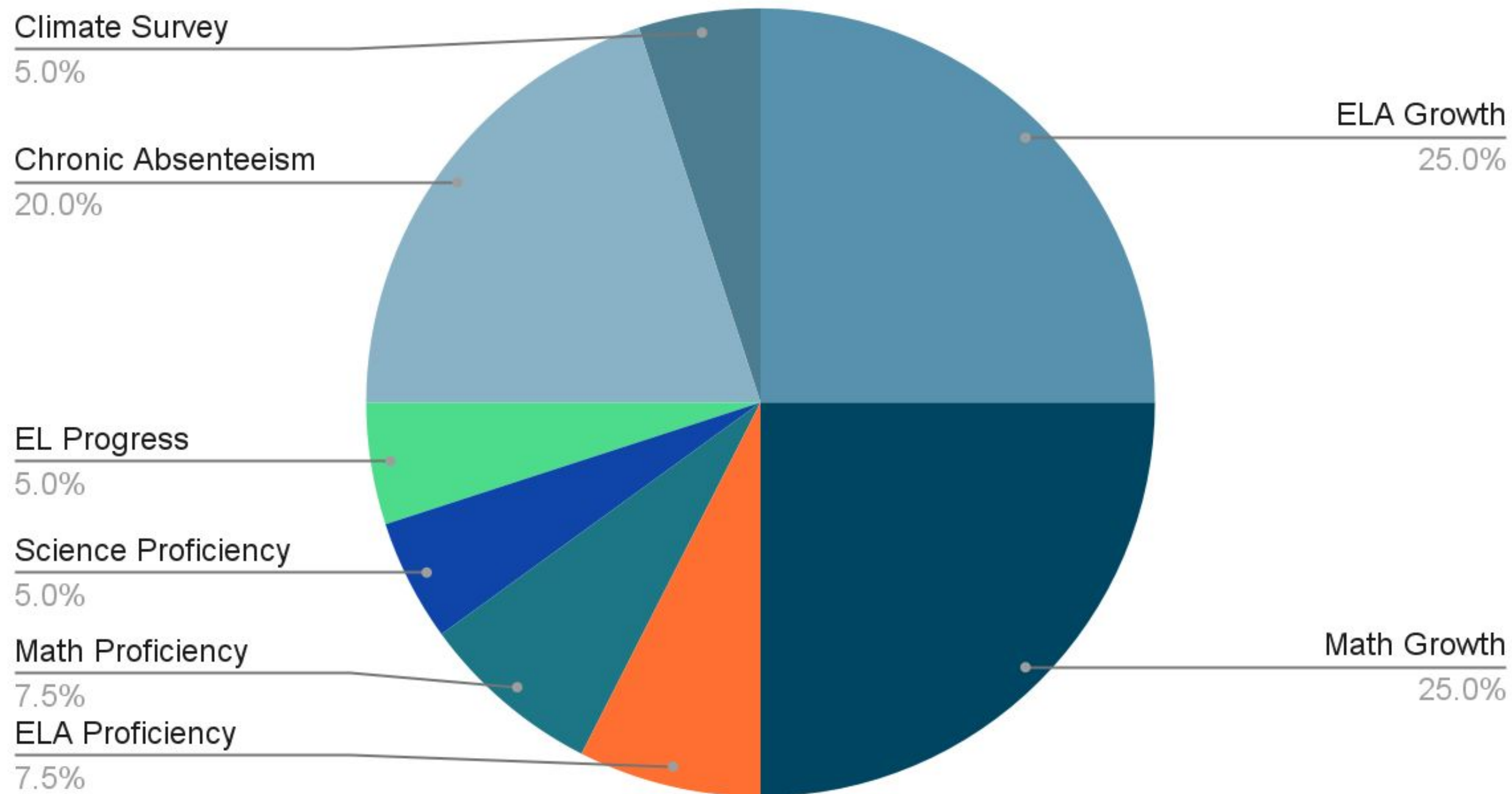
On the other hand, **school culture** is the collection of values, beliefs, norms, and traditions that shape the way a school operates and influences the behavior of its members. This includes the shared expectations and attitudes of teachers, administrators, students, and parents, as well as the rituals and practices that define the school's identity.

Although school climate and culture are interconnected, they are distinct concepts that play a significant role in shaping the overall school environment and experience.
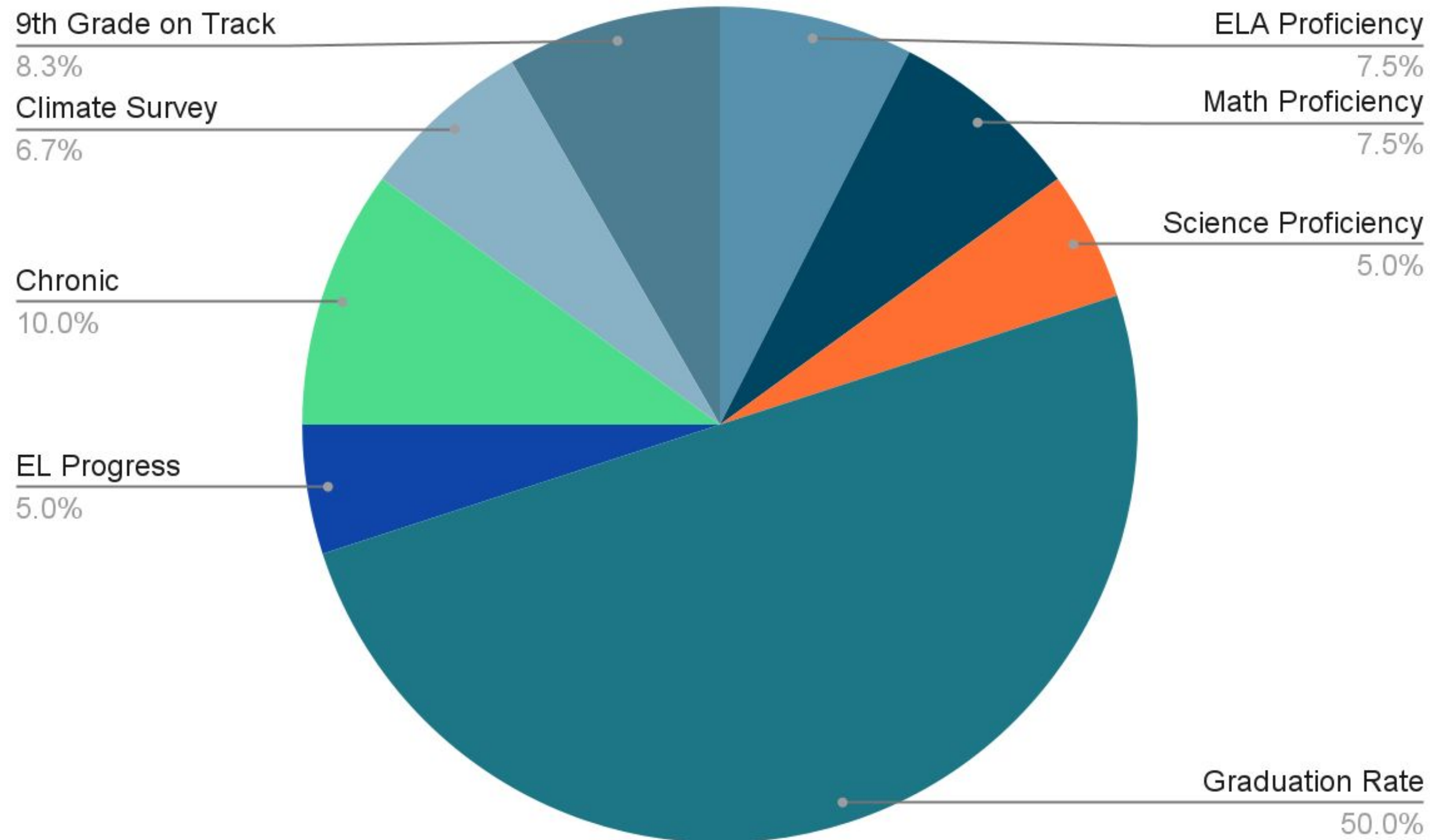
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ISBE Multiple Indicators of Success – Elementary & Middle Schools

Elementary and Middle Schools

- Climate Survey 5.0%
- Chronic Absenteeism 20.0%
- EL Progress 5.0%
- Science Proficiency 5.0%
- Math Proficiency 7.5%
- ELA Proficiency 7.5%
- ELA Growth 25.0%
- Math Growth 25.0%

ISBE Multiple Indicators of Success – High School

5Essentials in Practice

What Research Tells Us About the Link Between School Organizational Conditions and Improved School and Student Outcomes:

Research shows strong school climate has been demonstrated to reduce the negative effects of socioeconomic status has on academic achievement and helps foster higher overall academic achievement and attendance rates. - Berkowitz et al. (2017) & Cohen, Mccabe, Michelli, & Pickeral (2009)

Improvement in the areas of Leadership, High Academic Expectations, Teacher Relationships and Collaboration, and School Safety and Order were all independently associated with reduced teacher turnover. - Kraft et al. (2016)

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5 Essentials Survey

The **5Essentials Survey** is a research-based school improvement survey administered annually in **Illinois public schools**. It was developed by the **University of Chicago Consortium on School Research** and is mandated by the **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)**.

The goal is to gather feedback from:

- **Teachers**

- **Students (grades 4–12)**

- **Parents**

This feedback helps schools understand their organizational strengths and areas for improvement that are tied to **student learning outcomes**.

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5Essentials Survey

The survey measures five key indicators that are strongly linked to school success:

1. **Effective Leaders**

   ○ Do school leaders inspire trust and foster teacher leadership?

2. **Collaborative Teachers**

   ○ Do teachers collaborate to promote professional growth and instructional improvement?

3. **Involved Families**

   ○ Are families engaged and invested in their child's learning and the school community?

4. **Supportive Environment**

   ○ Is the school safe, orderly, and supportive of student needs?

5. **Ambitious Instruction**

   ○ Are students challenged with rigorous and engaging instruction?

Research shows that schools strong in at least **3 of the 5Essentials** are **10 times more likely** to improve student outcomes.

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5Essentials

Effective Leaders: School leadership inspires a shared vision, builds trust, and empowers staff to take ownership of school improvement.

Collaborative Teachers: Teachers work together in professional communities to improve instruction and foster collective responsibility for student learning.

Supportive Environment: The school is safe, respectful, and responsive to the needs of all students — socially, emotionally, and academically.

Involved Families: The school builds strong partnerships with families and engages them as active participants in their children's education.

Ambitious Instruction: Students are challenged with rigorous, engaging, and well-aligned instruction that promotes deep understanding.

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Strategic Plan Alignment

Priority 1: We will provide all district team members with consistent, role-specific ongoing professional learning and resources.

- Effective Leaders
- Collaborative Teachers

Priority 2: We will provide high-quality instruction, resources, and targeted support.

- Supportive Environment

Priority 3: We will foster clear and consistent communication with all community members

- Involved Families
- Supportive Environment

Priority 4: We will build and maintain a community that supports all school community members.

- Supportive Environment
- Ambitious Instruction

Priority 5: We will nurture relationships and connections with all school community members.

- Collaborative Teachers
- Involved Families
- Supportive Environment

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5Essentials

RIMSD 41 is partially organized for improvement.

*Schools that are at or above benchmark on 3 or more essentials are **10 times more likely to improve** than schools that are below the benchmark.*

- 🟢 Very Strong
- 🟢 Strong
- 🟠 Weak
- 🔴 Very Weak
- 🟡 Neutral
- ⚪ No Data
- ⚪ Low Response/Not Applicable

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School Year Comparison SY24 & SY25

Effective Leaders

Collaborative Teachers

Involved Families

Ambitious Instruction

Supportive Environment

5ESSENTIALS RESULTS COMPARISON

Effective Leaders

Collaborative Teachers

Involved Families

Ambitious Instruction

Supportive Environment

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RIMSD 41 5 Essentials Results

5Essentials	2024	2025	Change
Effective Leaders	Weak	Neutral	+6
Collaborative Teachers	Weak	Neutral	+5
Involved Families	Weak	Neutral	+3
Supportive Environment	Neutral	Neutral	+0
Ambitious Instruction	Weak	Neutral	-1
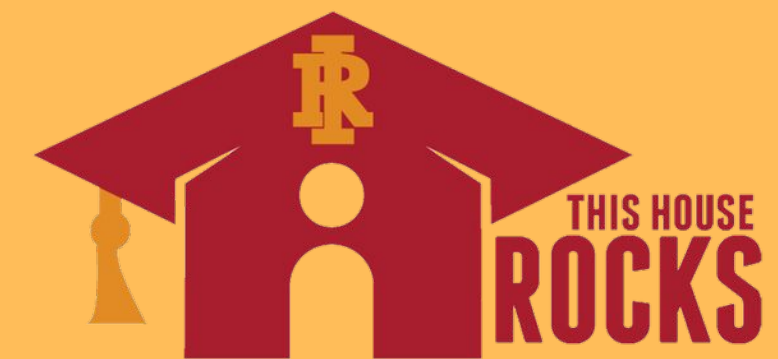
Next Steps: Improvement

Effective Leaders: focus on visibility, clarity and trust-building

Collaborative Teachers: focus on culture of collaboration and professional dialogue

Involved Families: focus on two-way communication and relationship building

Supportive Environment: focus on relationships, safety and belonging

Ambitious Instruction: focus on academic press, support and engagement

Overall: highlight small wins, avoid initiative overload, focus on 5Essentials goals in staff meetings, school improvement plans and leadership development plans. Satisfaction survey alignment (completed) for data informed decision making and transparency.

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Potential Discussion Questions

How are staff being trained and supported to recognize and respond to early warning signs in students across different school levels?

What strategies are being used to ensure continuity in expectations and climate from elementary to junior high and high school?

What role does staff morale play in shaping overall school climate and student support, and how can we better support staff wellbeing?

What district-level resources (including partnerships, professional learning, and counseling supports) are available to assist schools in cultivating positive climate and culture?

How are individual school climate goals aligned with district-wide improvement strategies informed by the 5Essentials framework?

What are some examples of climate and culture initiatives happening at the building level, and how are principals using their 5Essentials data to guide those efforts?