Listening to the Whispers So I Do Not Have to Hear the Screams

Floyd Central High School

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- **Why bother?**

- Teacher and other school personnel develop relationships through constant contact.
- Administrators are different
- The focus of a school's core purpose has changed

Purpose of This Inquiry

- Provide a sounding board for student concerns that might not be voiced otherwise.
- Would I have a better understanding with their willingness to share concerns?

My Wondering

If I provided students with a forum of individuals "like" themselves, would they be more inclined to share concerns regarding school climate and culture?

My Actions

Meet regularly with the following groups:

- Senior leadership
- Diversity Advisory Council
- LGTBQ+ group
- At risk seniors individually
- School newspaper editorial board

Report findings to the staff
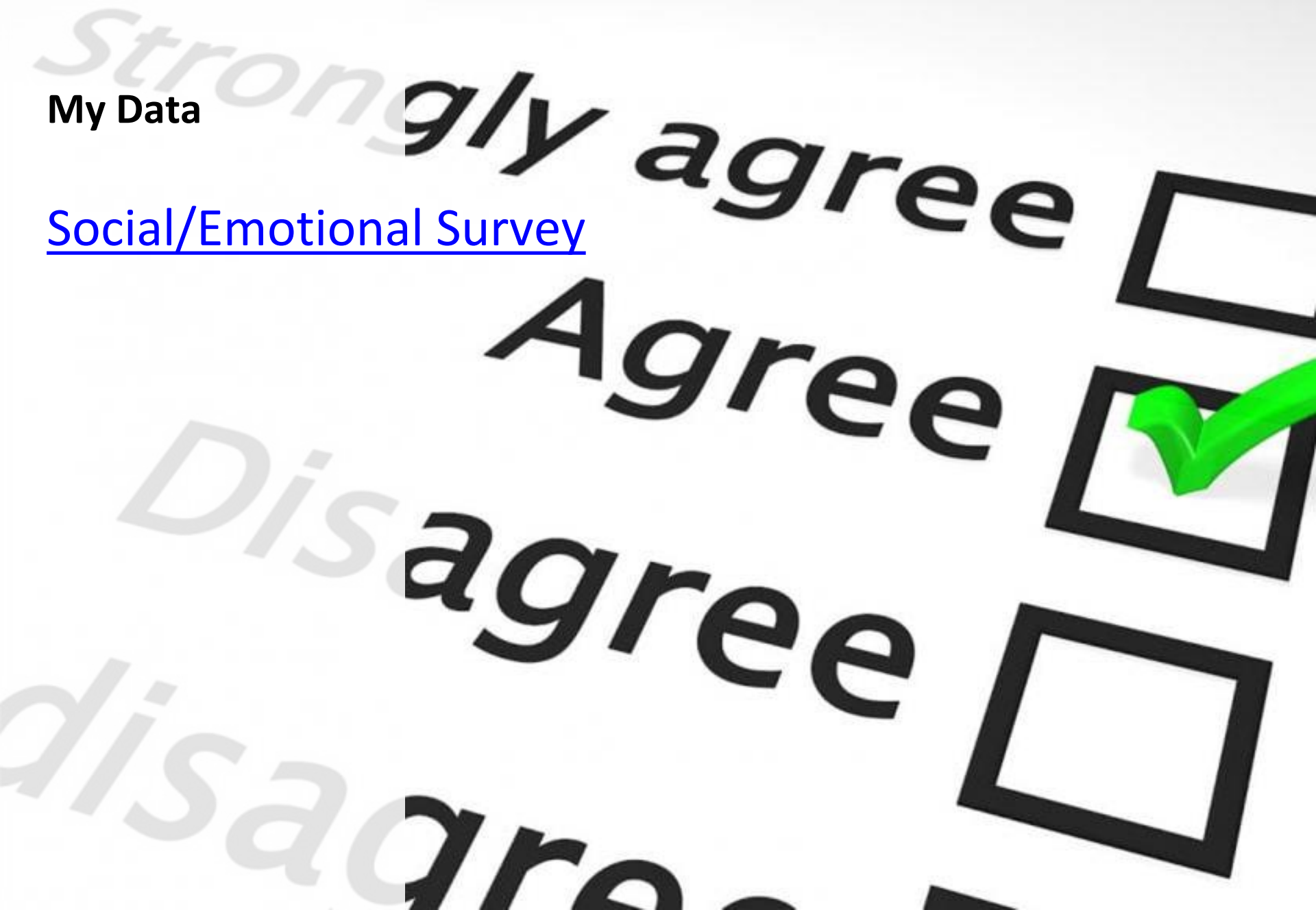
Data Collection

- Journaling

My Data

Individual interviews

My Data

[Social/Emotional Survey](#)

Highlights

Staff:

- 25 participants
- Students respect each other
- Students and teachers respect each other
- You feel supported
- We are a welcoming place
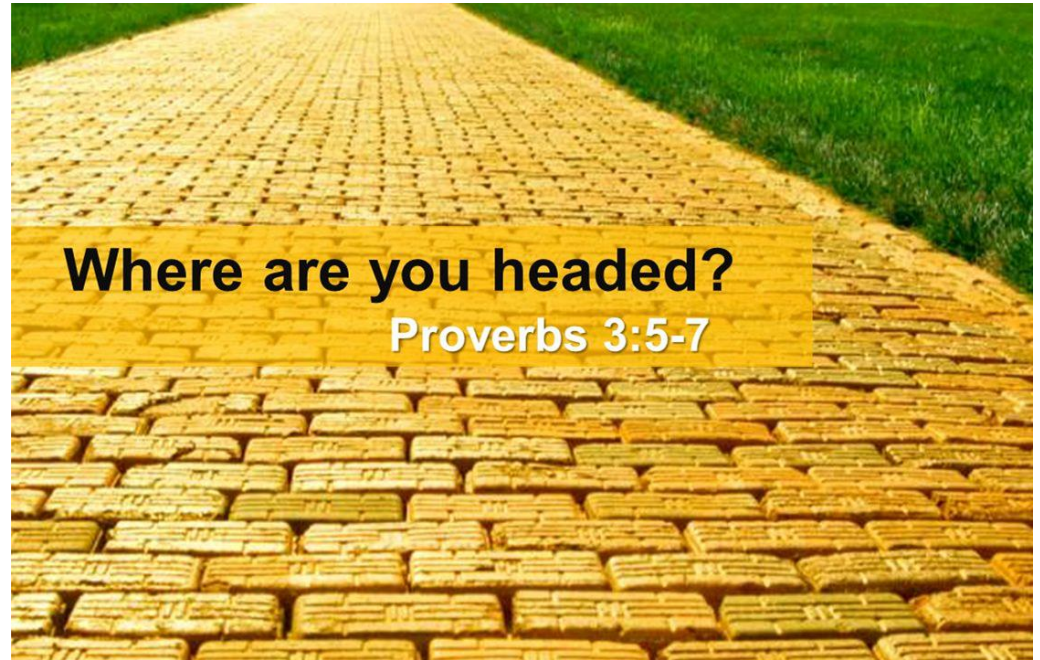- I have a sense of belonging.
- They feel safe.

Students

- 385 participants
- Students DON'T treat each other with respect.
- Students participate.
- Connected with at least one adult in school
- One on one opportunities.
- School is welcoming
- Teachers believe all students can learn.
- We feel safe

My Discoveries

- I noticed that students tend to better share insights and concerns when they are around people "like" themselves.
- I believe students generally like school, but want people to make it better.

Where Am I Headed Next?

Where are you headed?
Proverbs 3:5-7

- Continue to meet with student groups
- Track changes in attitude through the yearly social emotional survey.

Year 1 Inquiry Brief

*Resources for inquiry brief development:
➤ Chapter 3 of *Leading with Passion & Knowledge*

"Listening to the whispers so I do not have to hear the screams"

Abstract: As an administrator, it is sometimes hard to intentionally cultivate relationships with students - especially those students who might "fly under the radar" or who might be part of an unintentionally marginalized group. For my research, I am being more intentional with meeting with student groups. I will meet with student leadership, such as the student council or the class leaders. To become more in touch with those students who struggle with high school, I am meeting individually with at risk seniors at least 4 times during the year. In addition, I am in the process of meeting with certain minority groups to give them more of a voice in a largely homogenous population: racial, LGTBQ+ and religious.

● Purpose:
  ➤ Cultivating relationships with students as a classroom teacher was never a problem for me. To teach students, I felt like I needed to know them personally. In addition, I was a coach and got to know even more about students which helped me in the classroom. In my first administrator job, I dealt with a lot of student discipline, so I developed deep relationships with certain segments of the school as well as some of the parents. However, as I moved into the staffing position and now the principalship, I find myself having to be more intentional about forming those once organic relationships. Having a son still in high school helps in this area, and I wonder if that will become more difficult for me after he graduates.

● Question (Wondering): I wonder if by scheduling a meeting with certain student groups for the purposes of improving relationships with students would help me as a leader to better understand the culture of our school.

  ➤ Sub-questions:
    ▪ By meeting with certain groups of students, can I help FCHS move from a tolerant school to a welcoming one?

- ▪ If I create an environment of a student group of individual "like" one another, will students be more apt to share concerns dealing with difficult and sometimes controversial topics such as race and sexual orientation?
- ▪ Will meeting with representatives from diverse groups help in my purpose?

- ● Method (What will I be doing?)
  - ▪ Last year, I formed a group of students called the Diversity Advisory Council. It is composed of racial minority students. It had two purposes:
    - ● Help inform the school leadership of issues related to race as it affects school culture.
    - ● Help to inform other students of the diversity we have in our school that they might be unaware.
  - ▪ We already have a group that addresses LGBTQ+ issues and I meet with them regularly.
  - ▪ In addition, I have a student who is starting a club for the purposes of religious diversity. She already has a teacher sponsor. This group has been tougher to organize.
  - ▪ I also meet with student council and senior executive committee students several times a semester.
  - ▪ I will also meet individually with seniors who are at risk of not graduating on time.
  - ▪ The school newspaper, *The Bagpiper*, writes editorials about school topics and does a good job of collecting diverse viewpoints on a variety of topics. I have now met with this group several times.
  - ➢ With bringing these students into the discussion, my hope is that it will afford me a two-way street of communication with some of our most vulnerable students.

- ● Data Collection:

- ➢ The school corporation sent out a survey to all students and teachers to get an idea about the social/emotional environment of individual schools. I have discussed the results with nearly every group cited above and they were able to give me perspective on those results. Here is a link to the survey: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18SmsKj7IlL-R0AX9yzqcqX9Ymym8QldT_CVa7mBpRq0/edit?usp=sharing To view the right data, please look on the "paired responses" tab.
  - ➢ I use journal entries as well.

- Calendar (timeline):
  - ➢ I plan to meet with each group on a monthly basis over the course of the semester.

- Data Analysis: Surveys and qualitative data.