

Date: August 25, 2017

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes _____
No X

FROM: Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer, Department of Accountability

THROUGH: Lois F. Berlin, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Ramee Gentry, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: ACPS 2020 Survey Results

BACKGROUND:

This is the second consecutive year that Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) conducted a survey to measure division-wide performance related to the ACPS 2020 strategic plan. The purpose of this survey was to measure public perceptions of progress within goal areas of the strategic plan from different stakeholder groups. The survey was available from April 23rd through May 16th, and was accessible online in English, Spanish, and Arabic. Paper versions of the survey were also available on request at ACPS schools in Amharic as well as English and Spanish.

ACPS encouraged parents and community members to participate through various means. Current ACPS parents with valid email addresses on file received an email invitation to participate in the survey and reminders were sent out periodically throughout the survey administration window. Elementary schools received letters for parents regarding the survey. The FACE Center encouraged participation through its channels. The survey was publicized through ACPS Express and social media (including Twitter and Facebook) as well as through community listservs (for example, the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities). ACPS also reached out to civic associations, senior centers, libraries, preschools, and members of ACPS advisory groups. The results PowerPoint summarizes the 2017 results and compares them to the results from the initial spring 2016 survey. The qualitative data provided in this summary is preliminary and the Department of Accountability will provide supplemental in-depth thematic analysis in an addendum.

Participation

There were 1,517 respondents to the survey, 73% of which were current ACPS parents. This is a substantial change from the 2016 survey ratio where 92% of all respondents were current ACPS parents. The primary increase in 2017 was seen among the ratio of community members with no school aged children (11%) completing the survey which increased by nine percentage points from 2016 (2%). Sixty-seven percent of respondents identified themselves as White, followed by Black or African American (13%), Hispanic or Latino (9%), Multiracial (6%), and Asian (4%). Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated they have lived in Alexandria for six or more years. The total number of 2017

respondents (N=1,517) was slightly lower than the total number of 2016 respondents (N=1,581).

Limitations

Survey limitations include sample representativeness and generalizability. While improved in 2017, based on the smaller response from non-parent community members, aggregate results are largely indicative of current ACPS parent respondents (73%). It is noted that survey respondents within this sample are not representative of the entire City of Alexandria population nor that of the school system when looking by race/ethnicity. Additionally, interpretation of these findings cannot be generalized to the entire Alexandria population given the sample was not random.

The division will continue to discuss in addition to communication and outreach, survey methodological options that may assist in reducing these limitations for future administrations. An example of an option would be use of a stratified random sampling approach where pools of potential survey participants would be selected at random but based upon specific criteria in an effort to increase the likelihood of a more representative respondent pool and thus greater generalizability of findings.

Results

Overall, 63% of respondents reported perceiving the quality of the school system as “excellent” or “good”, this marked a slight decrease of four percentage points in comparison to last year. Additional findings are noted below:

- Survey items related to Family and Community Engagement yielded the most favorable responses this year. A majority (92%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that ACPS provides opportunities to volunteer for school programs, activities, and events.
- On the whole, the percentage of strongly agree or agree responses decreased for all survey items except for “ACPS works with families to provide high-quality services”, which had a one percentage point increase when compared to 2016 responses.
- A salient theme that emerged from the preliminary open-ended data analysis was the need to develop a more effective communication method between stakeholders including the district, schools, parents, and the community. Respondents indicated the use of multiple communication methods (e.g., mail, phone, call, emails, and social media) should be employed.
- Other themes that emerged from the preliminary open-ended analysis include the need to: update and build new buildings and facilities, provide more training and professional development opportunities for staff, and increase the transparency in decision-making.
- Respondents also indicated their concern of overcrowding in schools. Division leadership may want to expand or modify facilities to address overcrowding.

Division Action Steps

Goal #1: Academic Excellence and Educational Equity. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is committed to the priority of all students learning, a priority that will be accomplished through the strategic and deliberate focus in SY 2017-2018 on advancing students through the use of interventions and systems of support, reinforcing our staff through targeted professional development opportunities, and growing our overall organization through continuous improvement via data-driven decisions. Examples of interventions and systems of support include developing a division-wide “Teaching and Learning Framework” as well as utilizing and continuing to refine the Multi-Tiered System of Instruction Supports and Intervention to match students’ needs. Within professional development examples include aligning professional learning opportunities with School Education Plans and expanding professional learning to ensure effective instructional leadership. Finally, illustrations of data-driven decision making include analyzing student achievement data to identify and implement instructional interventions identified in “gap” areas, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of instruction.

Goal #2: Family and Community Engagement. The Office of School, Business and Community Partnership will continue to examine current Family and Community Engagement best practices and implement them into impactful action steps. There will be a strong effort to engage volunteers in meaningful and engaging opportunities and eliminate barriers that can negatively impact family involvement. Using current national family engagement research findings, strategies will include our continued goal of creating parent/guardian workshops and events that are relevant to their needs and designed to support children's academic success and healthy social/emotional development. ACPS will also continuously explore additional ways to establish trusting positive relationships with all of the other sections of the educational ecosystem (staff, students, community members, and partners). The Office of Communications will work with the Parent Liaisons and the FACE Center to increase the number of surveys completed by Hispanic, Arabic and Amharic families to increase the diversity of the sample for the ACPS 2020 survey.

Goal #3: An Exemplary Staff. The Department of Human Resources continues to meet our goals of hiring highly effective staff and we are committed to keep looking for new and innovative ways to reach the most talented teachers in our region, country and world. We will take the information from the survey and learn from the data to try to better our practices. The survey indicates that 75% the community strongly agrees or agrees that ACPS employs (excellent) staff that meets the needs of every student. However, only 44% polled found that ACPS need improvement in the area of Exemplary Staff. (ACPS will recruit, develop, support, and retain a staff that meets the needs of every student.) We will need to continue to develop our existing teachers, through our evaluation system, mentor program and professional development programs as well as, ensuring that our teachers are meeting the needs of every student. In collaboration with the Department of Student Services, Alternative Programs and Equity the professional development and training being completed in the area of social justice, restorative practices and PBIS is assisting many teachers with reaching many students they were not able to reach before this training.

Goal #4: Facilities and the Learning Environment. ACPS added additional capacity (96) seats at Polk Elementary school and (144) seats at TCW for fiscal year 2018. In addition, the new West End School with a capacity of an additional (650) seats has started the design phase and is being scheduled for September 2019 opening. ACPS is updating its wide-area-network to increase reliability and bandwidth for schools.

Goal #5: Health and Wellness. The Department of Student Services, Alternative Programs and Equity, in collaboration with other departments, will continue its commitment to promote efforts to enable students to be healthy and ready to learn. While the ACPS 2020 Community Survey results related to health and wellness remained fairly consistent at 82% (previously 85%), Student Services looks to increase the support of our students' physical, social and emotional wellness. Increased use and training on PBIS and Restorative Practices will increase positive school and classroom climate. The additional of division-level substance abuse services including evaluation and programming will allow staff to work with students and families in a responsive way to address substance abuse.

Goal #6: Effective and Efficient Operations. The Financial Services Division, Support Operations Department and other ACPS Departments and Schools are all committed to efficient operations, sound business practices, public transparency and effective stewardship of taxpayer funding. ACPS will continue to strive for excellence in these areas and will seek additional community input on effective and efficient operations through community forums, public hearings, the Budget Advisory Committee and other engagement efforts.

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the *ACPS 2020 Survey Results PowerPoint* for an understanding of parent and community perceptions of ACPS and progress towards the division's strategic objectives and goals within *ACPS 2020*.

IMPACT:

This year's ACPS 2020 Survey results serve as the second year of data collection and will be inserted into the ACPS 2020 Scorecard. Data from this survey will be used to annually monitor progress in the critical areas identified within the division's strategic plan. These data, in conjunction with other data sources, serve to identify and inform the requisite division action steps necessary within goal areas to continue to move the division forward towards the ultimate goals set forth within *ACPS 2020* and explicitly stated in the division's clarion call of '*Every student succeeds*'.

CONTACT PERSON: Clinton Page

ATTACHMENTS: 1. *ACPS 2020 Survey Division Results PowerPoint*