

Executive Summary

School climate refers to the “feel” of a school and tends to be a significant element in discussions about improving academic performance and school reform. As a principal new to the school, Dawn Feltman was interested in staff and parent perspectives of school climate at Patrick Henry Elementary School. For this purpose, she requested the Department of Accountability to prepare two versions of a school climate survey, one for staff and one for parents. Between January and February 2011, surveys were administered online using K-12 Insight. To support parents with limited computer and/or internet access, Patrick Henry Elementary School provided parents with an option to complete a paper version of the survey. There were 24 surveys completed by school employees (17 teachers and 7 other school staff) and 115 by parents or legal guardians. Results are presented first by staff respondents, next by parents and legal guardians, and then by comparing common items between staff and parent surveys. This report provides some background information on school climate before presenting survey results and recommendations.

Highlights

- Staff and parents regarded the school as a welcoming environment.
- Staff and parents viewed main office staff as being somewhat disrespectful to students and parents. In addition, respondents noted disrespectful behavior by students to staff and between students.
- In terms of discipline and bullying, staff and parents were satisfied with supervision over arrival, recess, and dismissal (with a number of parents commenting on the recent improvements for arrival and dismissal); however, there was some concern over how discipline is handled and considering bullying as a major problem at the school.
- Regarding cooperative behavior among staff and between school staff and parents, school employees noted some concern when working with colleagues. However, parents were satisfied with their interactions with staff, especially the administrators and teachers.
- With respect to parental involvement, there was a clear difference between staff (62%) perceiving parents as being interested in helping their children learn and parents (97%) reporting they were interested in helping their children learn. Both staff and parents indicated that communication to parents had room for improvement.
- In terms of an overall school grade for a welcoming and respectful environment, parents gave the school mostly A’s and B’s (91%) with staff giving nearly two-thirds A’s and B’s (67%) and nearly a third C’s.
- For discipline and school safety, parents awarded even more A’s and B’s (93%), while staff gave a little over half A’s and B’s (54%), a third C’s (33%) and some D’s and F’s (12%).

Recommendations

1. Provide more division-wide support to improve school climate at the building level.
2. Provide more professional development opportunities to support school building staff to improve school climate.
3. Have division and school personnel review the practices currently in place to improve or enhance school climate.