

CALEDONIA-MUMFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

As part of the Strategic Planning Process and to understand perceptions held by community members of the Caledonia-Mumford Central School District, a survey was conducted during December 2017. The survey was started by 352 stakeholders, although not fully completed by all.

The survey consisted of 44 items and was made available to community members via paper copy at District venues, specifically holiday concerts held during the month of December. In addition to paper copies, online opportunities were provided and publicized by the District through its website and paper/email communications. Online and paper survey techniques have been used by researchers many times. Responses collected on paper copies of the survey were entered into the electronic survey tabulator by District staff. It is important to note that the District's decision to provide paper copies during December concerts likely resulted in a higher rate of respondents than generally seen when surveying community members in other similar school districts. The District's ability to input results from the paper surveys into the electronic survey tool facilitated analysis. The researchers commend the District for their support with this aspect of the Strategic Planning process.

Electronic survey tools provide the opportunity for researchers to "force" a response before the respondent can move to the next question. While a respondent is unable to go to the next question, he is able to leave the survey entirely without completing all of the questions asked. With that said, paper surveys allow respondents to skip questions. Although 352 stakeholders started the survey, 78 left one or more questions blank. Given that a large number of those using the electronic format had stopped after question 2, additional analysis was conducted in an attempt to understand why so many surveys were incomplete. No pattern emerged pointing to a situation,

date, or time that would have prevented the respondent from answering all questions, however. This is typical. Whenever a respondent skips a question or leaves the survey incomplete, researchers are left with little understanding as to why a question was left unanswered. Despite the fact that these surveys were not completed, responses to questions that had been done were tabulated and are among the data provided in this report. The number of responses tabulated is provided in each section.

While the total number of respondents is large when compared to those we have seen in other similar districts, we do not see this sample as a valid representation of the entire Caledonia-Mumford school community. It is not a stratified random sample and does not constitute a scientific sampling of the school community. It is, however, a large enough sample of primarily parents of current or former students from which we can gain significant insights.

Survey Population

To understand the population completing the survey, respondents were asked to identify how long they had lived in the Caledonia-Mumford School District and their relationship to the school district - alumni, parent, etc. Respondents were comprised largely of parents of current students or former students or alumni as represented on the following table.

Description	Number
Parent of Cal-Mum Elementary School Student	97
Parent of Cal-Mum Middle School Student	95
Parent of Cal-Mum High School Student	96
Parent of graduate of Cal-Mum School District	74

Parent of a student who has attended Cal-Mum	24
Alumni of Cal-Mum School District	85
No children have been enrolled in Cal-Mum	23

In this instance, respondents were asked to choose all the descriptors that applied. This resulted in a number (494) higher than the total number of respondents inasmuch as each person selected upwards of four descriptors; a total of 62 skipped this question entirely.

The second question asked respondents to identify the length of time they had lived in the school district. This question had the fewest number of non-answers, only 9. The majority of respondents have been long-time residents of the Caledonia-Mumford School District with 60.9% of 346 reporting that they had lived in the School District for longer than 15 years.

Measuring Perceptions

Throughout the entirety of the survey, respondents were asked to identify whether they believed the statement/phrase listed was a strength of the District by choosing one of five possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know. To support analysis of the survey results, data is categorized as follows:

- Quality of the School Program
- Student Experience
- Teaching and Instruction
- Student Outcomes
- Parent/Community Partnership with the District
- Overall Value

Each statement/phrase has been assigned to one of the categories. Positive and negative responses have been totaled, factoring out the “don’t know” categories. There are some statements that truly align to more than one category. For instance, how respondents feel about the “quality of instruction” can be considered a factor of school program, student experience, and teaching and instruction. Therefore, in the tables that follow, the reader will see some repetition. This is deliberate; it is not a mistake by the researchers.

Quality of the School Program (n=285)

The business of a school district is to provide an educational program to the students it serves. Reviewing the entire survey, we interpret community perceptions relating to the educational program based on the ratings as follows:

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Quality of Instruction	29	62	5	1	3	91	6
Student performance meets community expectations	28	62	4	1	5	90	5
Quality of classroom materials and equipment (incl. library/technology)	26	53	11	1	9	79	12
Overall program for students with disabilities	15	35	8	5	37	50	13

Inclusion for students with disabilities	19	39	6	3	33	58	9
Visual arts and music opportunities	20	59	13	1	7	79	14
Extracurricular activities (sports and clubs)	31	59	5	0	5	90	5
AVERAGE						76.7	9.1

When reviewing the results for the entire survey, the highest number of “don’t know” responses occurred when respondents were asked about students with disabilities. Given that 87% of the Caledonia-Mumford student body is not classified as a student with a disability, it is easy to assume that a large number of parents may feel unqualified to judge the program for those who are classified. With that said, those who chose to respond likely believed they had enough information or experience on which to judge the program for students with disabilities. It is, therefore, important to note that these two areas had the lowest percentage of positive response – 50% believed the “overall program for students with disabilities” was a strength and 58% saw “inclusion for students with disabilities” as a strength. Digging deeper into the survey reveals that 181 of 285 respondents answered with something other than “don’t know”. Of those 181, 20% or 37 rated the “overall program” negatively.

Extracurricular activities, including clubs and sports, were highly rated with 90% of respondents indicating these as a strength of the District. Visual arts and music opportunities were rated lower. Overall, it is clear that those surveyed perceive the quality of the Caledonia-Mumford instructional program as positive. In fact, 91% either agreed or strongly agreed that a strength of

the school district is the “quality of instruction”. Additionally, 90% shared that “student performance meets community expectations”.

Student Experience (n=285)

Part of the work of the research team was to interview students from both the Middle and High School to understand how they perceived their day-to-day experience attending school in Caledonia-Mumford. Those perceptions have been reported in the Focus Group Perception Report. Additionally, this survey does allow the parent perspective of student life to be somewhat understood. While it could be argued that every aspect of the survey could be tied back to the student experience, we chose items that we believe most directly reflect student life. They include:

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Quality of Instruction	29	62	5	1	3	91	6
Teacher attention to specific academic needs of students	26	51	14	4	5	77	18
Faculty and staff can motivate students	29	54	10	2	5	83	12
Quality of school buildings	32	60	7	0	1	92	7
Quality of athletic facilities	42	49	4	1	4	91	5

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Extracurricular activities (sports and clubs)	31	59	5	0	5	90	5
Quality of classroom materials and equipment (incl. library/technology)	26	53	11	1	9	79	12
Proper use of homework to support learning	17	58	14	4	8	75	18
Visual arts and music opportunities	20	59	13	1	7	79	14
Fair application of school rules, regulations, and policies	24	55	8	5	8	79	13
Student behavior at school	25	57	7	1	10	82	8
Developing good character in students	29	59	6	2	4	88	8
School safety and security	35	58	2	1	4	93	3
Safe and efficient school busing	35	52	4	1	8	87	5
Security and safety of children while at school	40	54	2	1	3	94	3
AVERAGE						85.3	9.1

Included on this table are two items that were discussed as strengths in the previous section of this report -- quality of instruction and student performance. These are seen as key aspects of student life. To this analysis, we added quality of classroom materials and equipment and use of homework, assuming these augment students' learning experience. The result was less favorable for each of those areas, on par with the perception of visual arts and music opportunities.

Researchers across the country have shown a positive correlation between student learning and their perception of safety and security. Survey respondents identified "security and safety of children while at school" as a significant strength – 94% positive. In fact, this was the highest score given to any area of the survey. Busing was seen as "safe and efficient" with 87% reporting it as a strength. The question did, however, ask stakeholders to respond to both criteria – safety and efficiency. Thus, it is not clear which area prompted the respondent to agree. This may be an area for further investigation by the District. And, although 88% rated "developing good character in students" as a strength, "student behavior at school" was only rated by 82% as a strength. The "fair application of school rules and policies" may have an impact on the perception of student behavior; this item has one of the lowest "positive" scores on this survey tool.

Teaching and Instruction (n=285)

In this area we look at perceptions around teaching effectiveness. Again, we identify a number of areas that we believe provide insight into perceptions relating to quality of instruction.

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Quality of Instruction	29	62	5	1	3	91	6
Teacher expectations for student performance	28	58	7	1	6	86	8
Teacher attention to specific academic needs of students	26	51	14	4	5	77	18
Faculty and staff can motivate students	29	54	10	2	5	83	12
Expertise of teaching staff	28	58	7	1	6	86	8
Proper use of homework to support learning	17	58	14	4	8	75	18
Communication with parents and families by teachers	28	48	15	3	6	76	18
AVERAGE						82.0	12.6

Although repeated in two other areas of this report, we believe the term “quality of instruction” is particularly important to this section of the report. It provides an understanding of how respondents view school, specifically instruction which is most often tied to the instructor. If they believe teaching is a weakness, everything else is a problem and would be rated negatively. A full 91% of respondents thought the quality of instruction was a strength with 29% seeing it as

particularly strong. This was mirrored by the fact that 86% of respondents agreed that the “expertise of teaching staff” was strong.

Although still seen as a strength by the majority, classroom activities receiving less favorable responses included “use of homework” and “teacher attention to specific academic needs of students”. Likewise, teacher communication with parents was rated less favorably. Given the overall high ratings in most areas of this survey, the lower percentage of positive responses for these areas may be worthy of consideration.

Student Outcomes (n=285)

To gauge respondent perception regarding how well students are being prepared for post-secondary experiences, we looked at three statements/phrases from the survey:

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Readiness of Cal-Mum graduates for college	21	55	6	2	16	76	8
Readiness of Cal-Mum graduates for job/career	18	52	9	2	19	70	11
Student performance meets community expectations	28	62	4	1	5	90	5
AVERAGE						78.7	8

While 90% of the respondents felt community expectations for student performance were being met, positive responses for readiness for post-secondary college or work were lower. This

may be due in part to the fact that over 15% of respondents did not know whether or not students graduated college or career-ready.

Parent/Community Partnership with the District (n=285)

It is our belief that a school district cannot exist in a vacuum. Only with strong parent and community partnerships can it fulfill its mission and vision. Using the survey items below, the Districts’ ability to forge partnerships with parents and the community can be reviewed.

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don’t know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Communication with parents and families by teachers	28	48	15	3	6	76	18
Professional manner of staff when considering and addressing concerns	25	58	6	3	8	83	9
Communication with parents and families by school and superintendent	29	56	6	3	6	85	9
Positive teacher response to concerns/comments	28	51	10	1	10	79	11
Easy to reach a principal or superintendent when necessary	26	52	3	1	18	78	4
Principals/superintendent are polite and listen to concerns or comments	33	48	4	3	12	81	7
My ideas are considered and addressed in a professional manner	25	47	5	3	20	72	8

Description	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %	Total positive %	Total Negative %
Community participation in school program	29	57	4	2	8	86	6
District/school participation in community activities and issues	26	59	5	0	10	85	5
School values match and support community values	31	60	4	1	4	91	5
Parental support in the home for student success	26	58	5	1	10	84	6
Parents and community members feel welcome at the schools	37	55	4	2	2	92	6
AVERAGE						82.7	7.8

Overall respondents rated the partnership questions as a strength. They feel especially welcome at schools. Only four of the twelve areas used in determining strength of partnership were lower than 80% positive. It may be worthwhile to investigate why.

Overall Value

We asked two questions to inform the district regarding perceptions of overall value. In the first question, respondents were asked to rate the district specifically in terms of value. They could rate the district's value as excellent, good, average, low, or choose "don't know". In total (n=283), 82% of respondents indicated that the district provided good or excellent value. Of that

amount, 43% felt the district provided excellent value. Only 2% indicated the district provided low value with 15% selecting average value. A few respondents (1%) reported they did not know.

Finally, respondents were asked to grade the district on a traditional school report card A through F scale. Those results (n=281) are as follows:

Grade	% of Respondents
A	44
B	44
C	10
D	1
F	1

This pattern reflects answers on other questions with 88% grading the district with an A or B, and only 2% a D or F. Overall, there is a positive view of the district which we would suggest translates into a score of A-. This is above the national average. In the most recent Education Next ratings, 60% of parents graded their elementary schools as A or B and only 49% graded their middle schools as A or B. In Caledonia-Mumford, we include a high school and respondents without children in school. The 88% of respondents that grade this district as an A or B is significantly higher than those rating their elementary and middle schools as an A or B on a national scale.

Respondents' Final Thoughts

The survey provided respondents the opportunity to type what they believed to be the Districts' greatest strength and greatest need for improvement. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify their main source of information about Caledonia-Mumford school happenings.

Of the 170 who chose to report a strength of the district, the majority wrote about the staff with some simply writing “the teachers” or “the staff”. This mirrors what was written in the Perception Report. One survey respondent wrote, “There are many teachers who will go above and beyond”. While another cited as a strength “how the staff will always look for ways to reach students”. The closeness of the community and the relationships that develop as a result was touted as a strength by many, a close second to “staff” and “teachers”.

Fewer respondents chose to identify areas needing improvement (n=151), and there was no area identified that stood out above all others. Several with more than five “votes” included the need to increase communication with parents, to add computer science courses at the high school and elementary school, and to improve the school program.

Not surprising, the majority of the respondents (n=177) listed more than one means to obtain information about school happenings. What stood out prominently was the daily announcement email, information handouts brought home by the students, and information shared by children (their own and others). The District website received more mention than Facebook or social media, and district “robo calls” were hardly mentioned.

While some of the narratives written are brief, one or two words, others are lengthy thus indicating the degree to which the respondent wished to provide feedback. The district should consider examining what is written, particularly when looking for ideas relating to goals being developed for the Strategic Plan.

Discussion

Overall, on most measures, the Caledonia Mumford School District was perceived positively by the respondents to this survey. The question for the district to ponder as it creates a

strategic plan is what is good enough -- 85% positive, 80% positive, 75% positive? Once that is determined, areas not meeting that standard should be discussed more thoroughly; and while a rating of A- is commendable when compared to national results, is the district satisfied with the percentage of respondents giving a score of B or C when the perceptions across the entire survey are so high? If the goal is to raise those scores, what actions would be required to do so?

When looking across the entire survey, a couple of areas stand out. The first is the perception regarding students' readiness for college, job, and career. The number of "don't knows" could be indicative of a need for increased communication yet the low percentage of positive responses by those professing to know may warrant a look at the school program or require investigation into alumni experiences. As one respondent wrote, "I was very ill prepared for college" despite identifying himself as an "excellent Cal-Mum student". Another area that stood out and was described in the paragraphs above was the Special Education program and inclusion. Similar to the question on student readiness, there was a high percentage of "don't know" yet those who felt they did were not overly positive.

This survey provides a baseline of information. We strongly suggest that the district administer this survey again at about the same time in subsequent years. This would provide an opportunity for the district to track improvement.