

State College Area School District



Results of Baseline Strategic Plan Survey 2014



Ed Fuller

Associate Professor
Educational Leadership
Department of Policy Studies
Penn State University

Executive Director
Center for Evaluation and
Education Policy Analysis
Penn State University

Description of Surveys

Surveys administered electronically in June 2014

- Students (grades 3-12), teachers, and parents

Aligned with SCASD Strategic Plan Four Pillars

- Welcoming and Safe Climate;
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration;
- High Expectations for All; and
- Responsive Teaching and Learning

Purpose

- The purpose of the surveys is to provide ***baseline information*** about where the district is relative to benchmarks created by district stakeholders.
- The survey should be used to reflect upon current strengths and challenge areas and spur deeper investigations and thought into the causes of the challenge areas and how individuals, schools, and the district could respond to the challenge areas.

Current Use of Survey Information

- We met with all building principals to discuss results
- Principals currently sharing results with teachers and beyond.
- Building focus areas aligned with growth areas from survey and other building related data

Presentation Outline

1) What did we learn?

Positive Results

Challenge Areas

2) In which areas do we need clarity?

3) What are some possible policies/ strategies to address challenge areas

Positive Results

- Overall
- Students
- Teachers
- Parents

What We Learned: Positive Results (1)

There were very high levels of agreement across most statements for each survey. This indicates ***very positive perceptions by students, teachers, and parents about a wide range of issues.***

These baseline results strongly suggest that ***SCASD is a high-functioning district that meets the needs of the majority of students and parents as well as providing a good place to work for teachers.***

Most Positive Results for Students (1)

Perceive a welcoming and safe climate

Statement	Elem	Sec
This school is a safe place to be.	87.7	91.2
This school is a welcoming and friendly place.	86.0	83.6

Perceive school adults care about them

Statement	Elem	Sec
My teachers care about me.	97.2	91.2
At least one adult in this school who knows me well.		85.1

Attachment to other students

Statement	Elem	Sec
Students care about each other.	71.2	
There are students in this school who care about me.		87.2
I have friends at this schools.	96.3	90.1

Most Positive Results for Students (2)

Educators hold high expectations

Statement	Elem	Sec
My teacher expects me to try my best.	98.0	
My teachers have high expectations for all students.		56.3 (80.5)
Teachers encourage me to keep trying when the work is hard.	87.7	
My teachers push everybody to work hard.		60.9 (83.3)

Their teachers enjoy teaching

Statement	Elem	Sec
My teachers enjoy teaching.	96.2	64.1 (84.2)

Experience a variety of instructional practices

Statement	Elem	Sec
My teacher has us do lots of different activities in class.	86.1	
Students work with a partner or in groups.		69.5 (92.2)
Students engage in a class discussion.		56.9 (86.1)
Students give presentations.		57.6 (86.9)
Students provide feedback to each other.		43.9 (74.3)
Students work on class work by themselves.		69.3 (90.2)
Students use technology.		86.1 (95.5)
<i>Students listen to the teacher talk for most of class.</i>		<i>50.9 (81.3)</i>

Most Positive Results for Teachers (1)

- SCASD schools are a good place to work and learn
- Sense of trust & respect between teachers & principals
- Principals evaluate teachers in a fair & prof manner
- Teachers ensure equitable access to the curriculum
- Teachers use a wide variety of data to make decisions
- All members of the school community are valued
- Perceptions of their own behaviors and abilities¹⁰

Most Positive Results for Parents

- Communication efforts from schools & the district
- High expectations for the district held by parents
- Positive treatment of students by educators
- Enjoyment of school by children (esp. elem)
- Provision of a breadth of learning experiences by the district.

Areas of Challenge

- Students
- Teachers
- Parents

Areas of Challenge: Students (1)

Treatment by other students & teachers

(Students: *“Kids get bullied everyday”*, “Students are sometimes rude for different culture and language people”, “I got physically and mentally bullied a lot this year.” “My teacher calls students ‘jerks’ and ‘fools’ and makes them choose between push-ups/wall-sits or detention” “

Parents: *“My son has been bullied for 3 years now”*

Statement	Elem	Sec
Students at this school treat each other with respect.	55.7	34.3 (73.3)

About 16% of MS students mentioned reducing bullying as one important way to improve the school

Areas of Challenge: Students (2)

Looking forward to/liking school

Statement	Elem	Sec
I look forward to going to school.	61.0	38.9 (72.7)
Once I am at school, I usually like being there.	52.9	44.3 (83.1)

Much of this seem to center on teaching & learning:

“Some teachers hate teaching because they have to teach a curriculum that is dull, lacks the motivation required for students to enjoy their education, and caters to passing standardized tests that, although necessary, ruin creative thought and the actual application of knowledge learned.”

“Less busy work and more interactive learning. Make learning fun.”

“if we focused on how kids are learning and how different individuals are able to understand different concepts better it would make this school a much enjoyable place for all the students to attend.”

“more time to be active in [middle] school—even having recess”

“More enthusiastic and engaging teachers”

“Students should have thought-provoking discussions“

Areas of Challenge: Students (3)

Student voice/participation in decision-making

Statement	
Students are encouraged by teachers to say what they think.	46.1
I feel comfortable saying what I think at school.	45.4
Students are involved in decisions about classroom rules/procedures.	37.8

“{Students} could decide how to learn for the day would make kids have more fun.”

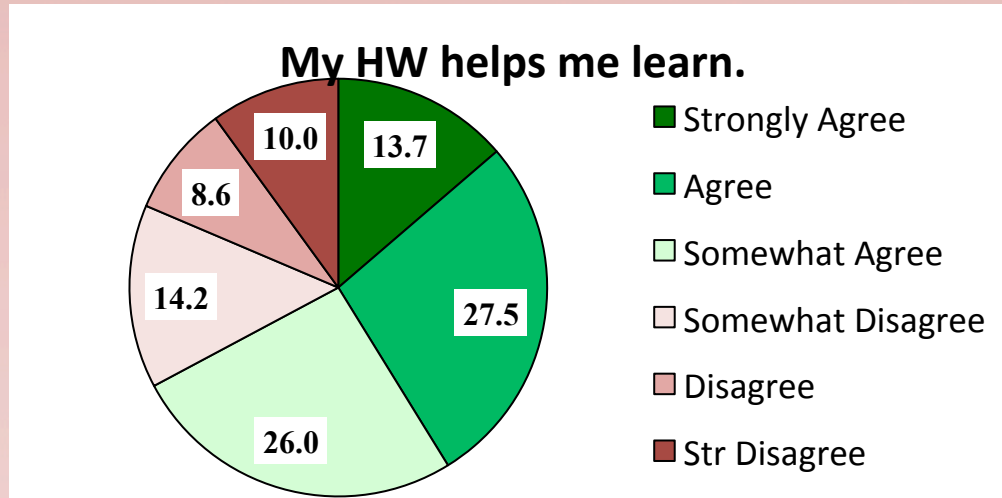
“Listen to the students. Do not shut us down or put us down for every thing we do. We are not all liars or geniuses. Remember not all of us thrive in school, some have a harder time. “

“I know everyone in this school is busy but the administration needs to listen to the students a lot more.”

“Pay attention to complaints about [bad teaching]. People always say they will listen but usually they don't.”

Areas of Challenge: Students (4)

Appropriate/useful homework



More on Homework

Students

“There is a lot of pressure on students to constantly excel, and be above average ... I understand the importance of homework, but I hope teachers realize how stressful school can be sometimes.”

*“Harder classes should have **harder** homework **not more** homework”*

“I typically spend 4-5 hours a night on homework which is way too long for a 15 year old who has other activities and would like to get to bed at a decent time”

“The lack of sleep in order to get decent grades on homework is unhealthy”

Parents:

“More homework doesn't equal a better understanding of the material”

“Often my 5th grader would have 3 hours of homework . . . So much that parents are having to help kids complete it”

Areas of Challenge: Students (5)

Perceptions of inconsistent exposure to fundamental teaching practices

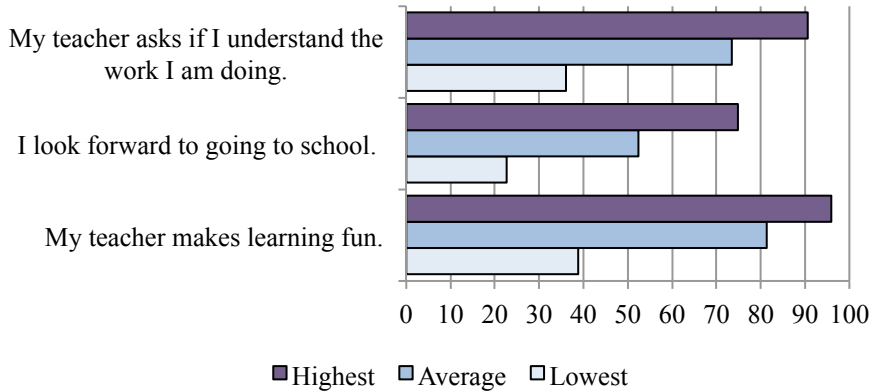
Statement	Elem	Sec
My teacher asks us questions during class.	43.0	
My teacher explains something until we all understand.	61.8	
The work I do in class makes me think.	71.6	
My teachers: Take the time to summarize what we learn each day.		39.4 (64.8)
My teachers have us correct our mistake on assignments and assessments		40.8 (64.3)
My teachers: Emphasize learning from our mistakes.		47.9 (74.0)
My teachers: Tell us what we are learning and why.		45.4 (74.0)
Students provide feedback to each other.		43.9 (74.3)

Final Areas of Challenge

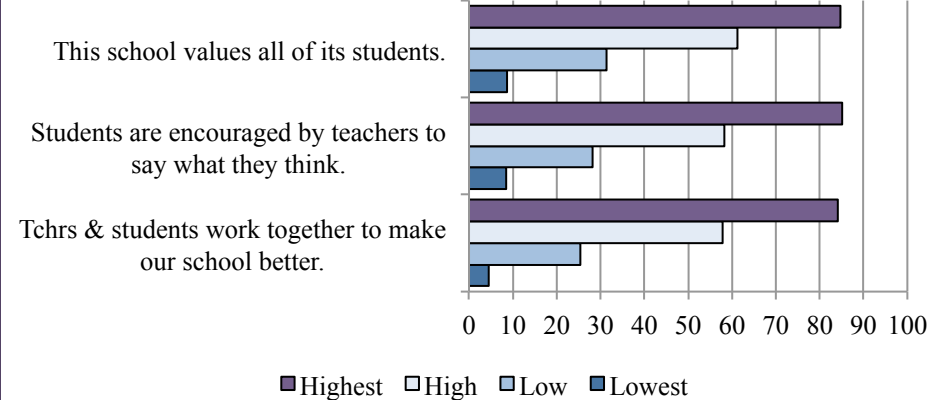
- Between *10% and 20% of students feel disengaged* from the schooling process and those students *have dramatically more negative perceptions* about all of their schooling experiences
- Students with the *lowest perceptions about teacher care have dramatically more negative perceptions* about all of their schooling experiences

Student Perceptions of Teacher Care

Elementary Students

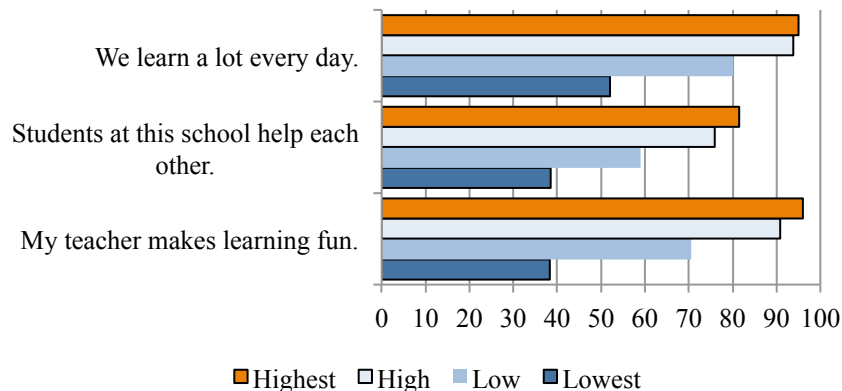


Secondary Students

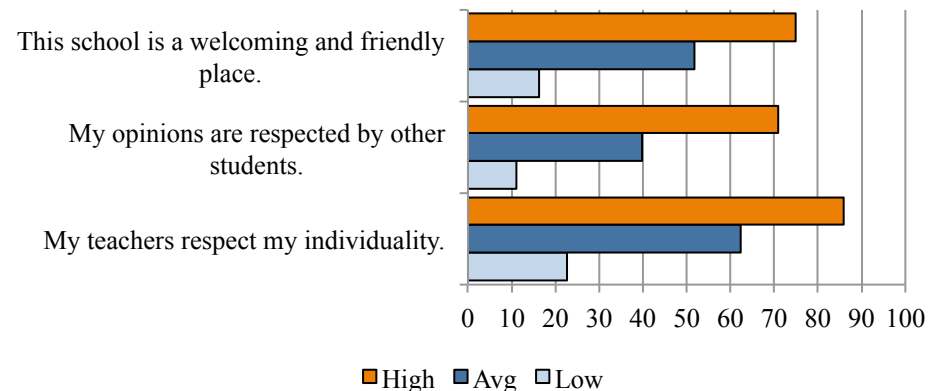


Student Perceptions of Affinity with School

Elementary Students



Secondary Students



Areas of Challenge: Teachers

- Teacher voice/involvement in decision-making
- Principals' efforts to be aware of teaching in all classrooms (esp. at ms/hs)
- Teachers receiving feedback/observing other teachers
- Suggestions to improve teaching
- Having effective discussions about achievement gap

Areas of Challenge: Parents

- Homework issues (need to clarify the problem)
- Degree to which educators know parents and students well (esp. at secondary level)
- Communication to parents about the strengths, weaknesses, and progress of students
 - Access to timely info on website
 - Inadequate information & explanations about scores

Areas Where We Need More Clarity

Where We Need More Clarity

- The survey does not ascertain **the WHY** underlying the results, so we don't know the reasons behind the findings
- The **accuracy of the perceptions**, particularly when perceptions are not in alignment (e.g. student perceptions relative to teacher perceptions; teacher perceptions relative to principal perceptions)
- The **distribution/concentration** of specific issues
- How these issues affect **different populations** of students (i.e., spec ed, minority, etc) and teachers.

Specific Issues that Need More Clarity (1)

- **Disengagement**--Why do students feel disengaged and how should issue be addressed? Which students feel disengaged?
- **Bullying**—Where and when does it occur? What is extent of bullying? Who is bullying and who gets bullied? Are teachers intervening when needed?

Specific Issues that Need More Clarity (2)

- **Caring**--Why do some students perceive some teachers don't care? What behaviors communicate caring? What could teachers do differently?
- **Student/Teacher Voice** —About what issues do students and teachers want greater voice? How do they want to communicate their opinions? What strategies could principals employ to increase student/teacher voice?

Specific Issues that Need More Clarity (3)

- **Teaching**—are some teachers not using best practices? Who are the teachers, which students do they teach, and what could be done to improve the teaching?
- **Homework**—what are effective HW policies? What should be purpose of HW? How much time should be spent on HW? How is the problem distributed across schools, classes, types of students? Are some HW issues related to poor teaching practices overall?

Potential Policies and Strategies (1)

Create and implement strategies to collect more information to better understand core issues. This will require long-term conversations with students, teachers, administrators & parents.

Bullying--Delve deeper into issues; examine efficacy of current ant-bullying programs

Homework

- Better understand issues
- Create district HW policy (teachers should hand back quizzes & tests)
- Adopt school philosophies about HW consistent with district policy

Potential Policies and Strategies (2)

Measure benchmarks and re-visit benchmarks based on ability to measure and alignment with strategic plan

Include measures of achievement gap in district discussions as a model for how schools can engage in conversation; Also, provide schools information on the achievement gap

Potential Policies and Strategies

Moving Forward (3)

Improve Communication -- Create structures to enhance and improve communication among/ between all stakeholder groups

Enhance Student Voice -- Increase opportunities for ALL students & teachers to voice thoughts/opinions in identifying issues and creating solutions

Support more Teacher Observations – Quality observations support effective teaching & learning

Potential Policies and Strategies

Moving Forward (4)

Continue Modeling of Appropriate Behavior by superintendent and other district administrators

Create more spaces for conversation so adults HEAR students and act on what they hear.

Final Thoughts

- SCASD is a very good district with the definite potential to be a truly outstanding district that is a state and national exemplar.
- To become such an exemplar, the district must engage in some difficult conversations and start focusing on every single child and every single teacher

Conclusion: Major Challenge Area 5

Some concern mentioned by students and parents about the quality and utility of homework.

Final Thoughts

SCASD is already a high-functioning district and all SCASD employees, the board, students, and parents should be commended for their efforts.

But, SCASD could—and should—be even better. By addressing these challenge areas, SCASD could be an exemplar for districts around the state and nation.