

PEAK TO PEAK RESPONSE TO THE 2020-2021 FAMILY SURVEY

ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Accountability Committee is to gather and analyze data to assess the school's progress toward its mission and to provide results of that analysis to the Peak to Peak Board of Directors, the administration and the rest of the Peak to Peak community.

The results of the 2020-2021 Peak to Peak Annual Family Survey were provided to the Peak to Peak Board of Directors and administration in the spring of 2021. A report detailing the results of the survey was provided to the Peak to Peak community and is available on the school website (<https://www.peaktopeak.org/Page/366>). After compiling both the ratings that families reported and their comments, specific strengths and areas of improvement were identified in each area. The Executive Leadership Team has responded with many changes to address the concerns of the Peak to Peak community. The following response, prepared by the Accountability Committee, summarizes those activities as reported by school leadership.

A summary of the report provided the following themes to address:

Quality of Instruction:

- More time spent on lit lab and literacy services
- Concerns on testing and meeting learning requirements (ES & MS)
- Leadership & staff turnover (MS)
- Need for more class/homework communication

Quality of Relationships:

- Small but steady decrease in recommending Peak to Peak to friends and family
- Effectiveness of using Communication Pathways
- Desire for more clubs and mental health services

Quality of Operations:

- Improve quality of the Chromebooks
- Desire for new theater/auditorium

Quality of Opportunities:

- More extracurriculars and sports offered with a boost in creativity and scope
- Opportunities in the performing arts
- Requests for Robotics club

Communications:

- Number of platforms to navigate to get information on classwork and activities
- Improve student-specific communication
- More proactive communications systems

Supportive Environment

- More social/emotional supports schoolwide

Facilities

- Cleanliness in bathrooms

Food Services

- Call for more vegetarian options
- Alignment with BVSD food services

BOD/ELT:

- Desire for more diversity and transparency
- Parents do not feel heard by leadership

Representatives from the Accountability Committee met with members of the Executive Leadership Team to discuss responses to these themes.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

Quality of Instruction:

Parents shared their concerns about testing and meeting learning requirements as one of the main comment themes in the survey at the elementary level. Ms. Christensen shared that literacy and math interventions were increased to five days per week from four days last year. K-3 grades, especially, have blocked out time for additional literacy and math resources. The elementary staff are focused on gathering data and providing learning supports as needed. Ms. Christensen said they are not seeing major gaps, only small boosts are needed here and there.

New this year is an increase in FTE for a special education teacher. The person in this role will not only be a help to students needing special education support, but also to teachers as they support their students.

Supportive Environment:

Also at the elementary level, parents shared a desire for more social/emotional support for students. Ms. Christensen shared that the teachers were setting time aside, particularly early in the school year, for relationship building within the classroom. Being in-person is a help as teachers and students benefit from built-in, structured parts of the day focused on making connections.

Quality of Opportunities:

Teaching specialists, particularly in art and technology, are excited to begin new clubs and activities with the students as soon as Boulder County Health guidelines allow. These small groups will be excellent opportunities for students to build friendships and explore new interests.

Finally, it's important to mention the many positive comments in the Family Survey lauding the work of Peak to Peak's many elementary teachers and for the elementary counselor, Mrs. Ball. Faced with incredible challenges, they rose to the occasion.

On another encouraging note, a desire of families for many years has been realized with the new elementary playground. The feedback from elementary students has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Ms. Christensen.

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

Ms. Quinlan spent a lot of time last spring (2021) interviewing all middle school staff and groups of students, particularly last year's 8th graders, to grasp middle school's most pressing needs and gaps. Many of the new practices and ideas to address the accountability survey concerns stem from those conversations.

In an effort to better understand which areas were driven by the response to the pandemic and which are long-term issues, Ms. Quinlan focused on indicators that had been dropping consistently over time.

Quality of Instruction

Kudos to the newly created Intro to Engineering and Nutrition and Kitchen Chemistry classes. Due to their popularity, those classes were prioritized for 8th and 7th graders in the 2021-22 school year.

In an effort to measure growth in different ways, the staff continues to consider how to help students understand that their identities as learners are not necessarily tied to their grades in traditional courses. The middle school shifting from the core/non-core language to using "course choices" is one example. The school is more responsive to student athletes, has increased and differentiated PE classes, and is currently looking at a course proposal for forensic science. The leadership continues to look at how other classes are being taught to differentiate curiosity and extensions and are considering additional new opportunities.

For all students, the middle school is implementing a grid method in math for personalized learning. Kids are entering the classroom with a personalized growth plan and ability to lead their own learning pathway. There is more discussion in the middle school about student reflection and portfolios. The initial conversation is around "how did I grow in this skill set" rather than "what was my test score". There's nothing wrong with setting a higher goal for academic achievement, but what happens if the test is not the only thing that's telling you you're learning.

The middle school intends to prioritize resources for populations disproportionately affected during virtual learning last year. This includes students who qualify for Special Education and who are part of the Latino community. The school plans to use i-Ready platform and combined resources of Erin De Assis, the Multi Tiered System of Support (MTSS) coordinator, Christine Botvinik (math interventionist), and Brian Rozinsky (literacy interventionist), to pull data that support effective differentiation.

The Accountability Committee would like to offer kudos to the amazing teachers, who are willing to differentiate curriculum into numerous groups to get everyone moving forward.

Teachers are also dedicated to more pre-assessments than usual at the beginning of this year. They will meet as in smaller teams to discuss gaps across each grade level and vertically in departments. They will problem solve in search of ways to fill gaps observed in students' learning. The principal and assistant principal, both hired earlier in 2021, are currently focusing on stability within the staff as a response to the concern regarding turnover. The leadership is dedicated to discovering what veteran staff has desired to launch but that they have not been able to, and pouring resources into newly hired members. Given recent patterns, data about staff retention deserves continuing attention. Leaders at the middle level do not believe turnover has been caused by the culture of the team.

The Accountability Committee would also like to recognize that Jessica Knorr introduced Thrive, a brand new curriculum, which she delivered for the first time virtually during a pandemic. This course is intended to address students' social/emotional growth and leadership. Kudos to Ms. Knorr for her dedication to students. This year she has added an additional section of this class. The hope is that it will be just as popular a choice course as Intro to Engineering and Kitchen Chemistry.

Quality of Opportunities

New clubs this year include a middle school builders club, a hands-on service-oriented club sponsored by the Foothills Kiwanis Club of Boulder. It is a feeder for Key Club at the high school. They are looking at how to incorporate clubs into the newly created house systems. Ms. Jessica Manzanares and Ms. Bertarelli are working hard to establish a National Junior Art Society across the 6-12 landscape this year or next, and Ms. Jessica Manzanares will also be partnering with Ms. Guajardo in establishing a MS Eye to Eye chapter. This is a peer mentoring program for students with learning differences, including those with learning disabilities. It's been successfully running in our high school for several years. Finally, the MS Student Council is expanding roles and opportunities this year.

The Robotics Club, which is regularly requested, has struggled to launch successfully. It has been attempted twice in the past but required more adult sponsors than were available. The Athletics and Activities Director would welcome a conversation with an interested cohort of students and/or staff sponsor in an effort to make this ongoing desire a reality.

Supportive Environment

As to character development, leadership is looking at how to build a more authentic undercarriage to character education which is more accessible to middle schoolers as a way to incorporate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into the fabric of the school. They are making inquiries such as: "What does it look like to be kind?" "How can students be courageous on behalf of others?" And, "How do students have empathy in conflict and also firmness in belief?" Teachers and leadership have successfully offered low-stakes opportunities to for middle schoolers to explore leadership. For example, the school invited students to read the Pledge of Allegiance over the microphone; an opportunity to contribute to the school in a meaningful way and practice public speaking. The staff is currently brainstorming ideas around a lunch squad, students nominated by teachers to tackle some things pervasive in all middle schools, such that

these students can step in when adults aren't around. It might not be a new club or a new course. Later this year, perhaps looking at what are different ways to lead, social leaders in vertical teaming.

Communication and Communication Pathways:

Ms. Quinlan said one of our middle school team specific goals is making room and finding time to dialogue with teachers around: What does it look like to enter a crucial conversation on behalf of connecting? What does it look like to carve out the time to call home as opposed to sending an email? What does it look like to choose the opportunity to connect and do so proactively? How many teachers have had a contact with home that shares something that they're doing in the classroom? The hope is to become more conscious of what it means to build relationships.

Additionally, leadership aims to communicate monthly via the Weekly Digest so as to invite conversation with the parents/guardians up front. For example, communicating information regarding bringing back backpacks for middle school and providing our cell phone policy in the August weekly digest resulted in having 12-15 families contacting middle school leadership with opportunities for connection.

After community feedback questioning how middle-school students were surveyed at times last school year, leadership is committed to communicating with all stakeholders the "why" behind such efforts as well as what parts are optional versus expected. When a question is optional, students do not have to answer. Staff members recognize that modeling different ways to handle optional items can help make the experience more inclusive. At the same time, too much emphasis on modeling just one way to respond can be misinterpreted as its own agenda or bias. Staff members know there are often power dynamics in teacher-student relationships, which can have both positive and negative consequences when teachers model behaviors. The goal is to prepare students to be informed, confident, and authentic participants, in order to generate valid data that can prompt constructive next steps.

HIGH SCHOOL:

2020-2021 school year was unlike others since both students and teachers were dealing with a pandemic and figuring out how to study online. Each was continually adapting to changing situations. While most of the areas of measurement saw a decreasing trend, the leadership of the High School noted that the decrease was less for high school in some areas. This could be attributed to the fact that high school students are more mature and can advocate for themselves. Additionally, high school systems were already set up for online communication on a similar platform, such as Google Classroom, resulting in a positive trend for "the technology was adequate for learning."

Quality of Instruction:

Although the teachers tried their best, it was hard to keep some of the students appropriately challenged with remote instruction. This year we are committed to maintaining in-person instruction.

Quality of Opportunities:

To address the decline in Quality of Opportunities, High School has expanded in-person clubs and school level sports are being offered in as close to normal season format as possible. Leadership has noted an interest in FIRST Tech Robotics Challenge and they welcome the help of parent volunteers to run this club.

Quality of Relationships:

To provide social/emotional support, counselors increased check-in with students, and students have been encouraged to reach out to their counselors if they had any concerns. This was reflected in positive comments received for the counseling staff. The return to in-person has been a help as the energy is improved and it is easier to build stronger relationships.

Though the counseling team tried to provide meaningful service opportunities or extracurricular activities last school year due to the pandemic, in many cases the opportunities were limited, or students preferred to stay home for safety reasons. This school year this has improved. There are more opportunities for students to engage and have meaningful interactions with peers, teachers, and the community. To develop a sense of belonging, earlier in the school year, a field day was organized to foster grade level connection, where different grades engaged in different activities.

QUALITY OF OPERATIONS:

Chromebooks:

Ms. Christensen mentioned that the computers are on a replacement schedule and that they have already received a shipment of new computers with touch screens for some of the youngest grades. New computers for other grades are on order, some have been delayed due to nationwide supply chain issues.

Facilities/Maintenance:

The Accountability Committee would like to once again commend our operations staff for the installation of the HVAC bipolar ionization system which significantly helps with controlling the transmission of Covid-19 and also other airborne illnesses during the school year.

There were some repeated comments regarding cleanliness of bathrooms. The operations department recognized the challenges presented in previous years and has addressed them. Those spaces are currently cleaned nightly by our contracted service provider. We have two employees who clean our buildings throughout the day and they work diligently to ensure bathrooms are checked regularly.

Our community also reflected a desire for a new theater/auditorium and our operations staff has heard these requests. There are plans ready to create this new space, pending funding to complete the project. The school is hopeful that we will be able to participate in a future BVSD bond measure as well as fundraising campaigns to make this dream a reality. Once the direction to move forward is provided by our board, the staff will begin the next steps.

Food Services:

We begin by acknowledging the efforts of the food services staff to provide lunch to all students during virtual learning, which was reflected in the kudos received in the Family Survey.

The survey did have requests for more vegetarian options. Our food services staff has heard these requests and is offering vegetarian options daily. The staff is working to add more and more options. There will be a forthcoming survey on which types of entrees are desired.

Comments continue to request alignment with BVSD food services. This option was explored in detail in 2017 and for a myriad reasons was shelved. Peak to Peak has a far higher secondary lunch participation than the district, which should be celebrated. Our lunchroom offers more choices for sandwiches, soup and entrees, which would not be possible if the lunch options came from the district kitchen and were transported to our facilities. Our staff continues to strive to provide healthy lunch options and desires to partner with parents and guardians to ensure that our students have healthy and desirable options at breakfast and lunch. It is for these reasons that our operations staff continues to believe that maintaining a Peak to Peak run food services option is the best fit for our students.

COMMUNICATION:

Communication and leadership transparency were mentioned as areas of concern in the survey. After completing the interviews with all school administrators, we found a united resolve to improve school communications and transparency around school decisions.

In addition to the new and improved website, P2P Leadership school leaders will be presenting Virtual Q&A events again this year. The first Virtual Community Q&A event was held on September 28th and two more Virtual Q&A events are forthcoming.

On a positive note, being back in-person has already greatly improved opportunities for relationship-building and one-on-one communication. The ELT is interested in providing additional channels for family feedback and is looking into other small-group opportunities, such as focus groups.

SCHOOL WIDE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT:

Several comments from families representing all levels of Peak to Peak mentioned their desire for additional social and emotional supports for their students. Ms. Reeser mentioned that the ELT anticipated the concern based on comments over the last few years and knew that going into Fall 2020 that the need for social/emotional support would be greater than ever.

Ms. Reeser mentioned that the school brought in outside resources this school year to support staff and provide training centered around recognizing the signs of stress and anxiety in students. The consultant, an expert in “trauma-informed teaching,” helped staff process the trauma that we all experienced last year.

On a positive note, being back in-person is a tremendous benefit to meeting the social and emotional needs of students. The survey also included numerous positive comments complementing the work of teachers and counselors the past year on their ability to reach out and meet the needs of students in a very challenging environment.

CONCLUSION

The Accountability Committee would like to thank Peak to Peak's Executive Leadership Team for their time and commitment to the Family Survey and this Survey Response. 2020-21 was a year of good lessons and lessons that were learned through challenges. We are grateful that we are now looking ahead into the 2021-22 school year.