

Dallas ISD Climate Survey: 2015-2016

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At-a-Glance

The Dallas ISD Districtwide Climate Survey was administered to all campus-based professional and support staff during December 2015 and May 2016. The Climate Survey had three purposes:

- To contribute to consistent organizational improvement;
- To gain integral feedback from school based employees;
- To align systems to student outcomes.

While overall results provide a broad picture of district change, the Climate Survey was primarily intended to provide individual campuses with feedback that could identify areas of success as well as opportunities for improvement. Campus-level results have been distributed to building principals, feeder pattern Executive Directors, and School Leadership management after each administration, and were used to initiate and guide discussions among central and campus administrators and staff.

The Climate Survey contributed to the campus principals' Mid-Year Review by providing staff feedback that related directly to principal effectiveness, as well as more complex information that helps to identify underlying issues that may contribute to or hinder success.

The 2015-16 school year was the fourth consecutive year in which the Climate Survey was administered. In 2012-2013, the survey was conducted internally, by the Department of Evaluation and Assessment. In 2013-14, to provide additional assurance of confidentiality, the survey was administered by an external organization, the University of North Texas (UNT) Survey Research Center. The UNT Survey Research Center ceased operations in the fall of 2014, and the surveys for 2014-15 and 2015-16 were administered by the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University (TAMU).

Dallas ISD provided TAMU with a list of email addresses of all campus-based staff. No employee ID number or staff names were provided to TAMU. TAMU then sent an email to all staff members, asking each of them to use an individualized link to the survey. Once the survey closed, TAMU provided a file of survey results with employee email addresses removed to Dallas ISD. Survey responses from past administrations also remain confidential, and no individual employee information regarding survey participation or responses has been released.

Participation Rate

Participation rates by administration for teachers and for all campus-based staff are shown in Figure 1.

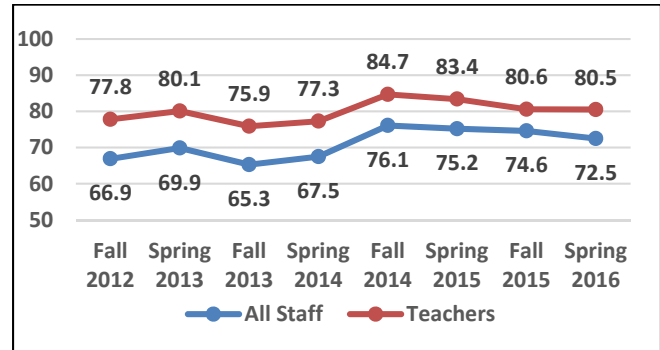


Figure 1. Survey participation rates, Fall 2012 –Spring 2016.

Scales

The initial version of the survey, given in the fall of 2012, contained items grouped into three scales, each describing conditions deemed necessary or desirable for an effective school: School's Beliefs and Priorities, Positive Culture and Environment, and Culture of Feedback and Support. Survey scales were initially determined through principal components analysis (PCA) of staff responses. Following each administration, items have been added and removed; each time, the analysis has been repeated, and has indicated the same overall structure. New items were included in the scale score calculations after their initial use and validation. An additional scale, College-Going Culture, was added in 2012-2013.

Item responses ranged from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). Scale scores were computed at the individual level and aggregated to the school level. Scale scores at the individual level consisted of the mean of the items on each scale. Percentages of positive (agree/strongly agree) responses were also calculated for each item and scale at the campus, Feeder Pattern, Division, and District levels.

School's Beliefs and Priorities: Positive responses to items on this scale indicate that the school bases its actions on the District's Core Beliefs, and follows a set of campus Key Actions that are student-focused and understood by school staff. Priorities of school leadership and staff are aligned, staff believe they have support from school leadership, and staff feel that their school is headed in the right direction. The percentage of positive responses across all administrations is shown in Figure 2.

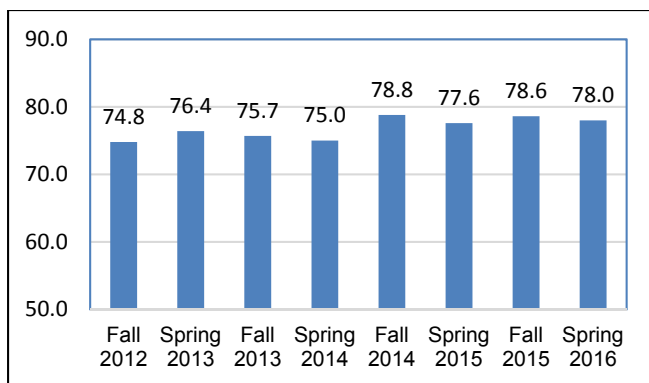


Figure 2. Percentage of positive responses, Beliefs and Priorities scale, Fall 2012 –Spring 2016

Key results include the following:

- The percentage of positive responses on this scale was similar across all administrations, with slightly more positive responses in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.
- In Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, approximately 85 to 88 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the Core Beliefs guided actions on their campus. About 89 to 90 percent agreed that they understood their roles in implementing key actions.
- About 79 to 80 percent felt that the key actions at their school were focused on what is best for students.
- More than 70 percent responded that they had the support from campus leadership to do their job well.
- More than 70 percent responded that their school's priorities were similar to what they should be, and that their campus was headed in the right direction.

The item "Overall, the district is headed in the right direction" was included in this section of the survey. (This item was not included in the calculation of scale scores, because the scales are designed to reflect perceptions of climate at the campus level.) Responses were 63 percent positive in Fall 2015 and 66 percent positive in Spring 2016, a substantial increase from the percentage of positive responses from the two prior years, which ranged from 44% (Spring 2014) to 52% (Spring 2015).

Culture of Feedback and Support (teachers only):

Positive responses to the items on this scale indicate that effective campus leadership provides support and feedback to teachers that improves job performance; helps teachers to understand recent changes; improves the quality of instruction; and encourages teachers to develop leadership potential. Teachers perceive that professional development and teamwork with colleagues help improve instruction. The percentage of positive responses across all administrations is shown in Figure 3.

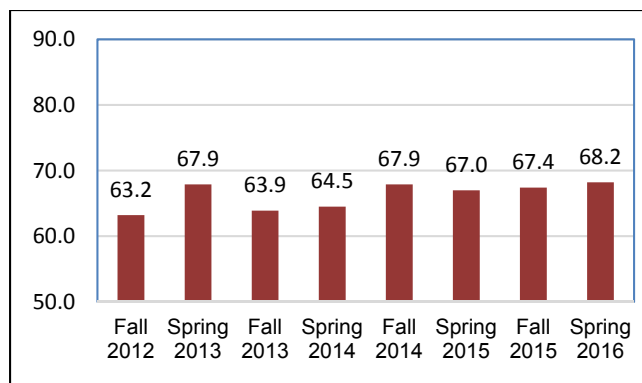


Figure 3. Percentage of positive responses, Feedback and Support scale, Fall 2012 –Spring 2016

Key results include the following:

- Overall responses in 2015-2016 were more than two-thirds positive, and were similar to those in 2014-2015.
- More than two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that campus leadership helped them improve the quality of instruction; that they had opportunities and encouragement to develop leadership potential; and that their campus had an effective leadership team.
- About 75 percent of teachers credited their team experiences in 2015-2016 with helping them improve instruction.
- Sixty (60) percent of teachers in both Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 agreed that PD sessions helped them improve instruction.

Positive Culture and Environment: Positive responses to the items on this scale indicate that the school environment is clean and safe, with consistent and effective student discipline. Staff work in an environment of respect, and are satisfied with recognition for doing their jobs well. Staff look forward to their work each day, would recommend the school as a workplace to others, and would stay with Dallas ISD even if offered a comparable job elsewhere. Morale at the school has improved during the year. The percentage of positive responses across all administrations is shown in Figure 4.

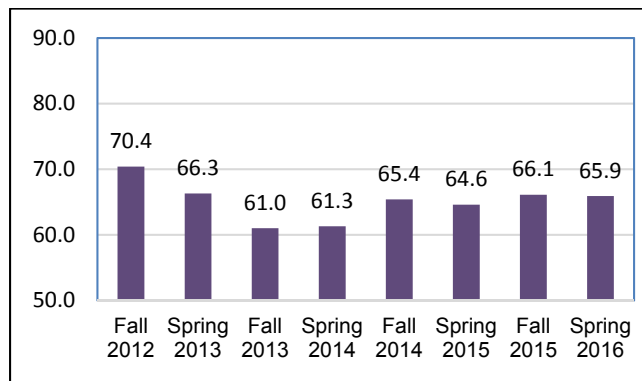


Figure 4. Percentage of positive responses, Culture and Environment scale, Fall 2012 –Spring 2016

Key results include the following:

- Overall scores on this scale fell in 2013-2014, but improved in 2014-2015 and again in 2015-16. However, it should be noted that scale scores for 2012-2013 are not directly comparable with subsequent administrations, as three new items were added to the scale score calculations in Fall 2013.
- About three-quarters of staff agreed in 2015-2016 that they looked forward to working each day at their school, and more than 75 percent agreed that their campus was clean and safe.
- About 70 percent of staff would recommend the school to others as a workplace, and a similar percentage felt that they worked in an environment of support and respect.
- While all items on this scale had positive responses greater than 50 percent, two items addressing student discipline fell below 60 percent positive in Spring 2016, similar to percentages in Spring 2015.
- The item "Morale at my school has improved this year" reached 60 percent positive for the first time in Spring 2016, from a low of 40% in Spring 2013, when the item was first used.
- In all prior-year administrations, 55 percent or fewer agreed that, if offered a comparable position with similar pay and benefits at another district, they would stay with Dallas ISD. These percentages increased to 56% in Fall 2015 and 60% in Spring 2016.
- More than two-thirds of staff agreed that they would recommend their school to parents seeking a place for their child. (This item was added in Fall 2015, so prior-year comparisons were not available.)

College-Going Culture: Positive responses to the items on this scale indicate that teachers focus instruction on preparing their students for college success, and expect most of their students to attend college. They provide feedback and support to prevent students from giving up when challenged, and in turn, expect students to give their full effort. The percentage of positive responses across all administrations is shown in Figure 5.

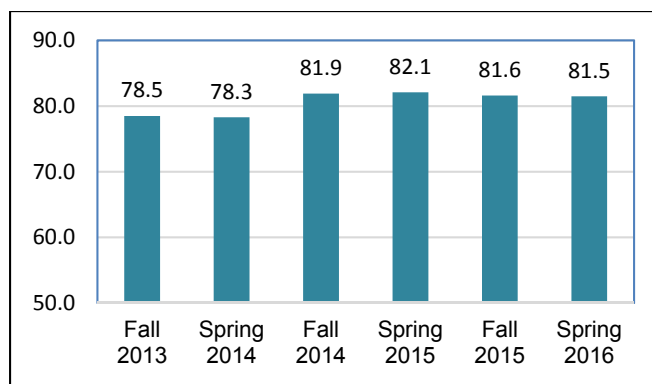


Figure 4. Percentage of positive responses, College Readiness scale, Fall 2013 –Spring 2016

Key results include the following:

- Positive responses were highest on this scale, above 80 percent overall for both 2015-2016 administrations. Item responses ranged from 78 to 87 percent positive.
- Responses of elementary school staff were slightly less positive than those of secondary staff.

Morale

Each respondent was asked to select up to three items that most influenced morale at work. In 2012-2013, this question accepted open-ended responses. These were analyzed and a final list of factors was created for the 2013-2014 survey (Table 1).

In 2015-2016, more than 60 percent of respondents named "Workplace environment and school culture" and more than half selected "Feeling appreciated and respected" as important to their morale. Results were generally consistent across all administrations.

Table 1
Factors Influencing Staff Morale

Factor	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016
Workplace environment and school culture	60.1	60.2	61.0	62.3	61.5	62.3
Feeling appreciated and respected	56.8	58.1	58.1	56.7	56.4	57.9
Student progress and success	53.2	49.7	48.1	46.6	46.8	45.3
Student behavior or discipline	32.4	32.0	25.5	31.5	27.7	31.4
Your relationship with colleagues	22.5	22.2	22.0	22.1	22.4	23.4
Relationship with immediate supervisor	18.0	19.9	18.4	19.5	19.2	20.9
Workload, working hours and schedule	26.3	21.8	29.4	21.5	24.8	19.5
The degree to which you feel successful	18.3	19.8	20.6	18.9	18.3	17.6
Salary and money issues	15.3	14.5	14.0	14.5	16.8	15.9

Recommendations

The Districtwide Climate Survey has provided useful and actionable information to School Leadership since its introduction, and will continue to be administered twice a year. School Leadership should review the survey annually to ensure that all items are up-to-date with current district initiatives and practices, and are providing actionable information to campuses and feeder patterns.