School Climate Survey, 2011/2012
Key Findings from the Parent Questionnaire

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May 2012

Acknowledgements

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Figure 2a. Supports for Student Learning I

- The instruction my child receives meets his/her needs: 79% (All), 80% (Elementary), 74% (Secondary)
- Staff who work with my child support them to achieve to the best of their ability: 80% (All), 82% (Elementary), 74% (Secondary)
- Staff who work with my child know his/her strengths: 85% (All), 87% (Elementary), 77% (Secondary)
- Staff who work with my child know his/her interests: 75% (All), 80% (Elementary), 62% (Secondary)
- Extra help is available at my child’s school when he/she needs it: 68% (All), 64% (Elementary), 79% (Secondary)
- The instruction my child receives is relevant, current and has real-life connections: 80% (All), 81% (Elementary), 76% (Secondary)

% agree/strongly agree
Figure 2b. Supports for Student Learning II

At school, does your child get the academic support needed to learn to the best of their ability?

All
- Don't know: 20
- Never: 26
- Sometimes: 20
- Often: 15
- Always: 47

Elementary
- Don't know: 19
- Never: 25
- Sometimes: 14
- Often: 23
- Always: 43

Secondary
- Don't know: 24
- Never: 26
- Sometimes: 19
- Often: 23
- Always: 49

At school, does your child get the support needed to develop work habits and learning skills?

All
- Don't know: 15
- Never: 23
- Sometimes: 14
- Often: 23
- Always: 55

Elementary
- Don't know: 14
- Never: 23
- Sometimes: 14
- Often: 23
- Always: 57

Secondary
- Don't know: 6
- Never: 19
- Sometimes: 23
- Often: 19
- Always: 49
Figure 3. Supports for Parent Engagement

- This school gives me feedback about my child’s strengths, needs, and next steps. 80 (All), 82 (Elementary), 73 (Secondary)
- This school keeps me well informed about my child’s well-being. 74 (All), 77 (Elementary), 64 (Secondary)
- This school provides me with the information I need to support my child’s learning at home. 75 (All), 79 (Elementary), 61 (Secondary)
- I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to discuss issues or decisions that affect my child at school. 81 (All), 82 (Elementary), 75 (Secondary)
- This school recognizes me as a partner in my child’s learning and well-being. 83 (All), 85 (Elementary), 75 (Secondary)
- This school keeps me well informed about what my child is learning. 82 (All), 83 (Elementary), 78 (Secondary)
- This school gives my child feedback about his/her strengths, needs, and next steps. 77 (All), 77 (Elementary), 75 (Secondary)
- Staff at this school listen to my opinions and suggestions. 76 (All), 79 (Elementary), 67 (Secondary)
- I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to support the school’s improvement planning process. 68 (All), 71 (Elementary), 58 (Secondary)
Figure 5. Supports for Student Well-Being

I am satisfied with the information this school gives me about community agencies and their services.

- All: 44
- Elementary: 44
- Secondary: 44

If my child needed supports related to mental health, I would know where to go to get help.

- All: 45
- Elementary: 44
- Secondary: 47

I am satisfied with the opportunities my child has to be physically active at school.

- All: 81
- Elementary: 83
- Secondary: 77

There are healthy food and drink choices offered at my child’s school.

- All: 71
- Elementary: 74
- Secondary: 60
Figure 6. Information about and Support for Pathways and Transitions

- This school provides enough information about career options for my child (secondary only).
  - All: 60
  - Elementary: 75
  - Secondary: 73

- I am satisfied with the support received for my child’s transition from elementary to secondary school (secondary only).
  - All: 69
  - Elementary: 73
  - Secondary: 74

- This school provides enough information about courses and programs available for my child.
  - All: 81
  - Elementary: 69
  - Secondary: 71

- I am satisfied with the choice of courses and programs available for my child at this school.
  - All: 81
  - Elementary: 78
  - Secondary: 71

- I am satisfied with the support received for my child’s entry into elementary school (elementary only).
  - All: 78
  - Elementary: 78
  - Secondary: 71
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To support the school and Board planning processes, the School Climate Survey for Parents was developed to gain insight into parent/guardian perceptions of their child’s school and of their experiences with the school. Consistent with Board priorities, the survey addressed such topics as equity and inclusivity, school safety, learning programs and resources, student well-being, and school-home communications. The purpose of this survey was to provide perceptual data to be used in identifying areas of need to be addressed, planning strategies, and monitoring progress on Board and school goals.

Methodology

The School Climate Survey for Parents was made available from October 21 to December 16, 2011. School administrators were asked to distribute an invitation letter to parents that included a web address at which parents could access and complete the questionnaire in English. Paper copies were also available upon request in the top ten languages spoken within our Board, including English, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Tamil, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Approximately 16,300 parents/guardians participated in the survey. Of those, 11,968 were parents of elementary students and 4,360 were parents of secondary students. Ninety-one percent of the surveys were completed in English and the remaining nine percent were completed in the nine additional languages listed above.

General Findings

Analysis of the survey data revealed six broad themes:

1. Welcoming and Inclusive School Environment;
2. Supports for Student Learning;
3. Supports for Parent Engagement;
4. Expectations of Student Behaviour and Responses to Incidents;
5. Supports for Student Well-being; and
6. Information about and Support for Pathways and Transitions.

For the most part, Board level results were positive. Parents tended to have positive perceptions of their child’s school and of the resources available for their child’s achievement and well-being. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, specifically in areas related to supports for student learning, support for parental engagement, and expectations of student behaviour and responses to incidents.
Findings from the survey also revealed important differences among subgroups:

- Parents of elementary students reported more positive perceptions than parents of secondary students in four of the six broad areas that were measured, including supports for student learning; supports for parent engagement; welcoming and inclusive school environment; and supports for student well-being. Parents of secondary students were more positive in areas related to information and supports for pathways and transitions, while there was little difference between the two groups in terms of school expectations of student behavior and responses to incidents.
- Parents of girls tended to be slightly more positive that parents of boys, particularly on measures of supports for student learning and supports for pathways and transitions.

While examining survey responses, several specific areas of strength and areas for improvement were identified. These are discussed in more detail below.

**Welcoming and Inclusive School Environment**

Overall, parents had very positive perceptions about their child’s school at both the elementary and secondary levels (see Figure 1).
- The vast majority of parents reported that their child’s school is a good school (93%) that is welcoming and well maintained (88% and 93%, respectively).
- Nearly nine in ten parents reported that they believed diversity is largely respected at the school; however, just 78 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that school activities and events reflect diversity.
- Parents of elementary students were somewhat more likely to report that diversity is respected and that school activities and events reflect diversity than were parents of secondary students.

While the majority of parents reported that they feel welcome at their child’s school, there is room for improvement, particular among specific social groups.
- Seventeen percent of elementary and 15 percent of secondary parents/guardians reported that they always, often, or sometimes feel unwelcome at their child’s school. A checklist of reasons from an equity perspective was included in the survey for respondents to indicate why they did not always feel welcome. The most commonly selected reasons were: • Race, culture, or skin colour (337 responses); • First language, dialect, or accent (276 responses); and • Appearance (167 responses).
- Qualitative survey responses indicated a need for improving the ways in which staff demonstrate to parents that they are welcome at the school.
- Nineteen percent of elementary and 31 percent of secondary parents/guardians reported that the cost of extra-curricular activities, sports, and teams has prevented their child from participating.
Supports for Student Learning

Parents were generally very positive about their child’s school in terms of supports for student learning. The majority of respondents agreed that the instruction their child receives is relevant, current, and meets their needs.2 Parents largely agreed that their child gets the support needed to learn to the best of his or her ability and that staff know their strengths and interests (see Figure 2a).

While the survey findings were encouraging, the following results suggest room for improvement in specific areas:

- Sixteen percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that “the instruction my child receives meets his/her needs,” while another five percent did not know. One in five did not agree that the instruction received by their child is relevant, current, and has real life connections (8% disagreed and 12% did not know).
- Thirteen percent of parents disagreed that staff who work with their child know his or her interests and 12 percent reported that they did not know.
- One in five respondents reported that they did not know if extra help is available for their child.
when he or she needs it, while another 13 percent disagreed. Parents of secondary students were more likely to agree that extra help is available than parents of elementary students.
Forty-seven percent of parents reported that their child always “gets the academic support that he or she needs to learn to the best of his or her ability” and 26 percent responded that their child often gets the support needed (see Figure 2b). Equity-based choices were provided for respondents to indicate why their child did not always receive these supports. The most commonly-selected reasons were:

- Academic achievement (1,471 responses);
• Gender (451 responses);
• First language or dialect (432 responses);
• Disability or exceptionality (405 responses); and
• Race, culture, or skin colour (347 responses).

• Fifty-five percent of parents indicated that their child always “gets the support needed to develop work habits and learning skills” and 23 percent responded that their child often gets the support needed (see Figure 2b). As above, equity-based choices were provided for parents to indicate why their child did not always receive these supports. The most commonly-selected reasons were:
  • Academic achievement (986 responses);
  • Gender (374 responses);
  • Disability or exceptionality (351 responses);
  • First language or dialect (262 responses); and
  • Race, culture, or skin colour (221 responses).

At school, does your child get the support needed to develop work habits and learning skills?
At school, does your child get the academic support needed to learn to the best of their ability?

• Qualitative responses to the above questions revealed a need to focus on:
  • Improving instructional practices and programs that support student achievement;
  • Improving structures that reduce the amount of time that staff have available for students (e.g., large class sizes, split/combined grades, scheduling conflicts);
  • Staff support for and encouragement of each student;
  • Encouraging and listening to all student voices; and
  • Making the development of students’ work habits and learning skills a priority.

• There are important differences across subgroups in terms of parent perceptions of the school supports that are available for student learning. Generally, parents of elementary students tended to hold more positive perceptions than parents of secondary students, particularly as they pertain to staff knowledge of students’ strengths and interests. However, parents of secondary students were considerably more likely than parents of elementary students to agree that extra help is available for their child when needed.
Supports for Parent Engagement

Nine questions were used to measure parent engagement and parents largely agreed that the school keeps them informed of their child’s progress, listens to them, and supports their involvement in their child’s learning (see Figure 3).

While parents’ perceptions were typically very positive, the following results suggest room for improvement in specific areas:

- A sizeable proportion of parents/guardians, particularly at the secondary level, did not agree that the school keeps them informed of their child’s well-being (overall, 74% agreed, 19% disagreed and 7% did not know) and of his or her strengths, needs and next steps (overall, 80% agreed, 17% disagreed and 4% were not sure)
- Sixty-one percent of secondary parents agreed that their child’s school provides them with the information they need to support their child’s learning at home (28% disagreed, and 10% were not sure).
- Seventy-six percent of respondents agreed that “staff at this school listen to my opinions and suggestions” (9% disagreed and 15% were not sure).
s from their child’s school are through: • Email;
• School newsletters;
• Printed communication (e.g., letters);
• School website; and
• Student agendas.
Expecations

Parents largely agreed that schools are safe and that expectations concerning student behaviour are clear and fair (see Figure 4).

- Ninety percent of respondents agreed that the school provides a safe learning environment.
- Eighty-five percent of parents agreed that the school rules related to conduct and behaviour are fair, and 84 percent agreed that the school has clear expectations and consequences for student behaviour.
- There were few differences among parents of elementary and parents of secondary students in terms of their perceptions of school expectations of student behaviour and responses to incidents.

While survey results were positive with respect to expectations and consequences regarding student behaviour, the following areas for improvement were identified:

- Sixty-seven percent of parents agreed that they were satisfied with the steps taken to prevent bullying or harassment among students at their child’s school, while 21 percent did not know and 12 percent disagreed.
- Three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the information provided to them about bullying/harassment prevention. The remaining 25 percent were not satisfied or did not know if they were satisfied (12% and 13%, respectively).
- Just over one-half of parents (55%) agreed that the school takes action when students are discriminated against, harassed or bullied. Another 36 percent reported that they did not know if the school takes action when students are discriminated against, harassed or bullied and the remaining 9 percent disagreed.
for Student Well Being

At both the elementary and secondary levels, parents were largely satisfied with the opportunities their child has for physical activity at school (see Figure 5). However, room for improvement was found for other areas of student well-being.

- Less than one half of parents/guardians agreed that they would know where to get help should their child need supports related to mental health; 19 percent disagreed and 36 percent were not sure that they would know where to go for help.
- Only 44 percent of respondents were satisfied with the information they receive about community agencies and their services. Twenty percent of parents were dissatisfied and the remaining 36 percent did not know whether they were satisfied.
n about and Support for Pathways and Transitions

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of respondents indicated satisfaction with the courses and programs available to their child and with the support for transitions into elementary and secondary school.

Results indicate a need for improvement in one particular area:

• Just 60 percent of secondary parents agreed that the school provides them with enough information about career options for their child. Nineteen percent of the respondents disagreed that the school provides enough information about career options and 21 percent did not know.
Next Steps

The YRDSB School and Workplace Climate Survey is to be used as one source of perceptual information to inform school and Board planning processes. As a whole, the survey presents a picture of strengths that are to be built upon and the needs to be addressed. The purpose of the survey is to contribute to the development of improvement plans and the implementation of strategies intended to
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Welcoming and Inclusive School Environment
Q4. There is a welcoming feeling when I enter this school.
Q7. Overall, I think this is a good school.
Q6. The school building is well-maintained.
Q8. Diversity is respected at this school.
Q9. School activities and events reflect diversity.

Supports for Student Well-being
Q39. I am satisfied with the information this school gives me about community agencies and their services.
Q38. If my child needed supports related to mental health, I would know where to go to get help.
Q37. I am satisfied with the opportunities my child has to be physically active at school.
Q36. There are healthy food and drink choices offered at my child’s school.

Information about and Support for Pathways and Transitions
Q25. This school provides enough information about career options for my child.
Q29. I am satisfied with the support received for my child’s transition from elementary to secondary school (secondary only).
Q23. This school provides enough information about courses and programs available for my

Appendix A. School Climate Survey for Parents: Themes and Questions
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Q25. This school provides enough information about career options for my child.
Q29. I am satisfied with the support received for my child’s transition from elementary to secondary school (secondary only).
Q23. This school provides enough information about courses and programs available for my child.
Q24. I am satisfied with the choice of courses and programs available for my child at this school.
Q28. I am satisfied with the support received for my child’s entry into elementary school (elementary only).

Supports for Student Learning
Q21. The instruction my child receives meets his/her needs.
Q20. Staff who work with my child support them to achieve to the best of their ability.
Q18. Staff who work with my child know his/her strengths.
Q11. At school, does your child get the academic support needed to learn to the best of their ability?
Q13. At school, does your child get the support needed to develop work habits and learning skills?
Q19. Staff who work with my child know his/her interests.
Q22. Extra help is available at my child’s school when he/she needs it.
Q26. The instruction my child receives is relevant, current and has real-life connections.