



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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**TO: Members, Board of Education
Dr. Albert Roberts, Superintendent**

FROM: Chris Jasculca

RE: Executive Summary – Climate Survey Report

DATE: October 30, 2012

The following is an executive summary of the report regarding the results of the parent/guardian and staff climate surveys for the 2011-2012 school year.

Executive Summary

From April 2, 2012 to April 27, 2012, 763 parents/guardians and 326 staff members completed the climate survey for the 2011-2012 school year. In contrast, the previous survey, which was administered in 2009, was completed by 1227 parents/guardians and 485 staff members. This represented a 37.8 percent decrease in participation by parents/guardians and 32.8 percent decrease in participation by staff members. It also was the fewest number of people to take the survey in a five-year period. While assumptions can be made about why participation has decreased by a third or more in both stakeholder groups since 2009-2010 (people who are generally satisfied do not tend to complete surveys, survey fatigue, timing of the survey, belief in the effectiveness of surveys, etc.), there is no specific factor or set of factors that accurately explain this phenomenon.

Issues of Note – The following issues of note were ones we were either aware of before administering the 2011-2012 parent/guardian and staff climate surveys, or identified while we were assessing and analyzing the results.

- Parents/guardians and staff members from each school community were given the opportunity to provide feedback about the administration (principals and assistant principals) for their building. However, for three schools—Brooks, Julian and Mann—the input we received included ratings for and comments about three principals who are longer with the district. With that said, the three new principals—Mike Michowski (Brooks), Todd Fitzgerald (Julian) and Sam LeDeaux (Mann)—thoroughly reviewed all of the information that was shared for their buildings and used it to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement.
- The surveys were administered around the same time that we discovered the irregularities in the administration of the 2012 Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) at Mann. This incident is cited/reflected in the survey results for the school and several district departments.
- The format we used for the surveys presented challenges for the individuals taking them, as well as for the staff members analyzing the results. Below are a few examples of these challenges.
 - People found it difficult to provide feedback for some of the staff members from the schools or certain departments because we asked them to rate several categories of staff as a group instead

of on an individual basis. For example, at the school level, we asked people to rate the rest of the staff in the building (other teachers, front office, maintenance, etc.) as a whole instead of as separate groups. Some of our stakeholders commented that it was hard for them to provide an overall rating in these situations because, while the groups listed operate out of a single school or department, the functions they serve and services they provide are different.

- While the language we used for questions on the short form of the surveys was similar to what we used on the long ones, it was not similar enough to allow us to effectively consolidate the results for the parents/guardians or staff. As a result, we needed to keep most of the data we collected and are presenting separated by the type of survey taken (i.e., short or long). In some cases, this produced results that are misleading. For example, only 20 percent of the staff members at Irving who took the long form of the survey rated the school's facilities as good or excellent. However, this percentage is skewed by the fact that only six total people completed the long form of the survey and only five of those six answered that specific question. So, although it is important that we consider the feedback these individuals provided when making decisions at the school or district levels, it is critical for us to recognize and remember that, in some cases, we only have access to results from a small sample size.
- Some parents/guardians and staff members did not offer feedback/ratings on central office departments because they had few dealings with them or did not know enough about them.
- We notified people in the introduction to both surveys that, unless they chose to include personally identifiable information in any of the comment boxes, their individual responses would be anonymous. We also let them know that the results from the survey, including portions of the comments, are considered public records under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Some people felt we included this language to discourage people from taking the survey or providing honest answers to the questions. In fact, we included this information at the advice of our lawyers following a legal issue we encountered in conjunction with the survey that was administered in 2009.

Sampling of survey results – The full version of the climate survey report features complete sets of results for all 10 schools, the Board of Education, the superintendent, the district's central office departments (business office, communications department, human resources department, etc.), and several district programs, plans and services. These results will be posted in their entirety on the main district and school websites. Below is a sampling of these results.

Schools

We took the building-level results from the parent/guardian and climate surveys and calculated consolidated ratings for all 10 schools in the following categories:

- Facilities
- Quality of teaching and instruction (parents/guardians only)
- Day-to-day performance of teachers
- Day-to-day performance of building administration
- Day-to-day performance of other building staff (other teachers, front office, custodians, etc.)
- Communications (parents/guardians only)
- Climate

The following are the percentages of people (parents/guardians, staff members and both groups combined) who rated the schools as good or excellent in these categories.

- Facilities – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **66.2 percent** of parents/guardians rated school facilities as good or excellent
 - **71.9 percent** of staff members rated school facilities as good or excellent
 - **69.1 percent** of people from both groups combined rated school facilities as good or excellent
- Quality of teaching and instruction (parents/guardians only) – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **84.9 percent** of parents/guardians rated the quality of teaching and instruction in the schools as good or excellent
- Day-to-day performance of teachers – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **86.5 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the teachers in the schools as good or excellent
 - **95.1 percent** of staff members rated their own day-to-day performance as good or excellent
 - **90.8 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of teachers as good or excellent
- Day-to-day performance of building administration – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **80.9 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the building administration in the schools as good or excellent
 - **75.5 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the building administration in the schools as good or excellent
 - **78.2 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the building administration in the schools as good or excellent
- Day-to-day performance of other staff (other teachers, front office, custodians, etc.) – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **87.5 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the other staff in the schools as good or excellent
 - **89.7 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the other staff in the schools as good or excellent
 - **88.6 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the other staff in the schools as good or excellent
- Communications (parents/guardians only) – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **80.7 percent** of parents/guardians rated the schools’ efforts to communicate as good or excellent
- Climate – Of the results collected for all 10 schools:
 - **76.1 percent** of parents/guardians rated the climate at the schools as good or excellent
 - **67.1 percent** of staff members rated the climate at the schools as good or excellent
 - **71.6 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the climate at the schools as good or excellent

Board of Education

The summary of the results for the Board of Education are as follows:

- Day-to-day performance of the Board of Education
 - **62 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the Board of Education as good or excellent

- **55.7 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the Board of Education as good or excellent
- **58.9 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the Board of Education as good or excellent
- Attendance at board meetings
 - **67.8 percent** of parents/guardians and **26.3 percent** of staff members who took the survey never attend board meetings
 - **39.1 percent** of the staff members and **16.1 percent** of parents/guardians and who took the survey attend board meetings on an annual basis

Superintendent

The summary of the results for the superintendent are as follows:

- Day-to-day performance of the superintendent
 - **60 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the superintendent as good or excellent
 - **47.4 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the superintendent as good or excellent
 - **53.7 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the superintendent as good or excellent

Central office departments

The summary of the results for the district's central office departments were as follows:

- Day-to-day performance of the business office
 - **76.3 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the business office as good or excellent
 - **80.7 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the business office as good or excellent
 - **78.5 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the business office as good or excellent
- Day-to-day performance of the communications department
 - **84.3 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the communications department as good or excellent
 - **79.6 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the communications department as good or excellent
 - **82 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the communications department as good or excellent
- Day-to-day performance of the human resources department
 - **78.9 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the human resources department as good or excellent
 - **53.2 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the human resources department as good or excellent
 - **66.1 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the human resources department as good or excellent

- Day-to-day performance of the special education department
 - **72.8 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the special education department as good or excellent
 - **77 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the special education department as good or excellent
 - **74.9 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the special education department as good or excellent

- Day-to-day performance of the teaching and learning department
 - **75.1 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the teaching and learning department as good or excellent
 - **52.2 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the teaching and learning department as good or excellent
 - **63.7 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the teaching and learning department as good or excellent

- Day-to-day performance of the technology department
 - **74.6 percent** of parents/guardians rated the day-to-day performance of the technology department as good or excellent
 - **68.2 percent** of staff members rated the day-to-day performance of the technology department as good or excellent
 - **71.4 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the day-to-day performance of the technology department as good or excellent

District programs, plans and services

The summary of the results for the district's programs, plans and services are as follows:

- Academic programs
 - **88.2 percent** of the people who completed both forms of the survey rated the district's academic programs as good or excellent

- Efforts to communicate
 - **77.5 percent** of the parents/guardians who completed the survey rated the district's efforts to communicate with them as good or excellent
 - **68.3 percent** of the staff members who completed the survey rated the district's efforts to communicate with them as good or excellent

- Effectiveness of communications resources (Website, e-mail, listservs, digital backpack, etc.)
 - **77.2 percent** of parents/guardians rated the effectiveness of the district's communications resources as good or excellent
 - **80.4 percent** of staff members rated the effectiveness of the district's communications resources as good or excellent
 - **78.8 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the effectiveness of the district's communications resources as good or excellent

- Quality of technology in schools
 - **70 percent** of parents/guardians rated the quality of the technology being used in the schools as good or excellent

- **66.9 percent** of staff members rated the quality of the technology being used in the schools as good or excellent
- **68.5 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the quality of the technology being used in the schools as good or excellent
- Integration of technology in schools
 - **68.6 percent** of parents/guardians rated the efforts to integrate technology in the schools as good or excellent
 - **74.9 percent** of staff members rated the efforts to integrate technology in the schools as good or excellent
 - **71.8 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the efforts to integrate technology in the schools as good or excellent
- Quality of technology district wide
 - **61.3 percent** of parents/guardians rated the quality of the technology being used district wide as good or excellent
 - **60.3 percent** of staff members rated the quality of the technology being used district wide as good or excellent
 - **60.8 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the quality of the technology being used district wide as good or excellent
- Integration of technology district wide
 - **60.5 percent** of parents/guardians rated the efforts to integrate technology district wide as good or excellent
 - **62.9 percent** of staff members rated the efforts to integrate technology district wide as good or excellent
 - **61.7 percent** of people from both groups combined rated the efforts to integrate technology district wide as good or excellent
- Technology plan
 - **58.7 percent** of the people who completed both forms of the survey rated the effectiveness of the district's five-year technology plan as good or excellent.
- Strategic plan
 - **48.7 percent** of the people who completed both forms of the survey rated the district's five-year strategic plan as good or excellent
- Food Service
 - **39.3 percent** of the parents/guardians who completed the survey rated the district's food service program as good or excellent
- Transportation
 - **61.6 percent** of the parents/guardians who completed the survey rated the district's transportation program as good or excellent

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following are the key findings we identified and conclusions we drew in conjunction with our assessment/analysis of the results from the 2011-2012 parent/guardian and staff climate surveys.

Schools

The results from both the parent/guardian and staff surveys reflect a high level of satisfaction with our schools. This is highlighted by the fact that 85 percent of the people who took the survey rated the schools as good or excellent in several categories, including the quality of teaching and instruction and the day-to-day performance of teachers and other building staff (front office, custodians, etc.).

While the rating for communications (80.7 percent good or excellent) was also positive, several of the building principals cited this category as an area of improvement moving forward. Some of them also highlighted a commitment to improve their own day-to-day performance (78.2 percent good or excellent)—most notably their accessibility, communication, leadership and responsiveness.

The two categories that received the lowest ratings and require the most attention are the school's facilities and overall climate. In the case of facilities (69.1 percent good or excellent), the quality and condition of the space outside the building consistently received low ratings. We are currently working together with staff, parents/guardians and community members to improve this space by making upgrades to our schoolyards. We have also installed secured entrances at all of our buildings, and are studying the options for adding air conditioning in our classrooms.

As for the climate (71.6 percent good or excellent), the primary areas of concern for parents/guardians are the effectiveness of PBIS and handling of disciplinary issues; while the primary area of concern for staff is morale. For discipline, the board adopted a new policy and the administration drafted new guidelines and forms to ensure that we adhere to the law, create a secure, trusting environment for students, and keep the children of Oak Park safe. However, we will continue to seek out ways to improve our system for handling disciplinary issues. For PBIS, we will continue to seek out strategies for improving the overall effectiveness of the program and communicating with families how it is impacting our students both in and out the classroom. For morale, we will identify additional ways to celebrate/promote the accomplishments of our staff members, highlight/recognize their contributions to our schools, district and community, and help them feel like they are valued members of the team.

Board of Education

The ratings of the day-to-day performance for the Board of Education on the short form of both surveys was good—69.6 percent of parents/guardians rated it as good or excellent and 61.2 percent of staff members rated it as good or excellent. In addition, the board was rated high in the area of professionalism on the long form of both surveys—65.4 percent of parents/guardians rated this area as good or excellent and 66.7 percent of staff members rated it as good or excellent. However, the overall rating of the board's performance by parents/guardians and staff members (58.9 percent good or excellent) reflect the importance of identifying ways the board can improve its relationship with both groups.

One of the potential barriers to accomplishing this goal is the fact that most people either don't attend board meetings (67.8 percent of parents/guardians and 26.3 percent of staff members) or only attend them on an annual basis (16.1 percent of parents/guardians and 39.1 percent of staff members). The board has taken steps to overcome this obstacle by attending more monthly PTO meetings, participating in more school and community events, and seeking ways to communicate more directly/engage in dialogue with citizens and staff members. It has also asked the administration to look into the cost and logistics associated with webcasting or podcasting its meetings so the information is more readily accessible to everyone.

While decisions by the board may not receive universal support from parents/guardians and staff members, having a better understanding of the reasons why they were made, which can be accomplished by improving

accessibility, responsiveness and the timeliness of communications, might help strengthen the board's relationships with both groups.

Superintendent

The superintendent, like the Board of Education, was rated high in the area of professionalism on the long form of both surveys—66.7 percent of parents/guardians rated this area as good or excellent and 62.2 percent of staff members rated it as good or excellent. In addition, he received good ratings on his day-to-day performance on the short form of the parent/guardian survey (63 percent good or excellent), and in the areas of responsiveness (60.5 percent good or excellent) and timeliness of communications (60.2 percent good or excellent) on the long form of the parent/guardian survey. However, also like the board, the overall rating of the superintendent's performance by both groups (53.7 percent good or excellent), as well as the ratings he received for support (22.9 percent good or excellent) and collaboration (21.8 percent good or excellent) on the long form of the staff survey, highlight that steps need to be taken to cultivate stronger, more effective partnerships with stakeholders.

He has already taken several significant steps this year, including leading the effort to implement the International Baccalaureate program at the middle schools, spearheading a comprehensive district-wide systems audit, forming a Technology Advisory Committee comprised of parents/guardians and staff members, and continuing to foster and support the integration of the Parent Educator Partnership program in all 10 schools. With that said, maintaining an open, productive dialogue with the district's bargaining units, groups such as Education Council, Administrative Leadership and PTO Council, community organizations, etc., and continuing to find ways to give people a voice and an active role in fulfilling the mission and vision for the district, will be critical for ensuring that these steps generate positive, successful results long term.

Central office departments

An average of 72.8 percent of people who took the survey collectively rated the overall day-to-day performance of the district's central office departments as good or excellent. The individual departments also received high ratings in several categories, including:

- 84.6 percent of the people who completed the short form of both surveys rated the business office's day-to-day performance as good or excellent
- 85.7 percent of the people who completed the short form of both surveys rated the communications department's day-to-day performance as good or excellent
- 83.1 percent of the parents/guardians who completed the short form of the survey rated the human resources department's day-to-day performance as good or excellent
- 80.7 percent of the people who completed the short form of both surveys rated the special education department's day-to-day performance as good or excellent
- 85.2 percent of the parents/guardians who completed the short form of the survey rated the teaching and learning department's day-to-day performance as good or excellent
- 81.5 percent of the parents/guardians who completed the short form of the survey rated the technology department's day-to-day performance as good or excellent

While these percentages are good, the departments identified the need to improve in the following areas to garner higher overall levels of support from both groups:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Visibility
- Accessibility

- Responsiveness

In addition, they determined that they must continue finding ways to educate people about their roles and responsibilities in the district because there were respondents who stated that they knew very little about the departments and, as a result, found it difficult to accurately rate/assess them.

Efforts to communicate

While 77.5 percent of the parents/guardians who completed the survey rated the district's efforts to communicate with them as good or excellent, 68.3 percent of the staff members rated them as good or excellent. This highlights the need for us to continue talk to staff members and work with them to identify ways to effectively keep them updated and informed about what is happening in the district.

Technology plan

Of the people who completed both forms of the survey, 58.7 percent of them rated the effectiveness of the district's five-year technology plan as good or excellent. The newly formed Superintendent's Advisory Committee, which will be comprised of key district employees and citizens who have an interest and expertise in technology, will be charged with reviewing the technology plan and offering guidance regarding how it can be modified to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our students and staff. This committee will also help direct the district's long-term vision for technology, and provide insight and strategic thinking on issues such as the effective integration of technology in the classroom.

Academic programs

Of the people who completed both forms of the survey, 88.2 percent of them rated the district's academic programs as good or excellent. Moving forward, we will monitor and assess how the implementation of the Common Core State Standards at all 10 schools and the International Baccalaureate program at the middle schools will impact the overall quality of these programs.

Strategic plan

Of the people who completed both forms of the survey, 48.7 percent of them rated the district's five-year strategic plan as good or excellent. A number of parents/guardians answering the survey were new to the district and did not know much about the plan. In addition, several people (parents/guardians and staff) highlighted the important accomplishments that resulted from the strategic plan (implementation of full-day kindergarten, introduction of PBIS, redesign of the Web site); while others felt the plan was too complicated, long and aspirational to be effective. There were also some staff members who felt the district could have done a better job of communicating the status/progress of the plan. The superintendent is currently working on a plan to move the district from a model of strategic planning to one of strategic thinking. This plan will be presented to the board later in the year.

Food Service

Of the parents/guardians who completed the survey, 39.3 percent of them rated the district's food service program as good or excellent. The results highlighted that there is a divide among parents/guardians about the need to/benefits of offering healthier, more nutritious options at lunch. Some parents/guardians appreciate the effort to offer options that are healthier/more nutritious, but believe more can/should be done (e.g., offer more organic and/or locally grown food); while others believe the focus on health and nutrition has diminished the quality of the food, which is why their children won't eat it. Several parents/guardians also believe the portion sizes are too small. In addition, some individuals requested that the district offer for more allergy-friendly options (e.g., gluten free). We will continue to work with our families, staff and District 200, who is our food service provider, to improve the overall quality of our lunch program.

Transportation

Of the parents/guardians who completed the survey, 61.6 percent of them rated the district's transportation program as good or excellent. There were a number of positive comments about the overall quality of the program, especially the service offered on the special education buses. Several parents/guardians gave positive feedback about the driver on their child's bus, while others believe the quality of the drivers is inconsistent. In addition, some parents/guardians believe maintaining discipline is an issue on some of the buses. Like the food service program, will continue to work with our families, staff and Lakeview, who is our transportation provider, to improve the overall quality of our program.

Climate survey

As in years past, the 2011-2012 version of the climate survey provided us with valuable feedback about the district's programs, schools, departments and personnel. It highlighted a number of our strengths (academic programs, quality of teaching and instruction, etc.), as well areas for improvement (timeliness of our communications, effectiveness of the technology plan, etc.). However, it also raised questions about whether this survey remains an effective long-term solution for helping us accurately assess critical issues in our schools and district as a whole. For example, as we mentioned in the survey results section on page three of this report, the total number of parents/guardians who participated in the process this time was down 37.8 percent from when we administered the climate survey in 2009; while staff was down 32.8 percent. These figures also represented the lowest rate of participation during the last five years. Although we cannot pinpoint the exact reason for the decline, it is possible that one or more of the following factors may have contributed to it:

- Tendency for people who are generally satisfied not to take surveys
- Survey fatigue in the district and community as a whole
- The timing of the survey
- Overall belief in the effectiveness of surveys

In addition, the State of Illinois is developing a mandatory learning climate survey that will be administered in conjunction with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. This may eliminate the need for us to conduct our own climate survey. If we do decide to continue using the climate survey to solicit feedback from our stakeholders, there are several questions we need to answer:

- Should we move to the use of a climate survey that is more data driven and focused on metrics and measurables?
- Will we need to make our climate survey compatible with the state's mandatory learning climate survey?
- Is there a way for us to better utilize the results from the survey to celebrate successes, make improvements, set goals, etc.?
- Should we continue to alternate when we administer the surveys—parents/guardians and staff one year and students the following year?
- Should we continue to make the survey evaluative in nature or change the focus altogether?
- Should we continue to offer short and long forms of the survey?

Although there are several decisions we need to make prior to the administration of the next climate survey, we want to thank the nearly 1100 people who took the time to fill the one out for the 2011-2012 school year. We appreciate your time, your feedback and your continued commitment to our schools and the students we serve.