



*A Community of Learners*

## **Informational Memo: 2016 Annual Survey**

TO: School Board  
Trisha Kocanda, *Superintendent*

FROM: Kate Hughes, *Communications & Community Relations Coordinator*

June 8, 2016

### **Overview & Background**

The Winnetka Public Schools conducts an annual survey to gather feedback from community members, parents, and staff to assess progress toward goals that require annual monitoring. To provide accurate trend data, many questions in the 2016 community/parent and staff surveys remained consistent with the 2014 and 2015 surveys. However, updates and additions were made in 2016 so the surveys would more closely measure progress toward goals outlined in the revised Strategic Plan and Shared Vision.

The 2016 Survey was open from April 18-30, 2016. A total of 330 Parent surveys, 51 Community surveys, and 170 Staff surveys were completed. In 2016, 11 more staff members completed the survey than in 2015, but the response from parents and community members was significantly lower than last year. There was a 58% lower response from community members who are not parents (51 total), and a 28% lower response from current parents (330 total). The District received anecdotal information that community members may feel survey fatigue after completing other recently conducted surveys pertaining to civic matters. Another possible reason for a lower response rate is that, in the past, postcards were mailed to remind the community about the survey. This year, an insert announcing the survey was included in *Learners*.

Due to an extremely low response rate, of only 51 community members who are not current parents, quantitative data is inconclusive for this demographic. Past quantitative data from community members is included in the 2016 Survey Summary for historic reference, and qualitative data from this group was analyzed and incorporated into the 2016 Survey Summary.

## **Quantitative Findings**

Parent satisfaction has been consistent for four years; 70% of parents report that they are highly-satisfied/satisfied with District 36. Staff satisfaction decreased by 8% and increased by 6% in the neutral category.

Parents continue to report higher satisfaction with both financial management and financial communication than staff. Parent satisfaction in these areas has increased in 2016, whereas staff satisfaction has decreased.

Parents and staff are more satisfied with the Board's overall performance, fiscal management, and response to feedback than they were in previous years.

Staff and parents were asked about consistency, reporting, and conferencing. The question on consistency was revised in 2016 to provide insight on consistency in specific grade-levels. Only parents whose children are currently enrolled in each grade answered the question, providing baseline data for deeper analysis in the future. Additionally, more detailed questions regarding parent/teacher communication on growth and achievement were asked, also contributing baseline data that will be used to measure progress in this area. Satisfaction regarding conferences decreased in the K-4, 5-6, and 7-8 categories. Satisfaction with elementary school conferences continues to remain higher than at the middle school level.

## **Qualitative Findings**

The Parent, Staff and Community Surveys included open-ended responses. This type of question allows respondents to supply additional information and insight to provide more context and nuanced information.

There were a total of 143 comments from parents, 31 comments from community members, and 82 comments from staff. These comments were reviewed and analyzed to identify themes (10 mentions or more). Themes include Curriculum & Instruction, Progressive Education, Recruiting & Retaining Staff, Communication, and Financial Management. Please note that not all respondents commented and the individual comments are kept confidential ("All responses will remain anonymous and individual comments will not be reported publicly").

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Response</i>
<p><u>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</u></p> <p>34 parents and community members specifically mentioned desire for improved consistency from grade-to-grade and classroom-to-classroom, primarily at the middle school level. Reading/Language Arts (13 comments) and Math (16 comments) were the most frequent content areas discussed. There were 13 comments from staff, parents, and the community regarding Kindergarten, which unanimously advocated for a full or extended day program in D36.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting meetings with Barry Rodgers, Director of Innovation, Teaching, and Learning, as well as each Principal to address findings specific to each school;</li> <li>• Continued focus on Reading &amp; Math in 2016-2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Findings from the Math Program Evaluation will be shared this fall in order to pinpoint areas of improvement;</li> <li>- 28 Parent Education events on math and reading were hosted in 2015-2016, and these events will remain a priority in 2016-2017;</li> <li>- New reading curriculum will be implemented in 2016-2017 and progress will be measured.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Plan for an Extended-Day Kindergarten program implementation, which the D36 Board approved for 2017-2018</li> </ul>
<p><u>Progressive Education</u></p> <p>46 comments from parents, staff, and community members referenced Progressive Education and indicated their support for this model. Some respondents noted that they are concerned that the District may move away from Progressive Education practices. 31 comments from parents, staff, and community members advocated for balancing this practice with an increase in evidence of growth &amp; achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to infuse best practices for Progressive Ed in the 21st century into classroom instruction</li> <li>• Focus on hiring and retaining staff who are committed to a progressive philosophy, including gathering evidence of student learning.</li> <li>• Provide increased Parent Education opportunities on this topic</li> <li>• Work with teachers to enhance communication regarding student growth &amp; achievement</li> </ul>
<p><u>Recruiting &amp; Retaining Staff</u></p> <p>26 parents, staff, and community members indicated that hiring and retaining high-quality teachers and administrators is a priority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback to Human Resources for continued monitoring</li> <li>• Develop a recruiting plan to attract top educators.</li> <li>• Support administrators with job demands and expectations to retain top talent</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collaborate with WEA regarding working condition improvements</li> </ul>
<p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>The most common reference to communication was regarding parent/teacher interaction. 17 parents expressed a desire for more detailed, frequent, and consistent communication on growth and achievement from teachers. 12 parents referenced conferences, asking for more time and in-depth discussions. 8 staff noted a desire for additional parent education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on improving the consistency in teacher/parent communication</li> <li>The District is planning an enhanced Parent Education Program to support teachers in communicating pertinent topics.</li> <li>Ask each school to gather feedback on conferencing from parents to better understand needs and desires, with focused attention at Washburne.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Financial Management</u></p> <p>9 parents and 1 staff member commented that they prefer the District to dedicate finances to building improvements rather than tax relief.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to align financial philosophy with decisions by balancing the need to maintain aging facilities with the commitment to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars remains a priority to the Board</li> </ul>

## Recommendation

Since response rates decreased significantly in the Parent and Community categories, the District consulted several experts, as well as four neighboring Districts, in order to gather insight to inform future survey efforts. Three neighboring North Shore Districts primarily conduct issue-based surveys, whereas one district offers a full survey on a rotating basis with a “mini survey” that addresses key issues. Research and Marketing experts\* consulted unanimously agreed that survey participation has decreased universally, leading to the need for more forms of communication surrounding a survey, and short (5 minutes or less) surveys tend to lead to higher participation.

In order to better increase response rates, it is recommended that the District conduct the full survey on a less frequent basis (such as every other year) in order to collect and compare historical data, but utilize shorter surveys when needed for decision-making purposes. Moving forward, communication efforts surrounding District surveys will be expanded in order to garner more participants (i.e. working with other local government organizations in order to publicize the survey), and it is recommended that the response window be expanded to allow for more time to access the survey.

[Click here for the full 2016 Survey Summary.](#)

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