

Plainville School Climate Surveys: June 2017 Op Ed
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In an effort to identify areas of strength and growth within our school district, Plainville Community Schools collects annual survey feedback from many stakeholder groups including; students, parents, staff, faculty and administrators. These surveys, designed in cooperation with Panorama (a private company that manages survey development, collection, analysis and reporting) cover many topics related to the school culture and perception of stakeholders. These topics include relationships between children, relationships between district professionals, relationships between students and teachers, school safety, growth mindset and additional culture and climate measures. Survey results provide insight to each school, central office and our school system as a whole. These surveys also provide specific feedback to individual educators across much of the school district as a method of identifying areas for celebration and growth, and areas for future goal development.

It is accurate to state that Plainville Community Schools' survey results have traditionally been extremely positive, and serve as a source of pride in the work our educators do every day on behalf of their students. This year, the results revealed similar and even improved outcomes in many areas in comparison to past years. Given our consistently positive results, we are reaffirmed that we have the very best professionals working with our students to bring about continuous improvement within all schools. We are optimistic that we have developed a positive culture and climate within our schools, and culture and climate are very important.

Well-known organizational management consultant Peter Drucker wrote, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast!” By this, he meant that without a positive culture and climate, organizations are unable to successfully implement positive change. Without the ability to implement a strategic plan, organizations are unable to move toward their identified goals. This is particularly critical in the area of education and certainly relevant to Plainville Community Schools.

Our most recent district strategic planning process, orchestrated by our central office administrative team and involving members from many constituency groups (Board of Education, Town Council, Connecticut State Representatives, district faculty and staff members from each school, parents, graduates and students) resulted in the adoption of a district Strategic Plan that sets our focus over the next 3-5 years. Within this plan, there are many ambitious and rigorous goals that require teamwork and all sails of the ship being blown in the same direction. Positive culture and climate within our schools serves as the wind in these sails and the driver of change.

Fortunately for Plainville Community Schools, our district and schools’ culture and climate is very positive. Surveys are administered to all elementary school students in grade 3 and up, to all middle school and high school students, parents, faculty members, staff and administration. From these surveys, trends are studied, positive results celebrated, and plans are made to address continued areas of growth.

Survey questions each have several answer options that are separated into either “favorable” or “unfavorable” responses. Most responses showed very favorable perceptions including the following data points:

99% favorable rating for “Staff-Leadership Relationships”

98% favorable rating for overall “School Climate” ratings

96% of students rate “Teacher-Student Relationships” as favorable

94% favorable rating for “Family-School Relationships”

94% of students believe their teacher holds them to high expectations

93% of students believe they are able to persevere through setbacks to achieve their goals (perseverance is critical!)

Some identified areas of focus relate to relationships between students, student perceptions of school safety and feelings of belonging. While the favorable responses on these topics increased in the percent from last year, there remains room for growth. Specific to the safety questions, one area that will continue to need attention is related to “cyber bullying,” or mean-spirited behavior expressed online to one another. This is a chronic issue across our nation so parents are urged to monitor student use of technology at home to the greatest degree possible. Technology is a wonderful tool for learning and a necessity in our world, but efforts must continue to monitor responsible use.

Plainville maintains a District Climate Committee, including Assistant Superintendent Steven LePage, school administrators and key members from

each school who will continue to address identified areas of concern related to school climate. This is done through the development of proactive measures and programs to improve school climate and target identified areas of concern. According to state law, each school maintains and regularly revisits a Safe School Climate Plan, which is also an area of focus for this committee's review and planning.

Finally, results from teachers related to the feedback they receive about their teaching and the value of our current teacher evaluation plan were less favorable, which was not surprising to the central office team. The Plainville Teacher Evaluation and Development Plan (PTED) was determined to be an area for improvement during the Strategic Planning process, and significant changes have been drafted by a committee of more than 20 district representatives who worked on revisions throughout the spring months. The new plan will provide more options and rich opportunities for peers to provide feedback to one another and for teachers and certified personnel to gain valuable insight from both peers and administrators. We are excited for the opportunities within the revised plan (pending State of Connecticut approval over the summer).

In summary, the recent survey results provide significant evidence to support that Plainville Community Schools have a very positive climate and continue to improve. Plainville has wonderful schools, programs, personnel and students and we will continue to use information available to us to make our school district the very best it can be.