



Division of Accountability & Research

Classified Staff Climate Survey **Executive Summary** **2007-2008**

Research has shown that the professional climate of an organization influences its outcomes. Climate can be defined as behaviors within a workplace or learning environment that can influence whether an individual feels personally safe, listened to, valued and treated fairly and with respect. In order to help evaluate the professional climate in the Aurora Public Schools as perceived by employees, a survey was administered to classified staff in January of 2008.

Methodology

A 31 item climate survey was initially presented to all APS classified staff May of 2007. The survey questions were developed by a volunteer group of classified personnel in conjunction with the Classified Employees Council. The survey was conducted for the second time in January of 2008. The 2007 survey was revised and now reflects 34 total items. A total of 772 classified staff responded to the survey reflecting a completion percentage of 41% (2006: 39% response rate).

The items that are new to the 2008 survey include:

1. I am satisfied with the professional development opportunities provided by the district.
2. There's a positive relationship between my professional association and the district.
3. I believe the mentoring program is beneficial for students.

Summary of Results

Results of the survey are grouped into five areas:

- Clarity of Purpose
- Communication
- Trust and Respect
- Work Environment
- Morale

Responses were analyzed at the district level only.

Clarity of Purpose. For clarity of purpose of work, staff responded that they were familiar with the VISTA 2010 Plan (71% agreed) and that they understood their role and responsibilities as an employee of APS (92% agreed). Staff also agreed that their work is important and contributes to the success of the VISTA 2010 Plan (78% agreed) along with the perception that everyone in the school community is accountable for the academic success of students (77% agreed). There was also high agreement in regard to knowing how their work relates to the district goals and priorities (75% agreed). Staff responded relatively less positively in regard to the belief that the district sets high and realistic expectations for students (60% agreed).

Communication. In the area of communication, the majority of the staff reported that clear goals and objectives have been defined for their job (68% agreed) and just over half reported they are encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services (53% agreed/26% disagreed). Two of the four items under communication had agreement rates below 50%. Specifically, staff did not strongly agree that administrators/supervisors share information with employees (48% agreed/32% disagreed) and 41% agreed (24% disagreed) that decisions made in APS are based on communicated data and information.

Trust and Respect. Regarding an overall atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, 50% agreed and 29% disagreed with the statement, “There is a spirit of *teamwork and cooperation* within APS” with a greater percent of staff agreeing that there is a *professional atmosphere* for staff working in APS (60% agreed/19% disagreed). Staff expressed low agreement when asked if they are able to influence decisions that are made by the district (38% agreed/ 28% disagreed) but responded more positively when asked about influencing decisions at their site (51% agreed/25% disagreed) and feeling free to express their professional opinions at work (55% agreed/28% disagreed). Also, staff responses were mixed when asked about trusting those who make district decisions (38% agreed/ 28% disagreed) while they expressed higher levels of agreement for trusting decision makers within their school/department (51% agreed/25% disagreed).

Work Environment. The majority of staff agreed that they have the necessary tools to do high quality work efficiently (68%) and that their work environment is safe (78%). Other relative strengths in the area of overall work environment were noted for receiving the necessary training to do high quality work (62% agreed), being treated with respect (65% agreed) and receiving fair performance evaluations (75% agreed). A lower percentage agreed with the idea of fair and consistent treatment at their worksite (50% agreed) and the belief that their ideas and suggestions are respected (52% agreed).

Morale. The majority of staff agreed with the statements intended to reflect morale in APS. Staff indicated that they like the work that they do (95% agreed), that their job is important (96% agreed), they are proud of their work (97% agreed), and they are generally satisfied with their job (78% agreed). Although high morale was reported, they do not always feel appreciated for the work they do (67% agreed).

Between-Year Change. The majority of survey items had an improvement in percent agreement between years. Fifteen of the items had increases of at least 5% in agreement. Similarly, for most items, the rate of disagreement declined. The only items that failed to show improvement were all related to clarity of purpose. The modest declines (1%-2%) were related to items asking about familiarity with the VISTA 2010 plan, the belief of one’s work being important (and contributes to the VISTA 2010 plan), and everyone in the school community being accountable for the academic success of students. It should be noted that the items with declines all had agreement rates exceeding 70%.

New Items for 2008. The three items that were implemented for the first time in 2008 revealed the following: First, relatively mixed levels of satisfaction were expressed in regard to the professional development opportunities provided by the district (49% agreed/26% disagreed). Respondents also expressed a limited belief in a positive relationship existing between their professional association and the district (49% agreed/11% disagreed). Finally, 74% of classified staff respondents with a mentee agree or strongly agree that it is beneficial for students.

Conclusions

The perceptions held by all stakeholders can influence school outcomes. It is generally accepted that the opinions and perceptions held by staff have the greatest impact on professional climate. The results presented in this report should be viewed with caution as perceptions typically are developed over time and can require a significant period of time to change.

Several positive aspects of professional climate in APS were reported by staff. These aspects included understanding and supporting of the APS vision, understanding how their work is important and contributes to the success of the VISTA 2010 Plan, and having the necessary tools to do high quality work efficiently. In addition, staff indicated they like their work, they think their job is important and they are generally satisfied with their job. It was also shown that the overall climate for classified staff has improved between years.

While positive aspects of professional climate were reported, there are specific areas of professional climate that need to be monitored and followed-up on. These include but are not limited to: Being encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services; receiving information to do their job; feeling free to express their professional opinions; and feeling that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.