*Licensed* **Staff Climate Survey**
**Executive Summary**
**2007-08**

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 the Licensed Staff in January of 2008.

## Methodology

A 42 item climate survey was presented to all APS Licensed Staff in January 2008. The survey questions were originally developed in the spring of 2007 by a volunteer group of teachers, administrators and professional/technical staff in conjunction with the Aurora Education Association. For 2008, six additional questions were added to the survey in order to provide perception data on several VISTA 2010 initiatives. At the time of the survey, 2,024 licensed staff was employed by APS. A total of 1,811 staff completed the survey for a completion rate of 90%.

The items that are new to the 2008 survey include:

(1) I believe the district has become more effective in meeting he needs of ELL students.
(2) My school has effective plans in place to assist ELL students.
(3) I believe the level of support for Art programs has increased within the district.
(4) I believe the level of support for Music programs has increased within the district.
(5) I believe the level of support for Physical Education has increased within the district.
(6) There's a positive relationship between my association (AEA, CEC, etc.) and the district.

## Summary of Results

Results of the survey are grouped into six areas:
- Clarity of Purpose
- Communication
- Trust and Respect
- Work Environment
- Morale
- Support for Programs

Responses were analyzed both at the district and school levels.

**Clarity of Purpose.** For clarity of purpose of work, agreement percents continued to be the highest for all areas of the survey. Staff responded positively that they were familiar with the VISTA 2010 Plan

(86% agreed) and that they understood the long-term vision of APS (86% agreed). Staff also agreed that they know how their work relates to the district's goals and priorities as stated in the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan (79% agreed), that they support the educational direction of APS (62% agreed) and that they believe APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement (60% agreed). Overall agreement percents in this area were up 0.2% to 7.4% noting that agreement percents for most questions started relatively high.

**Communication**. Agreement rates improved 9.9% to 16.5% for internal communication in APS. This area is still noted as a general area of challenge with staff less than 50% agreeing with the statements, "I am encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services" (47% agreed) and "I am comfortable in stating my opinions about APS programs even if I disagree with an approach being taken" (37% agreed). Staff agreed more often with the statement, "Administrators and supervisors share the information I need to perform my job" (65% agreed) and "Performance evaluations are fair in my school" (63% agreed).

**Trust and Respect.** Trust and respect was another area of the survey that recorded significant improvement in agreement rates (3.2% to 12.6%) although disagreement rates remain in a range of 31% to 62%. Regarding an overall atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, 43% agreed that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within their school and 30% agreed there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within APS (another 25% responded 'neutral'). Staff frequently disagreed that they are able to influence decisions that are made by the district (63% disagreed) and at their site (41% disagreed/44% agreed).

Staff provided mixed responses to a question on trusting other staff who make decisions that affect them at the district level (39% disagreed/28% were neutral/33% agreed) and on trusting staff who make decisions that affect them at the school level (36% disagreed/47% agreed). A majority of staff agreed with the statement that they were trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction (58% agreed) with roughly another one-third of staff disagreeing with the statement.

A new question under trust and respect was, "There's a positive relationship between my association and the district." The majority of staff agreed with this statement (57%) and another 27% answered neutral.

**Work Environment.** In the area of work environment, some of the largest gains in agreement percents were noted (2.8% to 17.6%). The majority of staff responded that they work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained (85% agreed) and that there are adequate security measures in place at their site (74% agreed). Other relative strengths in the area of overall work environment were noted for having sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials/resources (72% agreed), having sufficient access to instructional technology (70% agreed), and receiving both district professional development that provided strategies that staff could incorporate into instruction (district 56% agreed/school 60% agreed).

In regard to decision making, more respondents agreed than disagreed that decisions both at the district and school level are based on adequate student data and information (49% agreed/24% neutral/27% disagreed for the district: 56% agreed/19% neutral/25% disagreed for school sites). Staff also agreed more often than disagreed that decisions made at their site are based on the best interests of students (52% agreed/32% disagreed) and that they had opportunities to participate in school planning and decision making (60% agreed/25% disagreed).

Mixed responses were noted for schools having an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems (38% disagreed/42% agreed). Staff also gave mixed responses to statements that they

are empowered to help solve problems (37% disagreed/46% agreed), and that there is consistent enforcement of rules for student conduct (41% disagreed/47% agreed).

**Morale.** Significant improvement in the agreement percents were also seen on statements intended to reflect moral in APS (6.1% to 18.9%). These statements included: "I would encourage someone to work for APS" (48% agreed/25% were neutral); "I feel appreciated for the work I do" (55% agreed/15% were neutral); "There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation at my site" (52% agreed/17% were neutral); and "There is a professional atmosphere for staff working at my site" (64% agreed/14% were neutral).

**Support for Programs.** Five new questions were added to the survey under support for programs. Overall, a large percent of respondents answered 'neutral' to these questions indicating they either had no opinion or did not believe they had enough information to answer the questions. For ELL students and programs, 38% agreed that the district has become more effective in meeting the needs of ELL students while 29% responded neutral. At the school level, results were more positive, with 46% agreeing and 26% responding neutral. For Art programs, almost half of the respondents answered neutral (49%) and 25% agreed that the level of support for the programs has increased. For increased support to Music programs, 51% responded neutral and 23% agreed. For the Physical Education program, 47% responded neutral and 29% agreed that support for the program has increased.

## 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 (of causes) typically are developed over time and can require a significant period of time to change.

With a second year of the climate survey administration, positive change in the perceived climate within APS was noted. Increase in the percent of staff agreeing to statements was recorded for virtually all questions. The greatest agreement rates continue to fall in the areas of clarity of purpose, work environment and morale.

While positive aspects of professional climate were reported, there are specific areas of professional climate that continue to need monitoring and follow-up. These include but are not limited to: Trust that staff can state opinions either for or against current policies/programs; trust in the process and in the people who are making both district and school level decisions; empowering staff to be a part of an effective process for making group decisions and problem solving; and consistency in the enforcement of rules for student conduct.