



Division of Accountability & Research

Administrative & Professional Technical Staff Climate Survey Executive Summary 2009

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, treated fairly, and with respect. In order to help evaluate the professional climate in the Aurora Public Schools as perceived by employees, the third annual survey was administered to the administrative and professional technical staff in January of 2009.

Methodology

A 27 item climate survey was presented to all APS administrative and professional technical staff in January 2009. The survey questions were adapted from questions 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. The survey has since been administered in both January 2008 and January 2009. A total of 281 staff completed the survey for a completion rate of 100%.

Changes to the 2009 Survey

A few changes were made to the Admin-PT survey from the 2008 administration. Five questions were reworded to more accurately capture the opinions of staff and questions related to support for educational programs were omitted. The program questions concerned district support of art, music, physical education, and ELL programs which the survey review committee deemed the majority of respondents could not address. Supporting their position was data from 2008 that showed the majority of respondents answered "neutral" indicating a potential lack of knowledge regarding such issues. Finally, an additional question was added that asked, "I understand the roles and responsibilities of the APS Board of Education".

Summary of Results

Results of the survey are grouped into five areas:

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

Responses for this report were analyzed at the district level only. In addition to agreement/disagreement percents, changes to percents are reported by question for differences from the previous survey of greater than or equal to 5%.

Clarity of Purpose. For clarity of purpose of work, agreement percents are consistently high. Staff responded positively that they understood the long-term vision of APS (90% agreed) and that they know how their work relates to the district's goals and priorities as stated in the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan (85% agreed). Staff also responded that they support the educational direction of APS (85% agreed; +5%) and believe APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement (74% agreed).

Communication. In the area of communication, the majority of staff agreed with the statement, "Administrators and supervisors share the information that I need to perform my job" (74% agreed) and "Performance evaluations are fair" (86% agreed). Staff disagreed more often with the statements "I am encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services" (20% disagreed/66% agreed) and "I am comfortable in stating my opinions about APS programs" (31% disagreed/52% agreed) or issues facing APS (31% disagree/52% agreed; -8%).

Trust and Respect. Regarding an overall atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, 55% of staff agreed they trust the staff who make decisions that affect them at district level (21% responded neutral). Staff provided mixed responses to questions about an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within APS (30% disagreed/49% agreed) and the perceived ability to influence decisions that are made by the district (36% disagreed/39% agreed).

Work Environment. In the area of work environment, staff reported that their work sites were safe (92% agreed). The majority of staff also agreed that they are empowered to help solve problems (62% agreed), that decisions made in APS are based on adequate student data and information (64% agreed), and that district professional development has provided them with strategies for their work (64% agreed). Also, 72% of staff agreed that their principal/supervisor has a clear understanding of the challenges they face in their job.

In regard to questions about support from the District Leadership Team, 68% (+9%) of respondents agreed that the DLT effectively supports building administrators as they work to implement VISTA 2010; while 53% agreed (26% disagreed;+11%) that the DLT has an adequate awareness of issues at the building level; and 56% agreed (+10%) that the DLT effectively addresses issues brought forth from building administrators. Approximately 20% of respondents answered 'neutral' to these questions which is likely due to being unfamiliar with what the DLT function and roles are. For the district Board of Education, 80% of survey respondents said they understand the roles and responsibilities of the BOE.

Morale. The area of morale is an area of the survey which respondents agreed to questions at relatively high rates. These statements included: "I would encourage someone to work for APS" (74% agreed/18% were neutral); "I feel appreciated for the work I do" (68%); there is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation at my site (79%); and there is a professional atmosphere for staff working at my site (85%). A final question

asking “There’s a positive relationship between my association and the district” saw significant improvement between 2008-09 with 65% agreeing (+24%).

Between-Year Change. Fifty-nine percent of survey items (i.e., 13/22) had improvement in percent agreement between years. For four of those items, the rate of agreement increased by at least 5%. The largest improvements were in regard to the DLT and its ability to support building administrators (+9%) and effectively addressing issues brought forth by administrators (+10). The items with declines in agreement were more limited. The single significant decline (>5%) was for the statement, “I am comfortable in stating my opinions about issues facing APS” (-8%).

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.

The greatest agreement rates for administrative and professional technical staff fell in the areas of clarity of purpose and morale. While many positive aspects of professional climate were reported, there are specific areas of professional climate that need monitoring and follow-up. The areas include the overall atmosphere of trust and mutual respect with APS, the perception that staff can influence the decisions that affect them, and the comfort of staff with the expression of opinions related to APS programs and issues.

Table 1. Admin. & PT Climate Survey (2009): % Agreement with Between-Year Change

Item	Ag./SA	Change
1. I understand the long-term vision of APS.	90.0%	-1.5%
2. I support the educational direction of APS.	85.0%	4.9%
3. I know how my work relates to the districts goals and priorities as stated in VISTA 2010.	85.0%	-3.0%
4. I believe APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement.	73.6%	-4.4%
5. Administrators/supervisors share the information I need to perform my job.	74.1%	2.3%
6. I am encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs and services.	65.7%	-1.8%
7. I am comfortable in stating my opinions about APS programs*	52.5%	-4.3%
8. I am comfortable in stating my opinions about issues facing APS*	52.3%	-7.6%
9. I trust the people that who make district decision that affect me.	55.2%	3.0%
10. I am able to influence the decisions that are made by the district.	38.9%	1.4%
11. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within APS	48.9%	1.8%
12. District professional development has provided me with strategies for my work*	63.9%	--
13. I believe decisions made in APS are based on adequate student data and information.	63.5%	-1.7%
14. I would encourage someone to work for APS	73.8%	-3.2%
15. There is a positive relationship between my association and the district*	65.2%	23.8%
16. I understand the roles and responsibilities of the APS Board of Education	80.0%	--
17. Employees are empowered to help solve problems.	61.8%	-3.2%
18. My principal/supervisor has a clear understanding of the challenges I face.	72.4%	--
19. Staff work in a site environment that is safe.	91.5%	--
20. I feel appreciated for the work that I do.	68.0%	1.8%
21. There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation at my site.	78.5%	4.2%
22. There is a professional atmosphere for staff working at my site.	85.4%	4.2%
23. My performance evaluations are fair	86.3%	2.6%
24. I believe the mentoring program was beneficial for my mentee.	54.4%	--
25. The DLT effectively supports building administrators as they work to implement VISTA 2010	67.9%	9.0%
26. The DLT has an adequate awareness of issues at the building level	53.3%	2.2%
27. The DLT effectively addresses issues brought forth from building administrators.	55.9%	9.5%

Note. All responses of "not applicable" were omitted from this analysis. DLT: district leadership team. *: question abbreviated for report. 2008: n=212. 2009: n=281. --: indicates that the question is new since last year or has been modified thus preventing between-year comparisons.