



Classified 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 classified staff in January of 2009.

Methodology

A 33 item climate survey was presented to all APS classified staff in January 2009. The survey questions were developed by a volunteer group of classified personnel in conjunction with the Classified Employees Council. A total of 1203 staff completed the survey for a completion rate of 70% (2008: 41% response rate).

A few changes were made to the classified staff survey from the 2008 administration. An item was omitted from the survey, "I am familiar with the VISTA 2010 Plan" and an additional question was added that stated, "I am familiar with the functions of the Classified Employees Council". In addition, two questions were modified to make their meaning more transparent.

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, staff responded that they understood their role and responsibilities as an employee of APS (89% agreed). Staff also agreed that their work is important and contributes to the success of the VISTA 2010 Plan (80% agreed) along with the perception that everyone in the school community is accountable for the academic success of students (79% agreed). There was also high agreement in regard to knowing how their work relates to the district goals and priorities (73% agreed). Staff responded less positively in regard to the belief that the district sets high and realistic expectations for students (67% agreed; +8%).

Communication. In the area of communication, the majority of staff reported that clear goals and objectives have been defined for their job (73% agreed; +5%) and just over half reported they are encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services (59% agreed; +6%/ 22% disagreed). Two of the four items under communication had agreement rates at or below 50%. Specifically, staff did not strongly agree that administrators/supervisors share information with employees (50% agreed/ 30% disagreed) and that decisions made in APS are based on communicated data and information (48% agreed; +6%/19% disagreed; -5%).

Trust and Respect. Regarding an overall atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, 58% agreed (+8%) and 24% disagreed with the statement, “There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation.” A slightly higher percent of staff agreed that there is a professional atmosphere for staff working in APS (63% agreed/15% disagreed; -5%). Staff expressed moderate agreement when asked if they felt free to express their professional opinions at work (57% agreed/ 23% disagreed; -5%). Also, staff responses were mixed when asked about trusting those who make district decisions (45% agreed; +7%/ 24% disagreed) while they expressed higher levels of agreement for trusting decision makers within their school/department (54% agreed/23% disagreed).

Work Environment. The majority of staff agreed that they have the necessary tools to do high quality work efficiently (67%) and that they feel safe in the workplace (81% agreed). Other relative strengths in the area of overall work environment were noted for receiving the necessary training to do high quality work (63% agreed), being treated with respect (67% agreed) and receiving fair performance evaluations (74% agreed). A lower percentage agreed with being treated fairly and consistently at their worksite (53% agreed) and the belief that their ideas and suggestions are respected (56% agreed). Another question asked under work environment was modified for 2009 and asked if staff is satisfied with the professional learning opportunities provided by the district. The percent agreement was 51% with 25% disagreeing and 25% responding neutral.

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 (93% agreed), and they are generally satisfied with their job (80% agreed). Although high morale was reported, they do not always feel appreciated for the work they do (68% agreed).

Between-Year Change. The majority of items (i.e., 73%) showed small improved agreement between years. For six of those items, the rate of agreement increased by at least 5%. The percent of items with declines in agreement were very limited and all changes were under 5%.

New Item for 2008. A single item was added to the 2008-09 Classified Staff survey. The item, “I am familiar with the functions of the Classified Employee Council”, was proposed by the CEC to get a measure of the familiarity that classified staff have with the CEC. The results indicated that 44% were familiar with their functions (agreed or strongly agreed) while 21% weren’t familiar (disagreed or strongly disagreed).

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 overall climate for classified staff has shown Improvement between years along with a significant increase in the survey return rate.

Several positive aspects of professional climate in APS were reported by staff. These aspects included understanding how their work is important and contributes to the success of the VISTA 2010 Plan, and a belief that everyone in the school community is accountable for the academic success of students. In addition, staff indicated that clear goals and objectives have been defined for their job, that they like their work, they think their job is important and they are satisfied overall with their job.

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: administrators/supervisors sharing information with staff; feeling that all employees are treated fairly and consistently; trusting people who make decisions that affect them; and believing decisions are based on communicated data and information. In addition, over half of the employees are not familiar with the functions of the Classified Employee Council and do not agree there is a positive relationship between the CEC and the district.

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

Item	Ag./SA	Change
1. APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement.	73.8%	4.4%
2. I understand my roles and responsibilities as an employee of APS	88.8%	-2.9%
3. I know how my work relates to the district's goals and priorities as stated by VISTA 2010*	73.2%	-1.4%
4. My work is important and contributes to the success of the VISTA 2010 plan	79.7%	1.6%
5. The district sets high and realistic expectations for students	67.1%	7.5%
6. Everyone in the school community is accountable for the academic success of students	79.0%	2.1%
7. Administrators/supervisors share information regularly with employees	50.3%	2.4%
8. Clear goals and objectives have been defined for my job	72.8%	5.1%
9. I am encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services*	59.0%	6.0%
10. Decisions made in APS are based on communicated data and information	47.5%	6.2%
11. I trust the people who make decisions that affect me in the district	44.9%	6.6%
12. I trust the people who make decisions that affect me in my school/department	54.4%	3.0%
13. There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation	57.9%	7.8%
14. I feel free to express my professional opinions at work	57.1%	2.1%
15. I feel valued as an employee of APS	58.8%	3.3%
16. There is a professional atmosphere for staff working in APS	63.4%	3.7%
17. I am treated with respect	67.2%	2.0%
18. My ideas and suggestions are respected	56.1%	3.8%
19. I receive the necessary training to do high quality work	63.1%	0.8%
20. My supervisor supports and encourages me to participate in district committees*	50.8%	1.2%
21. I have the necessary tools to do high quality work efficiently	66.8%	-1.3%
22. My principal/supervisor has a clear understanding of my skills and abilities	68.2%	-1.5%
23. My performance evaluations are fair	74.2%	-1.1%
24. Employees are treated fairly and consistently at my site	52.8%	3.3%
25. I feel safe in the workplace	80.6%	3.0%
26. I like the kind of work I do	93.2%	-1.5%
27. My job is important	93.0%	-2.7%
28. I am proud of the work I do	96.1%	-1.1%
29. I feel appreciated for the work I do	67.8%	0.9%
30. I am satisfied with my job	80.2%	2.5%
31. I am satisfied with the PD opportunities provided to me by the district	50.9%	--
32. There's a positive relationship between the CEC and the district*	44.4%	--
33. I am familiar with the functions of the CEC	43.8%	--

Note. All responses of "not applicable" were omitted from this analysis. 2009: total n=1203. --: indicates that the question is new since last year or has been modified thus preventing between-year comparisons.