



Department of Accountability & Data Reporting

APS Administrative & Professional/Technical Staff Climate Survey 2017-18

February 2, 2018

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings:

- The majority of Administrative and Professional staff continue to express a relatively high level of satisfaction concerning staff climate, with the current year overall agreement rate at 62% (versus 56% last year) and the overall disagreement rate of 18% (versus 24% last year)
- There were no substantial changes in agreement ratings from the prior year except that there was significantly greater agreement with "I feel my work is aligned to the work of the district's goals within the strategic plan: APS 2020: Shaping the Future". There were several 5-year declines in agreement including for one question on understanding of the Board of Education's responsibilities and four questions on program support from district divisions.
- Areas of strength included clarity of vision (including related to the strategic plan), work conditions, and emergency preparedness; questions in these areas had high agreement rates.
- Challenge areas included trust, communication, and program support by district divisions, as well as district professional learning.

Recommendations for increasing ratings on challenge items:

- Communicating to Admin/PT employees on how the APS2020 strategic plan will *lead to* improved achievement can address ratings on the district having a clear direction for improving achievement. Such communications would benefit by including both anecdotal stories and quantitative research evidence on the link between having a plan and student achievement.
- Two-way communication opportunities such as monthly open coffee meetings with district leadership including the Superintendent and Chiefs (on a rotating basis) and quarterly town hall meetings for all staff may help address concerns that staff would like opportunities to have their perspectives heard and addressed. These actions could also address morale-related concerns on having positive relationships between district and school leaders, as well as perceptions of program support from district divisions.
- Related to the above, additional transparent sharing on decisions and explanations for decisions can increase trust.
- Additional data collection on staff professional development needs and following that with adjustments to PD opportunities could address ratings on district PD as well as result in higher ratings on trust.
- Creating expanded authority by engaging employees in decision-making processes (e.g., involvement in choice and development of a common district-wide interim assessment) can lead to increased trust.

Administrative & Professional/Technical Staff Climate Survey Report (2017-18)

Why is Climate Important?

- Research has shown that the climate of an organization can improve teaching and learning, increase student engagement in curriculum and the classroom, and lead to positive relationship development and positive behaviors. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes school climate as an indicator of school success (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, 2016).

How Was the Survey Developed and Administered?

- The tenth annual Administrative & Professional-Technical staff survey was administered in November and December 2017. The survey is typically administered in January and February but was conducted two months earlier to provide results for district and school leaders and staff at an earlier time-point to enable leadership to take action during the school-year.
- The survey was distributed to all administrative and professional/technical staff via email and administered through a confidential on-line survey tool.
- Survey questions were originally developed in 2008 with input from the School Executives Association (SEA), staff focus groups, district leadership, and the Division of Accountability and Research. The questions were designed to reflect attitudes related to clarity of vision, communication, morale, program support, trust, and work conditions.
- Two new questions related to the strategic plan were added to the survey this year:
 1. I am aware that the “APS 2020” Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring every student will have a plan for the future, skills to implement his/her plan, and credentials that open doors.
 2. My work supports the district in achieving APS 2020 Strategic Plan goals.

Who Completed the Survey?

- A total of 257 surveys were completed, which represented 67% of the 347 administrative & professional-technical staff in the district. The total percentage of staff responding to the survey in the past six years can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Admin-PT Survey: Historical Percent Response Rates

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
96%	75%	75%	65%	81%	78%	67%

- The lower response rate was likely due in part to the change in timing. Staff are accustomed to completing the survey after the winter break. Although the response rate is lower, the advantage of fielding the survey before winter break is that it provides earlier delivery of results to leadership enabling action during the school-year.
- Of the 231 respondents who indicated their position, the majority of the respondents (48%) selected “Professional/Technical” as their job classification. Assistant Principals made up 18% of the respondents, similar to last year. Compared to last year, the sample was comprised of a slightly larger proportion of Non-Principal Administrators (19% vs 15% last year) and a smaller proportion of Principals (15% vs 18% last year). There were 26 participants who did not select a specific job classification.
- The category for years of APS service with the largest number of respondents was the 11 to 20 year range (28%), followed by the 2-3 year range (21%) (see Table 2). There was a decrease in the percentage employed twenty or more years from 12% of respondents in 2017 to 8% of respondents in 2018.

Table 2. Length of Service within APS

Length of Service	Percent	Count
First Year	9.8%	22
2-3 Years	21.3%	48
4-6 Years	16.4%	37
7-10 Years	16.9%	38
11-20 Years	27.6%	62
20+ Years	8.6%	18

Note. 32 participants failed to identify the number of years they had been employed by the district.

Survey Results: Overall

- The survey items have remained relatively consistent between years allowing us to perform a simple longitudinal examination of overall results. All items are aligned, so agreement indicates favorable outcomes. Table 3 illustrates the overall agreement rates for the past two years.

Table 3. Overall Survey Agreement Rates

% Disagree/Strongly Disagree			Neutral %			% Agree/Strongly Agree		
2016-17	2017-18	Change	2016-17	2017-18	Change	2016-17	2017-18	Change
24.2%	18.2%	-6.0	19.8%	19.8%	0	56.1%	62.0%	+5.9

- The table above indicates that overall district agreement rates increased between 2016-17 and 2017-18 (+5.9 percentage points). This change is not considered significant using an effect size model.

Survey Results: Individual Items

- Overall, 20 of 38 items (53%) exceeded a 60% agreement rate, (see Table 4, below) which is an increase over the previous year's percentage of 44% of items. Of these 20 items, four were in the clarity of vision category, four were in the morale category, and most of the remaining were in the safety and work conditions categories. Of the 13 items with agreement rates less than 50%, six of the items were in the program support category, two of the items were in the morale category, four items were in the trust category, and one item (related to district meetings and professional learning) was from the work conditions categories.
- Summaries of results on each domain are provided below with bullet points.
- Arrow bullets below indicate recommendations for improvements as informed by survey findings.

Clarity of Vision/Strategic Plan

- Clarity of vision questions, including questions on the understanding of, and alignment of work with the strategic plan, were a strength.
- Compared with last year, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who reported that they feel their work is aligned to the strategic plan (77.6% versus 66% last year – effect size of 0.25).
- Four of the five clarity of vision items—including the two new items related to the APS2020 strategic plan—had very high agreement rates (75% or higher). These results contrast with the relatively low agreement (51.4%) rate for the vision-related question “APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement”.
- These results suggest that more communication is needed on how the APS2020 strategic plan will *lead to* improved achievement. It may be helpful to include in these

communications both anecdotal stories and quantitative research evidence on the link between having a plan and student achievement.

Communication

- Responses to questions on communications suggest that this is an area of challenge. Three of the four questions—all related to the employee's feeling that they can share their idea or opinions-- had agreement rates below 65%. In contrast, one of the four questions—"Administrators/supervisors share the information I need to perform my job" had an agreement rate above 65%.
- This suggests that while staff are receiving necessary information, they would like opportunities to have their perspectives heard and addressed. Opportunities such as monthly open coffee meetings with various district leadership (on a rotating basis) and quarterly town hall meetings for staff may help address these concerns.

Morale

- There were mixed results on questions related to morale.
- Four of the eight questions had agreement rates above 65% ("I understand the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Education." "I feel empowered to help solve problems"; "I feel appreciated for the work I do" and "There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect between principals in APS".) These aspects suggests strengths in Admin/PT staff feeling empowered and appreciated, trust between principals, and understanding the BOE functions.
- On the other hand, four morale-related questions had agreement rates below 65%. Specifically, these were questions related to feeling that district professional development can be applied within one's work, believing the district uses student data to drive decision-making, recommending APS as a place to work, and a positive relationship between the district and school executives.
- The findings related to professional learning suggest that additional qualitative data gathering may be useful to better pinpoint Admin/PT professional development needs and desires.
- Low agreement with the perception that student data drives decision making may mean that more work is needed on using student data to drive instruction, and that there is a need for increased communication about the many ways in which student data already is driving policy and instruction in the district.
- Findings on low agreement with recommending APS as a place to work may be driven by other domains in the climate survey. Thus, addressing these other domains may improve this rating. Additionally, it may be helpful to conduct

additional qualitative research to better understand other possible concerns not currently measured, for example employee benefits.

- Increasing town hall meetings or other opportunities to engage with district leadership may help address lower ratings on the positive relationships between district and school leaders.

Trust

- Results on perceptions of trust showed this is a particular area of challenge among Admin/PT staff. Fewer than 40% of respondents agreed with each of the four questions related to trust (trusting the people who make decisions affecting staff, feeling that there is trust within APS, and two questions related to being able to influence district decisions).
- Increasing two-way communication opportunities may help address these Admin/PT staff concerns as transparent sharing on decisions and explanations for decisions can increase trust. (Henderson Brower, 2017)
- Creating expanded authority by engaging employees in the decision-making process (e.g., involvement in choice and development of a common district-wide interim assessment) can lead to increased trust. (Henderson Brower, 2017)
- Investing in employee development is another avenue for increasing feelings of trust. (Henderson Brower, 2017)

Program Support

- Support from district divisions was an area of challenge. Fewer than 60% agreed with each question, and fewer than 50% agreed with the questions other than the item relating to support services.
- Increased two-way communications in the form of Town Hall meetings or rotating Chiefs' open coffee meetings (as suggested above) may increase executive's understanding of Admin/PT needs. Additionally, this could increase Admin/PT staff's understanding of currently available support provided by district divisions as well as the very real constraints faced by Chiefs.

1-Year and 5-Year Changes in Agreement

- Table 4 presents all agreement and one-year and five-year change rates by item for the 2017-18 survey. Although there were one-year changes in agreement for some questions, the effect size estimates indicate that only one change – the improvement of 11.2 percentage points in respondents feeling that their work is aligned to the strategic plan—was significant.
 - On the other hand, there were significant 5-year declines for four questions on program support (related to the Divisions of Support Services, Superintendent, Finance, and Human Resources) as well as a question on understanding the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Education.
- Recommendations for addressing low ratings on program support from district divisions are provided above under “program support”.

Table 4. Item Agreement Rates with Between-Year Change and Effect Sizes

		Agr/Str A..	1-Yr Chan..	5-Yr Chan..	1-Yr ES*	5-Yr ES*
Clarity of Vision	1 I understand the vision and mission of the Aurora Public Schools.	83.3%	2.5%	-1.7%	0.06	-0.05
	2 I believe APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement.	51.4%	11.9%	-5.7%	0.24	-0.11
	3 I am aware that the "APS 2020" Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring every student ..	87.0%	--	--	--	--
	4 I feel my work is aligned to the work of the district's goals within the strategic ..	77.6%	11.2%	--	0.25	--
	5 My work supports the district in achieving APS 2020 Strategic Plan goals.	79.3%	--	--	--	--
Communication	6 Administrators/supervisors share the information I need to perform my job.	68.2%	5.3%	1.7%	0.11	0.04
	7 I am encouraged to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or services ..	64.3%	4.4%	0.8%	0.09	0.02
	8 I feel have an avenue for providing suggestions on ways to improve program..	57.2%	8.1%	9.4%	0.16	0.19
	9 I feel safe in stating my opinions about issues facing APS even if I disagree with..	51.0%	9.9%	3.0%	0.20	0.06
	14 District professional learning I have participated in has provided me with strateg..	47.4%	3.0%	-7.1%	0.06	-0.14
Morale	15 I believe decisions made in APS are based on student data and information.	55.3%	9.9%	-4.6%	0.20	-0.09
	16 I would encourage someone to work for APS.	61.2%	14.3%	-4.2%	0.29	-0.09
	17 Based on my experience there's a positive relationship between School Executives ..	46.6%	9.3%	-9.6%	0.19	-0.19
	18 I understand the roles and responsibilities of the APS Board of Education.	66.1%	-1.9%	-11.4%	-0.04	-0.25
	19 I feel empowered to help solve problems.	69.7%	5.6%	4.0%	0.12	0.09
Program Support	23 I feel appreciated for the work I do.	65.1%	1.1%	-0.2%	0.02	0.00
	38 There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect between principals in APS.	71.4%	2.0%	-5.8%	0.04	-0.13
	28 The District Leadership Team has an adequate awareness of issues at my site.	39.7%	11.2%	-0.9%	0.24	-0.02
	29 The District Leadership Team effectively supports building administrators as t..	44.1%	14.0%	-1.5%	0.29	-0.03
	30 The Division of Equity in Learning effectively supports administrators as they ..	44.8%	13.3%	-3.4%	0.27	-0.07
Safety	31 The Division of Support Services effectively supports administrators as they w..	59.6%	3.3%	-14.9%	0.07	-0.32
	32 The Division of Finance effectively supports administrators as they work to imp..	48.2%	10.9%	-26.9%	0.22	-0.56
	33 The Division of Human Resources effectively supports administrators as they w..	44.8%	-3.2%	-17.3%	-0.06	-0.35
	34 The Division of the Superintendent effectively supports administrators as they ..	44.7%	10.5%	-16.0%	0.21	-0.32
	3.. I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: Lockdo..	91.0%	-3.0%	--	-0.11	--
Trust	3.. I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: tornado	91.4%	0.7%	--	0.03	--
	3.. I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: Fire Drill	94.0%	-1.5%	--	-0.07	--
	10 I trust the people who make district decisions that affect me.	35.8%	8.0%	-5.7%	0.17	-0.12
	11 I am given opportunities to influence the decisions made by the district.	36.3%	-2.1%	-7.6%	-0.04	-0.16

Table 4 (cont.)

		Agr/Str A..	1-Yr Chan..	5-Yr Chan..	1-Yr ES*	5-Yr ES*
Trust	12 I am able to influence the decisions made by the district.	24.6%	0.4%	-6.6%	0.01	-0.15
	13 There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within APS.	36.9%	10.1%	0.2%	0.22	0.00
	20 My principal/supervisor has a clear understanding of the challenges I face.	72.0%	-2.9%	2.5%	-0.07	0.05
	21 Staff work in a site environment that is safe.	86.4%	0.0%	3.8%	0.00	0.10
	22 Staff at my site respect people from different backgrounds and cultures	86.7%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.01	-0.01
	24 There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation at my site.	72.3%	-1.9%	0.4%	-0.04	0.01
	25 There is a professional atmosphere for staff working at my site.	78.1%	-2.2%	-2.0%	-0.05	-0.05
	26 The performance evaluation process is fair at my site.	76.9%	0.4%	1.5%	0.01	0.04
	27 Required District meetings and professional learning are differentiated enough..	40.1%	3.6%	--	0.07	--

References

1. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. (2016). Quick guide on making school climate improvements. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.
2. Henderson Brower H., Lester S.W., Lorsgarrd, M.A.(2017, July 5).Want Your Employees to Trust You? Show You Trust Them. Harvard Business Review, July 5, 2017. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/07/want-your-employees-to-trust-you-show-you-trust-them> on 1/31/18.