



Department of Accountability & Data Reporting

Classified Staff Climate Survey 2017-18

February 2, 2018

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings:

- The overall aggregate agreement rate decreased only slightly this year (69% versus 71% last year), indicating continued moderately high satisfaction among classified staff with the overall climate in APS.
- Individual item agreement rates experienced some change compared to last year but none were significant (based on effect size estimates).
- Areas of strength are related to the following: clarity of the district's vision, high morale, feeling enjoyment, satisfaction, and pride in work, seeing one's work as valuable and important to the district's goals, and feeling respected by supervisors and co-workers.
- Areas of concern continue to include perceptions of a lack of communication of information to employees, perceptions that the district has a plan for improving student achievement, trust in district decision-makers, feeling low satisfaction with professional development opportunities, and feeling a lack of influence on district decisions. Low ratings were also found for understanding the Classified Employees Council function and the relationships of the Council with the district.

Recommendations for improving ratings in challenge areas:

- Communication is needed on how the APS2020 strategic plan will *lead to* improved student achievement.
- Occasional district level town hall meetings with all staff in which decisions and the explanations for decisions are communicated could help address concerns about lack of communication and can increase feelings of trust. It could also be helpful for department or building level leaders to provide regular updates to employees on district and department decisions and policies.
- Sharing both survey results and leaders' plans for corrective actions (to improve ratings) with Classified staff can help improve ratings on trust, communications, and employee feelings that that they have little influence on the district. This could also help improve survey response rates which have declined in recent years.
- The findings related to professional development (PD) suggest that it may be helpful to gather additional information to learn more about classified staff-specific PD needs and desires.
- Also, additional data gathering may be needed to understand the perception that there is not a positive relationship between the Classified Council and district.
- The Classified Employees Council may benefit by providing additional communications to Classified staff to increase understanding of their function.

Classified Staff Climate Survey 2017-18 Report

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?

- As part of an annual 360 evaluation of the Aurora Public Schools (APS) climate, the eleventh annual Classified Staff Survey was administered in November and December 2017. The survey was distributed to classified staff via email to the APS Classified distribution list and administered through an on-line survey tool. It was also available as a paper and pencil, hardcopy instrument. Both surveys were anonymous.
- Survey questions were originally developed in 2007. The questions were developed with input from the Classified Employees Council, staff focus groups, district leadership, and the former Division of Accountability and Research. The questions were designed to obtain attitudes on clarity of APS's vision, communication, morale, program support, trust, and work conditions.
- One addition was made to the survey this year. A question related to the APS strategic plan was added:
 - 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.

Who Completed the Survey?

- A total of 809 surveys were completed with 88% submitted on-line. The percentage of responses to the survey represented 41% of the district's classified staff. This response rate was 5 percentage points lower than the survey response rate from the previous year. The total percentage of staff responding to the survey over the past five years can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Classified Survey: Historical Percent Response Rates

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	5-Yr Ch.
46%	43%	46%	44%	41%	-5%

- The number of staff responding to the survey has ranged from 46% to 41% over the past five years. Of the staff who responded to questions about job location and job classification, 75% indicated they worked at a school site. A total of 39% reported their position as para-

educator/educational assistant and 20% reported that they are administrative/secretarial support.

Survey Results: Overall

- The majority of survey items have remained relatively consistent between years allowing us to perform a simple longitudinal examination of overall results. All items are worded in such a way that agreement indicates favorable outcomes. Table 2 illustrates the overall agreement rates for the past two years.

Table 2. Overall Survey Agreement Rates

% Disagree/Strongly Disagree			Neutral %			% Agree/Strongly Agree		
2017	2018	Change	2017	2018	Change	2017	2018	Change
12.2%	12.7%	+0.5	17.0%	18.9%	+1.8	70.8%	68.5%	-2.3

- The data indicate that overall district agreement rates decreased slightly from the prior year. Additionally, there was a slight increase of 0.5% for the overall district disagreement rate. These changes are not considered significant.

Survey Results: Individual Items

- Overall, 26 of 46 items (57%) met or exceeded a 65% agreement rate and only seven items had agreement rates below 55%. Table 3 presents agreement and change rates by item within category.
- 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 is a strength with regard to classified employee’s perspectives. The majority of classified staff agreed with questions about the clarity of the district’s vision, as all items in this category exceeded 55% agreement, and six of eight exceeded 65%. Agreement was lowest (56%) on “the district sets high and realistic expectations for students”, but also relatively low on “APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement” (64%).
- These results suggest that more communication is needed on how the APS2020 strategic plan will *lead to* improved achievement.
- Given the double-barreled nature of the question on “the district sets high and realistic expectations for students”, it is unclear whether people believe that the expectations are not high enough or not realistic enough. We recommend this question be split into two separate questions on next year’s survey.

Communication

- Four of seven questions in the domain of communication had agreement rates exceeding 65%, including having clear job goals and objectives, feeling that one's supervisor encourages one to suggest ways to improve programs and services, and feeling that one's ideas are respected by supervisors and by co-workers.
- Agreement rates were lowest (47%) for the idea that decisions in the district are based on communicated data and information, and for the idea that department administrators/supervisors share information regularly with employees (56.4%).
- Results suggest it would be helpful to hold occasional town hall meetings with all staff in which decisions and the explanations for decisions are communicated. It would also be helpful for department level leaders at buildings to provide regular updates to employees on district and department decisions and policies.
- Results also suggest that leaders need to share survey results and their plans for corrective actions (to improve lower ratings) to employees including classified staff. This could also help improve response rates which have declined in recent years. Prior focus group findings (by the Division of Accountability and Research) suggest that low response rates among classified employees may be in part due to perceptions that survey results are not shared, nor corrective actions taken to address concerns raised in surveys.

Trust and Morale

- Overall, classified staff in APS consistently express strong agreement with items concerning morale. Staff responses met or exceeded 75% agreement rates on questions about enjoyment of work, satisfaction with job, belief that their job is important, taking pride in the work that they do, and feeling that they are treated with respect by their supervisor and co-workers.
- On the other hand, fewer than 40% agreed that they "trust the people who make decisions that affect me in the district" and that they are "given opportunities to influence decisions at the district."
- Trust and feelings of influence could be improved by having supervisors share survey results as well as actions planned to address low ratings on surveys.
- Additionally, town hall meetings either at the district or building level may be helpful in allowing staff to voice their concerns about decisions
- Results suggest a need to further understand these perceptions through additional qualitative data collection and use of such data to drive remedies. It may also be useful to identify specific sites with lower ratings on this measure in future years. This might be done by encouraging a higher response rate on the "site" question (perhaps by making it required) and removing the "required" question on respondent's position (to better protect confidentiality by site).

Program Support

- Results were mixed on questions related to program support and safety preparation.
 - Questions on safety preparation (feeling prepared to deal with lockdown, tornado, and fire drill) had agreement ratings above 85%. More than 65% of respondents agreed that they “have the necessary tools” to do “high quality work efficiently”.
 - Lower ratings were found for feeling encouraged by supervisors to participate in district committees (53%) and satisfaction with district professional development opportunities (50%).
 - There were also low agreement rates for questions on the Classified Employees Council (a positive relationship between the council and the district, and being familiar with the council’s functions). However, there were high rates of “neutral” response on these questions (49% and 38%, respectively) and low rates of disagreement (14% and 29%, respectively).
- Additional data gathering may be useful to better pinpoint classified staff professional development needs and desires. Also, additional data gathering may help to understand the low rates of agreement on the relationship between the Classified Council and district.
- The Classified Employees Council may benefit by providing additional communications to classified staff to increase understanding of their function.

Work Conditions

- Work conditions were an area of general strength for the overall sample. Five of nine questions had agreement rates above 65%. None of the questions on work conditions had disagreement rates over 25%.

1-Year and 5-Year Changes in Agreement

- Although changes in agreement rates were found compared to last year’s results, none of the changes were significant (based on effect size estimates).
- Only one question decreased significantly (from 46% to 33%, effect size=-0.28) since five years prior, which was “*I am familiar with the functions of the Classified Employees Council*”.
- Agreement increased significantly compared to five years ago for the question “*My work is important and contributes to the success of the district*” (from 77% to 90%; effect size=0.35).

Table 3. Item Agreement Rates with Between-Year Change

		Agr/Str. Agr	1-Yr Change	5-Yr Change	1-Yr ES*	5-Yr ES*
Clarity of Vision	Q1 APS has set a clear direction for improving student achievement.	64.0%	3.0%	-8.6%	0.06	-0.18
	Q2 I understand my role and responsibilities as an employee of APS.	90.3%	0.0%	0.5%	0.00	0.02
	Q3 I know how my work relates to the district's goals and priorities.	79.8%	0.1%	7.1%	0.00	0.17
	Q4 I am aware that the "APS 2020" Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring every student will h..	70.3%	--	--	--	--
	Q5 As part of the district's strategic plan, I understand how my work helps support student..	77.1%	-0.6%	--	-0.01	--
	Q6 My work is important and contributes to the success of the district.	89.6%	-2.6%	12.9%	-0.09	0.35
	Q7 The district sets high and realistic expectations for students.	56.0%	0.5%	-9.6%	0.01	-0.20
	Q8 Everyone in the school community is accountable for the academic success of students.	76.3%	-0.8%	-2.2%	-0.02	-0.05
Communication	Q9 Department administrators/supervisors share information regularly with employees.	56.4%	-0.2%	3.6%	0.00	0.07
	Q10 Clear goals and objectives have been defined for my job.	72.8%	-2.4%	0.4%	-0.05	0.01
	Q11 My supervisor encourages me to provide suggestions on ways to improve programs or s..	66.8%	-2.7%	2.9%	-0.06	0.06
	Q12 Decisions made in APS are based on communicated data and information.	47.2%	-0.4%	-3.0%	-0.01	-0.06
	Q16 I feel free to express my professional opinions at work.	64.2%	-1.5%	4.2%	-0.03	0.09
	Q21 My ideas and suggestions are respected by my supervisor.	69.3%	-2.8%	0.5%	-0.06	0.01
	Q22 My ideas and suggestions are respected by my co-workers.	75.0%	-2.8%	2.0%	-0.07	0.05
	Q23 I receive the necessary training to do high quality work.	64.4%	-2.4%	1.1%	-0.05	0.02
Program Support	Q24 My supervisor supports and encourages my desire to participate in district committees ..	53.4%	-4.2%	0.5%	-0.08	0.01
	Q25 I have the necessary tools I need to do high quality work efficiently.	68.8%	-2.1%	0.5%	-0.05	0.01
	Q40 I am satisfied with the professional development opportunities provided to me by the di..	50.1%	-3.9%	-2.8%	-0.08	-0.06
	Q41a I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: Lockdown	86.5%	-3.1%	--	-0.09	--
	Q41b I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: Tornado	85.8%	-1.7%	--	-0.05	--
	Q41c I feel prepared to deal with each of the following emergency situations: Fire Drill	91.3%	-1.8%	--	-0.07	--
	Q42 Based on my experience there's a positive relationship between the Classified Employe..	37.0%	-5.4%	-9.1%	-0.11	-0.18
	Q43 I am familiar with the functions of the Classified Employees Council.	32.6%	-6.1%	-13.6%	-0.13	-0.28
Trust & Morale	Q13 I trust the people who make decisions that affect me in the district.	39.5%	-0.2%	-5.0%	0.00	-0.10
	Q14 I trust the people who make decisions that affect me in my school/department.	56.9%	-2.1%	-0.8%	-0.04	-0.02
	Q17 I feel valued as an employee of APS.	59.2%	-1.8%	-1.4%	-0.04	-0.03
	Q19 I am treated with respect by my supervisor.	79.5%	-0.9%	2.6%	-0.02	0.06
	Q20 I am treated with respect by my co-workers.	80.0%	-4.2%	1.2%	-0.11	0.03
	Q26 I am given opportunities to influence decisions at my school/department.	55.4%	-2.0%	--	-0.04	--
	Q27 I am given opportunities to influence decisions at the district.	27.3%	-6.6%	--	-0.14	--
	Q35 I like the kind of work I do.	91.8%	-2.1%	-1.2%	-0.08	-0.04
	Q36 My job is important.	95.7%	-0.7%	0.9%	-0.03	0.04
	Q37 I am proud of the work I do.	96.8%	-0.8%	0.5%	-0.05	0.02
	Q38 I feel appreciated for the work I do.	69.9%	-1.4%	0.5%	-0.03	0.01
Q39 I am satisfied with my job.	78.2%	-3.6%	1.4%	-0.09	0.03	
Work Conditions	Q15 There is a spirit of teamwork and cooperation at my work site.	62.4%	-4.1%	3.1%	-0.09	0.06
	Q18 There is a professional atmosphere for staff working in APS.	64.1%	0.6%	-0.7%	0.01	-0.01
	Q28 My principal/supervisor has a clear understanding of my skills and abilities.	70.6%	-4.0%	-0.8%	-0.09	-0.02
	Q29 My performance evaluations are fair.	73.6%	-4.7%	-1.9%	-0.11	-0.04
	Q30 The process for performance evaluations is clear.	65.2%	-5.8%	--	-0.12	--
	Q31 The process for performance evaluations is being followed.	63.0%	-6.4%	--	-0.14	--
	Q32 Employees are treated fairly and consistently at my site.	57.3%	-4.3%	0.0%	-0.09	0.00
	Q33 Staff at my site respect people from different backgrounds and cultures.	78.6%	-2.8%	--	-0.07	--
Q34 I feel safe in the workplace.	79.8%	-2.7%	3.0%	-0.07	0.07	