

Kenilworth School District 38 – Faculty and Staff Survey 2013
Executive Summary

At the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year, the Kenilworth School District 38 Board of Education circulated a feedback survey to the faculty and staff of The Joseph Sears School for the second time. The survey was completed anonymously with an overall response rate approaching 100%. Sixty-eight staff members completed portions of the survey, not every person answered each question. In response to concerns raised by a few individuals after last year's survey that questions regarding length of service, grade-level and/or area of responsibility could affect the sense of anonymity of the respondents, it was decided to omit any demographic questions this year. Summary by question is as follows:

Q: This year as in previous years, some parents have advocated the Board of Education for a more rigorous curriculum. In general, do you feel Sears Students are sufficiently challenged?

Of the sixty-eight respondents to this question, 60 (88.2%) answered "Yes", and 8 (11.8%) answered "No". These responses compare to 80.4% "Yes" and 19.6% "No" of 51 respondents in last year's survey. Of this year's twenty-five verbatim comments on this question, the majority felt the curriculum was overall challenging. As was the case last year, several identified perceived inconsistencies in level of challenge across subjects or between grade levels. Several respondents expressed concerns that parents do not understand the distinction between a rigorous curriculum and differentiated instruction.

Q: In your opinion, are there specific grade levels or subject areas that are less rigorous than others?

There were 68 respondents, of whom 24 (35.3%) indicated "Yes" and 44 (64.7%) indicated "No". These responses contrast with responses last year to a similar question that asked whether there were some areas of the curriculum that should receive more or less emphasis. Last year's 51 survey respondents were 62.7 % "Yes" and 37.3 % "No." Of this year's 29 verbatim comments, seven mentioned science as an area in need of improvement.

Q: Do you have the administrative and pedagogical support to differentiate the curriculum to challenge the learners who have mastered the core curriculum?

There were 68 respondents, of whom 48 (70.6%) indicated "Yes" and 20 (29.4%) indicated "No." This was a new question this year so there is no prior year comparison. Of the 28 verbatim comments, ten referenced the need for a gifted coordinator.

Q: Is there any area of the curriculum that should have less emphasis?

Of the 68 respondents, 17 (25%) said "Yes" and 51 (75%) said "No." Of the 25 verbatim comments, six commented that time devoted to World Language should be decreased. Several others suggested less emphasis on eighth grade Social Science.

Q: Please indicate how satisfied you are with the following existing special programs.

	5 Very satisfied	4	3	2	1 Very Unsatisfied	Unsure
After-school clubs (i.e. Art Club, Science Olympiad, etc.)	30.9%	30.9%	10.3%	4.4%	0	23.5%
Lunch programs (i.e., Great Books, Chess Club, etc.)	39.7%	29.4%	10.3%	0	0	20.6%
English as Second Language (ELL)	22.1%	14.7%	7.4%	4.4%	1.5%	50%
RtI (Enrichment)	35.3%	36.8%	10.3%	7.4%	4.4%	5.9%
Individual Gifted Plans	17.6%	16.2%	16.2%	22.1%	11.8%	16.2%
Interscholastic Athletics	40.3%	25.4%	7.5%	3%	0	23.9%
Library Services	77.6%	14.9%	3%	0	0	4.5%
Technology Svcs(Ed)	69.1%	22.1%	7.4%	0	0	1.5%
Nursing Services	80.9%	14.7%	2.9%	0	0	1.5%
Student Services	62.7%	23.9%	7.5%	3%	0	3%
Psychological Svcs	69.2%	16.9%	4.6%	3%	0	6.2%
Social Work Svcs	55.9%	20.6%	11.8%	4.4%	0	7.4%
Speech Services	50%	19.7%	13.6%	1.5%	1.5%	13.6%
Technology (Hardware/Software)	62.1%	22.7%	7.6%	0	3%	4.5%

Percentages are based on a range of 65 to 68 respondents for each special program. Many of the responses are similar to last year; however there are several significant changes. The areas of Library Services, Technology Services (Educational support), Student Services (Grade level support), Psychological Services, and Social Work Services each showed gains of greater than ten percentage points in the Very Satisfied category. In contrast, the Individual Gifted Plans overall dissatisfaction rate (Dis-satisfied and Very Dis-satisfied) increased to 33.9% from 15.4% last year. A follow-up question asked those who were less than satisfied to indicate why. There were 25 responses. Eight individuals commented on the increased need for social work support based on student issues. Six had specific comments on the inadequacy of gifted programs. Several others were critical of the uneven distribution of laptops. Others mentioned ineffective enrichment time.

Q: Are there any services or programs that should be added?

There were 27 responses to this question, of which six (22.2%) indicated “No.” Seven (25.9%) respondents reiterated the desire for a gifted coordinator. Others indicated a desire for an increase in social work availability.

Q: Please indicate your satisfaction with other aspects of the Joseph Sears School:

	5 Very Satisfied	4	3	2	1 Very Unsatisfied	Unsure
Facilities and Space and Learning	24.1%	27.6%	20.7%	22.4%	3.4%	1.7%
Building and Campus Cleanliness	56.9%	29.3%	12.1%	1.7%	0	0
Communication within Grade/Dept.	60.3%	20.7%	8.6%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
Communication within School	31%	29.3%	25.9%	10.3%	3.4%	0
Communication with Parents	41.4%	43.1%	8.6%	3.4%	3.4%	0
September Curriculum Nights	51.7%	29.3%	5.2%	3.4%	0	10.3%
Structure of Parent/Teacher Conferences	37.9%	41.4%	13.8%	0	3.4%	3.4%
School Building Security	36.2%	36.2%	19%	3.4%	3.4%	1.7%
Student Discipline Policies	27.6%	20.7%	19%	13.8%	13.8%	5.2%
Timely Response by Administration	15.5%	19%	22.4%	20.7%	20.7%	1.7%
Parent Visitation Day	25.9%	34.5%	20.7%	5.2%	5.2%	8.6%
District Website	51.7%	36.2%	6.9%	1.7%	0	3.4%
Curriculum Renewal Process	25.9%	27.6%	17.2%	8.6%	5.2%	15.5%

These topics each had 58 respondents. The question regarding satisfaction with the District website is new this year. For the other questions, the percentages of respondents who were satisfied (Satisfied or Very Satisfied) are similar to last year. In contrast for several topics the percentages of respondents who were dis-satisfied increased significantly. Specifically, 25.8% of respondents this years were dis-satisfied (Dis-satisfied or Very Dis-Satisfied) with the facilities and space for learning, as compared to 15.2% last year. Greater than twenty-seven percent (27.6%) of respondents were dis-satisfied with student discipline policies, compared with 11.3% last year. Fully 41.4% of respondents were dis-satisfied with the timeliness of administrators' responses to concerns, compared to 15.1% last year.

Additionally this year, comments were specifically solicited for each topic. Of the 29 comments on adequacy of space, five referenced the need for a teachers' lounge, five others mentioned inadequate music space for increasing numbers of music students. Several others mentioned inadequate space for students requiring one-to-one assistance. Of the eighteen comments on building cleanliness, there was overall praise for Director of Building and Grounds, Mr. Moris Quijada, while at the same time, concern about the state of the restrooms. There was no consistency to the ten comments regarding communications within work groups. Of the seventeen comments related to intra-school communications, several raised concerns about

spelling and grammatical errors in written materials from the administration. Comments about communications with parents were mixed: several indicated a need for more boundaries, others praised relationships with parents. There were only eight comments about Curriculum Nights – all positive. Of the fourteen comments about Parent/Teacher Conferences, five would like to see changes made to the spring conferences. Several others expressed frustration that parents use the allotted conference times to extend family vacations, expecting teachers to be available at other times for “make-up” conferences. Of the 21 comments on building security, eight specifically mentioned appreciating the sign-in system. A few others commented that they have still encountered parents “roaming” the halls. Of the seventeen comments on Parent Visitation Day, seven felt it is disruptive; however, others felt it is a nice opportunity to showcase students. There were only seven comments on the District website – generally finding it improved, but still cluttered. Three questions generated a significant number of comments pointedly critical of the administration. In the area of student discipline, eleven of the 27 commenters indicated feeling unsupported by the Principal in the enforcement of discipline policies. Four other individuals commented that parents do not reinforce school policies with their children; rather they advocate the administration for special treatment. Both the Principal and Superintendent were identified in eleven of the 22 comments on timeliness (50%) as being inconsistent in the timing of their responses to emails from faculty. At the same time, several others commented positively on the responsiveness of the Principal. Others suggested that the “24 hour” rule that teachers use for response to parent communications be applicable to the administration. Of the eighteen comments on curriculum renewal, only two were positive. The other comments expressed concerns about leadership, numbers of meetings, (over)use of consultants, too much at one time, and too many initiatives.

Q: This year the Board of Education embarked on a strategic planning process which identified three principle goal areas: Curriculum, Communication, and Culture. Are you familiar with the Strategic Plan draft? Please indicate the top priority for each of the goal areas.

Of the 58 respondents to this question, 49 (86%) indicated that they were familiar with the Strategic Plan draft. Although there were 58 respondents to the question on the top priority for the Curriculum goal, many respondents replied “no comment” or stated that the curriculum is fine as it is. Of those who made a recommendation, eleven identified the Common Core State Standards alignment and training as a priority. Similarly, of the 58 respondents to the question on the top priority for the Communication goal, those who made recommendations were evenly split between transparency and timeliness. Of the 58 respondents to the question on the top priority for the Culture goal, those who made recommendations mentioned trust, lifelong learning, and positivity. Because some of the respondents interpreted the questions as asking them to rank order the three goal areas, it would appear that the questions on priorities were poorly worded.

Q: The Board of Education envisions a culture whereby all parties (community, Board, faculty, staff, administration, students, and parents) treat each other with respect. Please indicate your satisfaction with how you are treated by these entities.

	5 Very Satisfied	4	3	2	1 Very Unsatisfied	Unsure
Community	41.4%	39.7%	12.1%	3.4%	1.7%	1.7%
Board of Education	27.6%	43.1%	8.6%	5.2%	0	15.5%

Faculty	60.3%	31%	8.6%	0	0	0
Staff (Non-Certified)	60.3%	27.6%	6.9%	1.7%	3.4%	0
Administration	15.5%	37.9%	19%	13.8%	12.1%	1.7%
Students	46.6%	44.8%	6.9%	1.7%	0	0
Parents	29.3%	56.9%	10.3%	1.7%	0	0

Comments were individually solicited for each entity. There were 11 comments, all highly positive, related to community – six of which specifically referenced parents. There were 20 comments related to the Board of Education, five differentiated between the currently seated Board and the previous Board with greater general satisfaction for the current Board membership. Four others indicated that it was too soon to evaluate the newly seated Board. There were 12 comments about faculty – generally supportive of one another. The eleven comments regarding the non-certified staff were generally positive; however three comments mentioned concerns with front office staff. There were 17 comments regarding the administration – six of which lauded Dr. Libby Noell. Of the fourteen comments regarding students, several mentioned a behavior change for the worse for students upon entering the Junior High grades. Of the ten comments regarding parents, several commented on bullying behavior and sense of entitlement on the part of parents.

Q: The Board of Education envisions a culture whereby there is transparency in decision-making after careful consideration of alternatives. Please indicate your satisfaction with the transparency of deliberations and decision-making. If you are less than satisfied what one change would you recommend?

There were 58 respondents to this question: 8.6% Very Satisfied, 20.7% Satisfied, 41.4% Neutral, 13.8% Dis-satisfied, and 15.5% Very Dis-satisfied. The 25 verbatim comments were thoughtful and diverse. Although no two were entirely alike, themes which emerged include: asking for teacher input, informing teachers of issues and decisions rather than assuming they are aware of them, and discussing rationale behind decisions.

Q: Parents of Sears School students are intelligent, articulate, and assertive. To what extent are you satisfied with your interactions with parents? If you are less than satisfied, what one change would improve your level of satisfaction?

There were 58 responses to the question: 36.2% Very Satisfied, 46.6% Satisfied, 15.5% Neutral, 1.7% Dis-satisfied, None Very Dis-satisfied. Eight comments were made – all generally positive with no changes suggested.

Q: What do you consider to be the particular strengths of The Joseph Sears School?

There were 58 responses almost all of which mentioned the quality of the faculty. As was the case last year, there were also mentions of supportive community, eager students, and small class sizes.

Q: What areas should the District focus on for improvement, or what new programs, if any would you like to see implemented?

There were 58 responses to this question. Areas identified for improvement included stronger leadership from the Principal (12%), dedicated attention to gifted services (10.3%) and overall communication (8.6%). Several respondents (15.5%) indicated a desire for no new programs.

Q: For the past several years there has been discussion about the structure of the school day for students and faculty, including extension of the school day, consideration of reducing the lunch period for the junior high to increase instructional time providing for an Enrichment block and to provide common planning time for all teachers. Please provide your feedback on this topic.

There were 58 responses to this question, divided almost in half between those in favor of the change in schedule that had been proposed and those who were either opposed or unconvinced of the benefits. Some respondents offered alternatives to the proposed schedule including modification of the lunch period with retention of recess time, lengthening the school day without changing lunch, separating the primary grades from the junior high when considering scheduling. A few respondents specifically mentioned safety concerns with the current open lunch schedule.

Q: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements and describe how they could be improved.

	Always	Mostly	Inconsistently	Rarely
My supervisor provides regular, consistent helpful view of my performance	25.9%	19%	29.3%	25.9%
Personnel policies are administered consistently	19%	44.8%	24.1%	12.1%
Professional development is promoted for all	55.2%	29.3%	10.3%	5.2%
I am respected and my opinion is valued	29.3%	51.7%	12.1%	6.9%
I can express my view without fear of retribution	29.3%	43.1%	17.2%	10.3%

There were 58 respondents to these questions. These same questions were posed in last year's survey; however, based on feedback from the survey the response categories were changed from "Always/Sometimes/Never" to the four categories listed above. This change makes direct year to year comparison more difficult, nevertheless there appears to be a decline in the agreement with the statements regarding regular feedback on performance. This year's survey indicated 29.3% Inconsistently and 25.9% Rarely or Not at All compared to 33.3% Sometimes and 2.1% Never last year. Agreement with the statement regarding expression of opinion without fear of retribution may have shown some improvement with this year's survey indicating 17.2% Inconsistently and 10.3% Rarely or Not at All compared to last year's 29.8% Sometimes and 8.5% Never. Verbatim comments with four or more individuals responding alike included the following suggestions for improvement:

- ✓ Have the Principal spend more time in classrooms and engage teachers in improving instruction
- ✓ Ensure that the evaluation process measures actual performance and is administered consistently
- ✓ Bolster communication between teams and organize meetings to use time efficiently

Q: What single action could the Board of Education take to strengthen the academics at The Joseph Sears School?

There were 58 responses with wide-ranging suggestions. Topics mentioned by four or more respondents included:

- ✓ Strengthen leadership from the Principal
- ✓ "No new initiatives"
- ✓ Listen to the teachers and incorporate their input in decision-making
- ✓ Assign someone the role of Curriculum Director
- ✓ Hire an instructor for Gifted and Response to Intervention (RtI)

Q: On a scale of one to five, with five meaning highly satisfied, please rate your overall satisfaction with The Joseph Sears School.

Of the 58 responses, fifteen (25.9%) were highly satisfied, twenty-four (41.4%) were satisfied, thirteen (22.4%) were neutral, six (10.3%) were dissatisfied, and no one was highly dissatisfied. These results compare to 35.6%, 42.2%, 15.5%, 4.4%, and 2.2% respectively in last year's survey. Verbatim comments were made by 23 individuals with nine mentioning the toll exacted from the teachers from the instability and inconsistent leadership from the administration. At the same time, some of these same individuals and others as well expressed pride in being part of the Sears faculty.

The final question asked respondents to list any additional comments or suggestions. There were 24 comments, most with the general theme of enjoyment of teaching and gratitude for being able to work at Sears.

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