

Kenilworth School District 38 – Faculty and Staff Survey 2014

Executive Summary

The Kenilworth School District No. 38 Board of Education circulated its third annual feedback survey to the faculty and staff of the Joseph Sears School at the conclusion of the 2013-14 school year. The results of the survey are used by the Board of Education to assess progress against the Strategic Plan and to determine areas of strength and areas of potential concern. This year, seventy-eight members of the staff completed portions of the anonymous survey, although not every person answered every question. Overall the response rate approached 100%.

The results indicate a high level of engagement by the faculty and staff. Key highlights of the survey are:

- A high level of overall satisfaction with The Joseph Sears School
- Improvement in the level of satisfaction with communication within the school
- Improvement in the level of satisfaction with Individual Gifted Plans, although continued need identified in this area
- A significant increase in dis-satisfaction with Parent Visitation Day
- Improvement in the level of satisfaction with timeliness of administrators' response to concerns, although continued desire for attention in this area
- A decrease in satisfaction with interactions with parents
- Continuing dis-satisfaction with (in)consistent application of student discipline policies

Summary by question is as follows:

Q: In general, do you feel Sears Students are sufficiently challenged?

Of the seventy-six respondents to this question, 69(90.8%) answered "Yes", and 7 (9.2%) answered "No". Over the last two years, "Yes" responses have increased: 88.2% in 2013, 80.4% in 2012. There were no consistent themes in the eight verbatim comments.

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

There were 76 respondents, of whom 31(40.8%) indicated "Yes" and 45(59.2%) indicated "No". These responses compare to 35.3% "Yes" in 2013 and 62.7% "Yes" in 2012. In the sixteen verbatim comments this year, three or more respondents mentioned a need for increased emphasis on science, a need for more classroom time and less pull-out in 4th and 5th grade, and need for focus on grade-level transitions.

Q: This year, significant enhancements (facilities, teachers, IQWST curriculum, and dedicated full time facilitator) were made to the instruction in Science. Are you satisfied with these changes?

There were 76 respondents, of whom 37(48.7%) indicated “Yes”, 4(5.3%) indicated “No”, and 35(46%) indicated “Not Applicable”. This was a new question this year so there is no prior year comparison. Of the ten verbatim comments, there were no consistent themes.

Q: This year, the Math In Focus curriculum was fully implemented in grades K-5. Are you satisfied with these changes?

Of the 76 respondents, 31(40.8%) said “Yes”, 4 (5.3%) said “No”, and 41(54%) indicated “Not Applicable”. Of the nine verbatim comments, five praised the program and reported their students to be engaged and positively challenged. There is no prior year comparison.

Q: Was the professional development support helpful in preparing you for the Math in Focus implementation?

There were 76 respondents: 27(35.5%) “Yes”, 2(2.6%) “No”, and 47(61.9%) “Not Applicable”. Three of the six verbatim comments were positive; two offered different suggestions for improvement. There is no prior year comparison.

Q: When considering the specific curricular areas for which you are responsible, do you have the administrative and pedagogical support to differentiate the curriculum to challenge the learners who have mastered the core curriculum?

Of the 76 respondents, 44(57.9%) indicated “Yes”, 21(27.6%) “No”, and 11(14.5%) “Not Applicable”. Utilizing responses from only those respondents who considered the question applicable: 67.7% indicated “Yes” and 32.3% indicated “No”. These responses compare with 70.6% “Yes” and 29.4% “No” in 2013. The question was not asked in 2012. Of the seventeen verbatim comments, over half were critical of the level of administrative support. Several others remarked that there is insufficient support for the gifted learners in the primary grades.

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

Of the 76 respondents: 22(29%) “Yes”, 43(56.5%) “No”, and 11(14.5%) “Not Applicable”. These responses compare with 25% “Yes” and 75% “No” in 2013. Of this year’s 23 verbatim comments, twelve mentioned World Language as an area to be de-emphasized. World Language was identified in 2013 by six of 24 verbatim respondents. The question was not asked in 2012.

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

	5 Very satisfied	4	3	2	1	Unsure
After-school clubs (i.e. Art Club, Science Olympiad, etc.)	40.8%	19.7%	6.63%	4%	0	29%
Lunch programs (i.e., Great Books, Chess Club, etc.)	46.8%	26.3%	2.6%	0	0	25%
English as Second Language (ELL)	27.6%	9.2%	6.6%	4%	2.6%	50%
Rtl (Enrichment)	47.4%	22.4%	13.2%	4%	0	14.5%
Individual gifted plans	27.6%	15.8%	13.2%	6.6%	7.98%	29%
Interscholastic athletics	46%	21%	2.6%	0	0	30.3%
Library Services	75%	15.8%	4%	0	0	5.35%
Technology Svcs(Ed)	57.9%	26.3%	11.8%	0	0	2.6%
Nursing Services	80.3%	14.5%	1.3%	0	0	4%
Student Services	64.57%	22.4%	4%	2.6%	0	6.6%
Psychological Svcs	44.7%	17.1%	14.5%	9.2%	1.3%	13.2%
Social Work Svcs	52.6%	18.4%	10.5%	6.6%	1.3%	10.5%
Speech Services	47.4%	17.1%	11.8%	6.6%	0	17.1%
Technology (hard/software)	55.3%	29%	10.5%	1.3%	0	4%

Percentages are based on a 76 respondents for each special program and may sum to greater than 100% due to rounding. Many of the responses are similar to the last two years; however there are several significant changes. In 2014, the area of Individual Gifted Plan showed a gain of greater than ten percentage points in the combined Very Satisfied and Satisfied categories and a decrease of greater that ten percentage points in the combined Dis-satisfied and Very Dis-satisfied categories. Both areas of Technology Services showed a decrease of greater than ten percentage points in the combined Very Satisfied and Satisfied categories, with no change in the levels of dis-satisfaction. There was a greater than ten percentage point decrease in the Very Satisfied and Satisfied categories for Psychological Services, combined with a small increase in dis-satisfaction.

A follow-up question asked those who were less than satisfied to indicate why. There were 22 responses. Five individuals commented on difficulties with the part-time psychologist this year. Three others identified continuing deficiencies in the services for gifted learners, although improvement was acknowledged.

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

There were 28 responses to this question, of which eight indicated “No.” Five respondents indicated the desire for a gifted coordinator for the primary grades. Three respondents indicated a need for increased social work availability, a comment also made in 2013.

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

	5 Very sat.	4	3	2	1 Very dissat.	Unsure
Facilities and space for learning	17.7%	32.4%	30.9%	16.2%	1.5%	1.5%
Building and campus cleanliness	66.2%	27.9%	2.9%	2.9%	0	0
Communication within grade/dept.	54.4%	27.9%	7.4%	8.8%	1.5%	0
Communication within school	45.6%	33.8%	17.6%	2.9%	0	0
Communication with parents	51.5%	32.4%	8.8%	4.4%	1.5%	1.5%
September curriculum nights	47.1%	29.4%	13.2%	1.5%	0	8.8%
Structure of parent/teacher conf	39.7%	33.8%	14.7%	5.9%	0	5.9%
School building security	51.7%	30.9%	11.8%	5.9%	0	0
Student discipline policies	17.7%	33.8%	22%	14.7%	10.3%	1.5%
Timely response by admin	20.6%	35.3%	26.5%	8.8%	8.8%	0
Parent visitation day	16.2%	26.5%	20.6%	11.8%	14.7%	10.3%
District Website	54.4%	35.3%	8.8%	1.5%	0	0
Curriculum renewal process	23.5%	35.3%	13.2%	7.4%	4.4%	16.2%

These topics each had 68 respondents. For many questions, the percentages of respondents who were satisfied (Satisfied or Very Satisfied) are similar to last year. However, there are some significant differences. There were gains greater than or approaching ten percentage points in the satisfaction (Very Satisfied and Satisfied) with Communication within the school, School

building security, and Timely response by Administration to Concerns. In addition there was a twenty percentage point decrease in the levels of dis-satisfaction (Dis-satisfied and Very Dis-satisfied) with Timely response by Administration to Concerns as compared to 2013.

Satisfaction with Parent Visitation Day continues to decline: overall satisfaction in 2013 was 60.4% and dissatisfaction was 10.4%. There continues to be considerable dis-satisfaction with Student discipline policies, although not significantly different than responses in 2013.

Comments were specifically solicited for each topic. Overall there were fewer comments than in 2013. Of the 21 comments on adequacy of space, topics mentioned by three or more respondents include: inadequate classroom size and configuration, need for air-conditioning, absence of dedicated space for certain teachers and inadequate space for music. There were eight comments on building cleanliness; five specifically praised the Director of Building and Grounds and his team. There were fifteen comments regarding communications within work groups; need for common planning time was most frequently mentioned. Of the nine comments related to intra-school communications, there was acknowledgement of improvement but need for continued attention in this area. Of the eight comments about communications with parents, inappropriate communications (e.g. emails about playdates, absence of civility, venting, etc.) were mentioned by three or more respondents. There were no consistent themes to the seven comments on Curriculum nights. Of the nine comments about parent/teacher conferences, several expressed frustration that parents use the allotted conference times to extend family vacations, expecting teachers to be available at other times for lengthier “make-up” conferences. Of the nine comments on building security, five specifically mentioned improvements this year. There were seven comments on the District website – generally finding it improved. There were eleven comments on the Curriculum renewal process with the general themes of need for strong leadership and improvement in efficiency.

Three questions generated a significant number of pointedly critical comments. In the area of Student Discipline, fifteen of the nineteen respondents indicated inconsistent or absent application of policies by the administration, especially as regards junior high students. Others mentioned inconsistencies in enforcement of policies from one grade level to the next. The sixteen comments on Timeliness centered on the theme of slow or absent responses to emails. There were 21 comments on Parent Visitation Day, of which only three were positive. Three or more respondents felt that too much time was allotted, that many parents used the time to chat with their friends, that it was distracting and disruptive to teaching, and that it was difficult emotionally for children whose parents are not able to attend.

Q: This year the Board of Education implemented its Strategic Plan. Are you satisfied with the progress that has been made in the three goal areas: Curriculum, Communication, and Culture?

Of the 68 respondents to this question, 61(90%) indicated “Yes” and 7(10%) indicated “No”. There were eleven verbatim comments with three or more respondents identifying the need to improve overall culture.

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 Sat	(4) Sat	3	2(Dis-Sat)	1(Very Dis-Sat)	Unsure
Community	48.5%	29.4%	19.1%	2.9%	0	0
Board of Education	51.5%	32.4%	11.8%	1.5%	0	2.9%
Faculty	55.8%	29.4%	8.8%	5.9%	0	0
Staff (non-cert)	67.7%	25%	7.4%	0	0	0
Administration	38.2%	23.5%	22%	4.4%	11.8%	0
Students	48.5%	38.2%	13.2%	0	0	0
Parents	36.8%	36.8%	22%	2.9%	1.5%	0

Comments were individually solicited for each entity. There were 12 comments related to community –four of which specifically referenced concern about absence of respect from parents. There were ten comments related to the Board of Education with no consistent themes. There were nine comments about faculty – split between generally supportive of one another and concern about intra-staff bullying behaviors. There were only three comments regarding the non-certified staff. There were fifteen comments regarding the administration with a general theme of hopefulness regarding a fresh start with the new principal. There were six comments regarding students with no consistent themes. Of the twelve comments regarding parents, several commented on bad behavior by a minority 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 68 respondents to this question: 23.5% Very Satisfied, 39.7% Satisfied, 17.7% Neutral, 7.2% Dis-satisfied, and 8.8% Very Dis-satisfied. Two individuals (2.9%) indicated "Unsure". This is a marked gain in satisfaction over responses in 2013, which were 8.6%, 20.7%, 41.4%, 13.8% and 15.5% respectively. There were fifteen verbatim comments this year with no two entirely alike.

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 68 responses to the question: 32.4% Very Satisfied, 36.8% Satisfied, 22.1% Neutral, 2.9% Dis-satisfied, 1.5% Very Dis-satisfied. Three individuals (4.4%) indicated "Unsure". These results indicate a greater than ten percentage point decrease in satisfaction (Very Satisfied and Satisfied) in 2014 as compared to 2013. The results for 2013 were 36.2%, 46.6%, 15.5%, 1.7%, and no one very dis-satisfied, respectively. Eight comments were made in 2014— split between generally positive and concern regarding extremely vocal, over-involved parents.

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

There were 68 responses almost all of which mentioned the quality of the faculty. As was the case last year and the year prior, 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 68 responses to this question. Areas identified for improvement by at least three respondents included decreased principal turnover, dedicated teachers' lounge and collaboration space, and reassessment of time dedicated to core academics. Several respondents 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 and consideration of reducing the lunch period for the junior high to increase instructional time. Please indicate your satisfaction with the current school day. If you could make one change to the current school day, what would it be?

There were 68 responses to this question: 20.6% Very Satisfied, 36.8% Satisfied, 22.1% Neutral, 13.2% Dis-Satisfied, 5.9% Very Dis-Satisfied, and 1.5% Unsure. Of the 68 suggestions for change, sixteen explicitly identified a shorter lunch period. Other suggestions by three or more

respondents included an overall longer instructional day, creation of an academic support center, and incorporating performance music into the regular school day.

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	35.3%	25%	25%	14.7%
Personnel policies are administered consistently	23.5%	47.1%	23.5%	5.8%
Professional development is promoted for all	54.4%	33.8%	8.8%	2.9%
I am respected and my opinion is valued	36.8%	48.5%	10.3%	4.4%
I can express my view without fear of retribution	44.1%	38.2%	11.8%	5.8%

There were 68 respondents to these questions. These same questions were posed in last year's survey. Compared to 2013 there are gains of more than ten percentage points in the areas of consistent performance review and expression of view without retribution (Always and Mostly combined). There is also a greater than ten percentage point decrease in the ratings of Inconsistently and Rarely for those statements. The areas of consistent personnel administration and respect also showed gains but less than ten percentage point changes. The area of professional development was rated the same from 2013 to 2014. Verbatim comments with recommendations for improvement were made by 23 individuals with no consistent themes.

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

There were 68 thoughtful responses with wide-ranging suggestions. Topics mentioned by four or more respondents included:

- Listen to the teachers and incorporate their input in decision-making
- Structure school day to provide more time for instruction
- Continue emphasis on strong academics
- Set the tone for respectful culture

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

Of the 68 responses, 28(41.2%) were highly satisfied, 26(38.2%) were satisfied, eleven (16.2%) were neutral, three (4.4%) were dissatisfied, and no one was highly dissatisfied. These results compare to 25.9%, 41.4%, 22.4%, 10.3%, and zero respectively in 2013, and 35.6%, 42.2%, 15.5%, 4.4%, and 2.2% respectively in 2012. There were only six verbatim comments.

The final question asked respondents to list any additional comments or suggestions. There were 15 comments, most with the general themes of gratitude for being part of a strong faculty and for being able to work in a supportive community.