

Kenilworth School District No. 38-Annual Parent Survey 2012
Executive Summary

The Joseph Sears School Board of Education annually solicits community feedback in the form of a parent survey. Two forms of the survey exist, a long and a short version, and are sent in alternate years. In May of the 2011-12 school year, long version parent surveys were sent to 305 households representing 571 registered children. We received 279 responses which represents a notable increase from the 2010-11 short version survey.

We would like to thank all for participating. The full results of the survey are provided to each Board of Education member and are reviewed in detail by the Communication Committee. The feedback is highly valued as a tool for monitoring community opinion, preference and perception with regard to our school's educational culture and performance. The following summarizes the responses to the Annual Parent Survey.

1. Overall, how do you rate your child's school year? Parents were invited to answer the question for up to four children. The **average** ratings on the four point scale are depicted below:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion
47.9%	39.7%	9.0%	2.3%	0.9%

2. Please rate each of the following programs for each student. First, rate the curriculum and then rate the quality of the instruction your child(ren) has received. If the area of instruction does not apply to your student, please respond "Not Applicable". Parents were invited to answer the question for up to four children. The **average** ratings are depicted below:

Quality of Curriculum	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve A Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
Reading/Literature	34.2%	44.8%	15.9%	3.6%	0.1%
Grammar	21.1%	46.3%	20.6%	4.4%	7.6%
Spelling	24.6%	40.3%	19.8%	4.1%	11.1%
Writing Composition	32.8%	36.7%	16.9%	8.9%	4.8%
Literacy Intervention	27.2%	28.9%	11.5%	1.8%	30.5%
Mathematics	25.4%	40.2%	23.6%	8.2%	2.5%
Science	18.5%	37.3%	20.8%	16.0%	6.1%
Social Science	27.1%	45.3%	14.7%	3.4%	9.4%

Respondents who selected "Needs To Improve A Lot" were asked to provide detailed comments as to what they would like to see improve. The comments ranged on a variety of topics with the following areas most frequently cited: change/improve the science curriculum, strengthen/change the writing selections and increase the rigor of mathematics.

Items of note: The 2011-12 school year marked the end of the first full year of implementation of the Being a Writer program for grades K-5. This program provides continuity and consistency among and between grade levels. The 2012-13 school year will feature the piloting of the Math in Focus program in grades 2 and 4.

Quality of Instruction	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve A Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
Reading/Literature	53.3%	35.6%	8.2%	1.6%	1.6%
Grammar	41.4%	39.8%	5.8%	2.1%	6.7%
Spelling	39.9%	36.2%	11.5%	1.4%	11.1%
Writing Composition	47.7%	32.2%	12.2%	3.2%	4.6%
Literacy Intervention	37.6%	28.6%	7.9%	1.2%	23.8%
Mathematics	41.4%	36.6%	12.7%	6.2%	3.0%
Science	33.4%	37.4%	14.2%	8.8%	6.0%
Social Science	42.4%	37.8%	8.9%	2.1%	8.5%

Respondents who selected “Needs to Improve A Lot” were asked to provide detailed comments as to what they would like to see improve. The most frequent response focused on issues relating to classroom control/discipline.

3. Please rate each of the specials programs for your child(ren). First, rate the curriculum and then rate the quality of the instruction. If the area of instruction does not apply, please respond “Not Applicable”. Parents were invited to answer for up to four children. The **average** responses are depicted below.

Quality of Curriculum	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve a Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
Art	39.1%	41.9%	6.5%	6.3%	6.3%
Library	35.8%	47.9%	5.3%	.8%	20.2%
Physical Education	20.3%	50.0%	21.8%	4.8%	3.8%
Vocal Music	53.4%	37.7%	5.3%	.3%	4.1%
Quality of Instruction	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve A Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
Art	38.8%	37.5%	7.8%	9.6%	6.3%
Library	42.3%	41.1%	5.1%	1.0%	10.4%
Physical Education	27.2%	47.0%	17.6%	2.0%	4.1%
Vocal Music	57.8%	33.3%	4.1%	1.0%	4.1%

Respondents who selected “Needs To Improve A Lot” were asked to provide detailed comments as to what they would like to see improve. The most frequent responses cited include: change/add activities in P.E., allow more student choice in art, especially in grades 4-8 and foster a more positive atmosphere in music, especially in grades 4-8.

4. Please rate each of the following World Languages for each child(ren). First, rate the quality of the curriculum and then rate the quality of the instruction. If the area of instruction does not apply, please respond “Not Applicable”. Parents were invited to answer for up to four children. The **average** ratings are depicted below. Please note the high percentages in the “Not Applicable” category. This is due to the fact that students do not study all three languages, thereby enabling respondents to provide feedback for only a portion of the questions.

Quality of Curriculum	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve A Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
French	14.2%	12.0%	7.5%	2.1%	64.2%
Latin	7.2%	13.5%	13.5%	9.3%	56.5%
Spanish	18.3%	34.2%	21.4%	9.2%	16.9%

Respondents who selected “Needs To Improve A Lot” were asked to provide detailed comments as to what they would like to see improve. The majority comments centered on the respondents’ opinion that children are not learning enough from their world language and that Latin is not needed.

Quality of Instruction	Extremely Good	Very Good	Needs To Improve A Little	Needs To Improve A Lot	Not Applicable
French	15.7%	12.1%	7.0%	1.7%	63.5%
Latin	10.7%	14.3%	14.7%	5.8%	54.5%
Spanish	21.3%	36.9%	17.9%	7.4%	16.5%

Respondents who selected “Needs To Improve A Lot” were asked to provide detailed comments as to what they would like to see improve. The majority of the feedback focused on issues relating to classroom control and discipline.

5. These six questions all focus on the use of technology at Sears School.

Parents overwhelmingly feel students have adequate access to technology at school (85.8% strongly agreeing/agreeing) and are adequate in terms of their skill level to use it (82.8% strongly agree/agree). A common theme from the comments section suggested that students could use more instruction and practice with keyboarding.

Parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with the integration of technology into the classrooms (76.4% agree). Those who disagreed were split as to whether there was too little or too much integration. Of the examples listed on the survey, Google Docs and VMath were the most recognized by respondents.

6. During Parent/Teacher Conferences, rate the discussion of the following topics:

	Adequate	Not Enough Information	Not Discussed
Academic Progress	88.8%	10.7%	0.5%
Social/Emotional	85.8%	11.3%	2.8%
Standardized Test Data	66.0%	21.7%	12.3%
Enrichment Opportunities	47.6%	27.6%	24.8%

Comments from respondents indicated that people would like conferences to be longer and explanations for interpreting test scores to be clearer.

7. The next questions involve the various clubs/enrichment opportunities available to students at Sears School. Parents are very aware of the offerings (88.8%) with the chess club having the highest level of respondents' kids participation (62.7%), followed by Drama Club (23.6%), Debate Club (15.5%), Art Club (14.5%), Environmental club (12.7%), Francais Club (6.4%) and Architecture Club (3.6%).
8. The next questions focus on the homework guidelines and expectations for Sears students. Parents agreed that the quantity of homework their students experience was in line with the published guidelines (76.1%) and that homework emphasized real learning and reinforcement (77.1% strongly agree/agree). Comments varied with respondents split between there being too much and too little homework. A common theme acknowledged that time spent on homework varies greatly from student to student depending on study habits, ability, time management skills, etc.
9. Please provide any comments you have on the Master Schedule.

Respondents offering comments overwhelmingly focused on the topic of lunch. Most felt that the current lunch model offered kids too little time to eat. Most indicated that they highly value the open campus with a small minority suggesting a closed campus to allow for more instructional time and more reliable safety. Responses regarding the length of the school day ran the gamut with some suggesting a longer day while others wanted a later start time or shorter day.

10. The next questions address the topic of curriculum.

When asked if their child(ren) are being sufficiently challenged academically, 54.8% of respondents agreed while 33.0% disagreed. A majority of respondents felt that there are areas of the curriculum that should receive more emphasis (62.8%) with science and writing receiving the most comments. The majority of respondents liked the smaller junior high math classes (65.7% excellent/good), but did not like the combined 7th and 8th grade science classes (55.6% fair/poor). Comments on the science combo cited disciplinary challenges and poor curriculum as reasons for the weak rating.

Items of note: Enhancements to the science curriculum in grades 6-8 for 2012-13.

- a. More new labs and hands-on activities. Students will be working on lab activities usually 1-2 days each week.*
- b. Inquiry-based content introductions, lab activities and discussions. These discussions will be integrated across all content areas.*
- c. Lab reports. Students will learn how to formally report their questions, data, analysis and conclusions.*
- d. Larger tests serving as “exams”. Students will learn how to prepare for high school science exams through the experience of taking longer assessments at the conclusion of larger units.*
- e. Specific focus on the Scientific and Engineering Practices and “Cross-cutting” concepts emphasized in the anticipated Next Generation Science Standards.*
- f. Focused research and design projects relating to genetics, contemporary science technology (wireless networks, development of technological devices, etc.) and lights/lasers.*
- g. Debates and presentations where students use pieces of collected evidence to support their claims (across all units).*

11. Have the email communications with your child’s teacher been an effective method of communication for you?

Respondents strongly agreed with this topic with 58.6% rating email as an excellent form of communication and 33.3% rating it as good.

12. These three questions look at the District website as a means of communication and the community’s involvement at Board of Education meetings. The table below depicts the responses:

Frequency of Use	Monthly or More Frequently	Once or Twice	Never
Board of Education Meeting Agendas	22.0%	44.5%	33.5%
Board of Education Committee Agendas	18.3%	37.6%	44.2%
Board of Education Meeting Minutes	21.6%	43.7%	34.7%
Other Board Materials	23.6%	46.2%	30.3%

The numbers indicate that the District website is not widely utilized to view Board of Education published materials.

When asked what else respondents would like to see added, the most frequent suggestion was to videotape or live stream meetings to be watched at a later date. Additionally, a question on the survey asks about the merits of recording the meetings. Respondents indicated that 66% strongly agree/agree that this would be helpful.

When asked about the monthly Board of Education meetings, the majority of respondents indicated that their attendance at board meetings was once or twice (51.5%) or never (31.5%).

Item of note: The Board at its September 2012 meeting approved the pilot of the videotaping of the Regular Board meetings from October 2012 to _____.

13. The next seven questions pertain to the methods of communication the District utilizes to convey information to the community. Respondents were asked to choose from a list and to select the methods from which they receive District communications. Respondents indicated that the top three most utilized methods were the Sears to Home (83.9%), the twice weekly email blasts (80.0%) and the emails from the classroom teachers (78.5%). The top three least utilized methods were the room parent communications (51.2%), the conversations with a Board member (37.6%) and the parent handbook (34.6%). When asked to prioritize the methods of communication, respondents ranked emails from classroom teachers (92.1%), twice weekly email blasts (82.3%) and talking with their children (70.6%) as the most timely, accurate and useful methods.

The comments section regarding methods of communications contained two schools of thought: one where people thought the amount and type of communication is just right and the other who felt the amount of communication is too much and thereby somewhat overwhelming.

When asked how often respondents read the Sears to Home, the majority indicated that they read it monthly/frequently (74.7%).

14. This question asked for comments regarding the effectiveness of the Student Services Department (Special Education Teachers, Literacy Specialists, School Social Workers, School Psychologist and School Nurse).

This item solicited a large number of comments, the majority of which commended the Student Services Department and praised them as a huge asset to our school.

15. These three questions pertain to the District's fiscal position and the community's perception and understanding of it.

The majority of respondents are unsure if the District has been financially responsible (51.7%), but feel that the District's resources have added to the learning experiences of their children (66.8%). Respondents are split on opinions as to whether or not they feel informed about the financial status of the District (feel informed 32.5%, do not feel informed 35.5%, unsure 32.0%).

16. How would you rate The Joseph Sears School overall?

Excellent	48.1%
Good	38.0%
Fair	12.0%
Poor	1.4%
No Opinion	0.5%

Comments span the continuum with praise for the teaching staff, small class sizes, enrichment and music opportunities and community support. Suggestions include curriculum change, addition of a gifted program, more emphasis on children's gifts and not just grades and administrative examination.

17. If you could set one priority for the Kenilworth School District, what would it be?

This question yielded a multitude of responses with limited consensus. The Board is initiating a strategic planning process during the 2012-2013 school year engaging with the faculty and community to identify common goals.

18. These four questions were asked only of the new families at Sears School for the 2011-12 school year. This year saw a high number of families new to the District. When asked about the District's effectiveness in communicating during their transition, 74.2% of the new families responded positively. Additionally, 83.9% of new families said their child(ren) socially transitioned well to Sears. When asked if Sears has met new families' academic expectations, 81.3% of respondents answered positively.