

# OnTeam

October, 2007



Dear Parents and Guardians,

You will recall that in May, 2007, you were given an opportunity to share your opinions of Pupil Services. Our rationale was our commitment to the school/home partnership and the desire to enhance the annual goals of the PS department. We sincerely appreciated the strong response to the survey and your feedback significantly helped to shape our goals for the 2007-2008 school year in a thoughtful and reflective way.

In developing this survey, we looked at national and local samples not only from school districts but also from Departments of Education from a variety of States. Thus, we were able to capture some common language used in these types of surveys and adapted or modified both language and questions to reflect our school community. The questions were designed in such a way to generally capture the feelings and attitudes of the parent body towards the five measured categories below.

Surveys were mailed to 923 families in our community, whose families were associated with the Pupil Services office. Additionally, we placed the survey online, established drop off boxes at our libraries, and sent reminder postcards. While such surveys traditionally expect a response rate of 15-20%, we were thrilled to receive completed surveys from almost 50% of our families. Additionally, a few parents took the opportunity to comment about various topics beyond the survey: we appreciate the positive comments about our staff, the suggestions for future workshops, and the questions about their child's disability which we will address in future parent educational workshops.

While I had initially envisioned a summary report for this edition of OnTeam, with general themes and conclusions, I decided to develop my report in such a way as to give a rich texture to the valuable feedback that I received. As such, I have decided to prepare only one complete report for your information.

We are tremendously grateful for your feedback as the keys to any effective organization are the ability to work together as a group (school and home), the vision that the school has for your children, the goals it sets with high standards and expectations, and your knowledge and input of how we get there. Openness and respect for your ideas are critical aspects of this equation for achievement.

## Analysis

There were twenty-two questions in which a 1-5 Likert scale was used to determine the degree to which a parent/guardian agreed or disagreed with the question. You will recall the format below with percentages rounded up for ease of discussion.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

## Partnerships

In the partnerships section, parents (87-92%) agreed that not only their views but also their child's views were respected, and that they had opportunity to discuss their child's concerns with all parties and that those teachers had knowledge and understanding to support their child's special needs in teaching.

Of lesser statistical importance, but worthy to note, ten percent of the parents who responded, felt that teachers did not have sufficient knowledge and understanding required to support the child's special needs in the regular education classroom.

Data can be summarized as follows:

1. I feel that I am a partner with Pupil Services in planning and making decisions about my child's education and that my views are encouraged and respected.

Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree/Strongly Disagree
92.31%	3.26%	4.43%

2. I feel that I have opportunities to talk with and discuss with my child's team, classroom teachers and specialists throughout the year.

Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree/Strongly Disagree
89.98%	1.63%	8.39%

3. I feel that my child's classroom teachers have the knowledge and understanding required to support my child's special needs.

Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree/Strongly Disagree
87.15%	2.80%	10.05%

4. I feel that my child is respected and supported in school and that his/her views are encouraged and respected.

Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree/Strongly Disagree
92.31%	4.20%	3.5%

## Impact of Pupil Services on Students

In the Impact of Pupil Services on Students, parents agreed (88-96%) that Pupil Services has a focused vision, marked by support to parents, which encourages openness, transparency in goals and budget, and knows the special needs of their child. Of importance is the parent perception that the SPED PAC may not be considered a vital organization for parent support at this time.

Data can be considered as follows:

5. There is visionary leadership that is marked by focus and reflection from Pupil Services.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
88.19%	8.56%	3.24%

6. Pupil Services provides effective support to parents by offering newsletters, workshops, parent library, etc. to encourage participation and openness.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
96.04%	2.10%	1.86%

7. The SPED PAC is a vital organization for parental support and an important resource and sounding board.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
40.09%	43.40%	16.51%

8. I feel that Pupil Services knows my child and my child's needs, and that his/her special education needs are being met.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
95.10%	1.63%	3.26%

9. The department of Pupil Services is open about its goals, its partnerships with parents, and its budget to support my child's education.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
91.65%	3.71%	4.64%

## Pupil Services Staff

In the Pupil Services Staff section, parents agreed (89-93%) that the special education staff and ancillary services value parent input, work well together to provide the best education for the child, and consistently provide IEP accommodations in the classroom. However, parents only strongly agreed/agreed 47% of the time that staff respects cultural heritage and celebrates diversity with 53% remaining neutral.

Data can be considered as follows:

10. Pupil Services staff, including special educators, speech and language specialists, and clinicians, seek out and value my opinion.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
92.51%	3.04%	4.45%

11. I feel that regular and special education teachers work together (collaboration, mutual problem solving, etc.) to provide the best education for my child.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
91.14%	3.96%	4.90%

12. Pupil Services' staff respect my cultural heritage and celebrate diversity, especially with regard to special needs.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
46.82%	52.94%	0.24%

13. The regular education staff is aware of my child's needs and consistently provides accommodations (as written in the IEP) in the regular education classroom.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
88.73%	4.23%	7.04%

## IEPs

In the IEP section, parents (93%) felt that the IEP was clear and concise and the process (listening, documenting, and follow-up) was encouraged. Additionally, 80% of parents felt that they were given suggestions for the home regarding academics, behavior, and/or social issues, but 13% indicated a negative response. When there is a disagreement with the schools, 79% agreed that the school remains objective and informs parents about their rights, while 18% remain neutral on the question. Data can be considered as follows:

14. The development of the IEP is clear, concise, and timely.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
92.92%	3.54%	3.54%

15. As a parent/guardian, my concerns about my child are listened to, documented at the Team meeting, equally as important, and followed up.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
93.46%	2.10%	4.44%

16. The school gives me practical suggestions for the home regarding academics, behavior and/or social issues.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
80.47%	6.28%	13.26%

17. Even if parent and school disagree and cannot ameliorate differences, the school is objective and informs me about my rights under the special education regulations.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
78.77%	18.16%	3.07%

## Achievement, Expectations, and Performance of Students

In the Achievement, Expectations and Performance of Students section, parents responded favorably (93-96%) to all sections. They felt Pupil Services provided high expectations, yet with flexibility, offered related services that assisted the student in achievement, reviewed outcome-based goals to ensure quality and high expectations, and welcomed the student as an active participant in learning by taking safety as a top priority.

Data can be considered as follows:

18. The school sets high expectations for my child to succeed.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
95.10%	1.86%	3.03%

19. The school is flexible in understanding my child's needs but gives every opportunity to enhance achievement for my child.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
95.31%	2.35%	2.35%

20. The school provides appropriate related services (e.g., counseling, physical therapy etc.), defined in the IEP, to assist my child's achievement.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
96.49%	2.07%	1.44%

21. The IEP goals established for my child are outcome based and are consistently reviewed so that expectations to succeed remain high.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
92.91%	3.55%	3.55%

22. The school takes safety (physical, emotional, social) as a top priority so that my child feels welcome in the school as a learner and participant.

1 & 2	3	4 & 5
95.00%	1.43%	3.57%

## Synthesis

From the analyses above, parents are highly satisfied with the direction and vision of Pupil Services. They see themselves as partners in the decision-making process and feel that their views, as well as their child's opinions, are respected and valued, even when there may be, on occasion, a disagreement between home and school. When interacting with teachers, parents felt good about the teachers' level of understanding about the child's special education needs. Parents saw these accomplishments based upon the vision and openness in Pupil Services, based upon the transparency provided in goals and the budget. Parents were also pleased with the integration of related services and the staff's being able to provide accommodations with the regular education teachers. In developing these IEPs, parents felt that they were a part of the process, which resulted in clear and concise IEPs. For the most part, parents felt that they were given suggestions for the home that were meaningful academically, behaviorally, and socially. Even if there was disagreement, they felt that the school was objective and fair. And, because of the high standards set, students were valued as learners and participants in their education, based upon outcome based goals, for example, safety.

That being said, there are always ways for improvement and we thank our parents for helping to delineate these goals. In bullet form, these parent perceptions are listed:

- SPED PAC is a vital organization.
- Staff respects parent cultural heritage and celebrates diversity
- Parents are given practical suggestions for home.
- School remains objective and informs the parent about their rights, when there is a disagreement.

### **Setting Goals**

I have reflected upon your feedback with the percentages providing me with a general understanding of the weight of your concerns and recommendations. Although the survey confirmed our excellent partnership and both of our desires to enhance the achievement of our children, we cannot rest on our laurels, as the job is never completed. In my Action Plan for 2007-2008, the following sub-goals will be addressed:

1. The Pupil Services Leadership Team will continue to work closely with the SPED PAC to ensure that it is a vital organization for all parents. In doing so, I invite parents to sit with the co-chairs of PAC and me to brainstorm how we can better utilize this organization in supporting the schools through educational activities.
2. The Pupil Services Leadership Team will enhance our outreach to our international families so that they feel more a part of the school-home community. I invite parents to join me in discussing ways of reaching out and celebrating diversity.
3. The Pupil Services Leadership Team, in collaboration with parents, classroom teachers, specialists and clinicians will carefully craft a plan to address practical suggestions for the home (academically, behaviorally, and socially), by incorporating these suggestions at future teacher and parent workshops and following through at school and building levels.
4. The Pupil Services Leadership Team will devise better ways to reach out to parents about their rights when there is a disagreement, beyond what is required in writing under the regulations. This action will be done by discussing and training our staff to discuss with parents their options when a disagreement cannot be quickly resolved.

### **Next Steps**

From the aforementioned section, the action plan for the 2007-2008 school year has been enhanced. In order to measure the outcome of this plan, the following next steps will be initiated:

1. During the 2007-2008 school year, there will be an invitation to staff and faculty within Pupil Services and a representative group from regular education to discuss programmatic planning and issues within Pupil Services.
2. During the 2007-2008 school year, activities and workshops will be offered to classroom teachers as well as Pupil Services teachers, specialists and clinicians to strengthen partnerships between regular and special education and to enhance the skill set of all.
3. During the 2007-2008 school year, there will be an invitation to parents in an open forum format to discuss issues related to Pupil Services. This event will be coupled with an educational activity or workshop designed for parents.

4. During the end of the 2008-2009 school year, an abbreviated survey to parents will be mailed to the community to seek out parent input and feedback.

### **In Appreciation**

In retrospect over the last year, I felt those high expectations for students, their achievement and performance take much work, thought and reflection. The work entails developing goals, thinking about the big and small picture for students and getting there by hard work, synchronization of goals and objectives, and the enhancement of the school-home partnership. Nothing would have been accomplished without our families and the school working closely together. Much of the credit and the support you have given to your children and to the schools is now given to you, as parents.

Thank you for your feedback; thank you for your support!

Liza Huber  
Director of Pupil Services

***Don't forget to mark your calendars for our second Annual Workshop Day on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The registration form is enclosed! Please note that the Annual Parent Rights Workshop is part of the day.***

