

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent

From: Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment
Carrie Livingston, Senior Research Associate

Date: September 8, 2011

Subject: **2010-11 PARENT SURVEY**

Attached is a summary of the results of the pare

Parent Survey Results 2010-2011

September 7, 2011

Executive Summary

One of our district goals was to gather feedback from parents regarding parent satisfaction with their student's school experience and parent use of such communication venues as Home Access Center. Surveys were distributed to a total of 2334 families. Of these families, 893 surveys were completed representing a response rate of 38 percent. This response rate is above average based on a review of response rates in the literature, particularly at the high school level. Overall, the results from the parent survey are positive. Parent respondents are satisfied with the educational program and instruction in each of the school's departments. They feel that teachers adequately inform parents of student progress, extra-curricular offerings meet the varied interests of students and that they are informed about available academic supports during the school day. Parents are aware of the school's Code of Student Conduct and believe the school sets clear rules for student behavior. They find the Phone Alert system helpful and believe they receive letters and communication in a timely manner. Parents are utilizing the Home Access Center and find it easy to use. They feel that teachers and administrators behave in a respectful and professional manner. Parents feel welcome at ETHS.

Although responses were positive overall, one of the reasons to conduct a parent survey is to identify areas where the school can improve. Responses suggest we need to provide more opportunities for parent involvement, make sure that teachers are updating the Home Access Center information regularly, ensure healthy options are available for school lunches and communicate more about the school lunch menu. Survey results suggest we need to ensure that the school and neighborhood is a safe environment, communicate about the enforcement of the discipline policy, the course opportunities available in the Career and Technology Education Department, and services available to students with regard to post-secondary planning, preparation of college applications, and career decisions. We also need to ensure that information about the various aspects of the ETHS program (curriculum, extra-curricular activities, assessments, etc.) is provided to parents.

One of our district goals was to gather feedback from parents regarding parent satisfaction with their student's school experience and parent use of such communication venues as Home Access Center. This report provides the results of a parent survey specifically developed for this purpose and administered this past spring to our parent population.

Background

Development work on the parent survey began in early fall of 2010. Surveys from other districts were collected for review. We also contacted an independent research firm that specializes in parent and community surveys. Based on cost estimates from the research firm and review of other surveys, we decided to develop our own survey using formats and question types from our review. A small team of administrators worked on several drafts of the survey. The survey was then shared with a variety of constituencies for feedback including a special committee from the School Improvement Team, the Athletic Director, the IT Director, the Associate Principal for School Services, the Nutrition Director, and the District Equity Team. It was decided to administer the survey in the spring so that parents of students of all grade levels would have experienced a good part of the school year.

In March, a special group was convened to develop a distribution plan for the survey. The plan called for using Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool, to collect survey responses. However, we also took steps to collect survey responses from parents who we knew did not have email/internet access. Both the hard copy survey and online survey were translated into Spanish. The Phone Alert system was utilized to alert parents that a survey would be coming. For parents for whom we had email addresses, we sent an email explaining the survey and providing the web link. For parents for whom we did not have email addresses, we sent a letter and survey in the mail. Surveys were distributed during a four week window from April 20th to May 13th. During this time, phone alerts and email alerts were sent several times. We also utilized Facebook and Twitter as a communication tool.

Surveys were distributed to a total of 2334 families. Of these families, 893 surveys were completed representing a response rate of 38 percent. Figures by ethnicity are shown in Table 1. Parent respondents equally represented students across grade levels 9 through 12.

Table 1. Parent Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	n	%
Black	165	19%
Native American	5	1%
Asian	20	2%
Hispanic	46	5%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0%
Multi-racial	41	5%
White	604	68%
No Response	11	
Total	893	

The survey focused on a number of areas including 1) Educational Services; 2) Behavior and Discipline; 3) Counseling Services; 4) Communication; 5) Parent Involvement; 6) Athletics; 7) School Services; 8) Overall Academic/School

“I feel that my child could receive a more rigorous academic experience in the humanities and social sciences. There could be more reading of higher level material, and expectations for writing could be higher...My child is in a mixed level class and I believe is not being challenged as much as could be.”

“Prefer to be more challenged in courses such as English/History/Social Studies.”

Some parents pointed out that it was difficult to respond to the general items about teachers because their child’s experiences varied across teachers.

“Most teachers are excellent--- dedicated, inspiring, get to know my children. In most cases my children appreciate the classes and have learned a lot about the subjects they are studying. It has been tough for my senior with some teachers who don’t seem ‘to get him’.”

“Obviously, the quality of the instruction depends on the quality of the instructor. From what we can tell, that’s somewhat inconsistent at ETHS. Some teachers are great, some not so...”

“My satisfaction varies by teacher but the majority of classes have been very good for my student.”

Table 3. Behavior and Discipline

	Rating
--	--------

agreed that the Home Access Center helps them monitor their child's progress and is easy to use. A slightly smaller percentage (68%) of parents indicated that they check the Home Access Center to monitor their child's progress. A large percentage of parent respondents (91%) reported the automated phone call system is helpful. About half of parent respondents indicated they were satisfied with the information they receive about such aspects of the ETHS program as curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and assessments.

Table 5. Communication

Parent Involvement

Table 6 shows item responses relating to parent involvement. Two-thirds of parent respondents agreed they have adequate opportunities for invol

Athletics

“Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” for these school climate items. One item received lower positive responses---54 percent of parents selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” when asked if they felt students show respect for other students. An additional 22 percent selected the “neutral” response option for this item.

Table 9. Overall Academic/School Climate

						Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
I feel welcome at my child's school.	883	0.2%	7%	11%	82%	4.03

Computer/Phone/Internet Access

A number of items in the survey were included to collect information from parents about computer and internet access, use of ETHS websites and their preferences with regard to communication channels. Tables 10 to 17 show parent responses for these items. The responses indicate that of parent respondents, almost all of them have computers and mobile phones in the household; 86 percent have two or more computers and internet access. About half of parent respondents use a teacher website at some time or other during the year. Most often they use a teacher website for the assignment calendars, downloading assignments, homework solutions or useful links. Eighty-four percent of parents responded they receive information from the high school more than ten times per year. The majority of parent respondents indicated their preferred communication channels for getting information about ETHS are:

- Home Access Center
- ETHS Website
- Automated phone messages/emails
- Emails from teachers/counselors
- Letters/Fliers mailed home

Table 10. Computer Access

Table 11. Mobile phone

Table 12. Mobile Phone Access

Item	N	Answer Options		
		Voice only	Voice/ Text	Voice/ Text/Data
What kind of mobile phone access is available to your family?	880	4%	38%	59%

Table 13. Parent Teacher Conference Preference

Item	N	Answer Options		
		Morning	Afternoon	Evening
My preference to meet with teachers during Parent-Teacher Conferences is...	871	16%	23%	61%

Table 14. Teacher Website Use

Table 15. Type of Teacher Website Use

Assignment Calendar	Downloading assignments	Homework solutions	Useful
---------------------	-------------------------	--------------------	--------

they would now try to use teacher websites more while others said their child uses the teacher websites but they did not.

“I did not know the teachers had websites.”

“Was never even informed they existed!!”

Table 16. Frequency of ETHS Information

Open-ended Responses

Parents were also given the opportunity to offer comments in an open-ended item at the end of the survey. What follows reflects common themes cited by parents. Parents commented on the positive school experience of their children.

“Three kids graduated. Three kids with good social skills, great friends, and a good education (and all either in, or about to start college). Can’t ask for more than that. Thank you!”

“Our experience with ETHS has been overall a very satisfying one. We are very satisfied with the attention of the staff and the social department. I believe my son’s success is due to the constant vigilance of the teachers and educational boundaries are set up so that students are allowed to learn, and make friends in a safe environment. We love ETHS!”

“ETHS is well organized, has the best interest of the students as its core value, and I think that ETHS is doing a superb job overall.”

Parents like to use the Home Access Center but indicated that it is not always up-to-date.

“The Home Access Center is only as good as the information that teachers put into the system. I find several teachers do not update with sufficient frequency to properly track the progress of my children.”

“The Class work section of the Home Access Center is a great idea – HOWEVER many teachers do not update it consistently making information incorrect and misleading.”

Parents are concerned about safety, crime and drugs at ETHS as reflected in the following comments:

“Safety in and around the high school is an ongoing concern.”

“My daughter often tells me of the fighting she sees in the halls at school. In addition, the surrounding areas seem unsafe (not always) however we have seen several altercations on Church, and Dodge.”

“I am concerned about school safety. The school climate is too permissive for all students. My student describes the school as ‘reckless and out of control’. Set clear expectations and follow them. There are too many exceptions to the rules and the students know it. Admit that there’s a problem, stop acting as though one doesn’t exist.”

“The safety environment, lack of student to student respect i.e., fights, drug/alcohol consumption and popularity of its use I believe has increased in recent years.”

Some parents feel that more students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities.

“I believe children should be ‘encouraged’ to participate in extra-curricular activities because not all children are aware and asked to participate.”

“Academics are in general excellent. Extra-curriculars are too limited for the number of students attending ETHS”

Parents voiced concerns about the upcoming restructured Humanities/Biology courses.

“We do not agree with de-tracking Honors English, or plans to do so in other curriculums. My student needs differentiated attention to keep her engaged and motivated and achieving to HER highest potential, vs. the ‘she’s good enough..’ approach this de-tracked format promotes.”

“My child’s favorite courses are his honors Humanities courses and I’m disappointed that his younger sister will not have that experience in the Humanities when she attends ETHS in two years.”

“The curriculum is not challenging enough, however, especially in the humanities. Biology was the exception, but the plan now seems to be to dilute that, too, despite denials.”

Another common concern was the ratio of counselors to students.

“I feel the counselor/advisor system at ETHS needs to be re-vamped. There seems to be way too many students to each advisor.”

“The counselors have so many students and so little time that they can’t prepare them for college and many parents are left to figure out the process by themselves or have to hire outside counselors to help.”

Summary of Findings

The school has not conducted a parent survey in recent history. Overall, the results from this year’s parent survey are positive. Parent respondents are satisfied with the educational program and instruction in each of the school’s departments. They feel that teachers adequately inform parents of student progress and believe the school sets clear rules for student behavior. They are utilizing the Home Access Center and find it easy to use. They feel that teachers and administrators behave in a respectful and professional manner. Parents feel welcome at ETHS.

Although responses were generally positive, one of the reasons to conduct a parent survey is to identify areas where the school can improve. Responses suggest we need to provide more opportunities for parent involvement, make sure that teachers are updating the Home Access Center information regularly, ensure healthy options are available for school lunches and communicate more about the school lunch menu. Survey results suggest that we need to ensure that the school and neighborhood is a safe environment, communicate about the enforcement of the discipline policy, the course opportunities available in the Career and Technology Education Department, and services available to students with regard to post-secondary planning, preparation of college applications, and career decisions. We also need to ensure that information about the various aspects of the ETHS program (curriculum, extra-curricular activities, assessments, etc.) is provided to parents.