

Kensington Hilltop Parent/Family Survey 2008 – 2009 Summary

As you know, the School Site Council – composed of parents, community members, teachers, and the principal – works hard throughout the year to plan and monitor student success at Hilltop. An important tool for this advisory group is the annual Parent/Family Survey, which was distributed to all families last spring. In an effort to share information with the school community and maintain transparency, we think it important to communicate the results of the survey.

The survey consisted of 30 questions covering issues such as student learning, home-school communication, school climate and safety. An additional set of questions inquired about homework, interest in parent education classes, as well as an inquiry into parents'/families' use of the various modes of communication currently in place at the school (e.g. Thursday packet, E-Tree, etc.). The Site Council focused on including questions in the survey that reflected issues the Council had placed emphasis on throughout the year. By mid-Summer, a total of 241 surveys were collected, representing about 44% of the total school community. This is a very good number and I am pleased to share with you some findings.

Overall, the responses demonstrated overwhelming positive views about the school and its climate for learning and social development. This is true across all grade levels. For example, parents and families overwhelmingly responded “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” to questions such as “Teachers at this school stress academic achievement as an important priority for their students”, “My child’s teacher(s) knows my child’s strengths and weaknesses and provides extra help when needed” and “The school has high expectations of my child.” As outgoing Chair and member of the Site Council for the past two years, these positive responses reflect the deep dedication of the faculty and staff to our children. I have witnessed this dedication first-hand throughout my service on the Council.

Also notable were the very positive responses regarding parents’ and families’ views about school climate. Parents and families “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” to questions such as “My child’s school is a safe and secure place to learn”, “Parents are involved in the planning and decision-making at my child’s school” and “I am satisfied with the quality of communication between school and home.” As a member of the Site Council, it was especially important to gauge family’s views about their children’s well-being since the Council had focused on implementing a Peer-Mediation Program and other community-building activities to foster these school qualities.

As for home-school communication, families also indicated that some of the most useful ways to receive information were the electronic Thursday packet and the e-tree, with the school website ranking low in its usefulness. Leaders of the various parent-groups recently met to discuss ways to improve this communication resource.

On another note, the great majority of parents and families indicated that the amount of homework assigned to students across all grade levels was “about right,” which may or may not reflect students’ own views about this topic. Families also noted their interest in parent education classes. Parents and families of lower grade students indicated an interest in classes such as Reading Night, Family Math Night, Setting Limits with Your Child, and Understanding the Standards-based Report Card, while those of upper grade students indicated an interest in Math Night and How to Help with Homework.

Clearly, the survey responses show there is much positive energy at Hilltop and our students continue to benefit from it. But, it is also important to note that some parents and families did note their worry about bullying and safety at drop-off and pick-up. It is the plan of the Site Council and the PTA, among other parent groups, to continue to vigorously monitor and address these and other issues in partnership with parents, families and the community.