

Central Office Climate Survey

Results and Analysis

May 2011



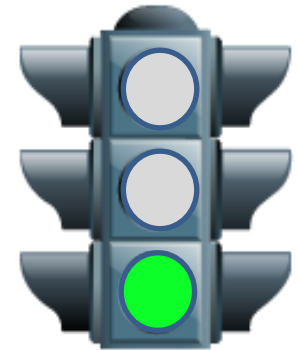
Overview

Danvers Public Schools conducted a Central Office Climate Survey of staff, parents, and community members during April and May 2011. The purpose of this survey was to share information about various issues confronting the district and to receive feedback on the perspectives held by the participants concerning various aspects of school district operations. Specific topic areas included:

- School District Leadership
- Major School District Decisions
- Progress on the Strategic Plan
- Budget
- School District Operations
- Communications

In addition, specific survey items have been identified as critical measures for the district's Success Measures. The specific Success Measures linked to survey items are identified.

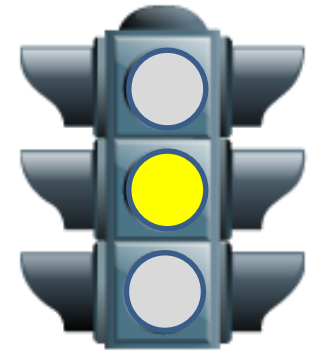
Executive Summary of Findings



Review of the survey data revealed a number of positive findings, which have resulted from our emphasis on our prior strategic efforts:

- Participation was strong among staff ($n=310$, 66%).
- 81% of staff graded the district as an “A” or “B”, 72% of parents gave similar grades.
- Most parents (86%) said that they are familiar or very familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the School Committee, 64% familiar with the Administrative Council (64%), and 67% with the Central Office.
- Respondents who indicated they spoke with School Committee Members indicated generally favorable interactions ($\geq 77\%$ among parents, $\geq 90\%$ among staff).
- Respondents who indicated they spoke with the Administrative Council Members indicated generally favorable interactions ($\geq 78\%$ among parents, $\geq 94\%$ among staff).
- Parents (82%) and staff (90%) indicated that the decisions made by the district were good decisions in support of education.
- Most parents (81%) and staff (86%) indicated that the schools are effectively teaching students to respect others who are different from themselves.
- Respondents indicated that the schools were personally relevant ($\geq 89\%$).

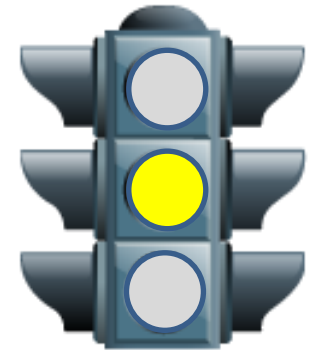
Executive Summary of Findings



A number of issues were noted for further consideration. Many of these items are current focuses of our strategic efforts. Highlighted items include:

- Participation was moderate among parents ($n=450$, 15%) and low among non-parent community members ($n=15$) indicating a continued need for outreach to encourage input and participation among the community.
- 65% of parents indicated that community input was sought before the district made decisions.
- One-third of parents (33%) and staff (37%) reported attending or viewing School Committee meetings. 10% of parents and staff reported having attended a School Council meeting.
- Parents raised concerns that meetings are held at times that working parents cannot attend.
- 69% of parents and staff indicated that DanversCARES is doing a good job of promoting health in the community; however, more than 25% of respondents indicated that they did not know about the goals and projects of DanversCARES.
- With regard to School Operations, parents and staff indicated concerns with the school calendar, transportation, and school lunches.
- 31% of parents and 32% of staff believe that the current funding level is adequate to meet Danvers' education needs.

Executive Summary of Findings



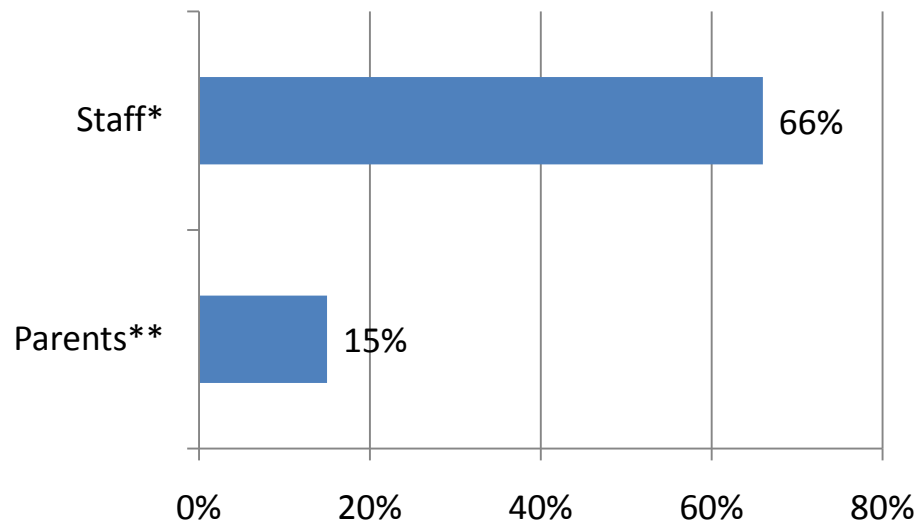
Additional items for further consideration include goals from the Strategic Plan:

- 55% of parents and 63% of staff feel that a lot of progress has been made towards meeting the goal of “providing inclusive, welcoming and safe school environments that invite students and their families to school, promote respect for all individuals and cultivate enthusiasm for learning.”
- 32% of parents and 52% of staff feel that feel that a lot of progress has been made towards meeting the goal of “providing highly effective instruction in every classroom that ensures consistent delivery of quality curriculum, using strategies and best practice approaches that address the learning needs of all students and maintain high expectations.”
- 41% of parents and 37% of staff feel that feel that a lot of progress has been made towards meeting the goal of “providing facilities and technology necessary to support student learning expectations throughout the school system and ensure that resources are equitably distributed across all schools and across the district.”
- 44% of parents and 51% of staff feel that a lot of progress has been made towards meeting the goal of “strengthen communication systems and strategies to build shared expectations, understanding and trust with parents and community members about the school system.”

Who Responded

Survey participation was open to all parents, community members and staff. Parents and staff were invited to complete the survey via email which provided a link to the survey. Community members and parents for whom email addresses were not available could access the survey by a link on the district's Website or request a paper copy.

A total of 450 parents, 310 staff, and 15 non-parent community members completed the surveys. Parents reported having children in all grades PK-12. Staff participants represented all seven schools and the central office. Of the staff respondents, 68% were teachers.



* The staff response rate is based on the respondents to the email invitations (275 out of 418). In addition, 35 individuals responded to the public survey identified themselves as staff for a total of 310 staff members.

** The parent response rate was estimated based on the total number of students in the district (3,617) and 1.7 school age children per family.

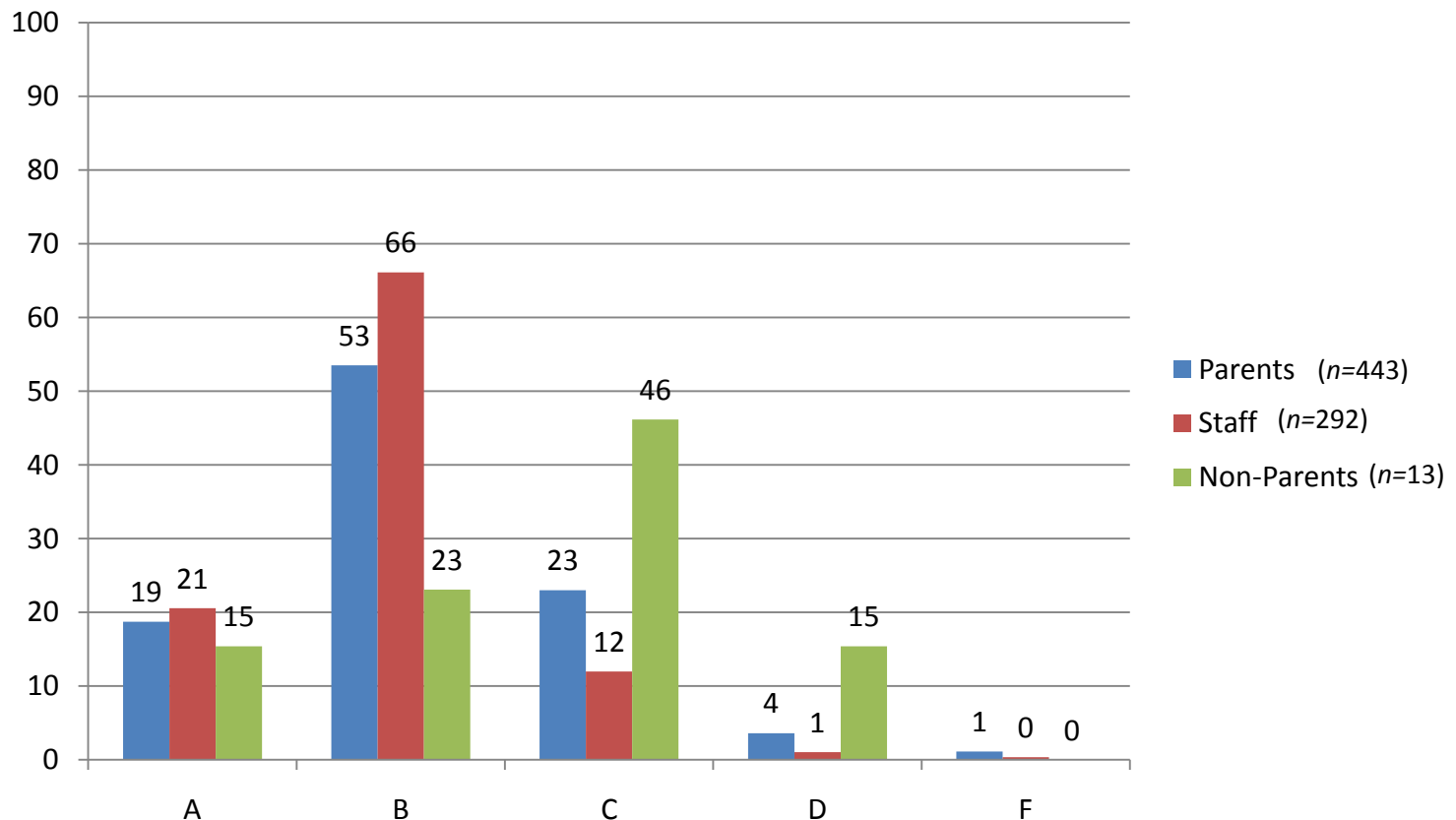
The questions on the following two slides are related to the Success Measures:

Theme VI: Community Partnership and Planning

Goal 3.2: 95% of community groups give the school district a favorable rating annually on feedback surveys related to their relationship with the schools

Overall Rating of School District

Survey participants were asked to express their overall rating of the school district by assigning a letter grade (A to F). Staff in general assigned higher grades (81% A's and B's) than did parents (72% A's and B's) and non-parents (38% A's and B's).



Suggestions for Improvement

The survey participants shared ideas as to how the district could improve. Suggestions include:

Parents

- More opportunities for communications between schools and parents; more frequent updates.
- Less emphasis on preparation for the MCAS.
- More opportunities for students to choose courses of interest.
- Concerns/confusion about the new grading system.
- Increase challenge/rigor for students, particularly at the high school level.
- Concerns about homework, both too much and not enough.
- More consistent enforcement of behavior rules and academic expectations by teachers and school administrators.

Staff

- Smaller class sizes particularly at the high school level and in Advanced Placement classes.
- Customize professional development by department, grade level, subject area.
- Increase collaboration between teachers and specialists to help struggling students.
- More consistency in the enforcement of policies, discipline, and grading standards.
- Increase academic standards and expectations; more challenging opportunities for students.
- More support for Gifted and Talented, English Language Learners, and Special Education.
- Training and support to implement differentiated instruction.

Non-Parents

- Increase communication with the community, particularly with regard to the performance, successes, and achievements of the students.
- Educate students to be good community members.

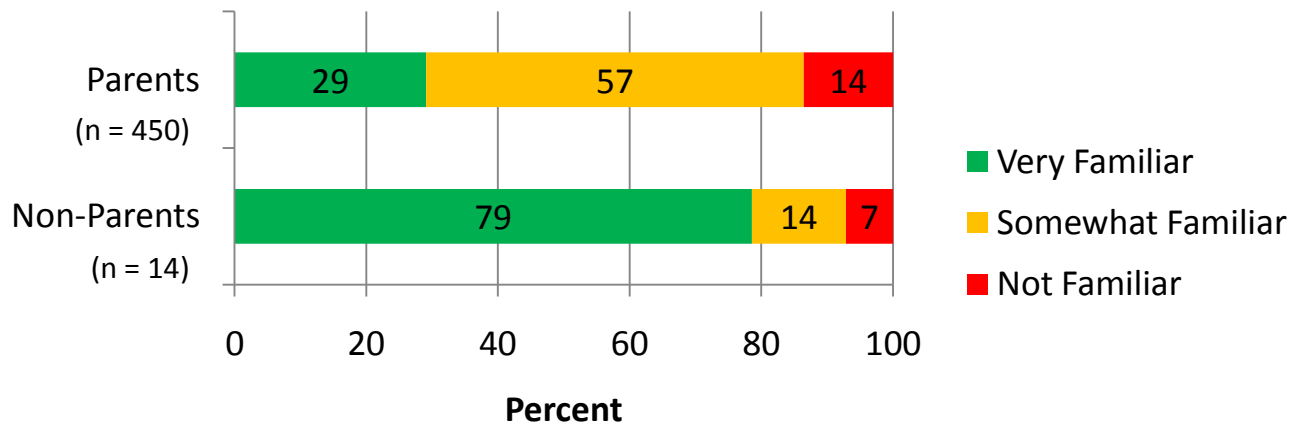
School Committee

Parents and non-parent community members were presented the following information about the School Committee:

“The School Committee is a body of 5 elected officials who represent the community while governing the school district. The School Committee sets educational goals, hires and evaluates the superintendent, adopts policy related to employment and school operation, adopts the school district budget, and ensures school district accountability to the public.”

Most participants indicated that they are somewhat or very familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the School Committee.

How familiar are you with the role and responsibilities of the School Committee?



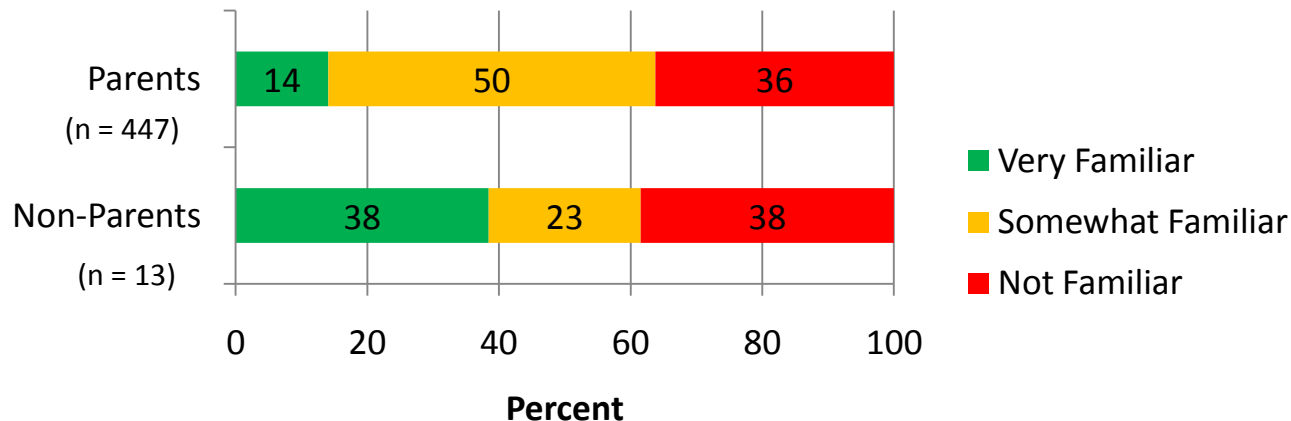
Administrative Council

Parents and non-parent community members were presented the following information about the Administrative Council:

“The Superintendent’s Administrative Council is the leadership team responsible for the administration of all the schools in our district.”

More than 60% of the parents and non-parent community members indicated that they are somewhat or very familiar with the Administrative Council. However, only 14% of the parents indicated that they are very familiar with this leadership group.

How familiar are you with the role and responsibilities of the Superintendent's Administrative Council?



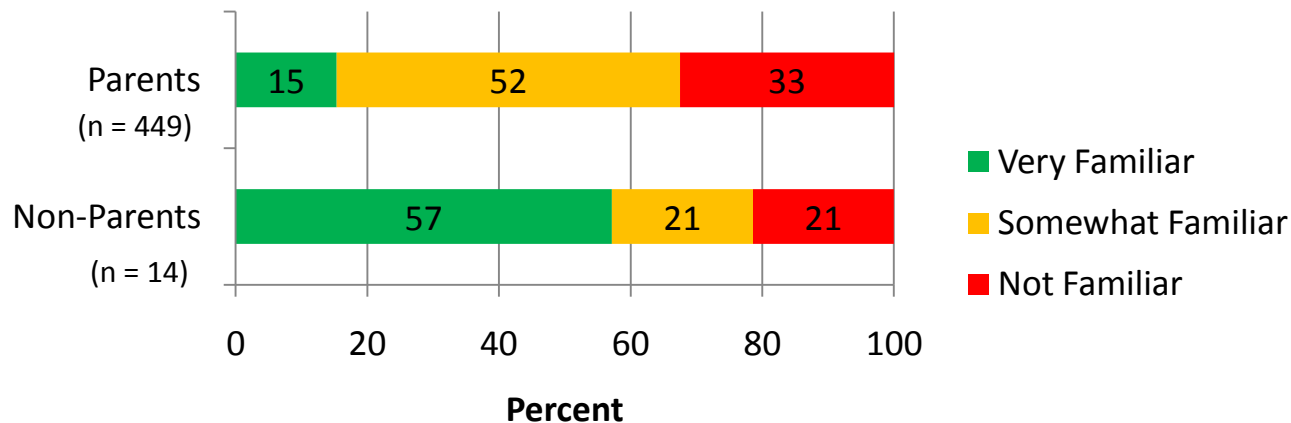
Central Office

Parents and non-parent community members were presented the following information about the Central Office:

“The Central Office helps all seven schools in areas like hiring principals and teachers, providing textbooks, food services, school buses, testing, building repairs, budget, and keeping parents and community informed of key issues.”

More than 67% of the parents and non-parent community members indicated that they are somewhat or very familiar with the support provided by the Central Office. Few parents (15%), however, are very familiar with the support the Central Office provides the schools.

How familiar are you with the ways the Central Office supports all schools in our district?



Interaction with School Committee Members

Parents, staff, and non-parent community members were asked about their interactions with School Committee Members. Small numbers of participants reported speaking with School Committee Members, but those who did reported favorable interactions.

Within the past year, have you needed to speak with one or more School Committee Members? (Number and Percent "Yes")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
Number	47	23	4
Percent	10%	7%	31%

When you have had something to discuss with a School Committee Member... (Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
(a) the School Committee Member(s) was/were available to talk to me.	87%	95%	100%
(b) the School Committee Member(s) was/were courteous and listened to my concerns.	79%	90%	100%
(c) the School Committee Member(s) responded to my concerns in a professional manner, whether or not he or she agreed with me.	77%	90%	100%

Interaction with Administrative Council Members

Parents, staff, and non-parent community members were asked about their interactions with the Superintendent and Administrative Council members. Participants who reported speaking with the Superintendent or Administrative Council member indicated that they were able to make contact and had favorable interactions.

Within the past year, have you needed to speak with the Superintendent or a Administrative Council member? (Number and Percent "Yes")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
Number	52	87	7
Percent	12%	28%	50%

When you have had an issue to discuss with or an idea to share with the Superintendent or Administrative Council member... (Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
(a) you easily found out who to contact.	84%	94%	86%
(b) you made contact with the right Administrative Council member.	86%	95%	100%
(c) the Administrative Council member was polite and listened to you.	88%	98%	100%
(d) your ideas were considered and addressed in a professional manner.	78%	94%	100%

The questions on the following four slides are related to the Success Measure:

Theme III: School Climate and Culture

Goal 1.1: Students, staff, and parents participate in shared decision making through the schools, school councils, and district-wide committees.

School District Decisions

Parents, staff, and non-parent community members were provided information about three major school district decisions:

- **Implementation of a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.**
- **Use of Early Release Days to review student achievement data and plan instruction and assessment.**
- **Report cards for elementary students were changed from traditional grades to a standards-based format with more specific information about student performance.**

Are you aware that these decisions were made? (Number and Percent "Yes")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
Number	409	297	12
Percent	91%	97%	86%

With regard to these decisions... (Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")			
	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
(a) The school district shared relevant facts with the community before making these decisions.	81%	89%	46%
(b) Community input was sought before making these decisions.	65%	81%	31%
(c) These decisions are good decisions in support of education.	82%	90%	62%

Participation in District Decision Making

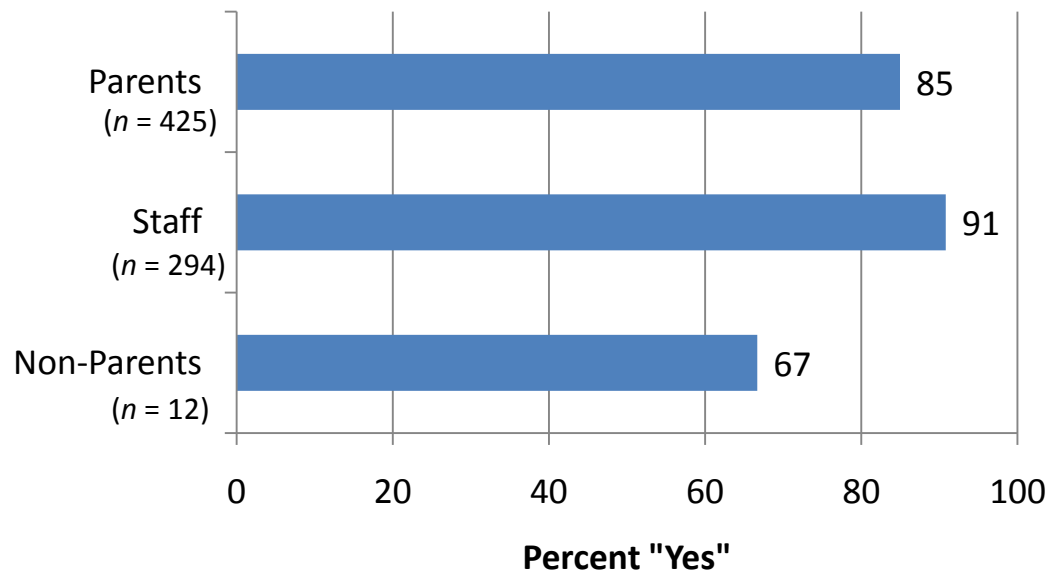
Many respondents indicated that they have attended one or more meetings to assist in school district decision making. One-third of parents (33%) and staff (37%) reported attending or viewing School Committee meetings. One-third of parents also indicated that they attend school PAC meetings.

	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
	Percent Attending One or More		
School Committee Meetings (second Monday of each month at 7 PM; also broadcast live on local TV and available 'On Demand')	33	37	43
School PAC (Check with school for meeting times)	32	15	7
PACE (District wide parenting meeting, first Friday of each month at 9 AM)	12	7	7
Special Education PAC (first Wednesday of each month at 7PM)	10	7	14
School Council (Check with school for meeting times)	10	10	14
DEEP (educational partnership; meets second Wednesday of each month @ 7:30am)	7	5	14
DanversCARES (Healthy Community Coalition, first Monday of each month at 9 AM)	7	10	21

Satisfaction with Opportunities to Provide Input

Parents and staff report being satisfied with opportunities to provide input for school decision making.

Are you satisfied with the opportunities to provide input on school decision making?



Suggestions for Improvement

Participants were asked: How can opportunities to provide input on school decision making be improved?

Parents

- Schedule meetings at times that working parents can attend.
- Increase use of Internet, E-mail, texting, social media (like Facebook) and/or other technologies to collect input.
- Concerns expressed that the schools/district collects input, but that it is not used in the decision process.
- Update information on the district website and include more useful contact information.

Staff

- Increase teacher input and use of their input on issues concerning curriculum, instruction, scheduling, and classroom issues.
- Increased use of technology like E-mail, website, and ConnectEd for regular communications.
- Schedule meetings at times that teachers can attend.

Non-Parents

- More proactive outreach by the district to encourage public participation.

The question on the following slide is related to the Success Measure:

Theme III: School Climate and Culture

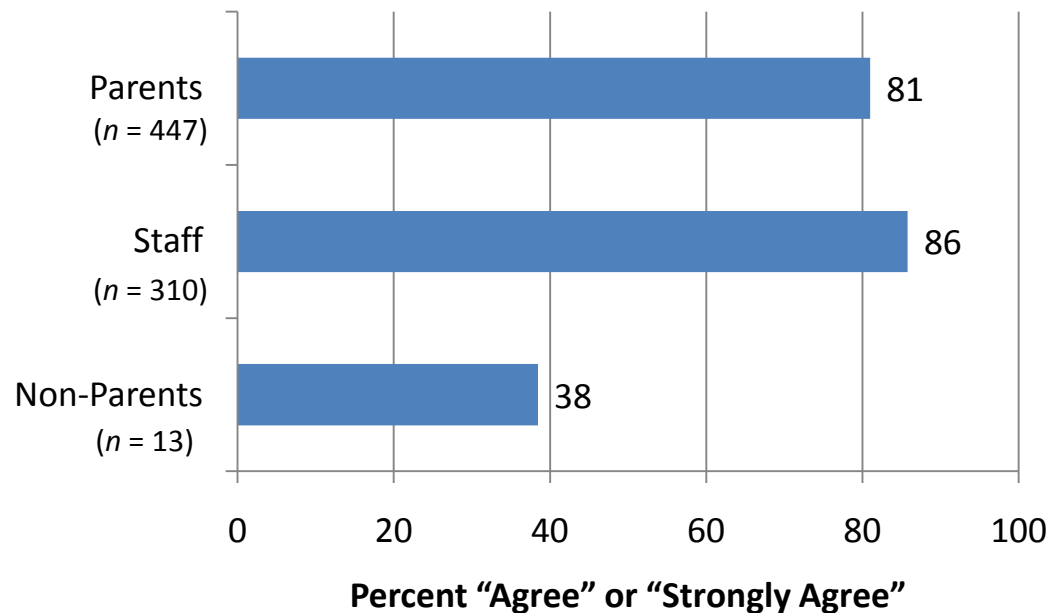
Goal 2: Diversity.

Perceptions/feeling of respect for individuals with differing backgrounds.

Diversity

Parents and staff indicated that they believe that the schools are effective in teaching students respect for others from different backgrounds.

The schools are effectively teaching students to respect others who differ with regard to religion, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation.



The questions on the following four slides are related to the Success Measures:

Theme VI: Communications Partnership and Planning

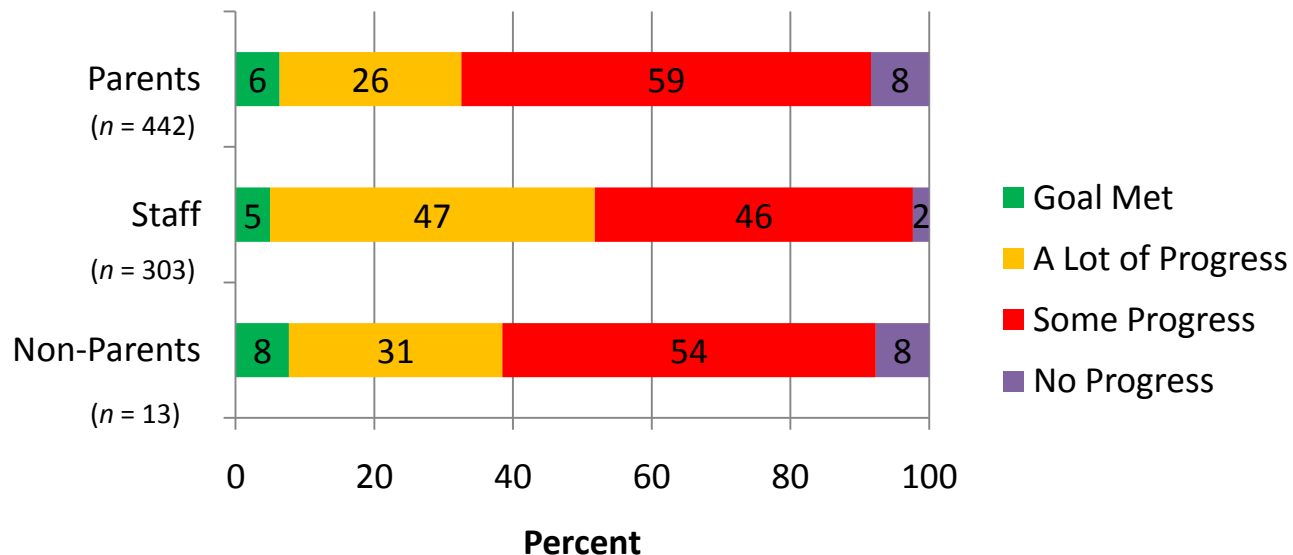
The following slide provide data on the perceptions of progress toward meeting four goals selected from the 20 Strategic Plan goals.

Strategic Plan Goals

Participants rated how much progress they think has been made towards meeting selected goals from the Strategic Plan.

Goal: Provide highly effective instruction in every classroom that ensures consistent delivery of quality curriculum, using strategies and best practice approaches that address the learning needs of all students and maintain high expectations.

About one-third (32%) of parents and 52% of staff feel that a lot of progress has been made or that this goal has been met.

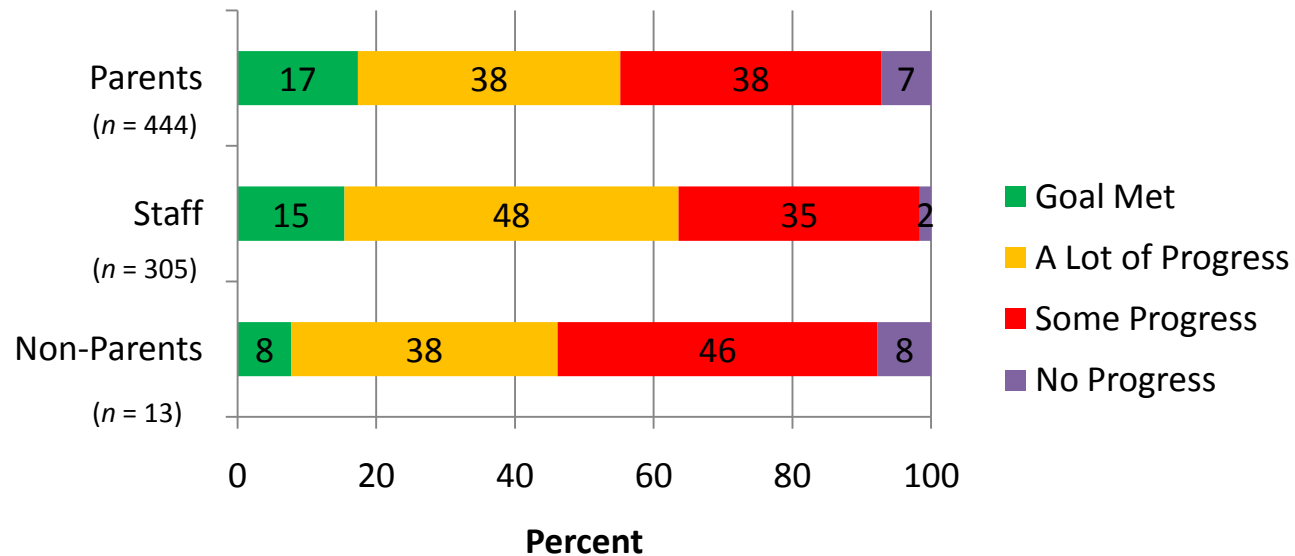


Strategic Plan Goals

Participants rated how much progress they think has been made towards meeting selected goals from the Strategic Plan.

Goal: Provide inclusive, welcoming and safe school environments that invite students and their families to school, promote respect for all individuals and cultivate enthusiasm for learning.

About half (55%) of parents and 63% of staff feel that the district has met or made a lot of progress towards this goal.

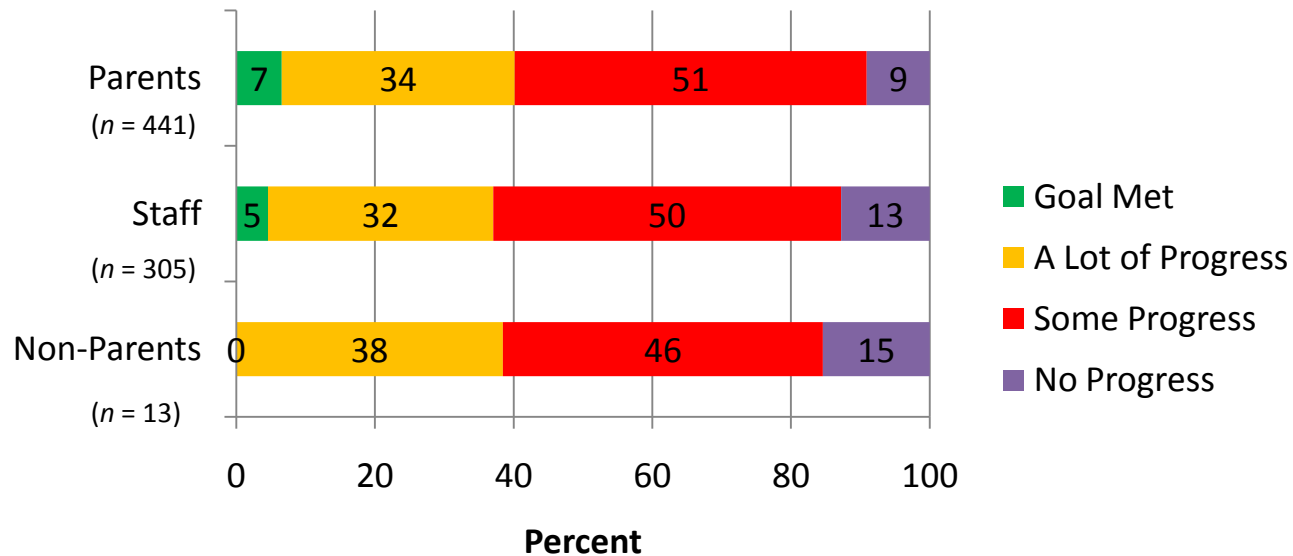


Strategic Plan Goals

Participants rated how much progress they think has been made towards meeting selected goals from the Strategic Plan.

Goal: Provide facilities and technology necessary to support student learning expectations throughout the school system and ensure that resources are equitably distributed across all schools and across the district.

Less than half (41%) of parents and 37% of staff feel that the district has met or made a lot of progress towards this goal.

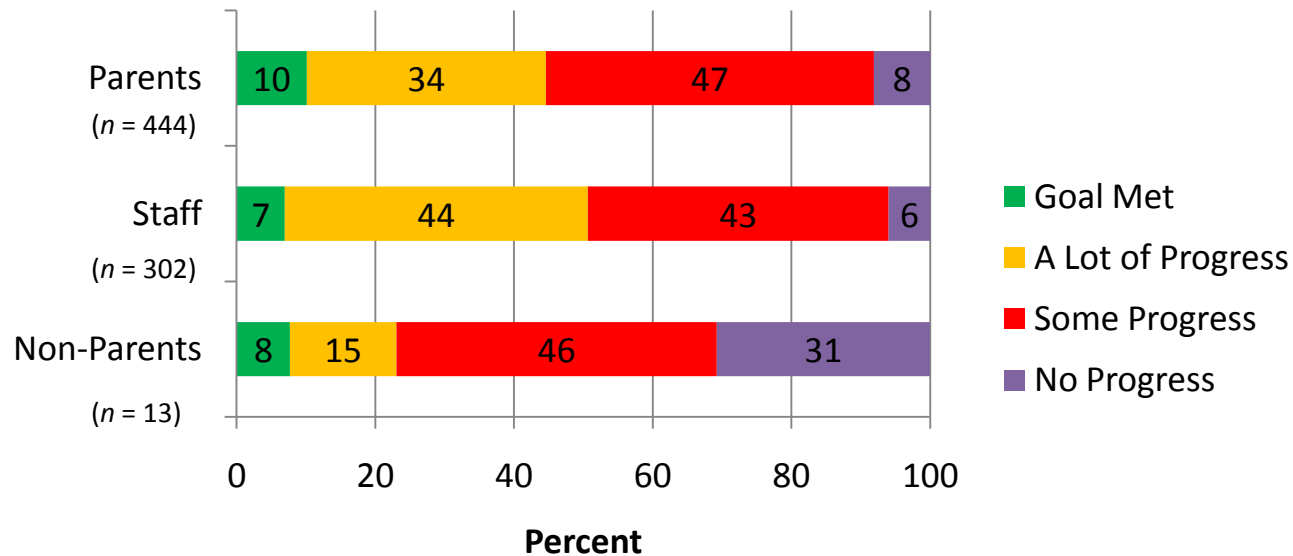


Strategic Plan Goals

Participants rated how much progress they think has been made towards meeting selected goals from the Strategic Plan.

Goal: Strengthen communication systems and strategies to build shared expectations, understanding and trust with parents and community members about the school system.

Less than half (44%) of parents and 51% of staff feel that the district has met or made a lot of progress towards strengthening communications systems and strategies.



The questions on the following six slides are related to the Success Measures:

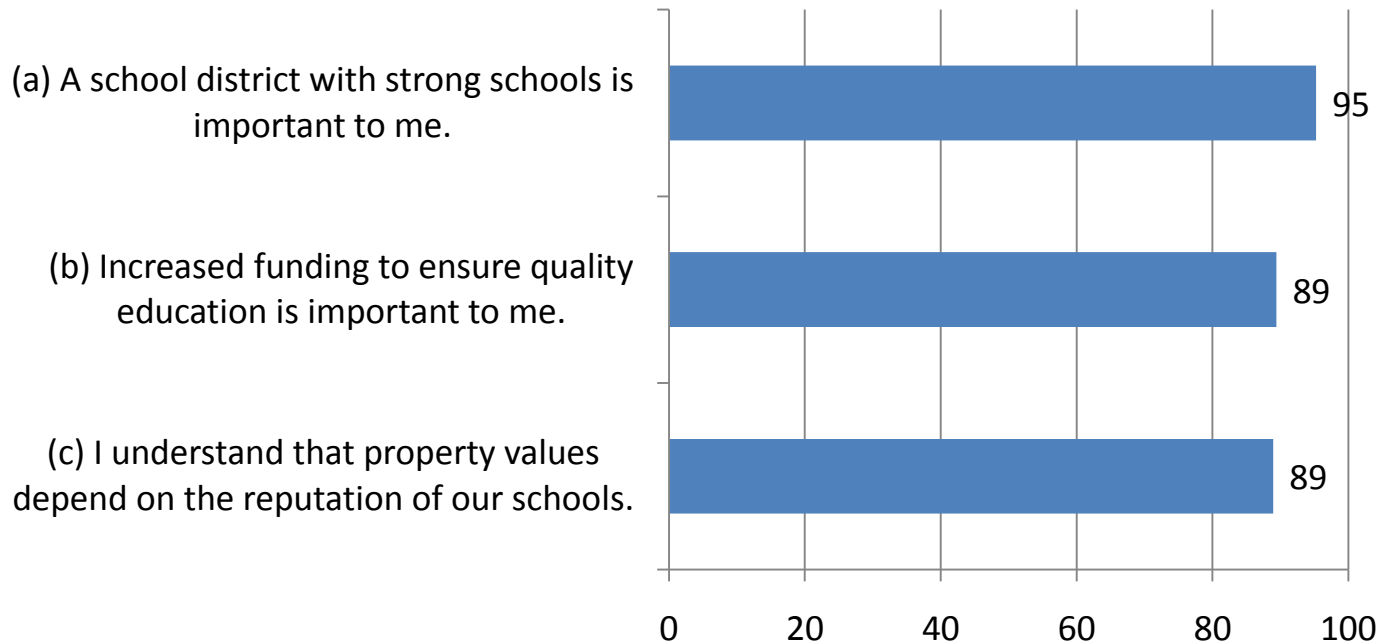
Theme VI: Community Partnership and Planning

Goal 3.2: 95% of community groups give the school district a favorable rating annually on feedback surveys related to their relationship with the schools

Personal Relevance of the Schools

Most parents and community members indicated that they perceive the schools as being personally relevant. Most agreed or strongly agreed that strong schools (95%) and increased funding to ensure quality of education (89%) are important. They also understand that their property values depend on the quality of the schools (89%).

As a resident or business owner in this community, how strongly do you agree with the following statements?*



* These items were not presented to staff.

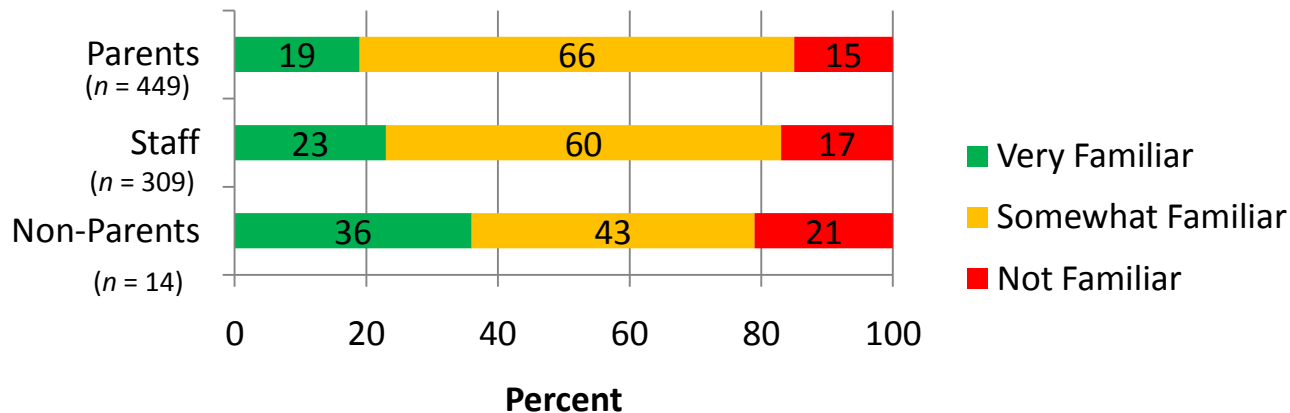
DanversCARES

The following information was provided about DanversCARES:

The Danvers School District is an active member of DanversCARES, a partnership for a healthy community. This partnership includes each school, local hospitals, businesses, and multiple community organizations. DanversCARES works to improve health by:

- encouraging students, families, and other community members to make healthy decisions,
- reducing rates of underage drinking and other drug use, and
- supporting programs to help improve the health of students and the community.

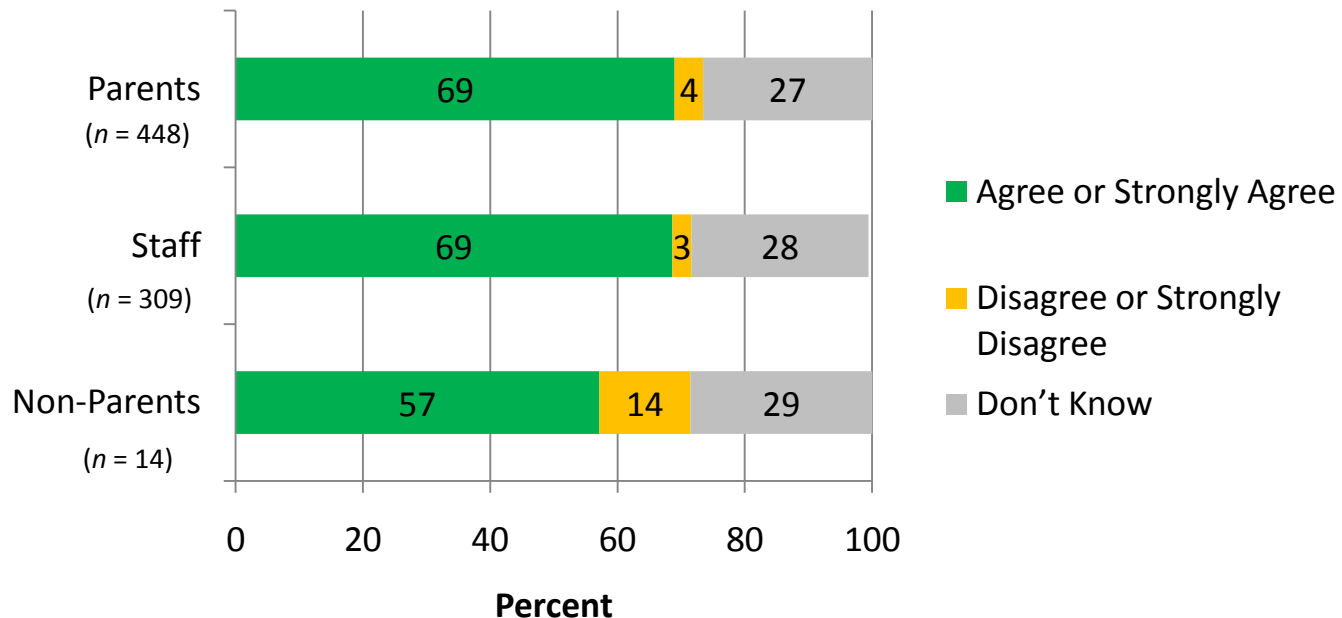
How familiar are you with the programs offered by DanversCARES?



DanversCARES

Most parents (69%) and staff (69%) indicated that they believed that DanversCARES is doing a good job of promoting health. A sizable proportion of respondents indicated that they did not know if DanverCARES was doing a good job, indicating a need to publicize the activities of the organization.

DanversCARES is doing a good job of promoting health in our community.



School Operations

The participants primarily indicated favorable views about school operations. Areas for attention include transportation (61% of parents and 70% of staff indicated that the district does a good job of providing bus service) and calendar (71% of parents and 62% of staff indicated appropriateness of dates). A third area for attention is food services with 73% of parents and 75% of staff providing favorable ratings.

	Parents	Staff	Non-Parents
The school district does a good job of providing school bus service.	61	70	64
The school district does a good job of providing food services.	73	75	64
The schools are clean and in good condition.	87	88	86
The school year start and end dates are appropriate for this community.	71	62	79
The scheduled holidays are the right ones for this community.	94	95	79
The times that the school day begins and ends are the appropriate for this community.	82	87	69
I am welcome to attend school activities.	95	97	71

Suggestions for Improvement

The survey participants were given an opportunity to share ideas as to how the district could improve with respect to operations.

Parents

- Concerns expressed about the quality and price of school lunches.
- Concerns that the school day starts too early for middle and high school.
- Concerns about too many early release days for professional development.
- School calendar concerns including: school year starting too late, school year ending too late, accommodations for snow days, consideration of holidays for other faiths.
- Concerns about transportation: school buses running late; missed bus stops, safety.
- Concerns about the condition of the high school and construction with students on campus.
- More activities for parents to attend, particularly at the elementary school where teachers are also in attendance.

Staff

- Concerns expressed about the school calendar, particularly that the school year starts too late and ends too late.
- Concerns expressed about the nutritional value of school lunches.
- Provide a late school bus at the high school for students who need to stay after school for additional help.
- Concerns expressed about the upkeep of the schools.
- Encourage greater acceptance of diversity in the schools among both staff and students.
- Suggestions to adjust school day schedule: later start times for the high school, longer school days.

Non-Parents

- Longer school year and school days.
- Concerns expressed about student discipline and respect for others.

Communications

Respondents tended to seek information from sources that they believe to be most useful. Parents and staff reported that the Parent Notification System (ConnectEd) was most useful for getting information about the schools. They also reported the School District Website and School Newsletters to be useful.

	Parents		Staff		Non-Parents	
	Usually or Always	Useful or Very Useful	Usually or Always	Useful or Very Useful	Usually or Always	Useful or Very Useful
School/District Parent Notification System (ConnectEd)	82	84	73	85	8	44
School District Website	56	72	60	78	14	46
School Newsletter	57	69	60	73	0	38
Child	57	67	19	32	17	40
Friends/Family	48	64	30	45	43	50
Newspaper	41	55	41	59	79	85
Personal Attendance at School/District Meetings	20	47	37	53	15	67
Watch School/District Meetings on Danvers Cable Access	14	45	14	41	7	64
Word of Mouth	33	44	35	41	25	45
School District Employees	17	42	71	77	0	36
Television	12	29	11	35	17	44
Other	9	15	4	8	25	0
Radio	4	13	6	17	0	20

The questions on the following four slides are related to the Success Measures:

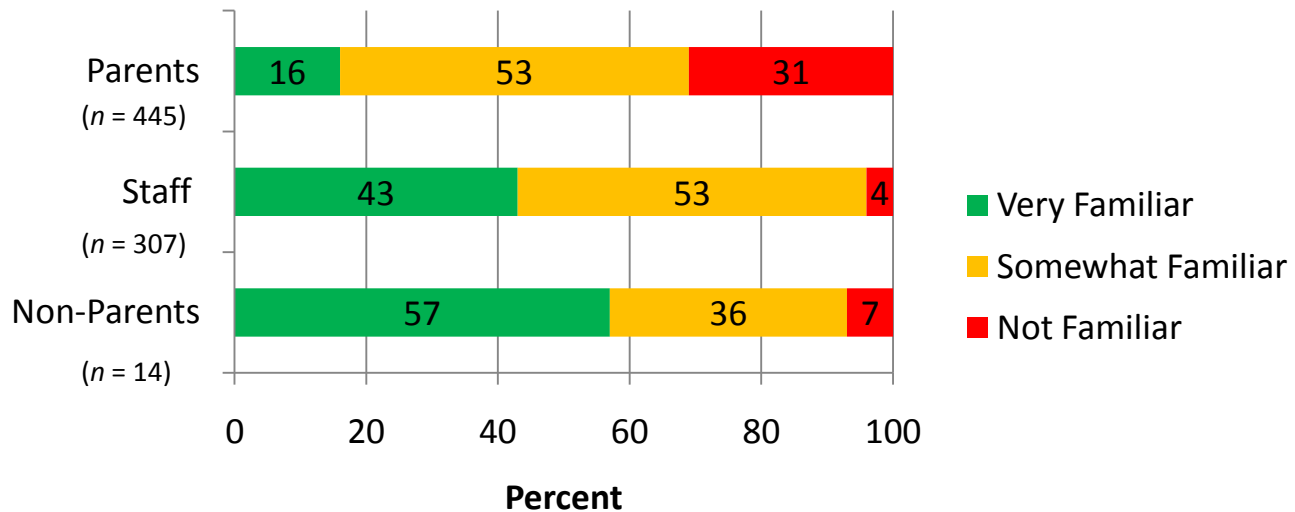
Theme VII: Budget and Finance

Goal 1. Provide greater stability to budgeting and planning processes

Budget

Most participants said that they are very familiar or somewhat familiar with the district's budget constraints. Staff were more likely than parents to indicate that they are somewhat or very familiar (96% vs. 69%).

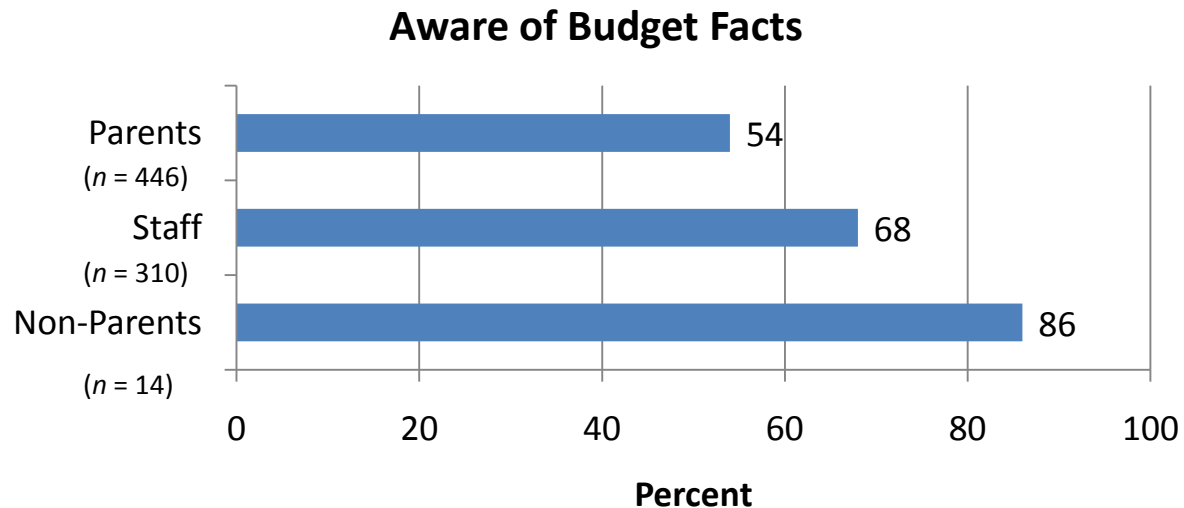
How familiar are you with the school district's budget constraints?



Budget

Most of the participants indicated that they are aware of the following budget facts:

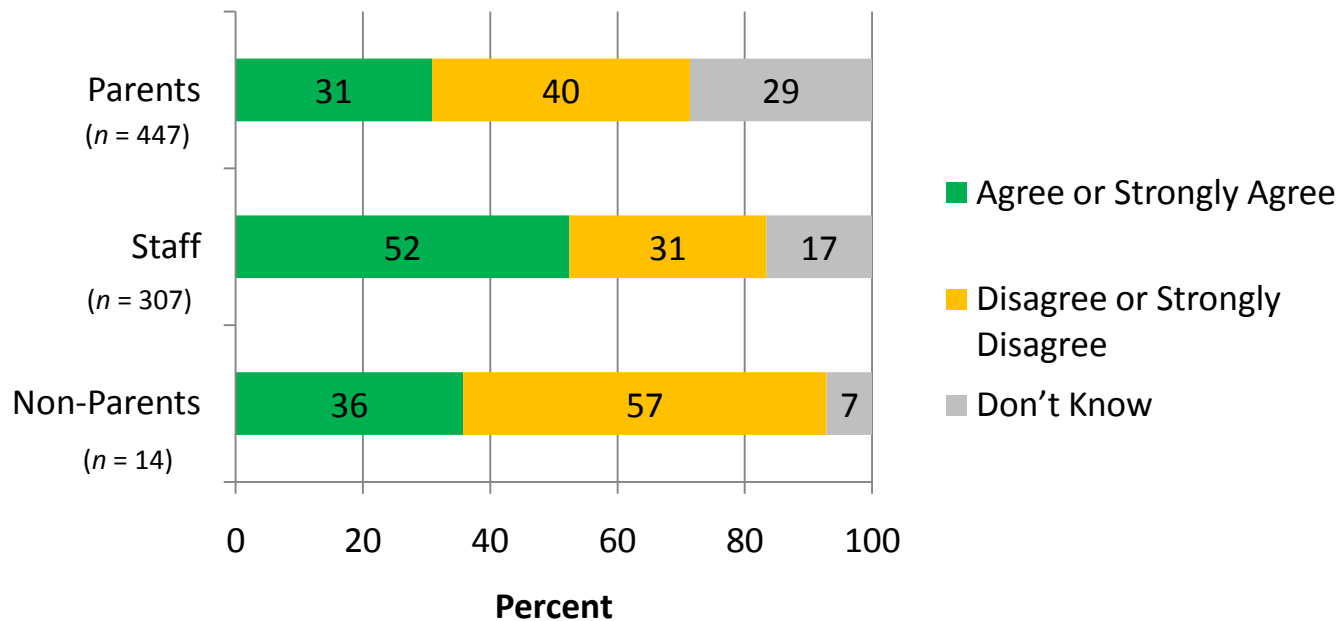
- The high school renovation will be completed without the need for a budget override.
- Danvers Public Schools has one of the lowest user fees for athletics and co-curricular activities.
- The FY11 School Committee approved budget was \$31 million with another \$15 million as part of the town's budget for healthcare benefits, buildings/grounds, and energy costs.



Adequacy of Funding

Less than one-third of parents (31%) and half of staff (52%) indicated that the current level of funding was adequate to meet the community's education needs. A large proportion of parents (29%) and staff (17%) indicated that they did not know if funding is adequate.

The current funding level is adequate to meet this community's education needs.



Central Office Services

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of the support and services provided by the Central Office for education. Each participant selected three items they considered most important. For interpretation, these “votes” were converted to a 100-point scale. The item with the most “votes” was scored 100 and all other items are ranked in relation to this top score.

Both parents and staff considered class size as most important. Parents considered current textbooks & supplies and computers as distant second and third in importance. Staff ranked support services and current textbooks & supplies as distant second and third.

Parents		Staff	
Class size	100	Class size	100
Current textbooks and supplies	63	Support Services	52
Up-to-date computers	35	Current textbooks and supplies	47
Support Services	30	Professional Development	32
Professional Development	28	Up-to-date computers	31
Administration	19	Administration	21
Athletics and After School Programming	14	Athletics and After School Programming	6
Lunches	5	Health services	6
Health services	3	Lunches	3
Transportation	2	Transportation	2

* Non-parents participants are not shown due to small numbers; however, they also selected class size as most important.

Conclusions

The survey findings both validates the work we have been doing and points to areas where we will strive to make improvements.

- Respondents told us that communication using technology like the Parent Notification System (ConnectEd) and the website preferred and useful methods for sharing information. In a related initiative, the district is making greater use of technology tools like email and social networking to not only share information but also engage parents, staff, and community members in the decision making process.
- Communications and engagement with the community continues to be an area for focus. With 15 non-parent community responses, we will be examining ways to further used technology and provide other opportunities to include the broader community in the decision making process.
- Respondents told us that class size is by far the most important element to supporting a sound education. Although issues like transportation and school lunches are comparatively less important, surveys participants told us that these are areas in need of attention. We will be examining the feedback we received to identify actions for these areas.
- We also learned about the perceptions of progress the district has made on four important strategic plan goals. The plan has been in place for over two years and respondents believe that substantial progress has been made. We will continue to track progress in the years to come.