



Public Schools

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Dear Parents, Teachers, Staff, and Residents of the Danvers Community:

As the 2010-2011 school year has come to a close, I want to share the findings of the District's Climate Survey.

First, a little bit of background. This survey was part of a broader effort to include every voice in the important work of educating our children. We now reach out to parents twice every year, community members (residents who do not have a child attending a district school) at least once, and our teachers and staff on more than three occasions. This two-way dialogue brings us all closer. We follow up on each survey by sharing the findings with you so there is full transparency and accountability. I hope you will agree with me, this coming together is not only beneficial in advancing the education of our children, it is also essential to help us realize our full potential as a community.

An important goal area of investigation in our end of the year "District Climate" Survey was to see how people perceived the progress we were making with respect to our strategic plan. As you may know, everything we do in this school district is directed towards advancing us along the seven themes of our strategic plan. Of the 20 goals that appear under the seven themes, we asked for input on four: (1) highly effective instruction, (2) safe and welcoming school environment, (3) equal access for all our students to high quality facilities and technology, and (4) strong communication to build trust with parents and community. Over 90% of parents indicated that they felt progress had been made in each of these areas. The ratings by teachers were higher, except on theme # 3, facilities and technology, where 87% of teachers and staff indicated they felt progress had been made.

Another major area we probed was our community's experience working with the district's school committee, my office, and my administrative council. Nearly 90% of parents and community members who needed to speak to a school committee member were able to do so and nearly 80% of them indicated they felt their concerns were handled in a courteous and professional manner. Similarly, 85% of parents and community members who needed to speak to my office or a member of the administrative council were able to do so. 88% said they felt the administrator listened to their concerns politely and 78% said their ideas were considered and addressed in a professional manner. I want to assure everyone that while we may not be able to act on every concern that reaches us due to resource constraints, you are always guaranteed this: we will carefully listen to your concerns, make a sincere effort to fully understand them and advise in a manner that is courteous and clear as to what action you can expect from us.

This survey identified a few areas in which we will need to work harder in upcoming years and I want to share at least one of them with you. We heard back from 450 parents,

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310 teachers and staff, and 15 members of our community who do not have children in district schools. While the response rate for teachers and staff is better than the average for such studies in other comparable school districts, we clearly need to do better with responses from parents and community members. More than twice as many parents had responded to our climate survey on school level issues last fall. It is worth emphasizing that our parents receive no more than two surveys and residents who have no children in the Danvers Public Schools only one survey from the school district. We understand you are busy and, therefore, we have designed this program to be convenient while covering all key areas.

When asked to indicate what was most important to them from a list of ten items that are key areas of service by central office, every group, without exception 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, survey participants told us that these are areas in need of greater attention. Respondents told us that they preferred communication using technology like the Parent Notification System (ConnectEd) and our district's website for sharing information. 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.

The results I have shared above are just some of the highlights we found in the District Survey. Along with the administrative council, I will be studying the survey data closely this summer and it will be the subject of many internal discussions. The detailed report is posted on the district's website at <http://www.danvers.mec.edu>. I hope you will continue to share your thoughts and ideas with us and even reach out to your friends and neighbors to join the dialogue next year.

I wish you and your families a fun and safe summer filled with positive experiences and various learning opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Dana".

Lisa Dana, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools