Introduction

In March 2005, students in grades four through twelve completed the Student Opinion Survey. This report contains the results for elementary students (grades 4 and 5). Ninety-two percent of elementary aged students in the district completed the survey.

Students who were enrolled in the district for at least 90 days are included in the overall analyses.

The elementary school survey contains 48 multiple choice items. There are five general themes: Sense of Belonging, Teaching/Learning, Sense of Community, Sense of Safety, and Access to Technology.

Sense of Belonging

Approximately nine out of ten district elementary students like school (89%) and are happy to be a student at their school (92%). Eighty-six percent feel as though they belong.

Nearly all respondents (97%) agree that their teachers care about them and 88% believe at least one adult in their school cares about them. The vast majority of students report that teachers and principals treat them with respect (93% and 94%, respectively). Nearly as many respondents (83%) believe that most students treat school staff with respect.

Most students are comfortable asking their teachers for help (91%) and report that they know and understand the school rules (96%). The vast majority of students (96%) report having friends at school. However, 18% admit that they are often lonely at school.

A similar survey was administered in the spring of 2002. In comparison to the responses of students in elementary school at that time, the 2005 students were even more positive regarding their sense of belonging. Students in 2005 were more likely to strongly agree that they are happy to be a student at their school (49% compared to 42% in 2002). There were similar increases across time in the percentage of students who strongly agree that they feel comfortable asking their classroom teacher for help (53% compared to 46% in 2002) and that they know and understand school rules (68% versus 62%).

Furthermore, 2005 elementary school students were more likely than their 2002 counterparts to strongly agree that their teachers care about them (66% compared to 61% in 2002) and that their principal treats students with respect (71% versus 60%).

1 A complete set of all reports is available in the district’s Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department.
2 Fourth and fifth grade students
3 Agree includes students who chose “Strongly Agree” and “Agree,” while disagree includes those who chose “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree.”
4 This includes students who reported having “A Few” or “Many” friends. Those who responded “None” or “One” are not included.
Robbinsdale Area Elementary Schools
Student Opinion Survey 2005

Students who indicated that they do not feel as though they belong at their school (252 students of 1749 students) answered 45 of the 48 questions significantly different than students who feel they do belong. These students are disproportionately students of color, students receiving free/reduced price lunch, and students in fifth grade. In general, these students responded to the items more pessimistically than their counterparts who feel as though they do belong.

Teaching and Learning

Nearly all (96%) of district elementary school students feel that they are learning a lot in their school. The vast majority of students believe that teachers hold high expectations of them; 99% indicate that most of their teachers expect them to do their best in class.

Eight out of ten respondents (81%) report that their school work is about the right difficulty level. Nine percent report that their school work is too hard and 9% indicate that it is too easy. Ninety-five percent of students believe that their teachers do everything they can to help them do well in school and 80% of students acknowledge that they could be a better student if they tried harder.

Almost all the district’s elementary school students (98%) think it is important for them to do well in school, with 82% strongly agreeing with the statement. All fourth and fifth grade students indicate that their families believe it is important for them to do well, with 92% strongly agreeing with the statement. The majority of respondents (91%) believe their friends think it is important to do well in school and 89% believe that students at their school think this is important.

While 79% of students indicate that their teachers present information in ways that they can understand three or more times per week, somewhat fewer (64%) report that teachers present information in interesting and fun ways with similar frequency.

When it comes to homework, 85% of students indicate that someone in their family asks about it three or more times each week. While approximately one-third (35%) of students report that they are never late turning in their homework, 41% admit that sometimes (1-2 times per week) they turn their homework in late or not at all. Sometimes the misbehavior of other students can interfere with work completion. Thirty percent of students indicate that this is a problem for them three or more times during a typical week.

Eighty-five percent of respondents report that they are taught about different cultures and races in their classes at school.

Across time, students are more likely to strongly agree that they are learning a lot in school (60% compared to 52% in 2002). In both years, nearly all students reported that their teachers hold high expectations; however, respondents in 2005 are more likely to strongly agree with this item (83% versus 75% in 2002). Finally, students in 2005 are more likely to indicate that they are never kept from doing their work by students who misbehave (28% compared to only 12% in 2002).
Sense of Community

Almost all students (95%) report that they feel comfortable around students at their school who are of a different race. Similarly, 97% agree that students make friends with students of different races, 94% indicate that students of different races play well together at school, and 95% believe that students of different races work well together. Only 6% of students report being afraid of students at their school who are of a different race.

In comparison to three years prior, students are more likely to feel comfortable around students of different races and to report that students of different races work and play well together at school (94–95% agreement in 2005 compared to 89–94% in 2002).

More than 9 out of 10 respondents (92%) report that students are treated fairly at their school regardless of their race or culture.

When asked about discipline, 85% report that white students are disciplined fairly and 82% indicate that students of color are disciplined fairly. Fewer than half (43%) of students report that there is a lot of racial name calling at their school.

Students were asked how many adults in their school deal with racist behavior when they see or hear it. More than half (54%) of students report that most adults deal with racist behavior and approximately one-quarter (27%) indicate that some adults in their school deal with such behavior. One in five students report that few adults at their school deal with racist behavior when they see or hear it.

Finally, 91% of respondents believe that students with disabilities are treated with respect at their school (an increase from 87% agreement in 2002).

Sense of Safety

The vast majority of the district’s elementary school students (95%) feel safe in the classroom. In addition, most students feel safe in the hallway, bathroom and cafeteria (88%, 82% and 94%, respectively) and on the playground (82%). Of the more than 1200 students who ride the bus, 80% report feeling safe.

While the majority of elementary school students report feeling safe, these percentages have decreased slightly since 2002. The percentage of students feeling safe in the hallway decreased from 92% to 88%, the percentage of students feeling safe on the playground decreased from 86% to 82% and the percentage feeling safe on the bus decreased from 84% to 80%.
Half of elementary school respondents (50%) report that they are never harassed or picked on by other students at school. Eighteen percent of students indicate that this is a problem for them 3 or more times during a typical week.

Access to Technology

The majority of students (89%) report having access to a computer at home, with 82% having internet access. Within the group of students who have home computers, 69% use their home computer for school projects. Similarly, 64% of students who have access at home use the internet for school projects. These percentages represent a decrease from 2002, when 76% of respondents reported using home computers, and 86% utilized the internet, for school projects.

The percentage of students who have a computer at home has remained relatively steady (91% in 2002 and 89% in 2005. However, in 2002, 92% of elementary school students reported having internet access at home, compared to 82% in 2005.

More than three-quarters of students (77%) indicate that they visit a public library one or more times during a typical month. Thirty-eight percent visit the library three or more times a month, which is significantly higher than the 27% who responded similarly in 2002.