

RESEARCH BRIEF

Department of Research Services

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Selected Results of the 2001 MDCPS School Climate Surveys

Each school year, School Climate Surveys are administered by the Department of Research Services to gather information on the perceptions that students, their parents, and school staffs hold concerning their schools and their performance. In 2000-2001, surveys were distributed to approximately 88 thousand parents, 69 thousand primary, secondary, and adult students, and 23 thousand staff. This brief summarizes district-wide results from the February 2001 administration of the *School Climate Surveys* to the regular Pre-k through 12th grade program. In that program, 51 percent of the parents to whom surveys were distributed returned the forms. Of students, 74 percent responded. Sixty-three percent of the staff forms were returned. In the results presented here, the ratings of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” are combined. Data regarding specialized centers and adult student programs were excluded from this district-wide summary. Percentages sometimes do not sum to 100 due to rounding error. A copy of the full report is available from the Department of Research Services.

Table 1 shows that solid majorities consider their school safe. Over 80 percent of staff at all school levels agreed that they felt safe and secure at their school. At the elementary level, over 80 percent of parents and students were also of the opinion that their school was safe and secure. For parents and students, however, these percentages fell at the middle and senior levels, with agreement ranging from 59 to 71 percent.

Table 1: School Safety
Percent agreeing that their school is safe and secure*

Surveyed Group	Educational Level		
	Elementary	Middle	Senior
Staff	87	83	85
Parents	85	71	69
Students	82	59	68

* Item 1 on all forms.

In Table 2, staff and parents are very positive about the quality of education at their school. Middle and senior student majorities are not as strong. All the survey respondents were asked if they thought their school provided a good education. All groups save two responded with a percent agreement at or above 75, and all elementary groups—parents, staff, and students—agreed at rates at or above 85 percent. The middle and senior high students stood apart, however, with agreement levels in the 60s.

Table 2: Quality of Education
Percent agreeing that their school provides a good education*

Surveyed Group	Educational Level		
	Elementary	Middle	Senior
Staff	88	77	79
Parents	91	78	75
Students	85	66	65

*Item 33 on the staff and parent forms, 25 on the student form.

Perhaps the most salient issue concerning school environment is that of crowded classrooms. Table 3 displays the responses to an item concerning this issue. Staff members are in agreement that the schools are overcrowded. The agreement is 59 percent among the elementary school staff, 69 percent at the middle school level, and 51 percent at the high school level, with the statement that “I am limited by too many students in my class.” The students, however, tend not to think that the schools are overcrowded. Fewer than 40 percent of them at all levels agree that “there are too many students in my classroom and that affects how much I learn.” Parents too tend not to think that their school is overcrowded. Asked if the school “is overcrowded to the degree that it affects learning,” agreement at all levels was at or under 45 percent.

Table 3: Learning Environment
Percent agreeing that overcrowding at their school
interferes with teaching and learning*

Surveyed Group	Educational Level		
	Elementary	Middle	Senior
Staff	59	69	61
Parents	35	42	45
Students	29	32	38

*Item 15 on the staff form, 3 on the parent form, 4 on the student form.

Finally, all the survey forms carried a version of a general statement to the effect that the school’s climate and atmosphere are positive and conducive to learning. The results are given in Table 4. Staff agreement varied from 84 percent at the elementary level, through 72 percent at the middle level, to 78 percent at the senior level. For parents, agreement ranged from a high of 90 percent at the elementary level down to 66 percent at the high school level. For students the agreement was 75 percent at the elementary level, 48 percent at the middle level, and 52 percent at the high school level.

Table 4: School Climate and Atmosphere
Percent agreeing that the climate or atmosphere at their school is positive
and conducive to learning*

Surveyed Group	Educational Level		
	Elementary	Middle	Senior
Staff	84	72	78
Parents	90	71	66
Students	75	48	52

*Item 34 on the staff and parent forms, 26 on the student form.