



RESEARCH BRIEF

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School Climate Surveys 2004-05 A Comparison of District and Zone School Responses

At A Glance

The annual School Climate Surveys (Parent, Student, and Staff) were administered in January 2005 and results were distributed to schools in June 2005. In this report, results for the schools in the Superintendent's School Improvement Zone are compared to the results for the District. In general, Zone parent and student responses were very close to the District average on approximately one-quarter of the items. However, groups of respondents from the Zone schools provided less favorable ratings with respect to many of the survey items, particularly those pertaining to school safety and quality of instruction.

This set of surveys—administered in January 2005, not long after the formation of the Zone itself—should provide a good baseline for observing the changing perceptions as reform efforts progress.

Response Rates and Parent Participation

Return rates for parents, students, and staff across the district and within Zone schools are contained in Table 1. The response rates for all three groups are less in Zone schools compared to the District at large. In fact, the response rate was approximately 18 percentage points lower for parents from Zone schools (29%) compared to parents districtwide (47%).

Table 1
2005 Survey Response Rates for District and Zone

	Parents		Staff		Students	
	District	Zone	District	Zone	District	Zone
Percent Responding	47.4	28.8	63.5	51.1	80.6	73.3

Parent participation in school-level activities also appears to be lower in the Zone schools. One of the demographic items on the parent survey asks how many school activities the respondent attended during the current year. Table 2 shows the activity rates for the Zone and District respondents. Approximately 18 percent of Zone school parents compared to 25 percent of parents districtwide attended four or more school activities.

Table 2
Attendance at School Activities Reported by Parents

	0 or Not Marked		1 to 3		4 or more	
	District	Zone	District	Zone	District	Zone
Percent of Respondents	23.3	34.1	51.4	48.2	25.3	17.7

Overall Satisfaction

Although parents of children attending Zone schools were less positive about the overall education their children were receiving compared to parents districtwide, the majority of Zone school parents perceived their children were receiving a good education (82% elementary, 71% middle, and 65% senior high). Similar opinions of parents across the District found 92% of the elementary, 82% middle, and 79% senior high school parents felt their children were receiving a good education (Table 3).

Differences of Opinion

Figures 3, 4, and 5 depict survey items on which the largest discrepancies occurred among parents, students, and staff associated with Zone schools and schools districtwide. Items with the greatest discrepancy included those concerned with: 1) academic standards, 2) overall school climate, and 3) safety and security. Parents from Zone schools (elementary, middle, and senior high) responded less positively on all three of these items.

Senior high school parents were consistently less positive regarding the extent to which the school climate or overall atmosphere at the school helped their child learn (Figure 3). Of senior high school parents with students attending Zone schools, only 49% versus 71% of senior high parents districtwide perceived an overall positive climate at their child's school.

The largest discrepancy for students attending Zone schools (Figure 4) was recorded on the item regarding whether the school building was kept clean and in good condition. Students attending Zone schools were considerably less likely to perceive their school building was in good

condition compared to students districtwide.

A smaller proportion of staff working at Zone schools perceived that morale was high at their school when compared to staff districtwide (Table 5). Zone school staff were also less likely to perceive that adequate discipline measures were used to deal with disruptive behavior when compared to staff districtwide. In addition, Zone school staff viewed students taking their classes as less well-prepared than staff districtwide.

Despite these discrepancies, more than eight out of ten parents with children attending elementary schools in the Zone reported that: 1) staff in the principal's office treated them with respect; 2) teachers assigned meaningful homework; 3) teachers were friendly and easy to talk to; and 4) teachers did their best to include them in matters directly affecting their child's progress in school.

Similarly, approximately three-quarters of parents with children attending middle and senior high schools in the Zone reported that their child's school effectively taught basic academic skills in reading and mathematics and effectively taught students to speak and write correctly in English.

Some of the lowest ratings on the 2004-05 School Climate Survey concerned student ratings relative to the extent to which students follow school rules (Figure 4) and staff opinions regarding student academic preparedness for the classes they taught (Figure 5). Only 9 percent of middle school and 12 percent of senior high school students attending Zone schools agreed that students follow school rules. Students districtwide concurred since only 36 percent elementary school, 17 percent middle school, and 31 percent of the senior high school students perceived that students followed school rules.

A relatively small proportion of instructional staff perceived students were academically prepared for the classes they taught. In Zone schools, only 23 percent of elementary staff, 18 percent of middle staff, and only 20 percent of senior high staff felt students were academically prepared. These percentages increased to 44 percent (elementary), 36

percent (middle) and 35 percent (senior high) when examining districtwide perceptions.

In the future, results from subsequent administrations of the School Climate Survey will be compared to the 2004-05 findings summarized here to determine trends and efficacy of reform efforts in Zone Schools.

Figure 3
2004-05 School Climate Survey
Parent Form: Percent Agree on Selected Items

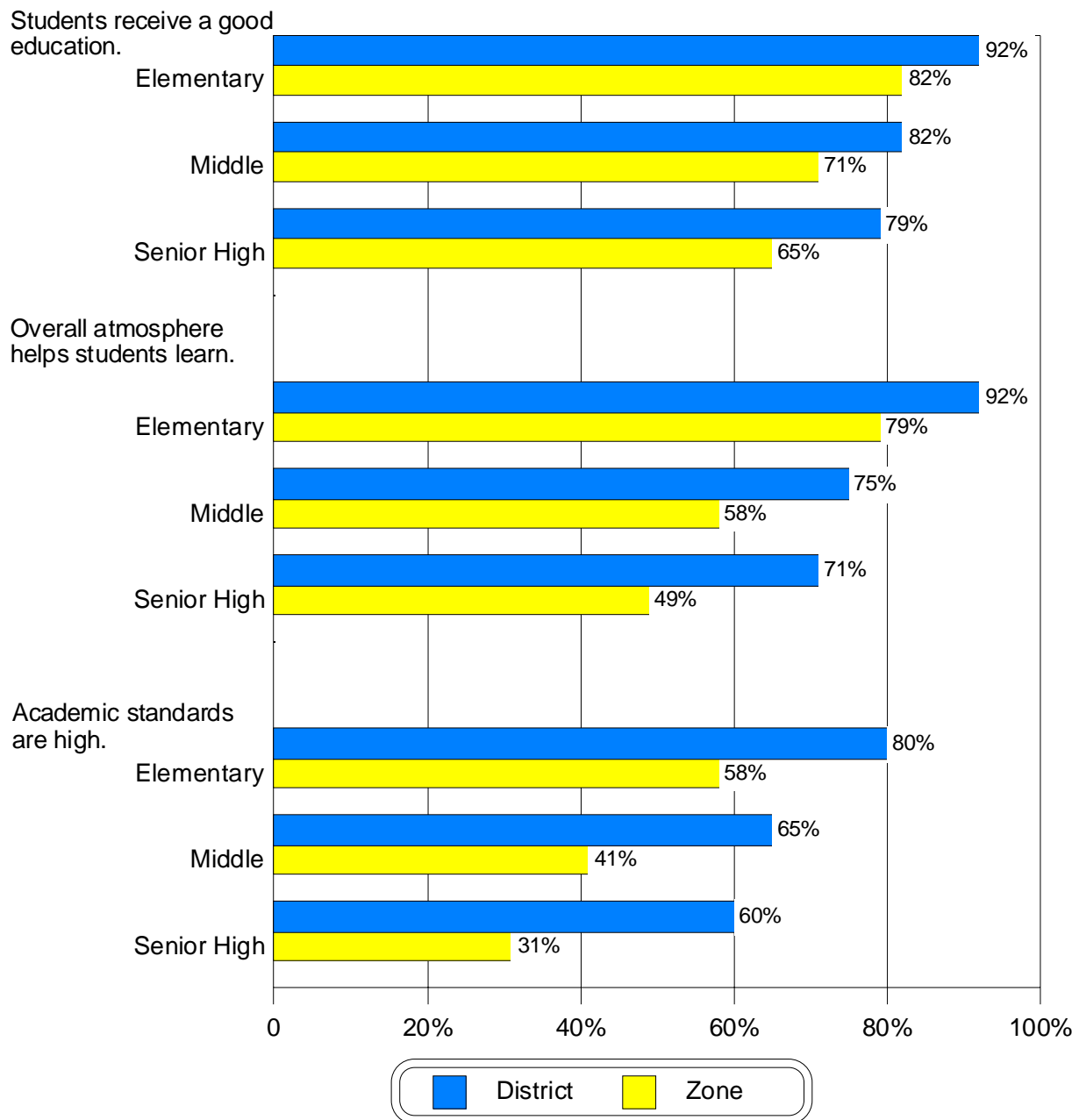


Figure 3 (Continued)
2004-05 School Climate Survey
Parent Form: Percent Agree on Selected Items

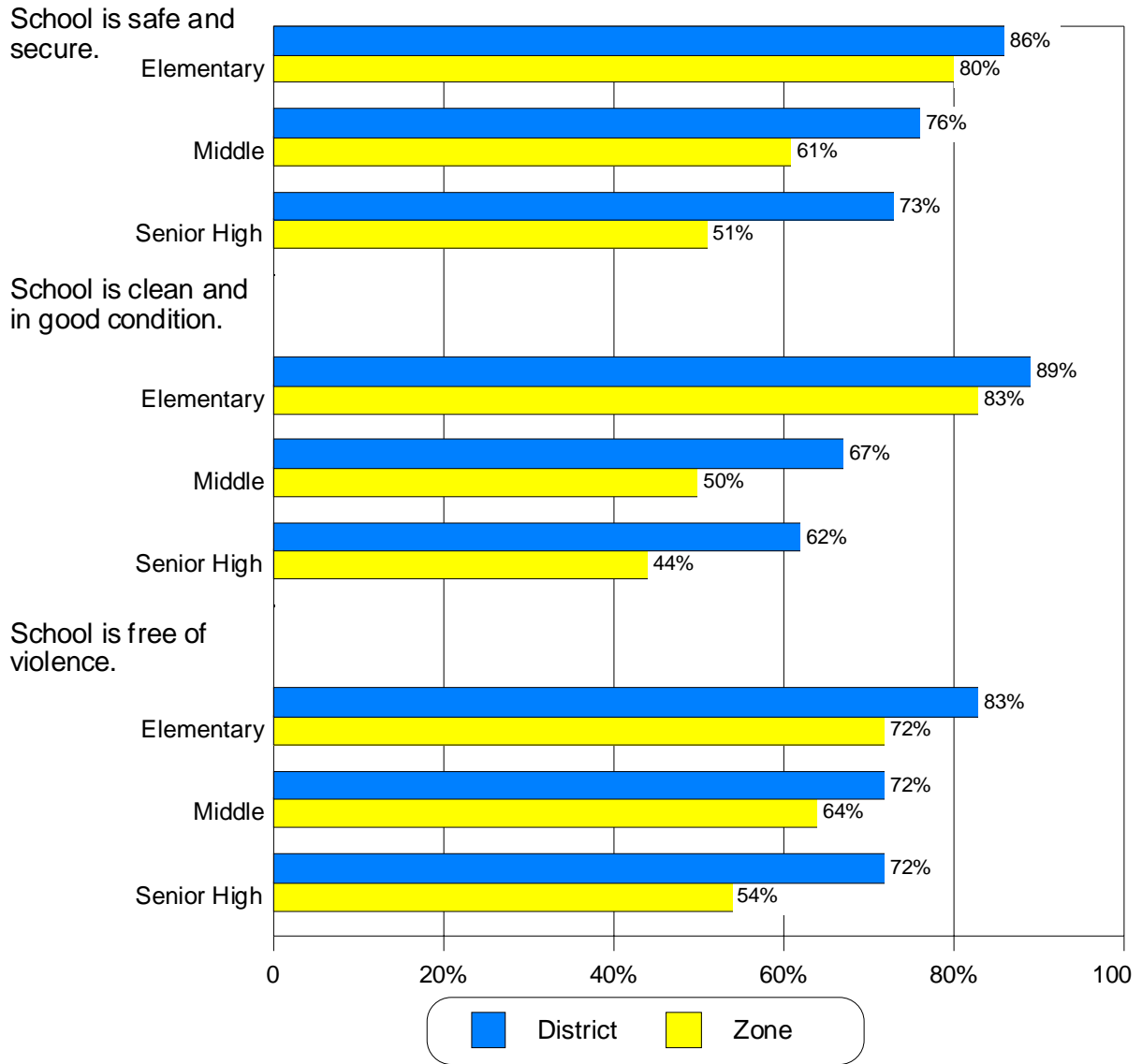


Figure 4
2004-05 School Climate Survey
Student Form: Percent Agree on Selected Items

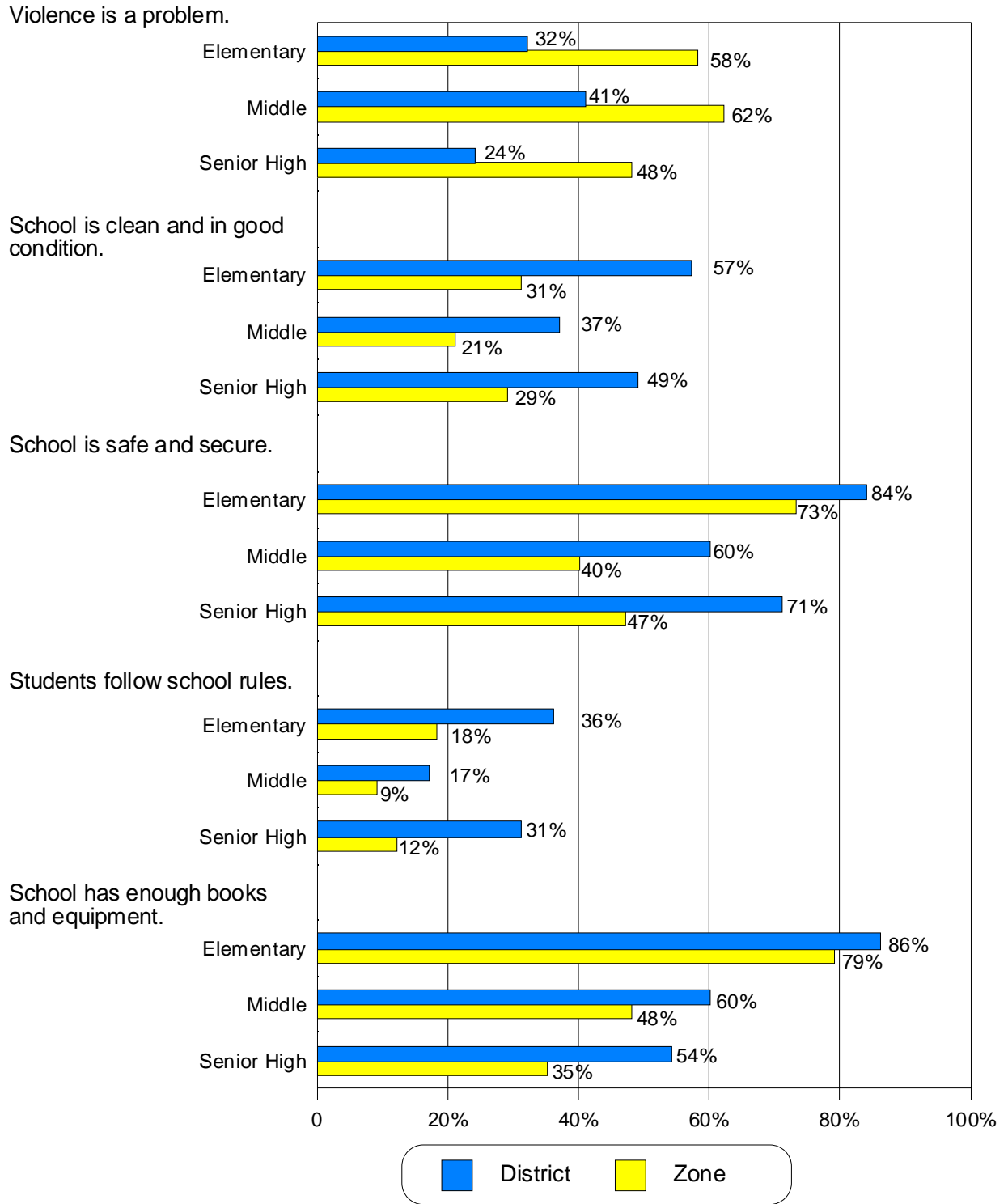


Figure 5
2004-05 School Climate Survey
Staff Form: Percent Agree on Selected Items

