

TO: Dr. Patrick Murphy, Superintendent of Schools
Arlington Public Schools

FROM: Kellyanne Conway, President & CEO
the polling company, inc./WomanTrend

DATE: May 26, 2016

RE: Arlington Public Schools: 2016 Community Satisfaction Survey Key Findings

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS) of **parents, teachers, staff, students and community members who do not currently have children enrolled in Arlington Public Schools** (APS) is conducted by APS every other year. The results provide a district wide snapshot of:

- Public Support Levels for APS
- Key Components of Education
- The Student Experience
- Cultural Sensitivity and the Academic Achievement Gap
- The Teacher Experience
- Communication and Stakeholder Involvement

The survey is designed to encourage comparison. Where applicable, the survey:

- asks similar questions across the stakeholder groups of parents, community members, teachers, and students.
- includes items from the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (PDK) of the Public's Attitudes Towards Public Schools, through earlier PDK/Gallup Polls.
- repeats questions from past Community Satisfaction Survey for questions that monitoring over time.¹ Results from the 2016 Community Satisfaction survey can be trended against past data from similar surveys in 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2014, providing a basis for monitoring levels of satisfaction over time.

In 2016, APS re-contracted with ***the polling company, inc.*** to conduct individual surveys of four stakeholder groups:

- (1) parents of current APS students
- (2) Arlington County “community members;” i.e., residents that do not have children in APS
- (3) current APS staff, and
- (4) current APS students.

Survey administration procedures have evolved over time. After first pioneering the use of a dual-frame, landline/cell phone survey for the 2014 parent and community member CSS, this year's studies increased the cell component from 12.5% to a 30% to reflect the continuing surge in wireless phone adoption.

This year also marked the initial deployment of hybrid paper/online formats for the student and staff member surveys. APS students in grades 6, 7, 9, and 10 received “survey tickets”

¹ <http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=1109>

enabling them to complete the online study with a randomly-generated, one-time use access code. Students in grades 5, 8, and 11 completed the paper survey questionnaire.

Staff members on the A-, E-, G-, P-, T-, and X-Scales received an online, English-language invitation to complete the CSS questionnaire. Staff members on the C-, D-, and M-Scales received paper surveys printed in both English and Spanish. Paper survey respondents placed their anonymous response in a pre-addressed envelope and for processing by tpc/WT.

In collaboration with the APS Office of Planning and Evaluation, *the polling company, inc.* developed the 2016 Community Satisfaction Survey of parents, community members, staff, and students. Regina Van Horne, Assistant Director for Evaluation at **Arlington Public Schools** and Kellyanne Conway, President and CEO of *the polling company, inc.* were the respective leads on the project.

the polling company, inc. selected a random sample of survey participants for each audience given the following sources:

- **Parents:** A full list of parents of Arlington Public School households provided by Arlington Public Schools;
- **Community Members:** a list of households (targeted for residents without school-age children) living in Arlington County purchased by **the polling company, inc.**;
- **Staff:** All staff members included in a full list provided by Arlington Public Schools; and
- **Students:** a list of classrooms of students in grades 5-11 provided by Arlington Public Schools.

Audience	Survey Method	Completed Surveys	Field Dates	Margin of Error
Parents	Dual-frame Telephone Survey (70% Landline / 30% Cell)	603	March 18 – April 10, 2016	± 3.9%
Community Members	Dual-frame Telephone Survey (70% Landline / 30% Cell)	602	March 11-23, 2016	± 4.0%
Staff	Hybrid Paper/Online	2,130	March 28 – May 6, 2016	± 1.6%
Students (Grades 5-11)	Hybrid Paper/Online	1,286	March 7-29, 2016	± 2.7%

The 2016 CSS Staff survey included a set of new questions that were developed in coordination with APS Human Resources. The updated questionnaire was pre-tested among two separate in-person focus groups of APS staff members: a session among non T-scale staff representatives held on February 19, 2016, and a session among a teacher group on Monday, February 22, 2016. The non T-scale group included representatives from all scales except C-scale. Representatives from tpc/WT administered the sessions, which were also monitored by

APS staff. Feedback from pre-testing participants helped to inform the final survey questionnaire that was distributed to APS staff.

The overall margin of error for each survey is calculated at a 95% confidence interval, meaning that in 19 out of 20 cases, the data obtained would not differ by any more than the percentage points in the margin of error in either direction if the survey were repeated multiple times employing the same methodology and sampling method across the same population. Margins of error for subgroups among all audiences examined through cross-tabular analysis are higher.

the polling company, inc. removed any personally identifying information from the survey data before completing this analysis. Personal information that would compromise the anonymity of respondents has not been shared with APS, and will not be divulged otherwise publicly or privately. Demographic information shared by survey participants have been examined and reported in aggregate without identifying specific individuals.

Using the Results for Continual Improvement

Surveys provide an effective method to help public entities assess relative levels of satisfaction, awareness, knowledge and opinion, and to solicit suggestions for modifying or improving services. The results reported in this survey, along with the additional data tables available on the Arlington Public Schools website (www.apsva.us) will be shared with staff responsible for APS schools, programs, and services.

Those likely to use the results include, but are not limited to: advisory groups, principals, supervisors, assistant superintendents, the superintendent, school board members, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff of APS, students and the Arlington community. The survey will be repeated again in the future for the purposes of trending and tracking results as well as to assess progress, satisfaction, challenges and pathways toward continual improvement.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2016 COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

- Continuing a trend from previous CSS studies, Arlington Public Schools (“APS”) earns high marks across-the-board: 93% of parents, 86% of staff members, and 80% of community members give the public schools in Arlington either an “A – outstanding” or “B – very good” grade.
- Parents also tend to have positive views of their child’s school (94% “A” or “B”) and their child’s teachers (92% “A” or “B”).

A 76%-majority of APS students give their school an “A” or “B” grade. Four-in-five APS staff members offer their site an “A” or “B” grade.

Parents view their child’s principal slightly more favorably (83% “A” or “B”) than do APS students (77% “A” or “B” grade for their school’s principal).

- Teachers provide a marginally warmer assessment of Arlington Public Schools compared to the previous study: 91% “A” or “B” in 2016 vs. 87% “A” or “B” in 2014).
- APS parents rate both their public school system (93% “A” or “B” grade for APS vs. 57% “A” or “B” among national public school parents) and their oldest child’s school (94% “A” or “B” grade for APS vs. 80% “A” or “B” among national public school parents) more favorably than those across the country do according to the most recent PDK/Gallup survey results.²
- Students offer mostly positive feedback to a battery of questions about their school experiences:
 - 67% of students feel “respected at school”
 - 71% of students say they are “supported by the adults” in their school
 - 73% of students believe they are “welcomed at school”
- APS parents acknowledge that their child “likes going to school” (92% agree in 2016 vs. 93% agree in 2014). In addition, a 93%-majority of parents “feel welcomed” at their child’s school.
- Parents report a slight uptick in their child’s stress level as compared to the 2014 results: 50% of 2016 respondents agree that their child “is experiencing school-related stress,” compared to 44% in 2014.

² The 47th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools; <http://bit.ly/1NKaxM0>.

- Parents, students, and teachers have divergent views about the extent to which their after-school time is spent on homework. A 42%-plurality of APS students say they spend “too much” of their after-school time on homework (vs. 33% “an appropriate amount” and 8% “too little time” on homework).

In contrast, a 65%-majority of parents say their children spend “an appropriate amount” of their after-school time on homework (vs. 23% “too much” and 10% “too little time” on homework).

Teachers’ assessment of their student’s homework load falls somewhere in-between, as 48% say that their students “spend an appropriate amount” of their after-school time on homework (vs. 15% “too much” and 14% “too little”).

- Key stakeholder groups generally feel safe with APS:
 - 81% of staff members say their building is “safe and secure”
 - 97% of parents believe that their child “feels safe at school”
 - 78% of students feel “safe at school”
- Nearly half of students (49%) agree that “in the last seven days, a teacher has given them recognition or praise for doing good work” (21% neither agree nor disagree, and 28% disagree).
- Arlington County community members tend to think the county is a good steward of their resources: 70% agree that their “tax dollars are being well spent by the Arlington public school system” (vs. 69% agree in 2014). A separate 8% neither agree nor disagree with this statement, while 14% disagree and 7% volunteer that they do not know (vs. 7% neither agree nor disagree, 17% disagree and 7% do not know among community members in 2014).
- APS Parents also share positive sentiments about how their tax dollars are spent: : 84% agree that their tax dollars are being well spent by the public school system (vs. 85% agree in 2014).
- Individual reports of bullying have not increased for students over the past two years: 17% agree and 69% disagree that they were “bullied at school this year” (18% agree, 66% disagree in 2014).
- A 51%-majority of students concur that “school staff stops bullying in school whenever they see it,” and in a separate question, 67% of students affirm that when they have a problem at school, they are able to get help.
- APS Staff members largely concur that they “like going to work”: 84% agree, identical to the 2014 measure.
- Teachers overwhelmingly concur that the Arlington Public Schools “curricula are challenging for all students” (85% agree). Most students feel similarly, as 70% agree that they are challenged by the lessons taught by their teachers (consistent with 70% agree on this question in 2014).

- The series of new and updated questions for APS staff members (see page 2 for details) revealed illuminating insights about staff members attitudes and perceptions, such as the following:
 - 75% of APS staff “feel respected as a professional” in their school or department (vs. 8% neither agree nor disagree and 16% disagree)
 - 85% of APS staff say that their school or department colleagues “are committed to doing quality work in support of the APS mission and goals” (vs. 7% neither agree nor disagree and 6% disagree)
 - 77% of APS staff believe “the mission/purpose of APS” makes them feel like their job is important (vs. 14% neither agree nor disagree and 9% disagree)
 - 68% of APS staff affirm that they have received “recognition or praise for doing good work” during the current school year (vs. 12% neither agree nor disagree and 19% disagree)
- APS staff members seem to be receiving the right signals from their supervisors. A 71%-majority agree that their evaluator has encouraged their development during the current school year, while on a separate question, that same percentage (71%) say that their evaluator gives them performance feedback “and conducts thorough, accurate evaluations” of their work.
- APS Staff members largely report that they have access to available resources:
 - 83% of teachers say that the central office staff (supervisors and specialists) for their instructional programs are “always/sometimes” accessible to them.
 - 74% of all staff agree that they “have the materials and equipment” they need to do their best work.
- A 65%-majority of APS staff members say there is an atmosphere of open communication in their school or department – consistent with the 64% that shared this sentiment on the 2014 CSS.
- Roughly three-quarters (74%) of APS parents say they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with their involvement in the APS School Board’s decision-making process. Among community members, satisfaction is lower, at 59%, largely attributable to a separate 25% who volunteered they did not know.
- There is a prevailing sense that APS is respectful of “cultural differences” (95% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 91% always/sometimes among staff), “language differences” (86% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 90% always/sometimes among staff), and “racial or ethnic differences” (94% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 89% always/sometimes among staff).

Majorities of students agree that those of their race or culture are accepted by staff (80%) and by other students (75%) at school.

- Overall, APS staff seems pleased with their annual salary and compensation packages, as 69% of staff report being either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their annual salary and 67% indicate they are satisfied with their benefits package.
- The prevalence of employee satisfaction may also be reflected by the fact that 86% of staff members say they are “very” or “somewhat” likely to recommend that a friend apply for a position with APS (vs. 11% that are unlikely).
- Over four-in-five (82%) Arlington County community members are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with their access to local schools’ facilities, including a 47%-plurality that is “very satisfied.” In a trend that remained consistent from 2014, 86% percent of community members know how to get information on APS services, programs and resources.
- Parents are more convinced that the public schools have a responsibility to close the achievement gap between white students and black Hispanic students: 73% today vs. 60% in 2014.
 - APS staff respond similarly to parents, as they are more likely to say closing the achievement gap is a responsibility of the public schools by a 65% to 14% spread (a separate 21% say they do not know or are unsure).