

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

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

DATE: September 12, 2014

RE: Arlington Public Schools: 2014 Community Satisfaction Survey

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS) of residents, parents, teachers, staff and students is conducted by the Arlington Public Schools (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 2014 Community Satisfaction survey can be trended against past data from similar surveys in 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2012, providing a basis for monitoring levels of satisfaction over time.

In 2014, 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. Since 2002, parents and community members have been surveyed by telephone for the Community Satisfaction Survey, while teachers switched to an online survey format beginning in 2007. In 2012, the Community Satisfaction Survey was administered to teachers and as well as all other APS staff members for the first time. The 2014 Community Satisfaction survey pioneered the use of a dual-frame sample frame, combining landline and cell phone interviews, for the parent and community member surveys. Students completed a paper survey during a designated classroom period.

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

In collaboration with the APS Office of Planning and Evaluation, *the polling company, inc.* developed the 2014 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 students 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 (87.5% landlines / 12.5% cell phones)	602	April 1 – 15, 2014	± 4.0%
Community Members	Dual-frame Telephone Survey (87.5% landlines / 12.5% cell phones)	600	April 2 – April 16, 2014	± 4.0%
Staff	Online Survey	1,680	April 2 – May 12, 2014	± 1.7%
Students (Grades 5-11)	Paper Survey	1,160	April 7 – 11, 2014	± 2.8%

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 2014 COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

- Arlington Public Schools (“APS”) earns high marks across-the-board: 90% of parents, 85% of staff members, and 79% of community members give the public schools in Arlington either an “A – outstanding” or “B – very good” grade.
 - These stakeholders also tend to be more positive toward APS than Americans nationwide tend to be about the public schools in their own communities. In the PDK Gallup poll², 53% of those surveyed graded their public schools with an “A” or a “B.”
- A 78%-majority of APS students give their school an “A” or “B” grade. Parents (94% “A”/“B”) and staff members (85% “A”/“B”) are even more positive about their child’s school and their own school/building.
 - Teachers (93% “A”/ “B” among teachers; 91% “A”/ “B” among parents; 70% “A”/ “B” among students) and principals (72% “A”/ “B” among teachers; 82% “A”/ “B” among parents; 75% “A”/ “B” among students) are also received positively.
 - 83% of parents agree that their child’s principal “is responsive to the concerns of parents and the community.”
- Four-in-five parents (81%) are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with their involvement in the APS School Board’s decision-making process. Among community members, satisfaction is lower, at 55%, largely attributable to a separate 24% who volunteer that they do not know.

This contrasts with APS staff members that seem to have a stronger basis to judge the school board’s involvement. Staff are more negative about this process, with 55% calling themselves “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied (vs. 31% “very” or “somewhat” satisfied and 14% that say they do not know).

Parents tend to be more satisfied with their involvement in the APS School Board’s decision-making process than they were in the 2012 (70% “very” or “somewhat” satisfied), while staff satisfaction on this question dipped slightly since the previous study (35% “very” or “somewhat” satisfied in 2012).

² PDK/Gallup Poll | PDK International; <http://bit.ly/1mEIDhd>.

- Parents and community members are impressed by APS' financial stewardship. Specifically, 85% of parents and 69% of community members agree that their "tax dollars are being well-spent" by the school system.
- Moreover, 83% of parents agree that their PTA "collaborates with the community to expand learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation."
- Students provide encouraging feedback in response to a battery of statements about their experiences at school. Most statements receive majority support from students, including "I am challenged by the lessons taught by my teachers," (70% agree) and "I feel supported by the adults in my school" (76% agree). In fact, students are more likely to agree that they are challenged by their teachers' lessons than they were in the 2012 survey (62% agree).
- Eighteen percent of APS students say they were bullied at school this year, and 53% agreed that "school staff stops bullying in school whenever they see it." Students are even more convinced that they are able to get help when they have a problem at school (66% agree) and separately, that there is at least one adult in the school with whom they can discuss things that are important to them (65% agree).
 - Parents share similar views, with 21% agreeing that their child "is worried about bullying in the school"; 73% disagree.
- Students are 15-points more likely to feel school-related stress (59% agree) than their parents reported them having (44% agree). Additionally, there is a 6-point uptick in student agreement that they are "stressed about school work" since the 2012 survey (53% to 59%).
- Several results showcase APS' progress toward achieving goals laid out in the strategic plan. For instance, 90% of students predict that "they will graduate from high school" and 62% acknowledge that they are challenged by their lessons. Teachers, too, recognize a high level of engagement: an 83%-supermajority of teachers agree that their students' schoolwork develops life skills.
- The vast majority of students report feeling safe, welcome, and supported at their school, indicative of positive progress on APS' fourth strategic plan goal (provide optimal learning environments for students).
 - Three-quarters of parents also believe that APS helps students live healthy lives through physical education, nutritious school lunches, and limiting junk food on APS property.
- A majority of APS students (53%) say that a teacher gave them recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork over the past seven days; 24% say this has not happened in the past seven days. Students credit APS teachers with "help[ing] students who cannot speak English well" (66% agree) and "treat[ing] students fairly regardless of race, culture, or language" (77% agree).
- Divergent majorities of APS parents (72%) and teachers (51%) feel that pupils spend an "appropriate amount of their after-school time on homework."

- Students are split on the intensity of their workload. While a 39%-plurality of students say they spend “too much of their after-school time on homework,” a separate 35% feel they spent an appropriate amount of time on these tasks.
- Parents largely regard themselves as partners with the schools in their child’s education: 88% concur that they collaborate “with the staff at [their] child’s school” to continue “development at home as well as at school.”
- APS parents also largely affirmed that their child’s teachers “maintain consistent and high expectations” (92% agree) as well as that teachers give adequate feedback about “their child’s classroom performance” (88% agree). The students themselves are less in agreement on this matter. A smaller majority of them, 58%, agree that their teachers give them feedback about how well they are learning. This number is similar to the 53% that said they’d received positive recognition from a teacher in the preceding week.
- Both APS parents and staff members overwhelmingly state that APS schools respect “cultural differences,” (95% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 96% always/sometimes among staff) “language differences,” (88% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 96% always/sometimes among staff) and “racial or ethnic differences” (93% very/somewhat respectful among parents; 95% 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.

- Fully 63% of Arlington Public Schools employees believe the work environment promotes productivity and success, and separately, 54% agreed “somewhat” or “strongly” that it brings about well-being, satisfaction, and positive morale.
 - Overall, APS staff seems pleased with their annual salary and compensation package, as 65% of staff report being either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with what they receive.
- Over four-in-five (81%) Arlington County residents are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with their access to local schools’ facilities, including a 52%-majority that is “very satisfied.” In a trend that remained consistent from 2012, 87% percent of community members know how to get information on APS services, programs and resources.
- Parents are over two times as likely (60% to 25%) to believe that it is “the responsibility of the public schools to close the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students.” A 69%-majority say that Arlington Public Schools has been “very” or “somewhat” in narrowing the achievement gap (vs. 9% “very” or “somewhat” unsuccessful).
 - 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 62% to 17% spread, and a 70%-majority believe APS has successfully narrowed the gap (vs. 21% unsuccessful).