

***the polling company, inc.* for Arlington Public Schools**  
**2015 Site-Based Survey: Methodology**  
**June 2015**

## **1. Purpose and Overview of the 2015 Site-Based Survey**

Arlington Public Schools (APS) commissioned **the polling company, inc./WomanTrend** to conduct a comprehensive Site-Based Survey among its students, parents, and teachers in 2015. The Site-Based Surveys are designed to provide school level feedback from students, teachers, and parents on issues including school climate, instruction and teacher expectations, curricula, classroom size, cultural competence, communication, counseling services, physical health and nutrition, teacher experience, professional development activities, and other related information.

Responses collected in the survey are shared in aggregate with principals in each of the schools, and individual school results are presented in a way that allows comparisons with results from previous years' Site-Based Surveys where questions are the same. Principals may use the 2015 Site-Based Survey results to monitor change and progress with respect to school management plans.

This process invited feedback from students, teachers, and parents in three separate surveys administered during the 2014-2015 school year. Site-Based Survey questions were developed over previous years to reflect input from the Planning and Evaluation Office, the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Accountability and Evaluation, senior staff, and a number of stakeholder groups. The questionnaires were designed to respond to the APS Strategic Plan goals, and provide the results for a number of the indicators used to measure progress in these areas.

The Site-Based Survey of students, teachers, and parents was conducted in 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2008, and piloted in 2005. **the polling company, inc./WomanTrend** began working with APS for the 2010 Site-Based Survey. A smaller version of the Site-Based Survey was conducted in 2014 among students, teachers, and parents at two schools.

## **2. Vendor Selection**

Arlington Public Schools commissioned ***the polling company, inc. ("tpc")*** – a market research firm incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia and headquartered in Washington, DC – to assist with the 2013 and 2015 Site-Based Surveys as well as the 2014 Community Satisfaction Survey through competitive bid processes.

***the polling company, inc.*** manages the planning and execution of these studies including the methodological design, questionnaire development, sampling, print and mailing, data collection, and analysis and reporting.

The APS Planning and Evaluation Office was responsible for the overall direction of the study. Regina Van Horne, Assistant Director for Evaluation in APS’ Planning and Evaluation Office was the primary point of contact and direction, and Lisa Stengle, Director of Planning and Evaluation for APS, helped coordinate and supervise the project.

### 3. Survey Audiences and Sampling

The 2015 Site-Based Survey solicited feedback from three distinct groups of stakeholders: 1) students, 2) teachers, and 3) parents. The size of each population, sample, and total number of interviews are provided on pages 8-10.

#### Students

All elementary students in grade five completed the questionnaire. **the polling company, inc./WomanTrend** selected a sample of secondary school classrooms from grades 6-11 to participate in the 2015 Site-Based Survey. **tpc/WT** randomly selected participating classrooms from the larger population of qualifying classrooms provided by APS. Sample classrooms met the following criteria:

Grade 5	All homerooms
Grades 6-10	Sample Health/PE classes
Grade 11	Sample VA/US History classes
Arlington Mill	All English classes, including HILT/HILTEX
Career Center	Sample of classes in periods 1, 3, and 5
Langston and New Directions	All students

A number of students who attended the Career Center in addition to their “home” school may have completed more than one Site-Based Survey, in conjunction with each of the institutions.

#### Teachers

All APS teachers received an email invitation to complete the Site-Based Survey for their assigned school. Teachers who worked at more than one school received invitations to provide feedback for each institution. The Planning and Evaluation Office furnished **tpc/WT** with an Excel file listing the name, email address, and institution for each qualifying teacher within the APS school system.

#### Parents

Parents of all Arlington Public Schools students, including the alternative programs, were invited to participate in the 2015 Site-Based Survey. Each household received one survey per student and per school to provide feedback on their own personal experiences and those of their students. Households with children in multiple schools in Arlington received more than one survey questionnaire to evaluate each school as appropriate.

Households with multiple children enrolled in one school (including twins or other multiples) received one survey for the school, and parents were asked to refer to the experience of their oldest child in the particular school being assessed. All Career Center students, both part-time and full-time, were included in the sample, meaning that some parents received two surveys for one child.

APS provided a sample population that included names, mailing addresses, and the student or students' institution[s] for all qualifying parents. The full population received survey packets sent by U.S. mail.

Contained within each packet were:

- 1) an English-language cover letter describing the survey, including instructions to complete the survey online and a printed signature from that institution's principal;
- 2) a double-sided English language survey;
- 3) a self-addressed business reply mailer parents could use to return completed paper surveys.

Households that APS designated as Spanish-speaking also received Spanish-language cover letters and surveys with otherwise identical content.

## 4. Survey Development

For the 2015 iteration of the Site-Based survey, *tpc* and the APS Planning and Evaluation Office compiled an initial set of questions by audience based on inquiries included in past studies, many of which were retained for the purposes of trending against previous years' benchmarks.

The following table details the composition of the questionnaires by audience.

Audience	Survey Versions	Closed-ended Questions
<i>Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two versions:</b> elementary and secondary schools</li> <li>• <b>Survey Language:</b> provided in English and Spanish</li> </ul>	43 questions (elementary) or 44 questions (secondary)
<i>Teachers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One version:</b> all teachers, regardless of school level</li> <li>• <b>Survey Language:</b> provided in English only</li> </ul>	30 questions
<i>Parents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One version:</b> all parents, regardless of school level</li> <li>• <b>Survey Language:</b> provided in English and Spanish</li> </ul>	35 questions

### a. Translation

The questionnaires for all audiences were developed and reviewed in English. In advance of data collection, the Arlington Public Schools' Language Services Registration Center translated the student and parent surveys in the primary Spanish dialect spoken by the majority of Spanish-speaking residents in Arlington County.

Students who were previously identified by APS to receive materials in Spanish were noted during the sampling procedure. These students were offered surveys in both English and Spanish, and a Spanish-language proctor was provided when necessary to assist with comprehension of survey instructions and content.

Parents included in this Spanish-speaking subgroup of the sample were mailed survey packets in *both* English and Spanish, including a translated letter from the principal and a Spanish language questionnaire. All parents who completed the survey online were given the option at the beginning of the survey to select to read the questionnaire in English or Spanish.

## 5. Methodology and Data Collection

**tpc** designed the methodology for the surveys of students, teachers, and parents to be most appropriate for each audience and effective for the execution of data collection.

### *a. Methodology by Audience*

#### **Students**

Students from designated classrooms among grades 5-11 were invited to complete the paper questionnaire. Selected courses were chosen according to their status as *required* for every student within that grade.

A survey coordinator was chosen by school administration to distribute and collect survey packets within each school. Each survey packet contained instructions to the designated survey proctor, questionnaires in English and Spanish to be completed by classroom, and pre-sharpened number two pencils to be provided for students to fill in answer choices.

Survey coordinators and proctors were given approximately two school-weeks (March 9-20, 2015) to administer the student survey in the selected classrooms. Survey packets were returned to the APS Planning and Evaluation Office in signed and sealed envelopes to protect the respondents' confidentiality. **tpc** representatives collected the completed surveys for processing and analysis.

#### **Teachers**

The survey of teachers at Arlington Public Schools was completed online. **tpc/WT** e-mailed an invitation to participate in the study from the address [survey@pollingcompany.com](mailto:survey@pollingcompany.com) on March 23. The e-mail included information on the purpose of the study, an assurance of confidentiality of responses, a link to partake in the study, and the school to be referenced in the study.

Teachers were asked to log in to the online questionnaire by providing their APS-issued e-mail address to which the invitation was sent. Data collected from teachers were examined collectively, and no identifying information that could reveal the personal identity of the participants was used in the analysis.

Three reminder e-mails were sent to those teachers who had not yet returned a completed online survey on April 6, April 13, and April 17. The online survey was available for completion by teachers between March 23 – April 20, 2015.

## ***Parents***

Parents participating in the study were given the option to complete the questionnaire on paper (through the mail) or online. Parents were mailed a survey packet beginning on April 13 which included an instructional letter from their principal, a paper version of the survey, a postage-paid return envelope, and the letter and survey in Spanish, if identified as necessary by Arlington Public Schools.

As an alternative to mailing back their completed questionnaires, parents were invited to take the Site-Based Survey online, connecting to the web-based system through the Arlington Public Schools' website. Instructions to do so were provided in the letter from principals. Each household was randomly assigned a unique five-digit survey ID, which was required to complete the online survey.

Parents who had not completed the online questionnaire or returned the mailed survey by Monday, May 11, received a second wave of survey packets. The second wave of survey packets included the same materials as the first iteration, with a slightly modified cover letter reminding parents to complete the Site-Based Survey. The second wave of survey packets included the same materials as the first iteration, with a slightly modified cover letter reminding parents to complete the Site-Based Survey. In conjunction with APS, **tpc** extended the deadline for completed surveys one week to June 5, 2015.

## ***b. Confidentiality and Anonymity***

No personally identifying information was collected in the surveys of students, teachers, and parents. Additionally, all responses were examined and reported in aggregate for the county, school level, and site.

### ***c. Ensuring Universal Awareness and Encouraging Responsiveness***

**tpc** planned and executed a number of measures prior to and during data collection of the 2015 Site-Based Survey to ensure that all qualifying respondents knew about the survey and to encourage an ample response rate for each audience, including:

- Arlington Public Schools was identified as the sponsor of the survey in all communications supporting the study of students, teachers, and parents.
- All respondents were ensured confidentiality of their responses, and were guaranteed that their answers would be examined in aggregate form only.
- Parents and teachers were notified of the 2015 Site-Based Survey weeks prior to its administration.
- Parents and students were given the option to complete the questionnaire in English or Spanish, and interpreters were available to students taking the survey in Spanish as needed.
- Teachers who were invited to participate in the survey but did not yet complete the questionnaire were sent two reminder emails with a request to sign into the web-based survey system to take the survey.
- Parents who did not complete a survey by May 11 were sent another packet of information, including the paper survey through the mail.
- Parents signed up for the School Talk listserv for the selected Arlington Public Schools received three separate notifications of the study.
- Arlington Public Schools provided information on the study on a dedicated page on their website. This page also included a link for parents to complete the survey online.
- **tpc** was continuously available to respond online, in person, or over the phone to any technical questions regarding accessing the survey online for teachers and parents.

### ***d. Survey Margin of Error***

The overall margin of error for the 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 survey methodology and sampling method across the same population.

### Students<sup>1</sup> - Response Rates to the 2015 Site-Based Survey by School

School Name	School Enrollment	Students in Sample	Completed Surveys	Response Rate	Margin of Error (95% Confidence Interval)
<b>Elementary Schools</b>					
Abingdon	575	78	68	87%	±4.2%
Arlington Science Focus	636	96	83	86%	±4.0%
Arlington Traditional	480	72	71	99%	±1.4%
Ashlawn	605	97	93	96%	±2.1%
Barcroft	474	64	58	91%	±4.0%
Barrett	495	95	91	96%	±2.1%
Campbell	333	45	38	84%	±6.3%
Carlin Springs	488	77	72	94%	±3.0%
Claremont	680	79	69	87%	±4.2%
Drew	493	62	57	92%	±3.7%
Glebe	578	91	81	89%	±3.6%
Hoffman-Boston	339	36	27	75%	±9.6%
Jamestown	603	99	87	88%	±3.7%
Key	653	92	77	84%	±4.5%
Long Branch	508	77	74	96%	±2.3%
McKinley	571	88	83	94%	±2.6%
Nottingham	720	96	95	99%	±1.0%
Oakridge	723	119	103	87%	±3.6%
Patrick Henry	478	67	61	91%	±2.4%
Randolph	418	75	75	100%	-
Taylor	783	132	119	90%	±2.8%
Tuckahoe	689	109	101	93%	±2.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,322</b>	<b>1,846</b>	<b>1,683</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>±0.7%</b>
<b>Secondary Schools</b>					
Gunston	876	357	316	89%	±4.4%
Jefferson	863	362	319	88%	±4.4%
Kenmore	877	361	318	88%	±4.4%
Swanson	1005	381	334	88%	±4.4%
Williamsburg	1074	391	381	97%	±4.0%
H-B Woodlawn	643	324	304	94%	±4.1%
Wakefield	1669	445	379	85%	±4.3%
Washington-Lee	2044	473	420	89%	±4.3%
Yorktown	1775	457	419	92%	±4.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,826</b>	<b>3,551</b>	<b>3,190</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>±1.5%</b>
<b>Alternative Programs</b>					
Arlington Mill	332	310	173	56%	±4.5%
Career Center	880	880	625	71%	±2.1%
Langston	88	66	45	68%	±10.3%
New Directions	32	28	21	75%	±12.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,332</b>	<b>1,284</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>±1.9%</b>
<b>County-wide</b>	<b>24,480</b>	<b>6,681</b>	<b>5,737</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>±0.5%</b>

<sup>1</sup> **Please note:** On the student survey, margin of error calculations for elementary sites are based off of the fifth grade population for that school, rather than overall enrollment, as only those students were sampled for the SBS. Margins of error for secondary schools and alternative programs are calculated based off the entire student population for that site.



### Teachers - Response Rates to the 2015 Site-Based Survey by School

School Name	Teachers in Sample	Completed Surveys	Response Rate	Margin of Error (95% Confidence Interval)
Abingdon	67	23	34%	±16.7%
Arlington Science Focus	56	23	41%	±15.8%
Arlington Traditional	41	27	66%	±11.2%
Ashlawn	63	28	44%	±13.9%
Barcroft	67	26	39%	±15.2%
Barrett	68	41	60%	±9.7%
Campbell	48	22	46%	±15.5%
Carlin Springs	64	20	31%	±18.3%
Claremont	68	29	43%	±13.9%
Drew	66	23	35%	±16.6%
Glebe	55	18	33%	±19.1%
Hoffman-Boston	63	23	37%	±16.4%
Jamestown	53	22	42%	±16.1%
Key	62	28	45%	±13.8%
Long Branch	49	30	61%	±11.3%
McKinley	50	26	52%	±13.5%
Nottingham	60	42	70%	±8.4%
Oakridge	75	33	44%	±12.9%
Patrick Henry	58	26	45%	±14.4%
Randolph	56	21	38%	±17.1%
Taylor	58	25	43%	±14.9%
Tuckahoe	60	23	38%	±16.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>±3.0%</b>
Gunston	82	32	39%	±13.6%
Jefferson	93	31	33%	±14.5%
Kenmore	88	42	48%	±11.0%
Swanson	98	49	50%	±10.0%
Williamsburg	94	47	50%	±10.2%
H-B Woodlawn	57	26	46%	±14.3%
Wakefield	138	44	32%	±12.2%
Washington-Lee	156	71	46%	±8.6%
Yorktown	142	64	45%	±9.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>±3.7%</b>
Arlington Mill	31	20	65%	±13.3%
Career Center	54	27	50%	±13.5%
Langston	11	5	45%	±34.0%
New Directions	8	1	13%	±98.0%
Stratford Program	13	10	77%	±15.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>±8.4%</b>
<b>County-wide</b>	<b>2372</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>±2.3%</b>

### Parents - Response Rates to the 2015 Site-Based Survey by School

School Name	Parents in Sample	Completed Surveys	Response Rate	Margin of Error (95% Confidence Interval)
Abingdon	488	122	25%	±7.7%
Arlington Science Focus	498	180	36%	±5.8%
Arlington Traditional	391	150	38%	±6.3%
Ashlawn	494	195	39%	±5.5%
Barcroft	386	90	23%	±9.1%
Barrett	414	80	19%	±9.9%
Campbell	322	81	25%	±9.4%
Carlin Springs	410	44	11%	±14.0%
Claremont	536	171	32%	±6.2%
Drew	440	94	21%	±9.0%
Glebe	439	152	35%	±6.4%
Hoffman-Boston	416	101	24%	±8.5%
Jamestown	445	191	43%	±5.4%
Key	528	150	28%	±6.8%
Long Branch	414	131	32%	±7.1%
McKinley	429	224	52%	±4.5%
Nottingham	498	218	44%	±5.0%
Oakridge	571	163	29%	±6.5%
Patrick Henry	376	105	28%	±8.1%
Randolph	368	49	13%	±13.1%
Taylor	566	245	43%	±4.7%
Tuckahoe	498	240	48%	±4.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9927</b>	<b>3176</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>±1.4%</b>
Gunston	789	212	27%	±5.8%
Jefferson	799	221	28%	±5.6%
Kenmore	783	162	21%	±6.9%
Swanson	907	328	36%	±4.3%
Williamsburg	943	325	34%	±4.4%
H-B Woodlawn	582	223	38%	±5.2%
Wakefield	1402	205	15%	±6.3%
Washington-Lee	1707	439	26%	±4.0%
Yorktown	1467	427	29%	±4.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9379</b>	<b>2542</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>±1.7%</b>
Arlington Mill	288	2	1%	±69.2%
Career Center	785	100	13%	±9.2%
Langston	81	7	9%	±35.6%
New Directions	26	0	0%	-
Stratford Program	45	6	13%	±37.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1225</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>±8.7%</b>
<b>County-wide</b>	<b>20531</b>	<b>5833</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>±1.1%</b>

## 6. Results and Analysis

### *a. Reporting Documents*

The following reporting documents were delivered by **tpc** to Arlington Public Schools after developing Site-specific results for each principal to review.

- The topline results per question for (1) the principal's school; (2) school level, and; (3) countywide.
- The frequency of all responses by question for students, teachers, and parents.