

## **Executive Summary for the Deer Hill School Council Parent and Guardian Survey 2015**

The Deer Hill School Council Parent and Guardian survey, created by Survey Monkey, was distributed to all of the parents of the Deer Hill in April 2015 via E-mail, (Blackboard Connect), School Fusion, and the Deer Hill Newsletter. There were 34 multiple choice/rating scale questions and three open response questions on the survey. The survey respondents could answer each question using a rating scale of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Not Sure. There was room for commentary after each question as well as one open ended question at the end. The survey was divided into six different sections: *General Information, Deer Hill Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Communication, Learning Environment and School Culture, Safety and Security, and Comments*. Ninety-eight people responded to the survey. **General Information:** The distribution for parent responses is as follows: 33% parents of third grade students, 30% parents of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, and 44% parents of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students responded, with some areas of overlap.

The summary for the **Deer Hill Curriculum** indicated that most families agree that their child is learning the skills and knowledge in the core curriculum areas of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, although writing remains an area of relative weakness according to our parents. However, there is a 7% increase in those respondents who strongly agree that their child is acquiring the necessary skills in writing.

As for specialist areas, most of our parents who took the survey agree that their child is learning the necessary skills and knowledge in each specialist area, with Library, PE and Music being the most strongly supported once again. A resounding 90%

of parents agreed that student progress is assessed and monitored effectively. Most parents agree that the enrichment program, EMC<sup>3</sup>, has a positive impact on student interest and learning, and most parents believe their child is adequately prepared for the MCAS given at his or her grade level. Curiously, 20% of the respondents answered “Not Sure” to this particular question. Several comments reflect that some respondents are not concerned at all about MCAS testing. A majority of parents believe that the non-academic school programs, such as character education and enrichment, help the students become well rounded learners. Parent commentary reveals strong support for PSO and CEF enrichment programs.

Parents were asked to evaluate how well the school curriculum meets the needs of general education students, students with disabilities, and accelerated learners. Overall, parents agreed that their students learning needs were being met. In spite of our establishment of a referral system for Gifted and Talented as well as continued training and materials for differentiating instruction for all levels, open commentary reveals meeting the needs of accelerated learners remains a stubborn area of concern for many parents. 90% of parents believe homework reinforces their children’s knowledge. Parent commentary reveals a mixed response to this particular question.

In the area of technology, there was widespread agreement that the STEM lab, iPads, interactive white boards, Digital Presenters, and Notebook cart supports the curriculum and student learning. There were a high percentage of “Not Sure” responses for this category. This may be because the technology is being used during the school day and the parents have little to no access to accurately evaluate it. Most parents agree that school and classroom websites are beneficial, but commentary continues to

reveal that there are variations in the quality of websites and the frequency with which they are updated.

With a focus on parent opinions regarding the degree to which Deer Hill School promotes 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, we asked parents to respond to our performance in promoting Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication, and Collaboration. The majority of our parents agreed that these important skills were promoted, but Creativity and Innovation are only a couple of percentage points behind the other categories.

In the area of **Communication**, a majority of parents (91%) agreed that “the degree of communication between home and school promotes the effective operation of the school” and that “The school communicates effectively with me about programs, services and events.” (95%) When asked which form of communication parents preferred, across the board, people prefer email. There was a majority agreement that Deer Hill teachers communicate effectively with parents and guardians. Classroom websites were supported by 68% of the respondents, Although a majority of parents (78%) did agree that “parents are informed and have an understanding of grade level curriculum and learning standards” 14% disagreed with that statement and 7% were unsure. A majority responded that the school handbook is useful and explains policies and procedures clearly and a strong majority (94%) also believe that “school newsletters are effective in keeping parents informed.” A majority of respondents agreed with the statement that the principal and support staff are available when needed and a strong majority said they felt comfortable contacting the teachers/school regarding the individual needs of their children. (96%) Most parents (82%) believe the “the school’s objectives and priorities are clear.”

In the area of **Learning Environment and School Culture**, a majority of parents and guardians claimed positively that they “feel welcomed in my child’s school” (88%) and believe “there are many opportunities for family and community involvement at the Deer Hill.” (84%) One area that continues to see a fair amount of disagreement is in the area of class size: 51% of respondents agree with the statement “Class size is appropriate for instruction” but 45.91 % disagree.

However, there was widespread support for the statement that “a positive school climate that reinforces appropriate student behavior is promoted by school programs” [97%]. Most respondents reported being “satisfied” with the consistency by which discipline problems are handled within the school,” with 33% saying they were “not sure,” happily indicating they had no experience with disciplinary matters in the parent commentary. Most parents reported positively that “my concerns as a parent are taken into consideration when decisions affect my child or me” but 11% of respondents to this question answered, “not sure,” commenting that they’d had no experience to inform them in this area.

In the area of **Safety, Security, and School Services**, most parents agreed that a safe environment is provided in the building (92%), classrooms (95%), with the cafeteria, playground, and bus garnering less support. (76%, 68%, and 65% respectively.) The area of some disagreement continues to be with the bus, with 12% reporting disagreement. 89% of respondents agreed that “the school rules and regulations outlined in the student handbook are reasonable” with 10% responding “Not sure.” 75% of parents agree that “School transportation services are safe and efficient” with 14% “not sure.” 80% of parents agreed that “Drop off and dismissal procedures are safe and efficient” but 6% of

parents disagreed with that statement, citing limited space as the cause of inefficiency. 88% of parents believe that “the building facilities are adequate to support the instructional program,” with the 9% disagreement coming from concerns over classroom crowding and climate control.

In the last section devoted to open commentary, 37 out of the total 101 people responded to the question, “What are the strengths of Deer Hill School?” Topics voiced by more than one parent included its safe, welcoming and positive environment, community involvement, strong faculty, staff, and administration, EMC program, academic program, interdisciplinary projects, front office staff, communication and focus on students.

38 people responded to the question, “How could we make the Deer Hill School a better school?” Topics voiced by more than one parent included having smaller class sizes, meeting the needs of accelerated or high-achieving learners, providing consistency in teacher quality and homework and communication practices, and providing more individualized attention for students.