

## **Introduction**

Approximately 29,500 survey instruments were distributed via the U S Postal Service to residents of West Des Moines Community School District. A total of 1734 surveys were returned for an overall response rate of nearly 7%.

It is not possible to determine to what extent the respondents are representative of community members, parents of school-aged children, or parents of children enrolled in WDMCSD, open enrolled outside of the district, or enrolled in non-public schools. Conclusions from resultant data are to be only related to the 1734 persons returning the instruments. Data are merely a snapshot of the perceptions of 7% of the persons sent the survey. Important high stakes decisions made from results require careful discernment, consideration and skepticism.

It is not known the extent to which external factors have influenced the respondents' perceptions of instrument items. Recent articles in the *Des Moines Register* in reference to the survey project may have had a skewing effect on responses and those who chose to respond. The pending issue of the decision making process for the consideration of a second high school has had a possible effect on responses and respondents.

## **Results**

This executive summary will focus on four main aspects of the data resulting from the West Des Moines Community Schools Community Survey, 1) A summary of the mean scores for Importance and Satisfaction for the sixteen items, 2) Appendix B explicates the relationship between the mean scores for Importance and Satisfaction graphed on a Cartesian plane (both measures juxtaposed on a grid), 3) Appendix C elucidates important statistically significant differences (significant at  $p = .05 >$ ) for each of the sixteen items between groups of respondents (t-tests are available in Appendix C), and, 4) Appendix D ranks the gap between Importance and Satisfaction mean scores. Note: this is particularly important on page D-3 where all mean score rankings for the sixteen items are ranked for the three main sub-groups of respondents with school-aged children

enrolled in the WDMCSD. The sub-group of parents of students enrolled in the WDMCSD is compared to "All Respondents" (which includes the WDMCSD parent respondents) in this executive summary to illustrate key differences.

## Key Findings

### Mean Scores and Ranking of Importance and Satisfaction Scores

The following tables demonstrate respondent perceptions (all respondents) of Importance and Satisfaction for each of the sixteen items. A mean (average) score has been calculated and then ranked from highest (1) to lowest (16). [Note: other ranking techniques in this report will relate to the ranking of gap scores and must be interpreted differently than these measures]

#### Mean and Ranking for Importance Scores (all respondents)

	Mean Score -- Importance	Rank
Preparation of students for post-secondary success	3.7831	1
Skilled, professional staff	3.7451	2
Variety of core course offerings	3.7068	3
An environment that promotes learning	3.6950	4
Communication between school and home	3.6414	5
Student/teacher classroom ratios	3.5573	6
Preparation of students for the workplace	3.5104	7
A caring environment for students	3.4423	8
Meeting the social and emotional needs of students	3.3197	9
A flexible approach to accommodate different learning styles	3.2938	10
Variety of electives	3.2930	11
Opportunities for student involvement in the arts	3.2827	12
Opportunities for student involvement in other school-sponsored activities	3.1859	13
Number of students at the building	3.1840	14
Opportunities for student involvement in athletics	3.0891	15
Quality of the building	3.0491	16

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Mean and Ranking for Satisfaction Scores (all respondents)

	Mean Score -- Satisfaction	Rank
Variety of core course offerings	3.4117	1
Variety of electives	3.3354	2
Preparation of students for post-secondary success	3.2459	3
Skilled, professional staff	3.0382	4
An environment that promotes learning	2.9399	5
Quality of the building	2.8919	6
Opportunities for student involvement in the arts	2.8276	7
Student/teacher classroom ratios	2.8053	8
Preparation of students for the workplace	2.7810	9
Communication between school and home	2.7493	10
Opportunities for student involvement in other school-sponsored activities	2.7362	11
A caring environment for students	2.7081	12
A flexible approach to accommodate different learning styles	2.6332	13
Meeting the social and emotional needs of students	2.6257	14
Opportunities for student involvement in athletics	2.5412	15
Number of students at the building	2.4607	16

**Mapping of Importance and Satisfaction Means**

The mapping of Importance and Satisfaction mean scores on the Cartesian plane shows the relationship of the two measures as an evaluative quadrant grid. When there is high satisfaction (4) and high importance (4) the grid is represented in the upper right hand quadrant. *This grid indicates a positive relationship.* For evaluative purposes, this would signify an area of possible program and service successes.

As the satisfaction mean nears the mid point (2.5) this is indicative of less satisfaction than importance. If the mean intersection goes into the upper left hand quadrant, *representing a negative relationship*, it is recommended the district explore all available sources of data to determine if intervention is needed.

Often, other items requiring intervention hover near the satisfaction mean and must be considered in comparison with other measures from the data and outside sources of information. From the community survey data several key observations present as flags for further inquiry. The satisfaction mean measures for "*Opportunities for student involvement in athletics*" and "*Number of students in the building*" land on the line that

splits the two measurement quadrants, possibly requiring further inquiry. Other satisfaction mean measures that fall close to the dividing line include: "*Meeting the social and emotional needs of students,*" "*A caring environment for students,*" and "*A flexible approach to accommodate different learning styles.*"

### **Statistically Significant Differences Between Groups of Respondents**

The following list identifies community survey items with statistically significant differences between the identified respondent groups and all other respondents (Statistical significance is set at  $p = .05$ ). The gap score between satisfaction and importance denotes less satisfaction than importance on the item. Therefore, when the text states a respondent group is less satisfied than others it is indicating that the size of the gap score is statistically significantly larger for the identified group than it is for the remaining respondents in the data. Where statistically significant differences are not found, it is indicative of general agreement across respondent groupings.

#### Variety of core course offerings

- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-.57 compared to -.26)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.33 compared to -.24)
- Those who do not have a student in the high school age group (in district, open enrolled, and non-public) are less satisfied. (-.33 compared to -.21)
- Of those enrolled in the WDMCSD-- those with high school students report a smaller negative gap than everyone else. (-.19 compared to -.35)

#### Variety of electives

- Those who have their students enrolled in a non-public school are more satisfied. (+.26 compared to -.004)

#### Opportunities for student involvement in athletics

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.72 compared to -.31)
- Parents with children enrolled in WDMCSD are less satisfied. (-.69 compared to -.44)
- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.07 compared to -.55)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.71 compared to -.38)

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- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.75 compared to -.41)

Opportunities for student involvement in the arts

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.55 compared to -.34)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.58 compared to -.32)
- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.59 compared to -.37)

Opportunities for student involvement in other school-sponsored activities

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.56 compared to -.31)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.57 compared to -.35)
- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.60 compared to -.36)

Preparation of students for post-secondary success

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.60 compared to -.43)
- Parents of children enrolled in WDMCSD are less satisfied. (-.60 compared to -.46)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.62 compared to -.46)

Preparation of students for the workplace

- Those who are not parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.87 compared to -.72)
- Parents whose children are not enrolled in WDMCSD are less satisfied. (-.86 compared to -.71)
- Those who are not parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.87 compared to -.66)

Skilled, professional staff

- Those who have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.78 compared to -.62)
- Of those enrolled in the WDMCSD-- those with high school students report being less satisfied. (-.81 compared to -.57)

Communication between school and home

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.95 compared to -.76)
- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.36 compared to -.91)
- Those who have their students enrolled in a non-public school are less satisfied. (-1.36 compared to -.90)

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- Of those enrolled in the WDMCSD-- those with high school students report being less satisfied. (-.98 compared to -.79)

Quality of the building

- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.26 compared to -.01)
- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.28 compared to -.01)

Number of students at the building

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.88 compared to -.40)
- Parents of children enrolled in WDMCSD are less satisfied. (-.82 compared to -.48)
- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.47 compared to -.62)
- Those who have their students enrolled in a non-public school are less satisfied. (-1.49 compared to -.61)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.98 compared to -.36)
- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.97 compared to -.46)
- Of those enrolled in the WDMCSD-- those with high school students report a smaller negative gap than everyone else. (-.67 compared to -1.02)

Student/teacher classroom ratios

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.85 compared to -.57)
- Parents of children enrolled in WDMCSD are less satisfied. (-.81 compared to -.61)
- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.50 compared to -.63)
- Those who have their students enrolled in a non-public school are less satisfied. (-1.11 compared to -.65)
- Those who do not have a Valley High School graduate are less satisfied. (-.91 compared to -.58)
- Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high students are less satisfied. (-.91 compared to -.61)
- Of those enrolled in the WDMCSD-- those with high school students report a smaller negative gap than everyone else. (-.65 compared to -1.04)

Meeting the social and emotional needs of students

- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.35 compared to -.70)

A caring environment for students

- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.27 compared to -.69)

A flexible approach to accommodate different learning styles

- Parents of school-aged children are less satisfied. (-.81 compared to -.62)
- Those whose student is currently in open enrollment out of the district are less satisfied. (-1.26 compared to -.69)

An environment that promotes learning

- *No statistically significant differences were found*

From the bullet points reported above it is clear that parents of WDMCSD students differ from parents whose children are enrolled in either non-public schools or open enrolled outside of the district. It is also apparent that pre-school, elementary, and junior high school parents differ from high school parents on many of the items. Parents of Valley High School graduates often appear to differ most significantly from other groups.

The most striking differences in perceptions appear while looking at the ranking of the sixteen items by gap scores for different groups of parents with children in the WDMCSD. By referencing page Appendix D - 3 it becomes apparent that parents of Valley graduates and high school-aged students scored similarly on importance and satisfaction for each of the sixteen items while differing from the responses of pre-school, elementary, and junior high school parents. It also becomes apparent that as a group, WDMCSD parents differ from parents with children in other school settings.

### **Ranking Results of Gap Scores**

Data presented below is in the same form as in Appendix D with rank scores included for "All Respondents." **It is important to note that a rating of 1 indicates the largest gap between satisfaction and importance.** While this may seem counterintuitive it is important to keep this perspective in mind when considering the results. A gap between satisfaction and importance indicates less satisfaction and, therefore, a potential area of concern.

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The first three columns (A-C) are rankings derived from various sub-groupings of parents whose children are enrolled in WDMCSD. The fourth column (D) is the average of those sub-groupings. Column E is the overall ranking of All Respondents.

	<b>A</b> Parents of pre-school, elementary, and junior high school students in WDMCSD	<b>B</b> Parents of high school students in the WDMCSD	<b>C</b> Parents of Valley High School graduates	<b>D</b> Overall Mean Ranking Score-Parents with student enrolled in WDMCSD	<b>E</b> Overall Mean Ranking Score--All Respondents
A caring environment for students	5	1	1	1	4
An environment that promotes learning	4	3	3	2	2
Communication between school and home	3	4	4	3	1
Number of students at the building	1	6	6	4	6
A flexible approach to accommodate different learning styles	9	2	2	5	9
Meeting the social and emotional needs of students	6	5	5	6	8
Opportunities for student involvement in athletics	8	7	7	7	10
Opportunities for student involvement in other school-sponsored activities <sup>12</sup>		8	8	8	13
Preparation of students for post-secondary success	10	10	10	9	11
Student/teacher classroom ratios	2	14	14	10	3
Opportunities for student involvement in the arts	13	9	9	11	12
Preparation of students for the workplace	11	11	11	12	5
Skilled, professional staff	7	13	13	13	7
Quality of the building	14	12	12	14	15
Variety of core course offerings	15	15	15	15	14
Variety of electives	16	16	16	16	16

### Limitations

Sufficient data to determine predictability of respondent perceptions of importance and satisfaction is not present in this study. Predictability is contingent on the respondent sample being representative of the general population. Results obtained from the data in this survey project will reflect error due to the inability to produce generalized statistics. External verification of results obtained from other sources will improve the accuracy of high stakes decisions when looking at the evaluative data on programs and services

provided by WDMCSD. The data will provide invaluable insight into the perceptions of those who responded to the survey. Typically, respondents who fill out this type of survey are those who have the most to say in reference to the pros and cons of material sampled.

### **Conclusions**

- It could be helpful to determine how large of a gap between importance and satisfaction is acceptable and what it means when statistically significant differences occur between groupings.
- The lists on pages 4-7 are not an exhaustive commentary on the data, but are meant to provide a starting point for understanding the data.
- The report writer has no opinions concerning relevance for any of the subjective interpretations of results that will ensue.
- The results could be further applied to discussions beyond the scope of the Design Down Committee. Analysis of the homogeneity of responses by parents within WDMCSD provides a context to the significance of results. Triangulated with other forms of available data on district programs and services, this evaluation will enhance decision-making.