



Student Survey Designed to Gather Co-Curricular Interest

Survey helps ensure districts are in Title IX compliance

Sue Peterson

When the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District wanted to know if their co-curricular programs were meeting the interests of their schools, they looked to School Perceptions, a company that specializes in data gathering for school districts, for assistance. The team at School Perceptions had been working with Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) attorney Bob Butler to develop a survey to assist school districts in gauging students' interest in athletic and non-athletic activities and ensuring the districts are in compliance with Title IX.

Title IX is the landmark law passed

by Congress in 1972 that prohibits sex discrimination in education and in employment. The law states that an institution receiving federal aid, such as a public school district, must provide equal athletic opportunities for members of both sexes and effectively accommodate students' athletic interests and abilities.

The survey, developed by School Perceptions, helps school districts comply with the law by surveying students about their interest and participation in athletic and non-athletic co-curricular programs. Additionally, data is gathered on reasons for non-participation in school-related activities.

“Our goal is to help a district identify barriers to participation,” explains Bill Foster, president of School Perceptions.

The tool allows a district to quantify the reasons students may not be able to participate and address the barriers.

“We know there is a strong correlation between participation in co-curricular activities and academic success,” Foster notes. “Therefore, being able to identify the specific reasons students can't or don't participate is important.”

The reasons for non-participation are vast, from a lack of interest or skill, to a desire to focus on

academics, to responsibilities at home, or perhaps the cost of participation is too great. The opportunity to follow up with individual students is an added benefit of the survey.

“We are interested in following up with students individually and helping to better understand what obstacles are impacting their ability to participate,” shares Middleton-Cross Plains Area Communications Director Perry Hibner.

The survey is designed to help school districts determine if there are additional clubs or teams they should be offering. The tool has an extensive list of offerings that includes astronomy, engineering, drama, debate and photography, among other clubs. Additionally, the survey can be customized by the district and used by several districts in unison to explore cooperative opportunities for sports and clubs.

“Our hope is to become better educated on what sports or other

co-curriculars we currently don’t offer, but might if we knew there was enough interest,” explains Hibner. “The survey will allow us to make decisions that are based on data, rather than simply the person who yells the most or the loudest.”

Co-curricular participation teaches students important life skills including time management and team work. Additionally, students involved in co-curricular activities sign a student code of conduct that outlines expectations for their behavior.

“Our goal is to provide districts with the data so the greatest number of students have the opportunity to participate in co-curricular programming,” notes Foster.

“We know athletic and non-athletic club participation can have a positive impact on health, well-being and academic achievement of all pupils and that young women and minorities in particular who play sports are more likely to graduate

from high school, have higher grades, and score higher on standardized tests than non-athletes. Using the School Perceptions survey and its data will help districts make informed decisions that will benefit all pupils’ achievement,” states Butler. “This was the main reason we have been working with School Perceptions to promote this service to our members.”

The tool aligns with Middleton-Cross Plains’ commitment to giving students a voice. “Students’ responses will help us to align our programming and budget with their interests. It is exciting to see how students can help us create even more opportunities going forward,” adds Hibner. ■

For more information on School Perceptions’ co-curricular survey visit schoolperceptions.com.

Sue Peterson is a strategic communications specialist with School Perceptions.



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