



What Do Your Teachers Think?

Survey helps school districts measure staff perceptions on important issues

Sue Peterson

Are workers happy? According to a 2014 report by the Conference Board, a New York-based nonprofit research group, 52 percent of U.S. employees are unhappy at work. Are teachers better? Not especially. A MetLife Survey published in 2013 found that teacher job satisfaction had plummeted from 62 percent in 2008 to 39 percent in 2012.

It's clear from the numbers that school districts need to engage with their staff. The WASB has teamed up with School Perceptions, a Wisconsin-based company, to help school districts engage with their employees. School Perceptions has developed a

web-based survey designed to gather feedback on staff members' feelings and perceptions on a range of issues from district communication to health and wellness.

The School District of Monroe utilized this survey to gather feedback from staff on district initiatives and culture.

"We are committed to ensuring every employee in the district has an opportunity to provide input and feedback," Superintendent Cory Hirsbrunner shared. "We value how staff feels we are doing as a district and the challenges they are experiencing that need to be addressed."

■ Positive for Staff and Students

"We know that there is a strong correlation between staff engagement and student engagement," said Bill Foster, founder and president of School Perceptions. "When students are engaged, achievement increases."

An engaged employee is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and takes positive action to further their school's reputation and success.

Research shows that employee engagement is the result of employees feeling connected and valued as well as reporting a strong

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— Corey Hirsbrunner, superintendent, School District of Monroe

sense of balance in their lives. As a result, engaged employees are producers. They work hard and give their best day in and day out. When teachers are engaged, kids learn.

The School Perceptions Staff Engagement Survey collects data on 12 indexes of employee engagement including: control over work environment, health and wellness, workload, affirmation, collaboration and teamwork, trust in building leadership, culture of educational excellence, tools and training, public and parental support, trust in district leadership, communications, and planning and improvement process. Reports allow a district to break out index results by various employee groups as well as compare themselves to similar schools across the state.

“Our goal is to create easily usable data that districts can use immediately,” states Foster.

The survey takes an employee 10-15 minutes to complete. The School Perceptions software tracks survey completion, sending

reminders to employees who have not yet taken the survey. As a result, districts experience high participation rates, often near 85 percent of all employees.

Using the Data

Once the survey is closed, a school district can receive index and similar school analysis reports from School Perceptions within a week. At no additional cost, the WASB will review the reports and promptly provide the school district with a written analysis and follow-up telephone contact. The written analysis will describe next steps that the school district might take in response to the written report. It will also recommend WASB services to assist the school district in its analysis, discussion and follow-up to the written report.

For the Lancaster Community Schools, data in the survey identified the need to change a school calendar policy and adjust staffing. In addition,

they were able to see what the staff thought about the district’s compensation structure.

“We were pleased to learn that despite the negative climate for public employees during the last couple of years, our staff believes the school board and district have done their best to maintain a compensation structure that is fair to both the staff and taxpayers,” said board president Bill Haskins.

In the School District of Monroe, the administrative team used the data to plan for the coming school year.

“It was extremely valuable to have the numbers and documentation to support what may have been assumptions in some areas,” Hirsbrunner explained. “The reports were extremely helpful and easy to read. The color-coded reports gave a clear indication of what needs attention and where we are doing well.” ■

Sue Peterson is a project manager with School Perceptions. For more information, visit schoolperceptions.com.

Staff Survey, Communication

District Average ←
Similar School Average ←

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement for each statement from Strongly Agree (5) and Agree (4) to Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).	I feel comfortable sharing my ideas.	3.53	3.30
	School / department information is communicated effectively to me.	3.18	3.07
	I am kept informed about matters important to my work.	4.29	3.84
	I have a good understanding of plans and goals of the district.	3.41	3.53
	Board policies and procedures affecting me and my work are available and clearly understood.	3.50	3.55
	I feel the district honestly communicates with me about important issues.	3.05	2.86

Sample data representative of a School Perceptions staff survey.