

Douglas County Federation contracted with Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA) to conduct an independent analysis of the climate of employees in Douglas County School District. APA is a reputable firm that DCSD has used for previous work. Below is a memo from APA with preliminary results from this survey.

Among these results, I would like to highlight the following:

- Among employees there is a high level of dissatisfaction with district-level administration. Only 14% of employees feel the District is moving in the right direction, a number that has steadily declined to a new low since 2007-08.
- Employees remain very satisfied with principals and managers within their schools and sites.

We are alarmed by the drastic drop in employee morale and confidence with regard to the direction of District leadership. These survey results show that our staff cares deeply about providing a high-quality education to their students, but they feel strongly that District leadership is heading in the wrong direction.

We look forward to partnering with the District in an effort to improve the climate in the District. DCSD has historically attracted the best teachers in our state and is a source of pride for the community. We invite the District to work collaboratively with us and join a committee we are developing with employees and parents to create a district-wide plan to improve the climate for our employees and therefore our students.

Sincerely,

Brenda Smith
President, Douglas County Federation



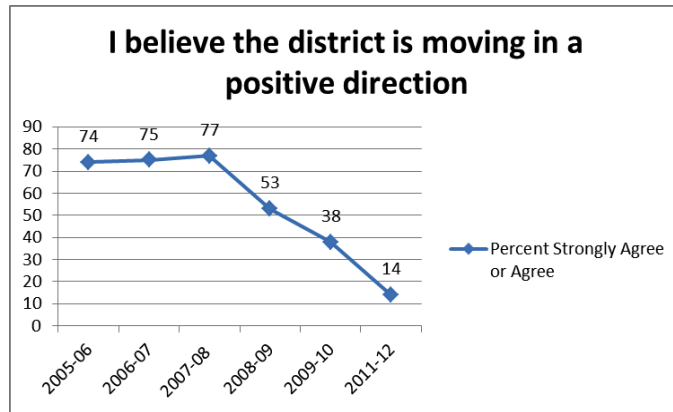
From: Jennifer Kramer-Wine, Senior Associate
Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA)

Re: Overview of Preliminary 2011 Climate Survey Results

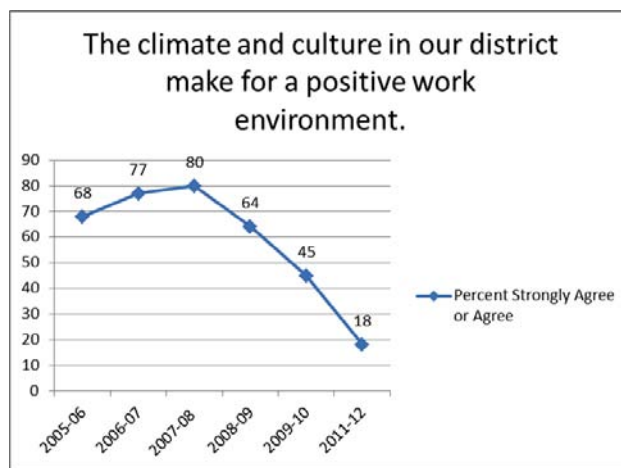
SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

These survey highlights represent the same five questions used in previous climate surveys. This allows us to compare responses over time more easily.

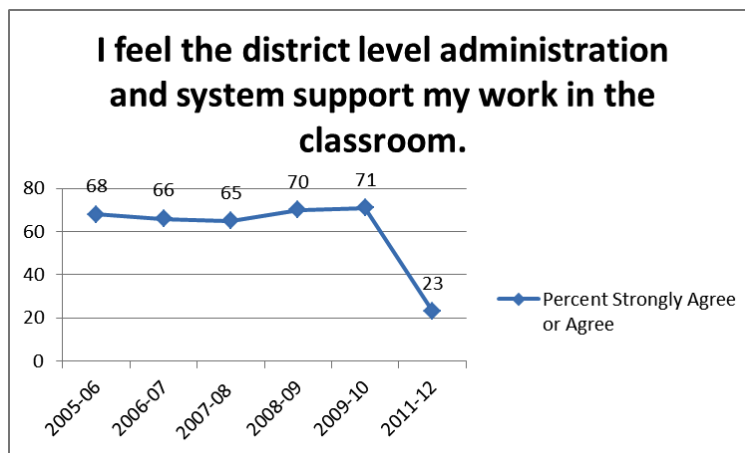
There are several points of data that illustrate a deep level of dissatisfaction with Douglas County School District leadership. Since the 2007-08 school year, the percentage of district employees responding “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement, “I believe the district is moving in a positive direction,” has declined from 77 percent to 14 percent, as illustrated in the following chart:



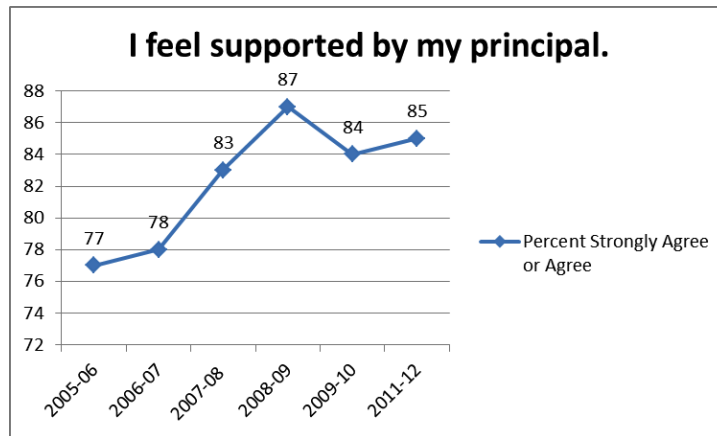
A similar trend is evident in reaction to the statement, “The climate and culture in our district make for a positive work environment.” There is a steep decline from 80 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement in 2007-08 to only 18 percent today in the 2011-12 school year.



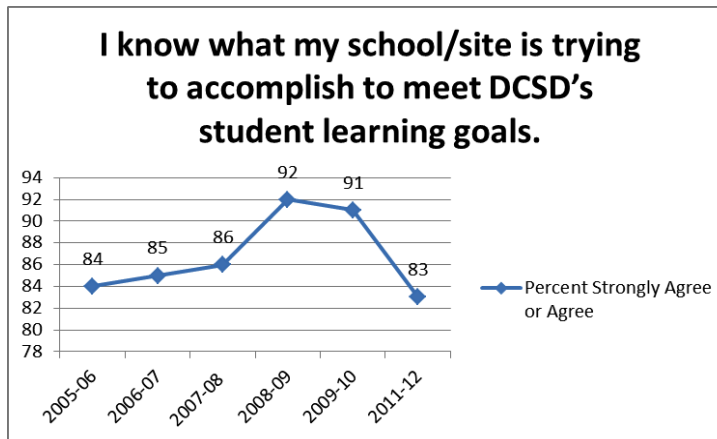
Furthermore, the survey statements are designed to ask teachers to reflect on the most important aspect of their job – what takes place in the classroom – and how well they are supported by the District in those efforts. Douglas County teachers’ positive responses decreased significantly from prior years, declining from 71 percent just two years ago to 23 percent today.



While these data raise many questions, teachers and classified staff remain very satisfied with their principals.



At individual schools and sites, district employees remain confident with the important work they are doing to meet student learning goals.



Student learning takes place in the classroom – it is very good news for students that teachers still feel supported by their principals. There is a growing amount of research on the importance of the interaction between a teacher and her or his students, and the findings are extraordinary. Teachers' attention to the 7 "C's" (Caring about students, Captivating students, Conferring with students, Controlling behavior, Clarifying lessons, Challenging students, and Consolidating knowledge) is correlated with positive changes in assessment scores (see, for example, research conducted by Robert Marzano and the Tripod project).

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

The survey of Douglas County teachers and classified staff was conducted from November 28th to December 16th, 2011. There were a total of 14 questions asked and a high level of interest in completing this survey. In fact, 2,405 people took the survey, the largest number since 2005.

The average length of service to the District of these respondents is 9 years. In order to have a refined sense of responses to some questions, respondents were asked to provide their position category: Preschool – certified, Elementary School – certified, Middle School – certified, High School – certified and Classified. Due to the low number of preschool teachers in the district, they have been included in the Elementary School category to insure anonymity.

Category	Number
Elementary School - Certified	830
Middle School - Certified	330
High School - Certified	579
Classified	566

APA modeled its survey on the school climate surveys that were administered in the Douglas County School District since at least the 2005-06 school year. The last one was conducted during the 2009-10 school year. In these surveys, employees were asked the extent to which they agreed with statements on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree).

The statements are very common when conducting climate surveys in school districts. These statements give district and teacher leaders a sense of how the District as a whole operates, what the climate is like in schools, and what staff members are thinking.

ABOUT APA

APA is a Denver-based consulting firm that focuses on education policy at the federal, national, state and local levels. Founded in 1983, our company is a private, Colorado “C” corporation in good standing with the Colorado Secretary of State. We have nine full-time employees. Since its founding, much of the firm’s work has been associated with developing and evaluating the procedures state legislatures use to allocate aid to school districts. More recently, we have undertaken work for school districts to efficiently allocate their resources, to develop new ways to pay teachers and to evaluate their programs.

For most of the past three decades, APA has worked with school, district, state, and federal leaders to create effective systems that facilitate increased student learning. Our most recent accomplishments include developing Austin Independent School District’s performance-based teacher compensation pilot program and becoming a contractor to the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) to establish the Central States Research Laboratory along with Marzano Research Laboratory and RMC Research.