

Cold Springs Middle School Staff and Parent Surveys
Washoe County School District Parent Involvement Council
Evaluation Brief July 2008



Background

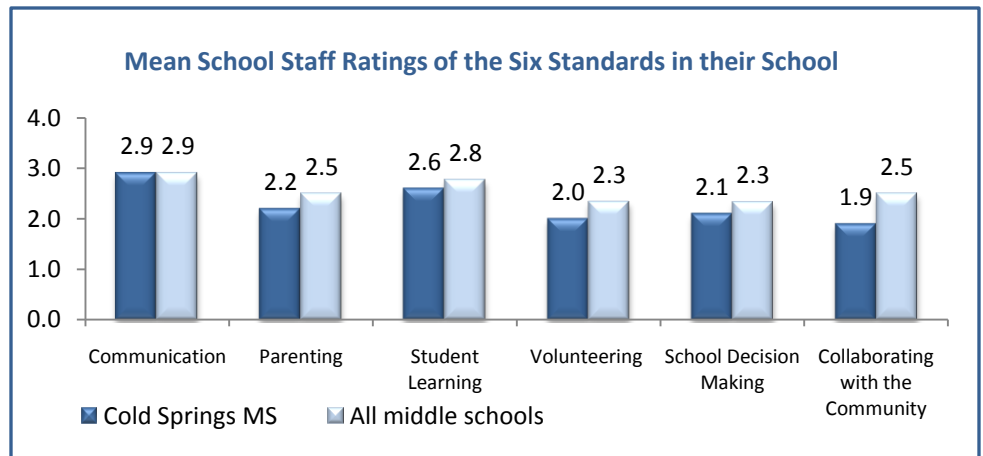
To learn more about how to strengthen partnerships between the district, individual schools, and parents, the Washoe County School District’s (WCSD) Parent Involvement Council (PIC) conducted a district-wide needs assessment about parent involvement (PI). The PIC is comprised of parents, school district administrative, certified and classified employees, and business representatives. The needs assessment included three components: an online administrator survey, an online teacher and staff survey, and a parent survey administered through the mail. This evaluation brief will highlight the results from Cold Springs Middle School’s staff and parent surveys. Throughout the brief, percentages reported are based on the number of respondents who answered the item, which may be less than the total number of survey respondents.

Staff Survey

- 9 respondents; 89% certified and 11% classified; 12% response rate.
- 75% felt their school was “good” or “excellent” at making parents feel welcome.
- 75% thought they would benefit from professional development specific to PI “a little” or “some.”
- 63% reported that in professional learning community meetings PI was talked about as a strategy for improving student academic achievement “infrequently.”
- 88% believed others at their school thought PI was “important” or “extremely important.”
- 50% would place a “high priority” on increasing PI in their school.
- 89% thought PI makes a “major contribution” to a child’s academic success.

Standards of Parent Involvement

School staff were asked to rate how well the school is doing with respect to the six well-established standards of parent involvement (PI). The items were combined to create a mean rating for each of the six standards. The response scale on these items were 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, and 4=excellent.



The bar graph to the right compares Cold Springs’ staff ratings to those of all WCSD middle school staff who completed the survey. Cold Springs’ mean ratings ranged from 1.9 to 2.9. The highest mean rating was in the area of communication, while the lowest was related to collaborating with the community.

6 Standards of Parent Involvement

Communication	Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
Parenting	Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
Student Learning at Home	Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
Volunteering	Parents are welcome in the schools and their support and assistance are sought.
School Decision Making	Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
Collaborating with the Community	Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

School's Barriers and Strengths Related to PI

- **Greatest Barrier to PI:** Parents' work schedules and other events prevent them from participating (38%)
- **Greatest Strength for PI:** Positive staff attitude (38%)

School's Actions to Encourage PI

- Hold meetings and events at different times of day (56%)

Parent Survey

Every parent in the school district was mailed a parent involvement survey written by members of the PIC. As part of the survey development process, parents outside of the PIC were also consulted for feedback and suggestions. The survey was mailed to 934 Cold Springs Middle School parents, and 274 were returned, yielding a response rate of 29%. The top three ways that parents got most of their information about school were from EdLine (31%), when their child told them (27%), and phone calls from the school (13%). Forty-six percent reported that all of their child's teachers post information on EdLine.

Parent Respondent Demographics

- 82% were mothers.
- 12% of the surveys were completed in Spanish.
- 20% were Hispanic/Latino; 69% white; 11% other.
- 80% had lived in Washoe County 6 years or more.
- 68% had one child in school.
- 88% had Internet access at home.

Cold Springs MS Student Demographics

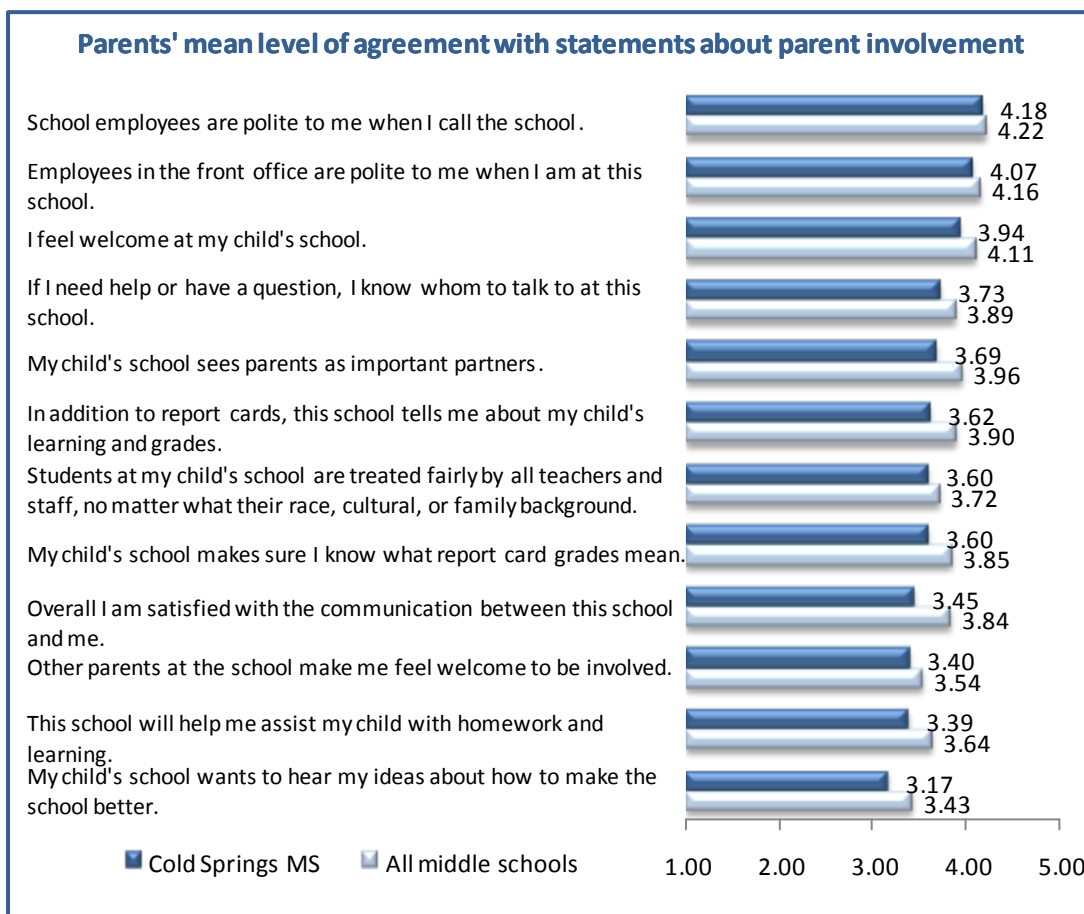
- 21% Hispanic/Latino
- 69% white; 10% other
- Transiency Rate: 24%
- Free/Reduced Lunch: 25%
- Limited English Proficiency: 4%

Parent Contact and Involvement with School

	Cold Springs MS	All WCSD MS
Attended 3-5 school events a year	45%	42%
Contacted the school between 3-5 times in the past year	38%	43%
Had been asked to volunteer	43%	51%
Had volunteered for their child's school	45%	44%
Had not volunteered but would like to	59%	56%
Used EdLine to track child's progress	60%	62%

Opinions about Parent Involvement

Parent respondents indicated their level of agreement with 12 statements about parent involvement at their child's school (see bar graph on the page to the right). Responses could range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The level of agreement was fairly high ranging between a mean of 3.2 to 4.2. The lowest level of agreement was on the item "my child's school wants to hear my ideas about how to make the school better." The highest level of agreement was for the item "school employees are polite to me when I call the school."



Comparisons of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents' responses

- Spanish-speaking parents (86%) who had never volunteered at their child's school were more likely to want to do so than white parents (54%).
- English-speaking parents were more likely to have Internet access at home (91%) than Spanish-speaking parents (63%).
- English-speaking parents (64%) were more likely to use EdLine to track their child's progress than Spanish-speaking parents (30%).

Comparisons of white and non-white parents' responses

- White parents were more likely to have Internet access at home (95%) than non-white parents (74%).
- White parents had attended more school events than non-white parents.
- White parents were more likely to have volunteered at their child's school (50%) than non-white parents (34%).
- Non-white parents (75%) who had never volunteered at their child's school were more likely to want to do so than white parents (51%).
- White parents (66%) were more likely to use EdLine to track their child's progress than non-white parents (46%).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Communication seems to be the strongest area of parent involvement at Cold Springs Middle School. School staff respondents rated communication as a top area of parent involvement in their school. Parent results were similar with high levels of agreement on several communication-related items. Results from both the school staff and parent surveys suggest that school decision making, volunteering, and collaborating with the community are areas in which Cold Springs Middle School could strengthen parent involvement.

As parent involvement is a viable and necessary strategy for student achievement, a general recommendation is to reallocate school site funding to support systemic implementation of parent involvement. Another recommendation is to provide all school staff with appropriate professional development on how to effectively engage parents in their children's education. Schools also should help parents understand academic standards, state and district assessments, how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children. A variety of strategies to improve parent involvement are highlighted below.

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Strategies to Improve Parent Involvement

General

- Reallocate school site funding to support systemic implementation of parent involvement. Example: Pay teachers overtime for working with parents at school wide meetings from the school general fund budget.
- Provide appropriate professional development to all school staff on how to effectively engage parents in their children's education. Example, customer service training for education support professionals; training for teachers in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners.

Collaborating with the community

- Getting participation of alumni in school programs for students
- Disseminate information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other community programs or services.

School Decision Making

- Create networks to link all families with parent representatives.

Volunteering

- Create a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families.
- Send out an annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.