

Piccolo Special Education School Staff and Parent Surveys
Washoe County School District Parent Involvement Council
Evaluation Brief July 2008



Background

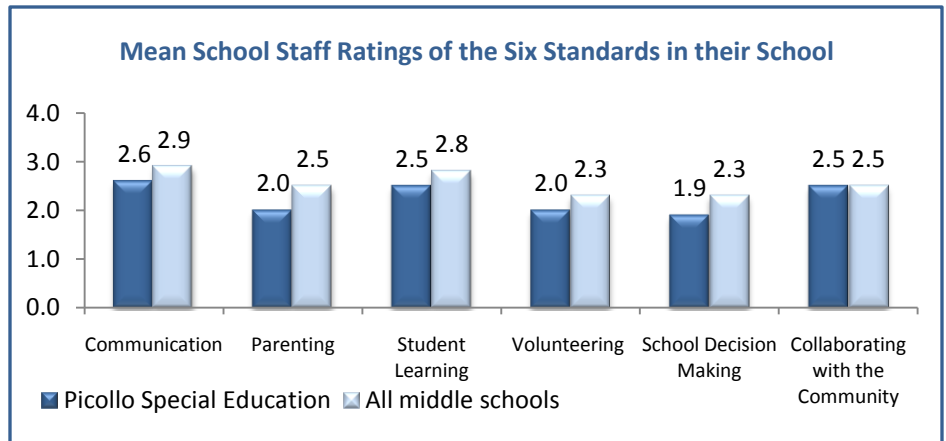
To learn more about how to strengthen partnerships between the district, individual schools, and parents, the Washoe County School District’s (WCSD) Parent Involvement Council (PIC) conducted a district-wide needs assessment about parent involvement (PI). The PIC is comprised of parents, school district 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 Piccolo Special Education 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

- 7 respondents; 100% certified; 10% response rate.
- 83% feel their school was “good” or “excellent” at making parents feel welcome.
- 67% think they would benefit from professional development specific to PI “a little” or “some.”
- 67% report that in professional learning community meetings PI was talked about as a strategy for improving student academic achievement “infrequently.”
- 83% believe others at their school thought PI was “important” or “extremely important.”
- 67% would place a “moderate priority” on increasing PI in their school.
- 83% think 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 Piccolo’s staff ratings to those of all WCSD middle school staff who completed the survey. Piccolo’s mean ratings ranged from 1.9 to 2.6. The highest mean rating was in the area of communication, while the lowest was related to school decision making.

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 (50%)
- **Greatest Strength for PI:** Communication with parents (50%)

School's Actions to Encourage PI

- Provide translation and/or interpretation services (57%)
- Hold meetings and events at different times of day (57%)

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 120 Picollo Special Education School parents, and 42 were returned yielding a response rate of 35%. The top three ways that parents get most of their information about school were from their child's folder (31%), when their child's teacher told them (17%), and flyers from school (17%).

Parent Respondent Demographics

- 75% were mothers.
- 33% of the surveys were completed in Spanish.
- 33% were Hispanic/Latino; 51% white; 16% other.
- 80% had lived in Washoe County 6 years or more.
- 81% had one child in school.
- 71% had Internet access at home

Picollo Special Education Student Demographics

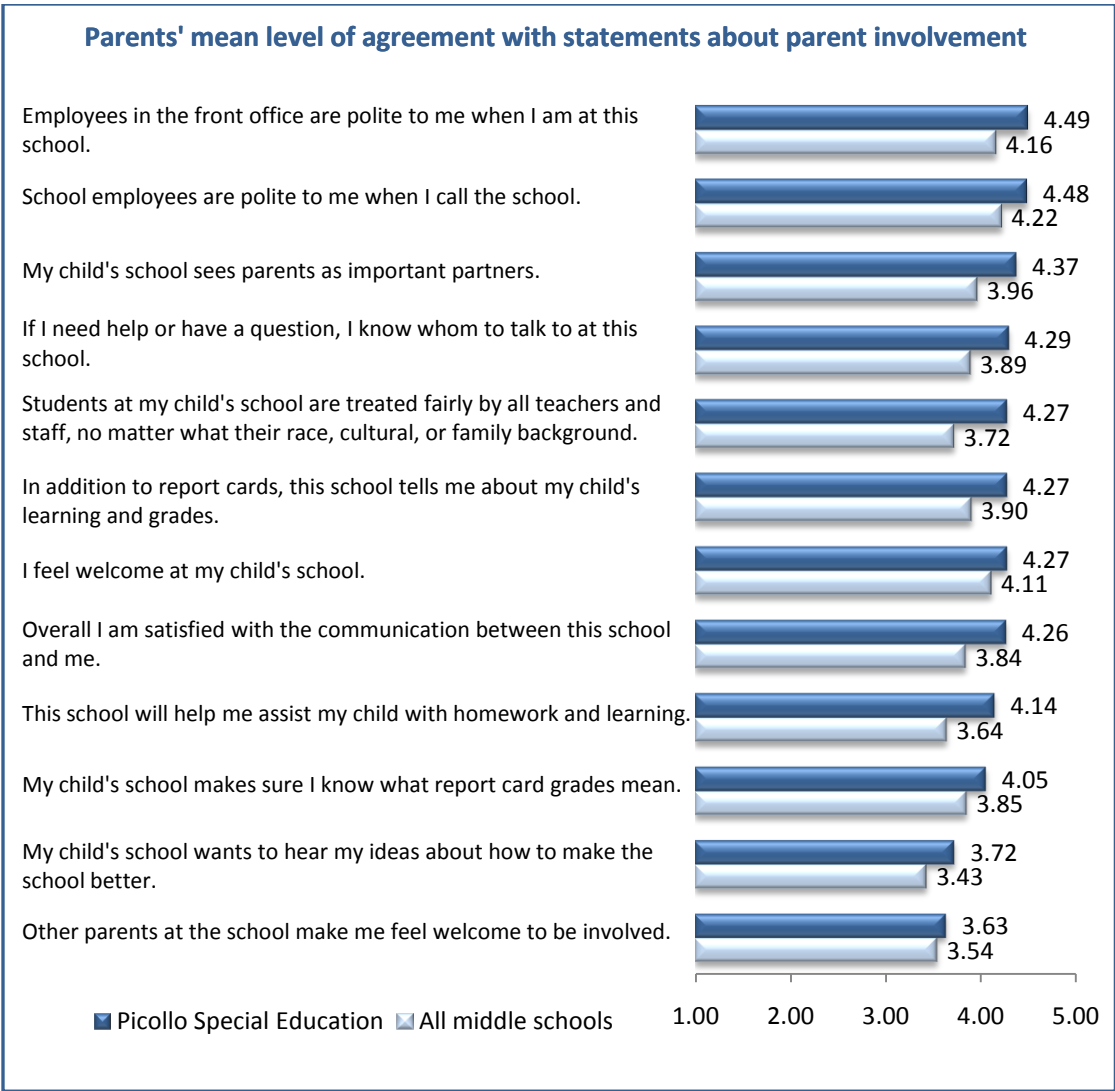
- 30% Hispanic/Latino
- 58% white; 12% other
- Transiency Rate: 33%
- Free/Reduced Lunch: 48%
- Limited English Proficiency: 18%

Parent Contact and Involvement with School

	Picollo ES	All WCSD MS
Attended 3-5 school events a year	44%	42%
Contacted the school between 3-5 times in the past year	59%	43%
Had been asked to volunteer	45%	51%
Had volunteered for their child's school	38%	44%
Had not volunteered but would like to	61%	56%

Opinions about Parent Involvement

Respondents indicated their level of agreement with 12 statements about parent involvement at their child's school. Responses could range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The level of agreement was fairly high with means of 3.6 to 4.5. The lowest level of agreement was on the item "other parents in the school make me feel welcome to be involved." The highest level of agreement was for the item "employees in the front office are polite to me when I am at this school."



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

- English-speaking parents (92%) were more likely to have Internet access at home than Spanish-speaking parents (31%).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Communication seems to be the strongest area of parent involvement at Picollo Special Education School. School staff respondents rated communication as a top area of parental 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 and volunteering are areas in which Picollo 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.

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.

