

Washoe 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. 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. Since no staff members from Washoe Middle School completed the staff survey, this evaluation brief will highlight the results from Washoe Middle School's parent surveys only. 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.

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.

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 39 Washoe Middle School parents, and 11 were returned, yielding a response rate of 28%. 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

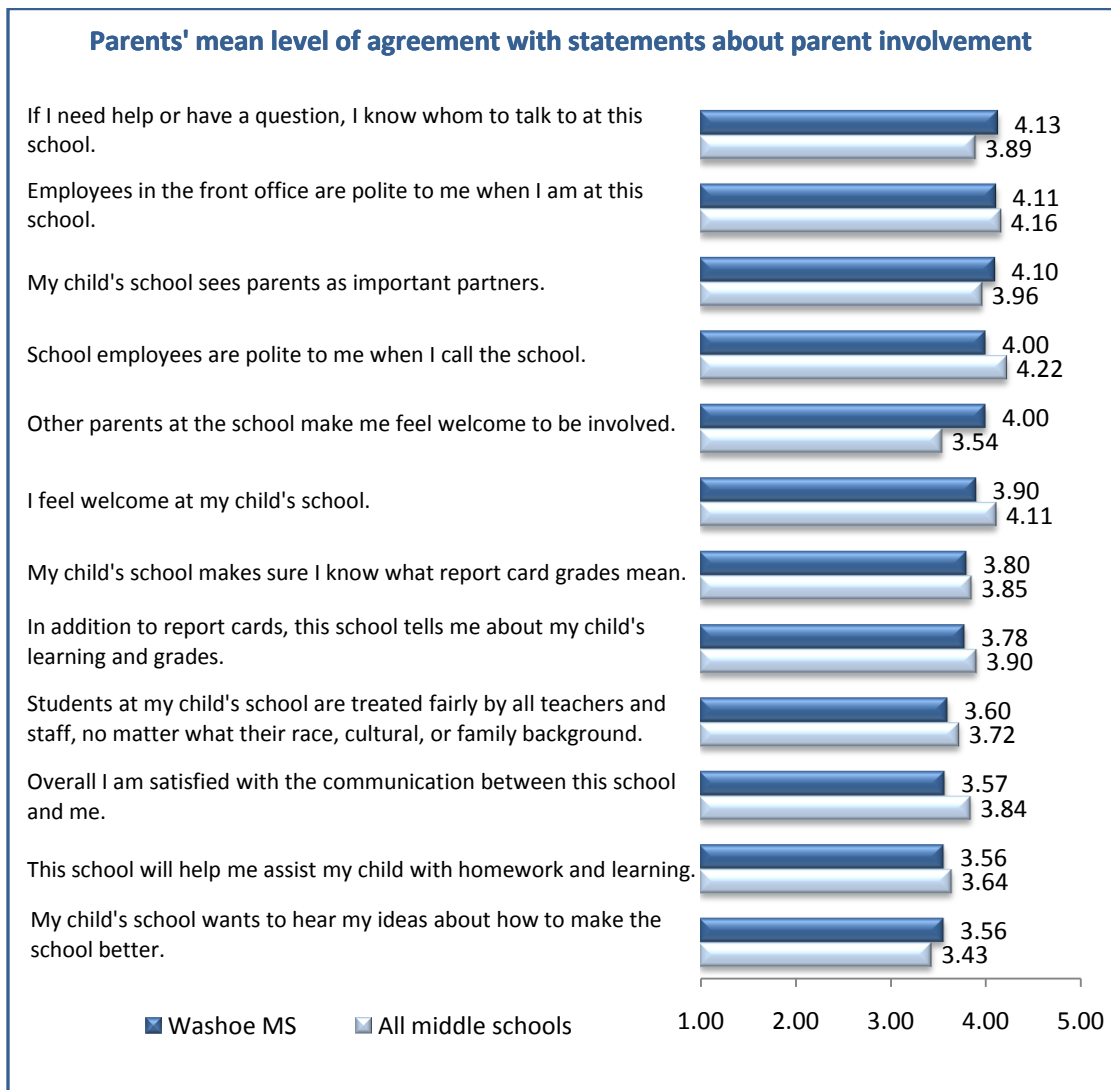
- 88% were mothers.
- 27% of the surveys were completed in Spanish.
- 30% were Hispanic/Latino; 40% white; 30% other.
- 80% had lived in Washoe County 6 years or more.
- 91% had one child in school.
- 73% had Internet access at home.

Parent Contact and Involvement with School

	Washoe MS	All WCS MS
Attended 3-5 school events a year	40%	42%
Contacted the school 6 or more times in the past year	73%	36%
Had been asked to volunteer	20%	51%
Had volunteered for their child's school	9%	44%
Had not volunteered but would like to	50%	56%
Used EdLine to track child's progress	40%	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 below). Responses could range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The level of agreement was fairly high ranging between a mean of 3.6 to 4.1. The lowest level of agreement was on the items “my child’s school wants to hear my ideas about how to make the school better” and “this school will help me assist my child with homework and learning.” The highest level of agreement was for the item “if I need help or have a question, I know whom to talk to at this school.”



Conclusions and Recommendations

Parent survey responses suggest that student learning at home and school decision making are areas in which parent involvement could be strengthened at Washoe Middle School. Communication between parents and the school could also be strengthened. 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.

Student Learning at Home

- Provide information and ideas to the family to increase family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.
- Provide information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.

School Decision Making

- Create networks to link all families with parent representatives.

Communication

- Provide families with weekly and/or monthly folders of student work for review and comments.
- Provide clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.

