

# **Canyon Elementary School**

**School Site Council (SSC)**

## **School Improvement Survey**

**Executive Summary**

**December 2011**

**School Site Council:**

**Co-Chairs: Chris Kerrigan (principal) Hiroko Kurihara (parent)**

**Secretary: Esperanza Surls (teacher)**

**Parent Rep: Canyon Steinzig**

**Parent Alternate: Ted Purves**

**School Administrative Rep: Gloria Faircloth**

## **Canyon Mission:**

*Canyon School's mission is to foster lifelong love of learning, integrating individual academic growth and achievement with artistic expression. We draw strength from our extended community rich in historic tradition, our unique natural setting, and our small size. The school provides a sanctuary for developing the talents, strengths, and confidence of each individual so that our students become resourceful adults who think and act creatively and critically in the world community.*

**Purpose of Survey** The purpose of this survey was to meet several objectives:

To provide information and input towards:

- the creation of the 2011 School Improvement Plan (SIP);
- setting goals that meet our vision of achievement of academic, social and life long learning practices.
- To build better communication between teachers, students, parents, administration and board members;
- To create an on-going communicative assessment tool.

**Methodology** In June 2011, a confidential survey using the on-line program "Survey Monkey" was used for data collection from parents/guardians of the 69 children attending Canyon School 2010-2011. Research pertaining to educational and school based indicators was conducted prior to development of survey questions. Additionally, specific written educational approaches provided by each teacher, the Master Plan 2000 and report card templates were used to identify indicators and determine aspects to be measured. Questions were developed by an experienced program evaluator with insights and contributions from professional evaluation staff and members of the School Site Council over several meetings and emails. Additionally, final edits and approval were obtained from the School Site Council on all evaluation questions and survey design. The survey was administered through e-mail. There were 69 children registered at Canyon School at the time. A total of 60 parents responded to the survey:

15 respondents from K-1-2; 26 from 3-4-5; and 19 from 6-7-8

Respondents rated the four primary components corresponding to Canyon School's Master Plan: the Environmental Program, Curricula, Program and Communication. Levels of satisfaction were given regarding a variety of aspects within these four components. Analysis of mean ratings for quantitative data as well as pattern-coding of qualitative data was conducted. **Results** A total of 60 parents responded to the survey. For each component respondents rated their level of agreement with various statements pertaining to a particular component. A 5 point Likert scale was utilized with 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'. A response category of 'Don't Know' was also provided. The 'Don't Know' response was utilized to indicate whether the respondent was not made aware of the topic. Additionally, respondents offered written comments, ideas and suggestions after each component.

Categories below reflect the order in which respondents were surveyed.

Raw data and survey instrument available on request and online.

## **Summary of Report with Recommendations:**

Overall, quantitative data was supportive of and by qualitative data, thus strengthening the validity of responses. Throughout the report, the majority of aspects received positive ratings and comments. Additionally, there were a few areas noted by respondents that need to be addressed. Overall, of the 60 ratings, the two aspects rated highest and lowest were:

*Highest level of satisfaction* is within the Environmental component regarding the aspect of the 'camping trip':

- 4.70 (highest level of satisfaction overall)
- Over 90% satisfaction among respondents

*Lowest level of agreement* is within the Program component addressing 'emotional and social well-being of students' regarding the way in which 'discipline is delivered' at the school:

- 3.39 (lowest level of agreement overall)
- Less than half of respondents indicated a level of 'agreement' or 'strong agreement with the way in which discipline is delivered.
- Of the 75 qualitative comments 15 resulting recommendations (or 20%) had to do with obtaining anger/conflict management and positive discipline training

## **Environmental Program:**

Top rated aspect of Environmental Component: Camping trip

- 4.70 (highest level of satisfaction overall)
- Over 90% satisfaction among respondents

Lowest rated aspect of Environmental Component: Knowing where to voice concerns or suggestions specific to the Canyon School site. (3.54)

- Only half of respondents indicated that they knew where to express concerns or suggestions regarding the environmental program

- 1) Identify and communicate what is currently in place to keep school clean and establish regular (weekly/monthly/tri-mester) school wide clean up days.** (e.g.: make a regular part of PE or weekly outside learning activity with students)
- 2) Identify and communicate clear objectives and components of Environmental Program.** Clearly identify and define the components and purpose behind each to school community.
- 3) Continue the camping trips as they help build community among the students and parents alike.** *(It was the one specific area both quantitative and qualitative that received over 90% satisfaction among respondents.)*
- 4) Include ‘putting things away’ as an integrated piece of school performances and events** inviting parents/administration/students to sign up to participate for communal areas such as multi-purpose room and library, etc.

## **Curricula**

Top rated aspect of Curricula Component addressed standards and content:

‘Enrichment activities support the curricula and my child’s learning.’

- 4.60 (no one ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with this aspect)
- Over 90% indicated ‘agreement’ or ‘strong agreement’

Lowest rated aspect of Curricula Component addressed family involvement with curricula: ‘Curricula information is readily available for every subject matter at school’.

- 3.45 (less than half indicated agreement with this aspect; several respondents also indicated that they ‘did not know’)
- One of the few aspects where the median was 3, also indicative of an aspect to be addressed

- 1) Provide school year syllabi and clear objectives on units of study to the school community.** Particularly for aspects of the Environmental Program, (garden, creek study and recycling program) outlining how 'a deep respect for the environment' is incorporated into curricula.
- 2) Offer diversity training or workshops for staff, school community. Identify** ways in which differences and similarities are embraced and learned through curricula, teaching strategies, etc.
- 3) Provide links to State academic standards.**
- 4) Identify and communicate how diversity is incorporated into curricula and teacher approaches.**

## **Program**

Top rated aspect of the Program Component: 'My child is shown respect and compassion from his/her teacher'.

- 4.46 (85% of respondents 'agreed' or disagreed' with this aspect)
- When looked at with other scores in this component, may be utilized as a strength on which to continue to build.

Lowest rated aspect of Program Component addressed emotional and social well-being of students: 'Discipline is delivered in a way that indicates disapproval of inappropriate behavior without humiliating the student'.

- 3.39 (lowest level of agreement overall)
- Less than half of respondents indicated a level of 'agreement' or 'strong agreement with the way in which discipline is delivered.

- 1) Establish and incorporate a positive discipline and conflict management approach:** Identify and communicate to school community the following: 1) philosophy and discipline approach practiced at school; 2) what steps have been taken to establish a positive disciplinary approach 3) steps that will be put into place to continue developing skills, philosophy and support for approach. Include parents, teachers and administration in process so children benefit from hearing similar messages and support.
- 2) Establish a volunteer program to alleviate some of the coordination of activities from school staff.** Utilize a participatory approach to establish sustainability within program so that it can continue to support school as families move through and different families join school community.

## **Communication**

Top rated aspect of the Communication Component: 'When I walk in to the school, I feel it is inviting and that this is a place where parents belong'.

- 4.24 (82% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this aspect)
- A potential strength on which to build

Lowest rated aspect of Communication Component: 'The school asks for input from myself and others before making important decisions (changes in curricula, school policies, etc.)

- 3.67 (18% said strongly disagree or disagree)
- When looked with other scores in this component, may indicate a need to build stronger sense of community through communication and inclusivity.

### **1) Utilize a participatory approach to build better communication between school administration, teachers, board and parents.**

- a) Communicate meeting times and dates at least 2 weeks before they occur;
- b) Post meeting minutes within one week of meeting and let school community know where to access;
- c) Administration and Board follow up with parents within one week of being contacted;
- d) Communicate clear roles and responsibilities of administration and board

There are many simple processes and tools one can utilize, some are in place, some need a bit of tweaking to establish a stronger sense of community and communication within the school. A participatory approach is transparent and forthright, it finds the common ground to build trust and understanding among community members by encouraging people to share, speak up and take part in a community they are creating and a part of.

### **2) Identify current communication channels used to provide information.** Ensure that parents understand how to access channels. Establish and communicate regular times communication channels are used so parents can also take the responsibility to check channels regularly to be sure they are getting the information they need.

### **3) Continue having parent/teacher conferences.** This seems to be a strong form of communication and building understanding between parents and teachers.

### **4) Provide clear information regarding tutoring and counseling resources.**

### **5) Provide resources for transitioning to high schools and/or resources on how to access.** Provide helpful guidelines for transitions between classrooms: what processes are currently in place to assist in transitions and what parents can do to support child during transition.