



Student Participatory Survey Final Report

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History

Minneapolis Public Schools is the first district in the country to systematically implement a Youth Participatory Evaluation program across all middle and high schools. Youth participatory evaluation (YPE) is an approach that engages young people in evaluating the programs, organizations, and systems designed to serve them. Through the YPE process, young people conduct research on issues and experiences that affect their lives in their community. In Minneapolis Public Schools, YPE is a youth-adult partnership model embedded within the traditional school construct and has been successful in bringing youth voice to school and district decisions.

On October 26, 2016, students along with their YPE Advisor attended the Fall Kick-off Retreat at University of Minnesota North Minneapolis Community Site. The purpose of the retreat was to connect as a group, learn more about the project, and identify a topic for evaluation. The students decided to evaluate “Caring Community” for their evaluation project. The student team had a lengthy discussion about the recent changes at FAIR School and the impact of being with MPS; they also expressed concern about the many new students at FAIR who were not familiar with the FAIR School identity. Students wanted to see if the community was still the supportive and caring school of earlier years. Students also wanted to use this opportunity to put forward their values of caring, connection and racial justice.

Evaluation Tool:

The students met with the advisor three times to develop questions for an online survey to be given in school on the laptop. Students focused their survey questions around the ideas of student connection, perceptions of caring, perceptions of fairness and racial justice. The survey was administered over the course of several days in February.

Challenges: The YPE team needed to be comprised of students who represented concerns within the student body: those impacted by discipline, special education, and mental health, in addition to grade and racial diversity. Two of the students had to withdraw from the team: 1 changed schools, and the other entered an in-patient mental health program.

Findings

Data Review:

115 students (59% of students*) participated in the survey:

28 9th graders, 38% of all 9th graders
34 10th graders, 53% of all 10th graders
31 11th graders, 46% of all 11th graders
22 12th graders. 42% of all 12 graders

This breakdown is a general reflection of the school as a whole.

* Enrollment is 259; 64 (25%) of students participate in PSEO and did not take the survey. 195 students attend FAIR School full time.

Result Themes:

Fairness:

83% of students believe the teachers are fair;
68 % of students thought the discipline system is fair.

Caring, Support, and Belonging:

97% of students think teachers and staff at FAIR school want them to succeed
77% of students feel safe and belonging at school.

76 % of students report their teachers care about them;
79% of students feel Administration cares about them;
81% of students report they can share their problems with teachers and staff;

71% of students feel students care about each other.

School Identity:

96% of students believe racial justice is important .

Conclusions:

Student feedback on fairness confirms earlier feedback that the discipline system is unfair because of inconsistent implementation. Students are very aware that different teachers implement classroom rules and expectations differently. This in contrast to student perception of teacher fairness. Students believe teachers will work with them and give them extra help and make accommodations for them if they ask.

FAIR's strengths are in the student perceptions of caring, support, and belonging. Students believe strongly that teachers want them to succeed. The current political context and the change in administration has pushed students to more firmly identify with the racial justice aspect of the FAIR School Identity. Students would like racial and social justice issues integrated into curriculum. The results of this survey will be shared with ILT and PSWE.

Comparison to MPS 2016 - 2017 Student Survey

The results from the 2016 - 2017 Student Survey administered to FAIR students in the Fall of 2016 indicated that student satisfaction was "far below district." Many of the content areas were similar to the Youth Survey. In discussions with small focus group of students, the students expressed dissatisfaction with the changes at FAIR School since the conveyance to MPS. Students expressed dissatisfaction in the following areas: teacher turn-over, new administrator who was not familiar with FAIR School, new discipline process and rules around cell phones, loss of arts classes -- dance, Brand Lab, the loss of Chinese language option. These changes had a negative impact on the perception of FAIR School as surveyed by the MPS Student Survey. Given the context of the many recent changes, it's clear that students have felt dissatisfied with MPS.

The difference seen in the Youth Survey was because:

- 1) The survey was developed and addressed issues that students felt was important
- 2) Students were told the survey was developed by students to help improve FAIR School
- 3) Students felt empowered to believe their opinions mattered to school administration, teachers and staff.

