

Burke-Memorial School Council
Parent Survey Results
May 12, 2009

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I. Introduction

One of Burke-Memorial's school improvement goals was, "to enhance communication between our school and parents regarding all aspects of school life". As an action step toward that goal, the Burke-Memorial School Council developed a survey that was sent home with every child along with the March 2009 report cards.

We asked for parents' opinions on how we share information about their children's academic program, general school policies, procedures, and school support services. We sought input regarding our school climate, and whether parents felt welcome when in our school. We explained that information gathered from the survey would be used to make improvements in what and how we share information.

663 surveys were sent home with students on March 8 and 9, 2009. 234 were completed and returned for a total return of 35%. 49 (21%) were parents of fourth graders, 81 (35%) were parents of third graders, 47 (20%) were parents of kindergarteners, 17 (7%) were parents of preschoolers, and 40 (17%) had more than one child at Burke-Memorial school.

The survey was divided into five sections; Academic Program, Communication, School Climate, and School Support Resources. At the end parents were invited to identify one aspect of the school program that was positive, and one aspect of the program that needed improvement. Parents reported that they received most of the information about their child's school program through notes, flyers and newsletters that are sent home in backpacks. 212 (91%) of the respondents attended a parent-teacher conference this year, 181 (77%) visited their child's classroom, and 171 (73%) attended a school event.

II. Academic Program

211 (90%) of the respondents agreed that Burke-Memorial School provides enough information to understand the academic curriculum (curriculum night, Open Circle, Storytown literacy program), 9 (3%) disagreed, and 8 (3%) indicated, "don't know/NA". 186 (79%) of the respondents agreed that they understand the grade level standards that their child is responsible for mastering, 27 (11%) disagreed, and 14 (6%) indicated, "don't know/NA". 197 (84%) of the respondents agreed that they are provided with timely information regarding their child's progress, 21 (9%) disagreed, and 16 (7%) indicated, "don't know/NA".

191 (82%) of the respondents agreed that the report card gives clear information about their child's progress, 32 (14%) disagreed, and 11 (5%) indicated, "don't know/NA". 203 (87%) of the respondents agreed that the samples of student work shown at conferences enhanced their understanding of their child's progress, 10 (4%) disagreed, and 21 (9%) indicated, "don't know/NA". 130 (56%) of respondents agreed that they are informed if their child is not doing homework or passing tests, 9 (4%) disagreed, and 95 (41%) indicated, "don't know/NA". It should be noted that homework and tests are not typically part of the preschool and kindergarten programs.

141 (60%) of respondents agreed that the school provides adequate opportunities for children to explore the arts and humanities (music, art, foreign language, drama), 57 (24%) disagreed, and 36 (15%) replied, "don't know/NA". 180 (77%) of respondents agreed that homework expectations and assignments are clearly communicated, 16 (7%) disagreed, and 38 (16%) indicated, "don't know/NA". It should be noted that homework is not typically part of the preschool and kindergarten programs. 189 (81%) of respondents agreed that Burke-Memorial school adequately prepares students for the next grade level, 5 (4%) disagreed, and 40 (17%) replied, "don't know/NA".

Positive comments related to the Academic Program included:

- Strong emphasis on literacy instruction (Storytown program, guided reading, Book Buddies, library programs, reading incentive programs)
- Program is academically challenging
- Children are well-prepared for MCAS tests
- Excellent science curriculum
- Good special education program
- Open Circle Social Competency program is effective
- Field trips enhance the curriculum

Areas in need of improvement related to the Academic Program included:

- More detailed information about the curriculum is needed
- More funding and emphasis on math needed
- More information regarding student progress is needed (teacher comments on report card, more than one conference per year, more information about standards-based reporting)
- More opportunities and emphasis on the arts and humanities is needed (theater arts, music, art, computer, foreign language)
- Homework expectations are inconsistent between classrooms and grades
- Full day kindergarten for all

III. Communication

195 (83%) of respondents agreed that they are aware that Burke-Memorial School has emergency safety procedures, 12 (5%) disagreed, and 27 (12%) responded, "don't know/NA". 212 (91%) of respondents agree that they receive adequate information about health issues in our school or district, 13 (6%) disagreed, and 9 (4%) replied, "don't know/NA". 206 (88%) of respondents agreed that their child's teacher communicates

effectively with them (notes, phone calls, emails), 20 (9%) disagreed, and 8 (3%) indicated, “don’t know/NA”. 199 (85%) of respondents agreed that school newsletters and website are effective in keeping parents informed, 13 (6%) disagreed, and 22 (9%) replied, “don’t know/NA”.

Positive comments related to Communication included:

- Good communication with individual classroom teachers
- Monthly newsletters from teachers are helpful
- Email updates from the school are effective
- Teacher-parent communication when a child is having difficulty is timely and appreciated
- Great special education communication

Areas in need of improvement related to Communication included:

- More information should be posted on school’s website (weather cancellations, upcoming events, information on how to help children at home)
- More email communication from teachers would be helpful (newsletters, homework assignments and projects, upcoming instructional units)
- Teacher websites would be useful

IV. School Climate

227 (97%) of respondents agreed that they feel comfortable talking with their child’s teacher about their child, 2 (1%) disagreed, and 5 (2%) replied, “don’t know/NA”. 218 (93%) agreed that they feel welcomed by the staff when they come into the school, 8 (3%) disagreed, and 8 (3%) indicated, “don’t know/NA”. 222 (95%) of respondents agreed that when they have a question, school staff members are helpful in answering it, 3 (1%) disagreed, and 9 (4%) replied, “don’t know/NA”.

226 (97%) of respondents feel that their child is supported and cared for at school, 3 (1%) disagreed, and 5 (2%) replied, “don’t know/NA”. 210 (90%) of respondents agreed that they are informed about volunteer opportunities at the school, 8 (3%) disagreed, and 16 (7%) indicated, “don’t know/NA”. 164 (70%) of respondents agreed that administrators at Burke-Memorial School are available for conferences when needed, 2 (1%) disagreed, and 68 (29%) indicated, “don’t know/NA”.

Positive comments related to School Climate included:

- Caring and welcoming administrators, teachers, and staff, particularly classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading teachers, physical education teachers, and office staff
- Cheerful and friendly school atmosphere
- Burke-Memorial School is a safe environment

Areas in need of improvement related to School Climate included:

- More parent volunteer opportunities needed

- More information about bullying and behavior procedures for disruptive students would be helpful
- More information about the school's safety procedures would be beneficial

V. School Support Resources

166 (71%) of respondents agree that people at Burke-Memorial School help their children with problems that happen at the school, 5 (2%) disagree, and 63 (27%) chose, "don't know/NA". 141 (60%) agree that the school provides additional resources and information on how to help their children succeed in school, 26 (11%) disagreed, and 67 (29%) replied, "don't know/NA". 187 (80%) of respondents agreed that their child has access to a nutritional lunch at school, 18 (8%) disagreed, and 29 (12%) responded, "don't know/NA". It should be noted that preschool students do not typically eat lunch at school.

173 (74%) of respondents agreed that they are informed about the variety of services and resources that are offered by the school (school adjustment counselor, special education, after-school programs), 24 (10%) disagreed, and 37 (16%) chose, "don't know/NA". 123 (53%) of respondents agreed that school funding is adequate to provide a quality education at Burke-Memorial School, 49 (21%) disagreed, and 62 (26%) replied, "don't know/NA".

Positive comments related to School Support Resources included:

- Good quality after-school programs offered (Junior Great Books, art, theater)
- Lunch Bunch is a worthwhile program

Areas in need of improvement related to School Support Resources included:

- Insufficient funding results in less competitive programs than other area school systems
- Students need more time to eat lunch, a prepay system would be helpful
- More information about the role of the school adjustment counselors is needed
- Afterschool programs for kindergarten students should be offered
- More support is needed to help incoming third graders transition to Burke-Memorial School

Additional suggestions for improvement included:

- Longer, more frequent outdoor recess periods
- Smaller class sizes would be beneficial
- Switching schools every two years is disruptive and contributes to inconsistency

IV. Conclusion

Results of this parent survey will be used to develop future school improvement goals that will focus on continuing to enhance communication and information sharing between home and school. Research shows that increased parental involvement is related to

improved student achievement. We would like to thank all of the parents who took the time to provide us with the thoughtful insights that were included in this report.