Family Feedback Survey Open Responses Communication Section

Method and Data

As part of some accountability structure set in 2014, KCS sends out a survey annually to parents and guardians of district students for feedback on their child’s school. Approximately one-third of parents and guardians who completed the survey in English provided additional feedback when prompted with an open-response box, roughly 1,200 comments.

Identified Limitations

These are initial codes and categories. Because qualitative is iterative, the findings below will likely undergo several changes as new data and interpretations become available. Additionally, the qualitative results listed belong to these respondents only. Use themes to move toward focus groups and refined survey instruments; generalizing beforehand is ill-advised.

Analysis

The first phase is an initial readthrough and coding, during which the aim is to find initial trends among respondents’ attitudes, values, and beliefs in the survey. Value is what you think and feel is important, an attitude is how you think and feel about something or someone, and a belief is what you think and feel to be true. The first phase of coding resulted in 64 initial codes. Phase 3 was “theming the data,” which involved shifting the focus of analysis onto broader ideas. The results are below.

Communication means feeling connected

Parents and guardians often assessed communication at a school in relation to how connected the exchange made them feel toward their child’s learning.

The parameters of connected communication include the following:

- Connected communication between school staff and parents could be direct. For example, parents remarked how the presence or absence of phone calls on a child’s academic progress or behavior with enough time before the consequences of writeups and grades greatly impacted their ability to work on the issues after school.

- Connected communication could also be indirect. For example, parents requested that children have at least light homework, not simply to keep the student working or practicing or to have a sense of where their child is academically. Parents also valued homework, and other school materials, such as spiral notebooks and texts, as signals by the teacher of the school and classroom landscape/ecosystem (class expectations, school codes, standard tests, etc.) and how the child is currently navigating it.

In contrast, when parents expressed frustrations over their communication experiences with a school, it tended to center around a lack of control over their child’s learning. These experiences were categorized as silences, voids, and turbulence.

- The timing of communication defines silences. For example, after building-level decisions are made, learning about behavior or academic struggles first through official writeups, calls home, or parent meetings, or missing PTA, extracurricular, or community-building events were trending examples of communication that went too late for the parents to shape how the decisions and later results about their child will end up.

- Voids are times when parents felt their attempts to find ways of connecting to their child’s learning went unheard. Trying to get their child help with disability, bullying, extracurriculars

- Turbulence is any information exchange between a school and parent during which the parent feels little to no connection to their child’s learning. Examples include storms of emails, the number and UX experience of media platforms required to access, back-to-school and parent-teachers nights, and feeling talked down to when talking with staff or front staff.

While the respondents spoke from a belief that parents should have primary control over their child’s learning, they generally understood and respected the control school staff have over their schooling and some of their learning (not the same thing) while at the building. This finding suggests that the level of power one's learning was exchanged according to trust and geography. As a result, issues seemed to arise when control over learning felt taken rather than exchanged and also when trust felt broken.