

MMSD Staff Climate Survey Results – District 2016

Key Findings

1. MMSD staff rated *Teaching & Learning* the highest among the five dimensions with 78% positive responses.
2. Staff's percent positive responses increased in two dimensions of school climate (*Relationships* and *School Improvement*), decreased in two (*Safety* and *Institutional Environment*) and stayed the same in the remaining dimension (*Teaching & Learning*) between 2015 and 2016.
3. Percent positive responses were similar across staff groups, except for differences between African American staff, who reported lower percent positive responses than other staff groups.
4. Staff at elementary have the highest percent positive responses by dimension of school climate, compared to Central Office or secondary school staff.
5. Among open-ended comments, staff most often described *Relationships* as the greatest strength of their school/department, while they similarly discussed aspects of *Relationships*, *Safety*, and *Teaching & Learning* as their school/department's greatest challenge.

Background

Since 2015, MMSD has surveyed parents, staff, and students each spring to measure climate in the district. The data gathered from these surveys informs the district's work around [Strategic Framework Goal #3: Every student, family, and employee experiences a positive school and district climate](#) and [Priority Area V: Accountability and School Support Systems](#). The MMSD Staff Climate Survey focuses on five research-based dimensions of school climate: 1) Relationships; 2) Teaching & Learning; 3) Safety; 4) School Improvement; and, 5) Institutional Environment.

Within the staff survey, questions are intentionally aligned to district initiatives and priorities, including [Strategic Framework Priority Area IV: Thriving Workforce](#); the [Great Teaching Matters Framework](#); and the [Growth Mindset](#).

Schools use climate survey data to drive their school improvement actions, including setting goals for their 2016-17 [School Improvement Plans](#). Central Office departments also use this data to monitor progress on their [Central Office Measures of Performance](#).

This report focuses on the 2015-16 district results for staff; similar reports are available for the parent and student surveys. For more information on MMSD Climate Surveys and to view detailed results – including interactive [scorecards](#) and [comparisons](#) across years – visit the [climate survey website](#).

Data and Methods

MMSD administered the staff climate survey between February 8 and 26, 2016. RPEO staff emailed links to the electronic survey to staff and sent paper copies to Central Office departments where staff do not have email access.

A total of 2,431 staff responded to the confidential survey for a response rate of 58%, compared to 56% in 2015. Staff responses included their employee IDs so survey results could be disaggregated demographically. Staff's demographics are displayed in Table I below:

Table I: Demographics	Staff Survey	District Overall
African American	4%	7%
Asian	2%	3%
Hispanic/Latino	6%	7%
Multiracial	0%	0%
White	86%	82%
Central Office	12%	12%
Elementary	48%	46%
Middle	20%	19%
High	20%	24%



Generally, demographics of respondents are representative of district staff overall with slightly higher participation among white staff and slightly lower participation among African American and high school staff.

On the closed-ended questions, we calculated response distributions (i.e., the range of responses) and percent positive responses. Percent positive aligns to the way MMSD reports metrics on other *Strategic Framework* goals, such as reading proficiency, high school graduation and challenging and well-rounded curriculum. We consider a response to be positive when it expresses agreement or strong agreement with a positive statement, and disagreement or strong disagreement with a negative statement. On the [staff scorecard](#), response distributions show the percentage of responses from very negative to very positive for each closed-ended question. For negatively worded questions, such as those pertaining to students experiencing bullying or harassment, "strongly disagree" corresponds with "very positive." Each question on the survey aligns to a dimension of school climate and a percent positive response was also calculated for each dimension.

We analyzed results and selected findings for this report based on a variety of factors. First, we reviewed percent positive responses, looking for differences of four percentage points or greater among respondent groups at the dimension and question levels. Then, we reviewed results based on groups of interest related to district initiatives and priorities. We also identified questions of interest based on district priorities, connections to school improvement and district goals or accountability. Among the groups, dimensions, and/or questions that stood out, we selected specific items to highlight based on interest and impact.

On the open-ended questions, we analyzed results to tie them to specific dimensions using a multi-step process in NVivo, a software program designed for qualitative analysis. The approach relied on coding, a way of organizing and sorting qualitative data that involves assigning labels, or codes, to each comment or response, which makes it easier to draw themes from and summarize the data. We began with a provisional code list (i.e., a predetermined set of codes) that consisted of the dimensions from the climate survey. First we performed preliminary coding, by manually coding a subset of comments into the dimension they best represented. We then searched the comments for key words identified from survey questions pertaining to each dimension, along with other synonyms and antonyms to these words, and coded those comments accordingly. Next, we used the Autocode feature of NVivo, which is a program function that uses an algorithm to automatically code comments based on existing coding patterns, to code additional comments. Finally, we assigned the comments not captured in the previous steps to an Other category, as they did not directly or explicitly relate to any specific climate dimension in the climate survey. This Other category was scanned and more coding was manually performed if appropriate. The findings presented in this report are the result of this exhaustive multi-step process.

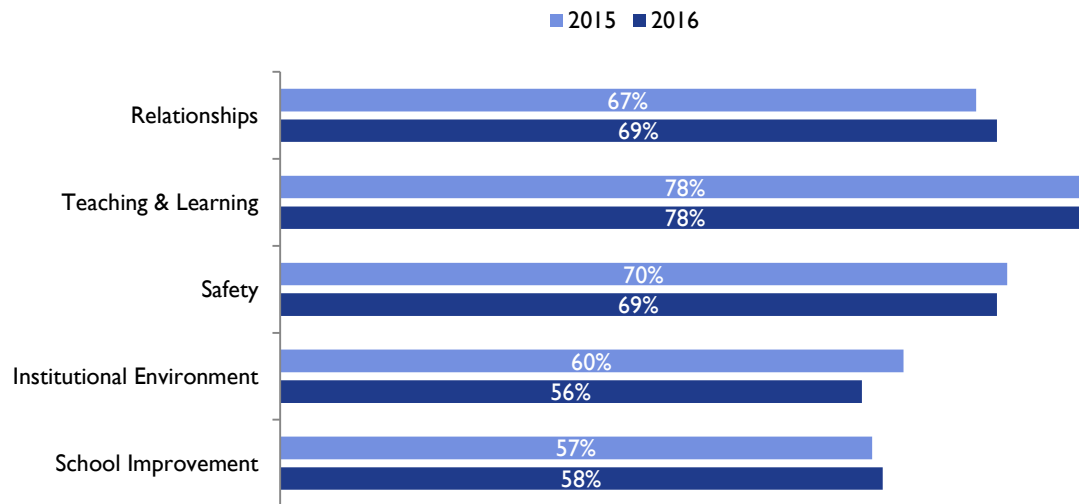
Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

Overall and Year-to-Year

For the second consecutive year, staff rated *Teaching & Learning* highest among the five dimensions of school climate with 78% positive responses to questions overall, followed by *Safety* and *Relationships* at 69% each. Staff's percent positive responses decreased in two of the five dimensions of school climate (*Safety* and *Institutional Environment*), increased in two (*Relationships* and *School Improvement*) and remained the same in the other dimension (*Teaching & Learning*) between 2015 and 2016.



Figure 1: Staff's Percent Positive Response by Dimension of School Climate



The dimension that decreased most year-to-year was *Institutional Environment*, with 56% positive responses, compared to 60% in 2015. It is notable that in 2016 *Institutional Environment* questions were revised for clarity resulting in no comparison among questions year-to-year, which may account for the decrease in percent positive responses at the dimension level. The remaining four dimensions' percent positive responses were very similar year-to-year with changes between zero and two percentage points.

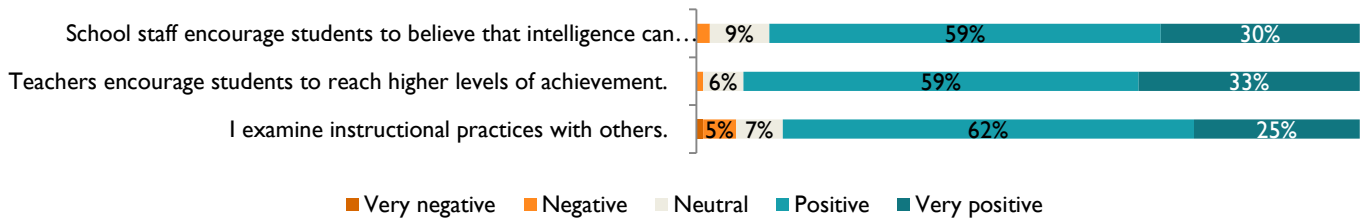
Within dimensions, there was also very little change between responses to individual questions year-to-year. The largest year-to-year changes by question were within the dimensions of *School Improvement* and *Teaching & Learning*. For example, within *School Improvement*, 56% of staff agreed *when improvement processes are not working, staff are proactive*, compared to 48% in 2015. Within *Teaching & Learning*, 69% of staff agreed *their efforts to learn new instructional methods are encouraged by the principal(s)*, compared to 73% in 2015.

Highlights Within Dimensions:

Teaching & Learning

For the second consecutive year, staff rated *Teaching & Learning* the highest among the five dimensions with 78% positive responses to questions overall. Within the *Teaching & Learning* dimension, questions measuring staff's encouragement of students which are aligned to the *Strategic Framework Core Value of Excellence and Equity* and the *Teacher Team Toolkit*, received the most positive responses. Ninety-two percent (92%) of staff believe that *teachers encourage students to reach higher levels of achievement* and 89% believe that *school staff encourage students to believe that intelligence can grow through effort*. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of teachers *examine instructional practices with others*, compared to 78% positive responses to *Teaching & Learning* questions overall.

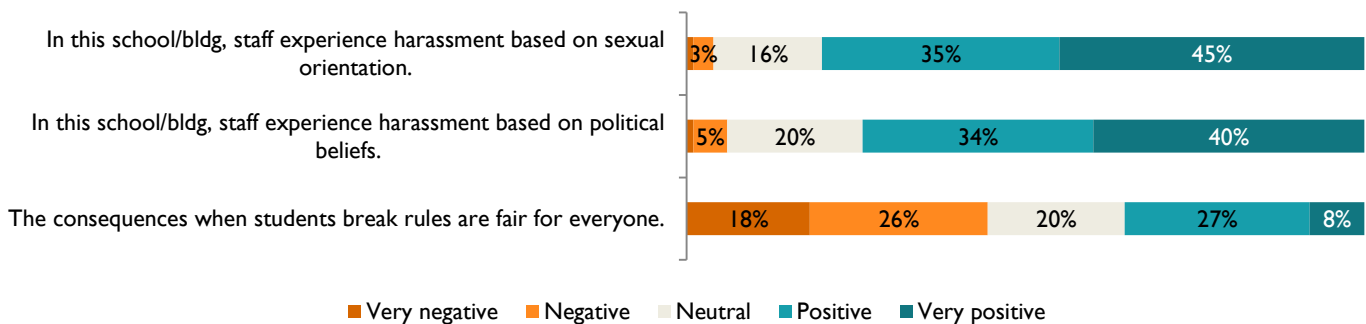
Figure 2



Safety

The next highest rated dimension among staff was *Safety* with 69% positive responses to questions overall. Within the dimension of *Safety*, questions pertaining to harassment had the highest percent positive responses with 80% of staff disagreeing that *staff experience harassment based on sexual orientation* and 74% disagreeing that *staff experience harassment based on political beliefs*. The question with the lowest percent positive responses among staff pertained to consequences. Thirty-five percent (35%) of staff agreed that the *consequences when students break rules are fair for everyone*.

Figure 3



Relationships

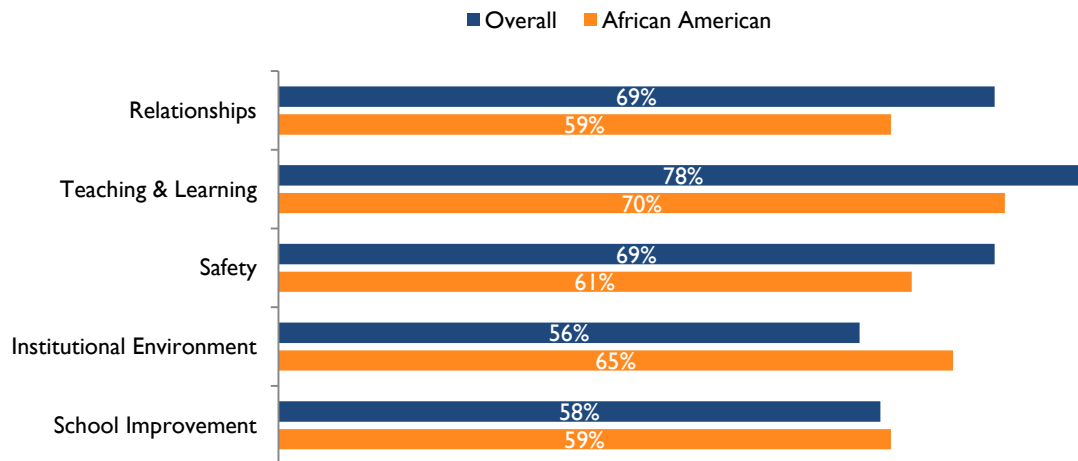
Relationships also received 69% positive responses to questions overall. Within the *Relationships* dimension, questions measuring staff-to-student relationships were rated the most positively. Ninety-four percent (94%) of teachers agreed *they regularly talk to students about their interests* and 86% of staff indicated teachers have *quite a bit or a tremendous amount of respect for students*. Questions measuring staff-to-staff relationships were rated the least positively. This is noteworthy because of the questions' implications relating to *Strategic Framework Priority Area IV: Thriving Workforce*. Only one staff-to-staff relationship question received a higher than average positive response, with 87% of staff agreeing that *staff help each other when it is needed*.



Highlights Among Staff Groups:

Percent positive responses by dimension were similar across most staff racial/ethnic groups, except for African American staff. The largest differences in percent positive responses were in *Relationships* and *Teaching & Learning*. African American staff rated *Relationships* 59% positive, compared to 69% of staff overall, and *Teaching & Learning* 70% positive, compared to 78% overall. In both dimensions, questions about diversity showed huge differences in opinion. Within *Relationships*, only 56% of African American staff believe their *work culture values diversity*, compared to 76% of staff overall (20 percentage point decrease). Within *Teaching & Learning*, only 38% of African American staff believe that *instruction reflects diversity*, compared to 68% of staff overall (30 percentage point decrease). These findings are significant as they relate to staff’s work around culturally and linguistically responsive practices for all students.

Figure 5: African American vs. Overall Staff Percent Positive Response by Dimension of School Climate

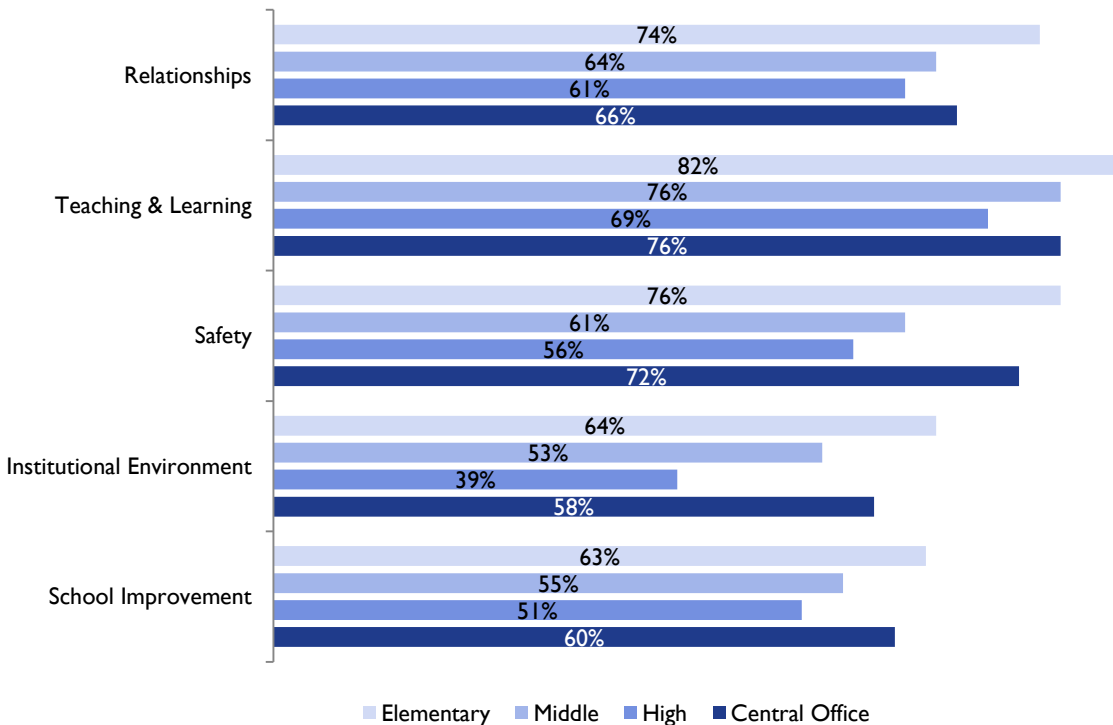


Highlights Across Levels:

When compared by level, elementary staff have the highest percent positive responses by dimension of school climate, compared to Central Office, middle, and high school staff. Consistently, the percent positive responses drops from elementary to secondary across dimensions, with the greatest decreases occurring within the dimensions of *Institutional Environment* (25 percentage point decrease) and *Safety* (20 percentage point decrease).



Figure 6: Staff's Percent Positive Responses by Dimension & Level



Among questions within various dimensions, there are some notable decreases in percent positive responses by school staff by level. Within *Teaching & Learning*, 83% of elementary staff agreed *teacher teams are valued*, compared to 70% of middle school staff and 66% of high school staff. Staff who agree that *instruction reflects diversity*, also declined steadily by level with 73% of elementary staff agreeing, compared to 69% of middle school staff and 54% of high school staff. Within the dimension of *Safety*, more elementary staff agree that *the school has clearly stated expectations for student behavior*, 76%, compared to 61% of middle school and 49% of high school staff. Differences by level are also evident within *Relationships*, where 80% of elementary staff agree *they communicate well with the families they serve*, compared to 69% of middle school and 57% of high school staff.

Findings: Open-Ended Responses

We report the findings from staff responses to the open-ended questions below. For more details about the dimensions, the percent of coded comments in each dimension, and example quotes coded into each dimension, see the Appendix. Our two open-ended questions, which we used to organize our analysis, were:

1. What do you feel is your/this school/department's greatest strength?
2. What do you feel is your/this school/department's greatest challenge?

Staff comments about their school/department's greatest strength most often focused on *Relationships*. Key ideas in their comments related to diversity along with the presence of caring and collaborative staff that communicate and work well together. *Relationships* appeared in the most comments, followed by comments related to *Teaching & Learning*. That staff in general most often described aspects of *Relationships* and *Teaching & Learning* as strengths supports the closed-ended response findings because those were two of the dimensions with the highest percent positive. Within racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic staff commented more about *Relationships* as a strength of their school/department than their peers.



Staff responses to the question about their school/department's greatest challenge clustered around issues related to *Relationships*, *Safety*, and *Teaching & Learning*. This clustering suggests that staff found challenges in various facets of climate as opposed to one or two. While these results do not necessarily coincide with the findings from staff members' closed-ended response findings (those same three dimensions received the highest percent positive in the closed-ended responses), it may be that the way that staff feel expand beyond the purview of the survey questions. These results also show that to improve perceptions of climate, multiple dimensions must be addressed, regardless of how positive some staff may have felt about them. Within racial/ethnic groups, African American staff may experience climate differently from staff of other races. Their comments about challenges varied on three dimensions – they left comments that related to *Relationships* more than their peers, and they commented less on *Institutional Environment* and *Safety* as challenges. More Asian staff comments revolved around *Teaching & Learning*.



Appendix: Open-Ended Comment Coding Scheme

Below is Table 2 depicting the percentage of coded comments applied to each dimension of climate across the comments staff left regarding the strengths and challenges facing their schools/departments. There is also a column of example comments coded into each dimension. Percentages may not total to 100% because comments could be coded into multiple dimensions.

Table 2: Staff Reported Strengths and Challenges		
Strengths		
Dimension	% of Coded Comments	Example Quotes
Relationships	50%	"community" "diversity" "collaboration" "staff genuinely care for students and their well-being" "it is very welcoming" "respect for others" "teamwork"
Teaching & Learning	24%	"the overall staff commitment to growth in practice" "instruction" "culture of learners" "our ability to help students grow academically" "the commitment of the staff to student success" "our approach to equity work reflects the staff's understanding of how students learn (pace, diversity of needs, etc.)"
Safety	3%	"behavior management" "our Positive Behavior Plan" "our non-harassment policy" "clearly defined behavior expectations"
Institutional Environment	2%	"clean facility" "providing staff/students with the resources needed to reach higher levels of achievement" "bigger school building and large play area; plenty of parking"
School Improvement	2%	"allowing autonomy in programming and changes" "our leader's skills--clear vision, precise feedback, supports me and, as a result, I stay in a continuous improvement state of mind" "looking at data and creating action plans to help improvement" "willingness to try new things. PBIS initiatives"
Other	32%	"none" "staff" "teachers" "kids!" "our principal" "the students and dedicated teachers" "staff commitment to students and families" "our leadership"
Challenges		
Dimension	% of Coded Comments	Example Quotes
Relationships	30%	"staff doesn't feel respected by administration" "communication" "student behaviors including swearing, disrespectful talk and actions toward staff and peers" "relational trust with administration" "respecting co-workers and treating others with kindness"
Safety	30%	"behavior and LACK of TRUE consequences for students" "out of control and often unsafe behavior of many students" "all teachers enforcing discipline and equally" "Behavior Education Plan implementation" "feeling safe to express our concerns, even if they are on behalf of students"



Teaching & Learning	26%	"student academic achievement" "achievement gap" "differentiating instruction for different kinds of learners and using an all-ed approach" "transitional planning-preparing all of our students to transition into meaningful post secondary education or vocational training"
Institutional Environment	14%	"resources to support classrooms" "space!" "facility is deteriorating" "budget cuts" "not having walls or doors" "equipment to do the job"
School Improvement	7%	"being proactive instead of reactive" "we need more input from staff regarding school decisions" "empowering all stakeholders more in the decision making processes" "too many initiatives; we hardly get one new initiative underway before another one pops along. It would be nice to have the time and space to perfect a few key initiatives rather than do a bunch in a mediocre way"
Other	25%	"time" "workload" "constant staff turnover" "I don't know" "poverty" "consistency" "meeting the needs of every student" "mental health needs of students"