



MMSD Staff Climate Survey Results – District 2017

Key Findings

1. MMSD staff rated *Family Engagement* the highest among the five dimensions with 82% positive responses.
2. Staff's percent positive responses increased in three of the four dimensions of school climate that remained consistent year-to-year (*Relationships*, *Teaching & Learning*, and *Institutional Environment*), and decreased in the remaining dimension of *Safety*.
3. Percent positive responses were lower for African-American and American Indian staff, and somewhat higher for Asian staff at the dimension level compared to other staff groups.
4. Staff at elementary had 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, and they discussed aspects of *Safety* 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 district's Research & Program Evaluation Office (RPEO) is responsible for the creation, administration, analysis and production of resources annually. 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) *Institutional Environment*; and 5) *Family Engagement*. Within the staff survey, questions are aligned intentionally 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 2017-18 [School Improvement Plans](#). Central Office departments also use this data to monitor progress on their [Central Office Measures of Performance](#).

In 2016-17, we made revisions to the surveys which included: deleting or adding questions in dimensions, realigning questions across dimensions, simplifying the wording of questions, and changing to a consistent scale for all items. We eliminated the *School Improvement* dimension and the questions in it were moved into the *Teaching & Learning* dimension. Questions on *Family Engagement* were also added to the staff survey to better align with the parent survey questions. We made these changes to increase clarity, reduce length, and ensure maximum utility from every question and dimension.

This report focuses on the 2016-17 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 1 and 28, 2016. RPEO staff emailed unique survey links to all full-time, permanent staff.

A total of 3,079 staff responded to the confidential survey for a response rate of 71%, compared to 58% in 2016. The significant increase in year-to-year response rate is largely attributable to new survey software that allows for less spam filtering of messages and greater customization of survey messages and reminders. Staff responses included their employee IDs so survey results could be disaggregated demographically. Staff's demographics are displayed in Table 1:



Table 1: Demographics	Staff Survey %	District Overall %
African American	5%	7%
American Indian	1%	1%
Asian	3%	3%
Hispanic/Latino	7%	8%
Multiracial	1%	1%
White	84%	81%
Central Office	11%	13%
Elementary	49%	45%
Middle	19%	20%
High	21%	23%

Generally, demographics of respondents closely resemble the composition of district staff overall with slightly higher participation among white staff and elementary school staff.

On the closed-ended questions, we calculated response distributions (i.e., the range of responses) and percent positive responses. Percent positive reflects the percent of responses that were desirable (either strong or very strong agreement with a positive statement) and 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. On the [staff scorecard](#), response distributions show the percentage of responses from very negative to very positive for each closed-ended question. As part of the realignment of survey questions, items that were negatively worded in prior years, were rewritten so that “strongly agree” now 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 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. Secondly, we assigned the comments not captured in the previous step to an *Other* category, as they did not directly or explicitly relate to any specific climate dimension in the climate survey. Finally, we ran a word frequency on the codes in the *Other* category to determine if we could include any of those words in our word searches as performed in the first step. We identified an additional word applicable for each dimension and we again ran key word searches and coded those statements accordingly.

Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

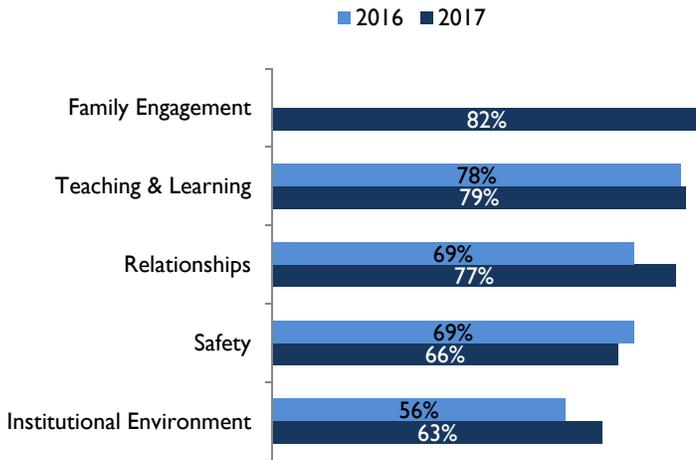
Overall and Year-to-Year

In 2017, questions on *Family Engagement* were added to the staff survey to better align it with the parent survey. Staff rated the dimension of *Family Engagement* the highest, with 82% positive responses overall. *Teaching & Learning* was the next highest rated dimension with 79% positive responses overall, followed closely by *Relationships*, 77%. Staff’s percent positive responses increased in three of the four dimensions of school climate that remained consistent from year-to-



year-(*Relationships, Teaching & Learning, and Institutional Environment*), and decreased in the remaining dimension of *Safety*. The year-to-year percent positive responses by dimension are shown in Figure 1 below.

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



The *Relationships* dimension had the greatest year-to-year increase in percent positive responses, 77%, compared to 69% in 2016, followed by *Institutional Environment* with 63% positive responses, compared to 56% the prior year. Within the *Relationships* dimension, questions that remained the same year-to-year had changes in percent positive responses between -2 and +14 percentage points. Items that drove the year-to-year increase within the *Relationships* dimension were *staff resolve conflicts in productive ways*, 64% positive responses, compared to 50% positive responses in 2016 and *the principal/department leader gives me constructive feedback on my work*, 60% positive responses, compared to 48% last year.

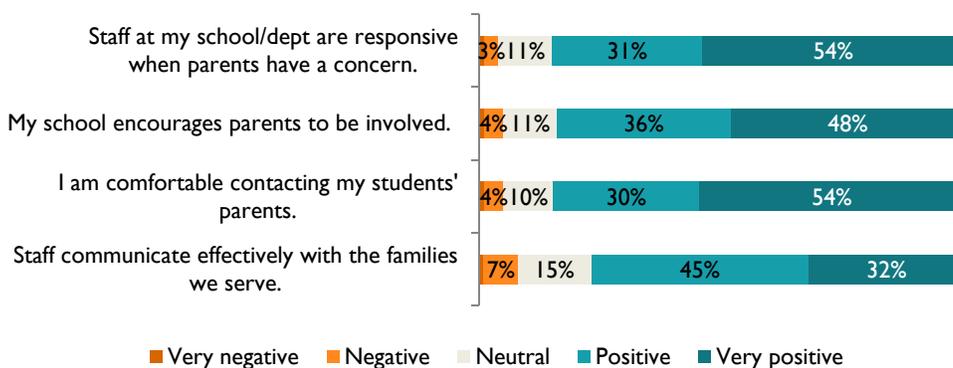
Within the *Institutional Environment* dimension, all questions remained the same year-to-year and all increased in percent positive responses by 5 and 8 percentage points. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of staff agreed *their school/department provides them with supplies and equipment to do their work*, compared to 59% in 2016 and 60% of staff agreed *their schools/buildings are kept in good condition*, compared to 52% last year. And, 62% of staff agreed *their schools/buildings are clean*, compared to 57% the previous year.

The decrease of percent positive responses within the dimension of *Safety* to 66% from 69% in 2016 is driven primarily by the reduction in the number of harassment question from seven in 2016 to just one in 2017. The *Safety* questions that remained unchanged year-to-year increased in percent positive responses between 4 and 8 percentage points from 2016 to 2017.

**Highlights by Dimension
Family Engagement**

Staff rated *Family Engagement* the highest among all dimension, with 82% positive responses overall. Eighty-five percent (85%) of staff agreed *they are responsive when parents have a concern*. Eighty-four percent (84%) of staff also agreed *their schools encourage parents to be involved* and the same percentage agreed *they are comfortable contacting their students' parents*. A somewhat lower percentage of staff, 77%, agreed *they communicate effectively with the families they serve*. Response distributions for questions in *Family Engagement* are shown in Figure 2 at left.

Figure 2: Family Engagement



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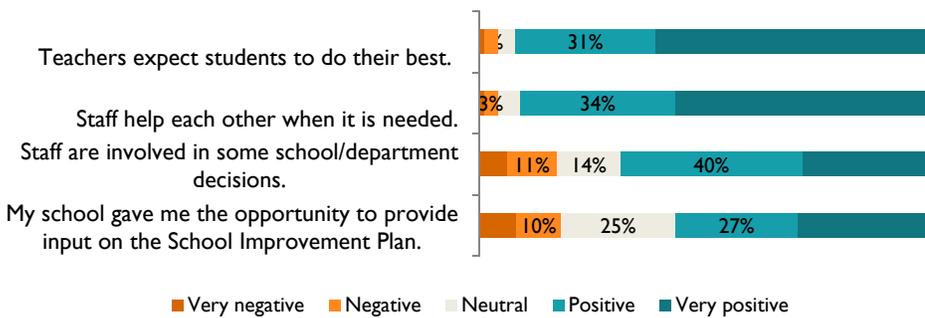


Teaching & Learning

Teaching & Learning was the second highest rated dimension with 79% positive responses to questions overall. Ninety-three percent (93%) of staff agreed that *teachers expect students to do their best* which aligns with MMSD's implementation of *Great Teaching Framework Practice #1: Set high and clear expectations for all students*. Ninety-one percent (91%) also

agreed *staff help each other when it is needed*. While staff rated most aspects of *Teaching & Learning* very positively, they rated items on collaborative decision-making and staff input much lower. For example, far fewer staff, 69%, agreed that *they are involved in some school/department decisions* and only 57% agreed that *their schools gave them an opportunity for input on the school improvement plan*. Response distributions for questions in *Teaching & Learning* are shown in Figure 3 at left.

Figure 3: Teaching & Learning



Highlights by Group

Among staff groups, African American staff's percent positive responses were lower on four of the five dimensions of school climate and American Indian staff's percent positive responses were lower across all dimensions, while Asian staff had higher percent positive responses on all dimensions, compared to staff overall. The percent positive response by dimension for all staff groups is shown in Table 2 below.

Percent Positive Response by Dimension	Teaching & Learning				
	Relationships	Learning	Safety	Institutional Environment	Family Engagement
African American	67%	72%	62%	66%	72%
American Indian	64%	64%	48%	56%	78%
Asian	81%	83%	68%	69%	84%
Hispanic/Latino	77%	81%	66%	68%	86%
Multiracial	83%	78%	81%	62%	79%
White	78%	79%	66%	62%	83%
Staff Overall	77%	79%	66%	63%	82%

African American staff's percent positive responses were between 4 and 10 percentage points lower on four of the five dimensions of school climate, compared to staff overall. Among African American staff, their opinions about *Relationships* and *Family Engagement* varied the most, compared to staff overall. In the *Relationships* dimension, only 72% of African American staff agree

that *staff at their schools respect the students*, compared to 90% of staff overall. Within *Family Engagement*, fewer African American staff, 71%, agree that *their schools encourage parents to be involved*, compared to 84% of staff overall.

Similarly, American Indian staff's percent positive responses were between four and 18 percentage points lower across all dimensions of school climate, compared to staff overall. American Indian staff rated *Safety* the least positively, 48%, compared to 66% of staff overall. Only 71% of American Indian staff *feel safe at their schools/buildings*, compared 82% of staff overall and just 63% of American Indian staff agree that *harassment based on personal characteristics is not a common problem for staff in this school/building*, compared to 80% of staff overall. While the number of American Indian staff is small relative to other racial/ethnic groups (24 respondents), their survey participation, 80%, was higher than any other staff group. This high participation rate coupled with significantly lower percent positive responses across all dimensions of school climate (-4 to -18 points), compared to staff overall, make American Indian staff's experiences noteworthy.

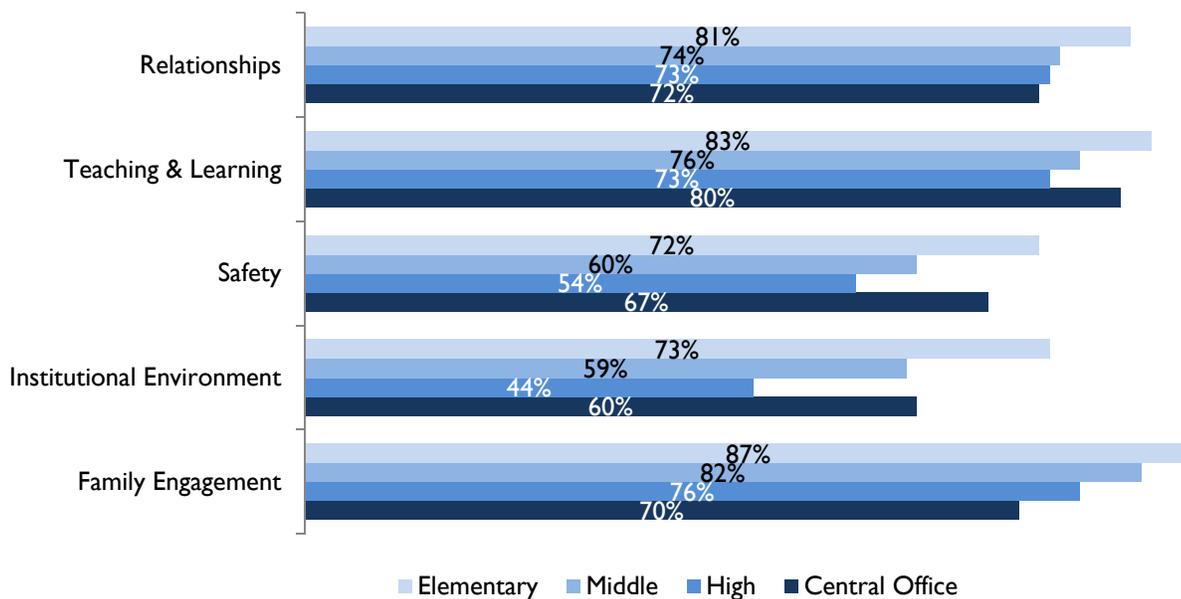


Conversely, Asian staff were somewhat more positive on all dimensions, between 2 and 6 percentage points higher, compared to staff overall. More than any other racial/ethnic group, Asian staff had the highest percent positive responses in the dimension of *Institutional Environment*. Seventy percent (70%) of Asian staff agreed that *their schools/buildings are clean*, compared to 62% of staff overall.

Highlights by Level

As it was for the previous year, elementary staff have the highest percent positive responses by dimension of school climate, compared to Central Office, middle, and high school staff. In four of the five dimensions of school climate, the percent positive responses drop from elementary to secondary across all dimensions, with the greatest decreases occurring within the dimensions of *Institutional Environment* (29 percentage point decrease) and *Safety* (18 percentage point decrease). In the *Relationships* dimension, Central Office staff had the lowest percent positive responses, 72%. The percent positive responses by dimension and level are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Staff's Percent Positive Responses by Dimension & Level



There are some notable decreases in percent positive responses by school staff by level among the new survey questions within the *Teaching & Learning* dimension. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of elementary staff agreed *their schools are responsive to students' language and culture*, compared to 79% of middle school staff and 77% of high school staff. Similarly, a higher percentage of elementary staff, 85%, agreed *their schools support the vision of preparing students for college, career and community*, compared to 84% of middle school staff and 78% of high school staff.

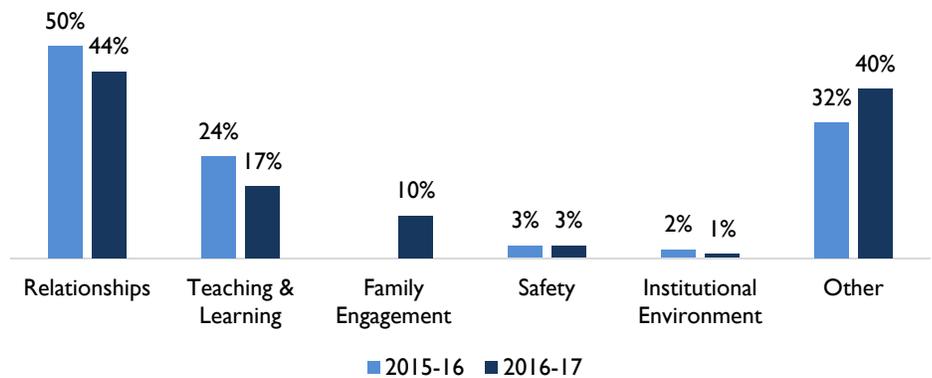
Findings: Open-Ended Responses

The climate survey asked staff two open-ended questions: (1) What do you feel is your/this school/department's greatest strength, and (2) What do you feel is you/this school/department's greatest challenge? Our analysis focused on categorizing these comments into the dimensions; for those comments that were off-topic or unclear, we coded them as *Other*. The percent of coded comments for staff responding to the question about school/department strengths is reflected in Figure 5, and the percent of coded comments for staff responding to the question about school/department challenges is reflected in Figure 6.



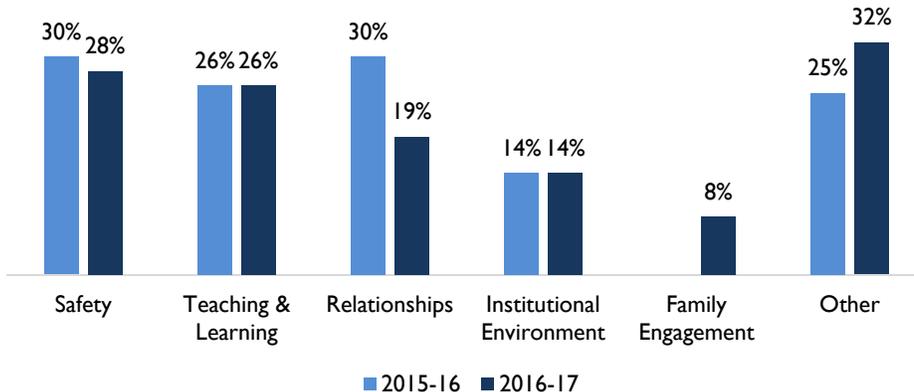
Staff most often identified aspects of *Relationships* (e.g., diversity, community, communication, and caring) as a strength of their school/department, followed by *Teaching & Learning* and *Family Engagement*. Comparatively, 2016-17 staff results are very similar to the results from 2015-16, with staff most often identifying aspects of *Relationships* as a strength, followed by *Teaching & Learning*. *Relationships* had a higher percent of coded comments in 2015-16, but the decrease this year may be due to the addition of the *Family*

Figure 5: Overall Staff's Percent of Coded Comments for Strengths by Dimension



Engagement dimension. *Teaching & Learning* percent of coded comments also decreased from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Disaggregated by race, feelings towards aspects of *Relationships* was very favorable, with African American staff most often referring to aspects of *Relationships* as a strength of their school/building more than other racial groups, and Latino staff referencing it less than often compared to other racial groups. African American staff commented on *Teaching & Learning* as a strength the least compared to other racial groups. No Asian staff commented on *Safety* as a strength, and no African American or Asian staff commented on *Institutional Environment* as a strength.

Figure 6: Overall Staff's Percent of Coded Comments for Challenges by Dimension



When articulating the challenges of their school/department, staff most often commented on aspects of *Safety* (e.g., behavior) and *Teaching & Learning* (teaching, learning). Compared to 2015-16 when staff were concerned about *Relationships*, then *Safety*, then *Teaching & Learning*, in 2016-17 staff were most concerned about *Safety*, then *Teaching & Learning*, then *Relationships*. While the rank ordering of dimensions changed across the years, the percent of coded comments for each dimension is pretty similar, with the

exception of *Relationships*. The decrease in percent of coded comments in *Relationships* from 2015-16 to 2016-17 may again be due to the addition of the *Family Engagement* dimension. By race, Latino staff commented on *Teaching & Learning* as a challenge less than other racial groups, but commented on *Relationships* as a challenge more than other racial groups. Asian staff were less concerned with *Safety* as a challenge than other racial groups, and African American staff indicated *Institutional Environment* as a challenge less than other racial groups. When looking at the rank ordering of dimensions, Asian staff were more concerned with *Teaching & Learning* than they were with *Safety* (which, again, they referred to as a challenge less than other racial groups).