

## MMSD Staff Climate Survey Results – District 2018

### Key Findings

1. A total of 3,394 staff responded to the survey for a response rate of 84%, compared to 71% in 2017.
2. MMSD staff rated *Family Engagement* the highest among the five dimensions with 81% positive responses.
3. Staff's percent positive responses remained the same year-to-year in *Relationships*, increased in *Institutional Environment* and decreased in *Family Engagement*, *Safety* and *Teaching & Learning*.
4. Percent positive responses by dimension of school climate were lower for American Indian, African-American, and multiracial staff, and higher for Asian staff compared to other staff groups.
5. Staff at elementary had the highest percent positive responses by dimension of school climate, compared to Central Office or secondary school staff.
6. Among open-ended comments from staff of color, staff celebrated strengths in diversity, the staff and teachers, and their sense of community; they identified challenges related to student behavior, support and resources, aspects of relationships, and other academic-related topics.

### 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 2018-19 [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 staff survey to increase clarity, reduce length, and ensure maximum utility from every question and dimension. No further revisions were made in 2017-18.

This report focuses on the 2017-18 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 trends](#) across years – visit the climate survey website.

### Data and Methods

MMSD administered the staff climate survey between January 29 to February 28, 2018. RPEO staff emailed unique survey links to all full-time, permanent staff. A total of 3,394 staff responded to the confidential survey for a response rate of 84%, compared to 71% in 2017.

Table 1: Demographics	Staff Survey (n)	Staff Survey %	District Overall %
African American	183	5%	7%
Asian	103	3%	3%
Hispanic/Latino	245	7%	8%
White	2,800	82%	80%
Central Office	374	11%	12%
Elementary	1,665	49%	48%
Middle	648	21%	19%
High	703	19%	20%

Staff responses included their employee IDs so survey results could be disaggregated demographically. Staff's demographics are displayed in Table 1.

The demographics of respondents closely resemble the composition of district staff overall with slightly higher participation among white staff and middle 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. 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.

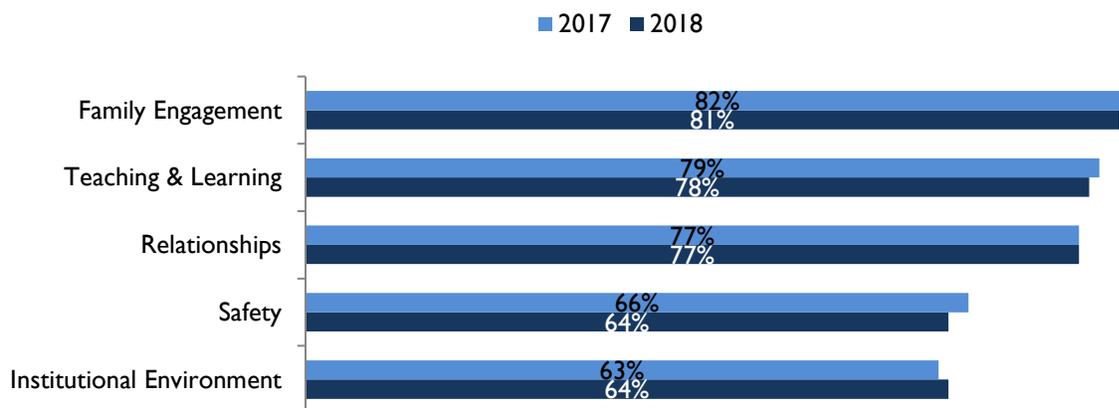
Given the district’s commitment to elevate the voices of those typically not heard, we focused our analysis of the open-ended questions on the responses of staff of color. After uploading responses into NVivo, a software program designed for qualitative analysis, we thematically analyzed those responses to discern patterns regarding staff of color’s perception of climate. In order to identify themes emerging organically from participant voice, we used techniques such as repetitive reading of responses, word frequency queries, and scanning responses for similar ideas.

## Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

### Overall and Year-to-Year

In 2018, staff rated the dimension of *Family Engagement* the highest, with 81% positive responses overall. *Teaching & Learning* was the next highest rated dimension with 78% positive responses overall, followed closely by *Relationships*, at 77%. *Institutional Environment* and *Safety* were rated the lowest at 64% each. Staff’s percent positive responses remained consistent from year-to-year in *Relationships*, increased slightly in *Institutional Environment*, and decreased slightly in *Family Engagement*, *Teaching & Learning*, and *Safety*. The year-to-year percent positive responses by dimension are shown in Figure I below.

**Figure I: Staff’s Percent Positive Response by Dimension of School Climate**



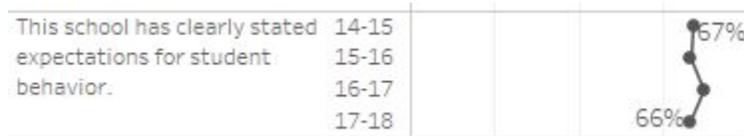


### Highlights by Dimension Institutional Environment

For the fourth consecutive year, staff rated *Institutional Environment* the least positively among dimensions of school climate. However, this year, *Institutional Environment* was the only dimension among the five to increase in percent positive responses among staff, 64%, compared to 63% in 2017. Responses to *Institutional Environment* questions ranged from 61% to 69% positive overall. Year-to-year, all questions increased in percent positive responses between 1 and 2 points. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of staff agreed *their school/department provides them with supplies and equipment to do their work*, compared to 67% in 2017 and 61% of staff agreed *their schools/buildings are kept in good condition*, compared to 60% last year. And, 63% of staff agreed *their schools/buildings are clean*, compared to 62% the previous year. No four year trends are available for these items as they were revised in 2017.

### Safety

For the fourth year, staff's percent positive responses in the dimension of *Safety* declined with 64% positive responses in 2018, compared to 66% in 2017. Responses to *Safety* questions varied widely, ranging from 41% to 78% positive overall. Year-to-year, six of the eight questions within the *Safety* dimension decreased in percent positive responses, one question's percent positive remained unchanged and the remaining question increased slightly. Among the questions within the *Safety* dimension, staff's percent positive responses to *I feel safe at my school/building*, decreased the most year-to-year with 78% positive responses, compared to 82% last year. No four year trend is available for this item as it was revised in 2017. A lower percentage of staff agreed *the school has clearly stated expectations for student behavior*, 66% positive responses, compared to 70% in 2017. However, its percent positive remained relatively stable over a four year period, as shown below.



### Highlights by Group

Among staff of color, African American staff's percent positive responses were lower on three of the five dimensions of school climate, 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.

Response by Dimension	Relationships	Teaching & Learning	Safety	Institutional Environment	Family Engagement
African American	73%	74%	66%	72%	75%
Asian	81%	82%	70%	77%	88%
Hispanic/Latino	76%	78%	64%	67%	83%
White	77%	78%	63%	63%	82%
<b>Staff Overall</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>81%</b>

African American staff's percent positive responses were between 4 and 6 percentage points lower on three of the five dimensions of school climate, compared to staff overall. Among African American staff, their percent positive responses in the dimension of *Family*

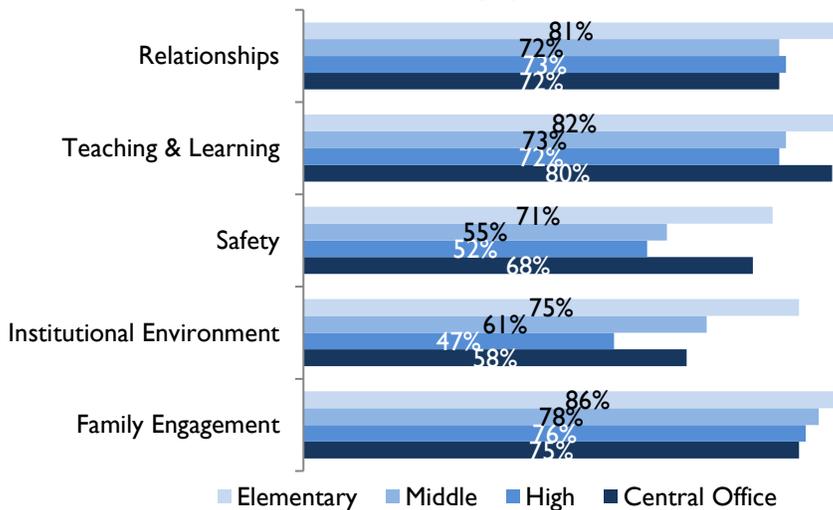
*Engagement* varied the most, 75%, compared to 81% of staff overall. Only 70% of African American staff agree that *staff communicate effectively with the families we serve*, compared to 77% of staff overall. A lower percentage of African American staff, 75%, agree that *their schools encourage parents to be involved*, compared to 83% of staff overall. It is important to note that despite African American staff having lower percent positive responses in three dimensions, compared to staff overall, year-to-year, the percent positive among African American staff increased between 1 and 6 percentage points across all dimensions of school climate.



Alternatively, among staff of color, Asian staff were more positive on all dimensions, between 4 and 13 percentage points higher in each dimension, compared to staff overall. Asian staff had the highest percent positive responses in the dimension of *Institutional Environment*, 77%, compared to 64% of staff overall.

### Highlights by Level

**Figure 2: Staff's Percent Positive Responses by Dimension & Level**



Consistent with previous years, elementary staff have the highest percent positive responses by dimension of school climate, compared to Central Office, middle, and high school staff. In all five dimensions of school climate, the percent positive responses drop from elementary to secondary, with the greatest decreases occurring within the dimensions of *Institutional Environment* (28 percentage point decrease) and *Safety* (19 percentage point decrease). The percent positive responses by dimension and level are shown in Figure 2 at left.

### Findings: Open-Ended Responses for Staff of Color

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 your/this school/department's greatest challenge?* We received 402 comments regarding strengths, and 394 comments regarding challenges from staff of color. The themes listed below are in no particular order – they represent the topics most often discussed. The corresponding word clouds represent a visual of frequently discussed ideas, with larger words being used more often than the smaller words.

#### Strengths

Generally, relational aspects amongst staff and the greater school community were perceived by staff of color as great strengths of Madison schools. Staff of color found their schools' greatest strength to be wrapped up in **diversity** – either encompassed in their student/staff/family population or as a value of the school: “I think our diverse student population is fantastic. I am noticing diversity within the make-up of the staff. This is a clear indication of our priorities.” The **staff and teachers** were another great asset to the school. Staff of color commented on staff “dedication,” “support,” and “care”: “The staff commitment, sacrifices, and great efforts to help students achieve success.” Staff of color also acknowledged how staff are also dedicated to students' success. “Teachers work hard to see that every student learns and succeeds,” one staff member wrote. With that, staff of color identified strength in their school **community**. They discussed communication, feelings of community, supportive relationships, and team work, as all contributing to the strength of their school: “Collectivism. Our staff is like a family. We support each other and take care of each other, which transfers to us taking care of our students.” Parent involvement and supportive parents were also characterized as school strengths by staff of color. Finally, staff of





color found strength in their *principals*: “We have great leadership at this school. Our principal is mindful of staff and the students and that makes for a great learning environment.”

### **Challenges**

While some concerns related to various aspects of schools, the largest perceived challenge facing Madison schools from staff of colors’ perspectives is behavior. From their perspective, the biggest challenge MMSD is around **student behavior and behavior management**, in particular a perception that there are no consequences or that the consequences are not appropriate for the level of behavior. “Behavior without consequences,” one staff member declared, while another emphasized “consequences for behavior are not clear and fair.” There were challenges related to consistently reacting to student behavior, as one staff member lamented the “inconsistent behavior management” at school. Some of this



feedback related directly to “the Behavior Education Plan.” There were challenges related to **support and resources** for teachers, staff, and families (e.g., time). Much of the talk around support related to behavior, special education, and supporting students to be successful. Staff of color noted a concerning lack of resources to enable them to meet the needs of students. A staff member indicated, “Not having enough staff to be able to accomplish all the workload and requests within such limited amount of time. Not having enough budget to have access to resources and professional development needed to do our work.” Similarly, “Our department staff is too small for the amount of responsibilities we undertake.” Staff of color also opined on **relationships**, including communication and collaboration, between each other, with

students, and with families. When describing communication challenges, staff of color referred to communication between staff and families, and among staff members (staff to staff or administration to staff). One staff member wrote, “Our greatest challenge is trust and communication.” Staff of color described difficulties with “inconsistent” or “ineffective” administration. Some claimed that “diversity awareness” was problematic or that there was not enough diversity: “Staff diversity is needed to strengthen cultural competence and awareness.” Finally, **academics** (e.g., “getting students to learn”) were sometimes cited as an issue, at times in conjunction with behavior issues.