



## MMSD Parent Climate Survey Results – District 2018

### Key Findings

1. This year, 9,446 parents participated in the climate survey – an approximately 39% response rate.
2. MMSD parents rated *Family Engagement* highest among the five dimensions of school climate, with 84% positive responses, followed by *Relationships*, with 83% positive responses.
3. Percent positive responses decreased in four of the five dimensions of climate from 2017 to 2018, with the largest decline in the dimension of *Safety*, which moved from 68% to 63%.
4. Among the open-ended comments from parents of students of color, parents celebrated diversity, the school community, and academic-related aspects of their school as strengths of their school; they identified challenges related to those same aspects along with student behavior.

### 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 Parent 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 parent survey, questions are aligned intentionally to district initiatives and priorities, including [Priority Area III: Family Engagement and Community Partnerships](#); the [Great Teaching Matters Framework](#); and [MMSD's Family, Youth and Community Engagement Standards](#). Schools use climate survey data to drive their school improvement actions, including setting goals for their 2018-19 [School Improvement Plans](#).

In 2016-17, we made revisions to the parent 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 results for parents; similar reports are available for the student and staff 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

RPEO administered the parent climate survey between January 29 to February 28, 2018 by distributing links to the electronic survey in English, Hmong, Spanish and Arabic to families through email and text messaging. We also sent paper copies of the survey via US mail and enclosed a postage-paid return envelope to parents without email or Internet access. Parents could complete one survey for each school where their children attend.

A total of 9,446 parents responded to the confidential survey for an approximate response rate of 39% among MMSD households, compared to 9,197 parents in 2017. Even though the total number of parents who responded increased year-to-year, the response rate we reported last year was higher because we changed how we calculate response rates this year. Surveys are sent to all parents/guardians with an email or mailing address on file. Therefore, we can receive more than one response for each student. To make the parent response rate calculation consistent with the way we calculate response rates for our student and staff surveys, regardless of the number of parent surveys received for a given student, each student now only counts once in the response rate calculation. We constructed the survey so that parent responses match to their students' demographic characteristics. For families with more than one child attending the same school, parents responded to the questions in reference to their youngest child attending that school.



**Table I: Demographics Parent Survey (n) Parent Survey % District Overall %**

Demographic	Parent Survey (n)	Parent Survey %	District Overall %
African American	759	8%	18%
Asian	783	8%	9%
Hispanic/Latino	1,549	16%	21%
Multiracial	771	8%	9%
White	5,548	59%	43%
Low Income	2,570	27%	48%
English Language Learner	2,116	22%	28%
Special Education	979	10%	14%
Advanced Learner	2,503	26%	20%
Elementary	5,064	54%	51%
Middle	2,118	22%	20%
High	2,268	24%	29%

The demographics reported in Table I reflect the demographics of students associated with the parent responses received. The demographics of respondents reflect the composition of the district’s student enrollment overall with higher participation among parents of white students and lower participation among parents of African American and low income students.

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 parent 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. To reflect our 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 parents of students of color. After uploading responses into NVivo, a software program designed for qualitative analysis, we thematically analyzed those responses to discern patterns regarding parents of students 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.

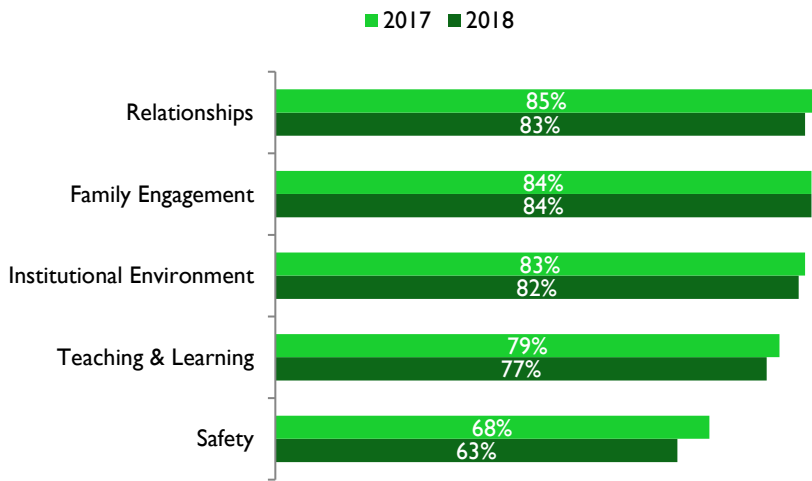
## Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

### Overall and Year-to-Year

Parents rated *Family Engagement* highest among the five dimensions of school climate with 84% positive responses to questions overall, followed by *Relationships* with 83%. *Safety* was rated the lowest with 63% positive responses to questions overall.



**Figure 1: Parents' Percent Positive Response by Dimension of School Climate**



The percent of positive responses decreased in four of the five dimensions of school climate. Decreases in *Relationships*, *Institutional Environment* and *Teaching & Learning* were negligible, with changes of one to two percentage points. The dimension that decreased the most year-to-year was *Safety*, declining five percentage points from 68% to 63% positive responses. *Family Engagement* remained the same year-to-year.

The year-to-year percent positive responses by dimension are shown in Figure 1 at left.

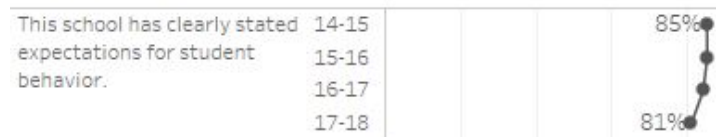
### Highlights Within Dimensions

#### Family Engagement

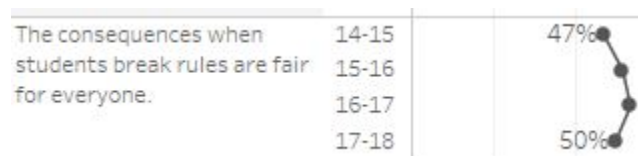
Over four years, the dimension of *Family Engagement* had the largest increase in percent positive responses overall, 55% in 2015 to 84% in 2018, although the questions asked changed across this timeframe. Across dimensions, parents rated *Family Engagement* the highest this year with 84% positive responses to questions overall. Responses to questions within the *Family Engagement* dimension ranged from 77% to 92% positive overall. Ninety-two percent (92%) of parents overall are *comfortable contacting their children's teacher(s)* and 90% *know how their children are doing academically at school*. A lower percentage of parents overall, 79%, *know how their children are doing socially at school* and 77% are *confident in their abilities to make sure the school meets their children's learning needs*. No four year trends are available for individual *Family Engagement* questions as they were revised in 2017.

#### Safety

For the fourth consecutive year, parents rated *Safety* the lowest among the five dimensions of school climate with 63% positive response overall. Responses to questions about *Safety* varied widely, ranging from 46% to 81% positive overall. Eighty-one percent (81%) of parents overall agree the *school has clearly stated expectations for student behavior*, compared to 84% in 2017. The four year trend for that question is shown below.



While a large percentage of parents agree that the *school has clearly stated expectations for student behavior*, only 50% agree that *the consequences when students break rules are fair for everyone*, compared to 54% in 2017. The four year trend is shown below.



And while the majority of parents, 78%, agree that *school is a safe place for their children*, less than half, 46%, of parents agree that *bullying is not a common problem in their children's school*. No four year trends are available for these questions as they were revised in 2017.



### Highlights Among Parent Groups

Consistent with last year’s findings, parents of Asian students, followed by parents of English language learner (ELL) students, had the highest percent positive responses by dimension while parents of special education or multiracial students had lower percent positive responses across all dimensions compared to parents overall. The percent positive response by dimension for all parent groups is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Parent Groups Percent Positive Response by Dimension	Teaching & Institutional Family				
	Relationships	Learning	Safety	Environment	Engagement
African American	77%	75%	63%	82%	84%
Asian	86%	83%	79%	86%	88%
Hispanic/Latino	81%	80%	67%	84%	85%
Multiracial	80%	74%	59%	81%	82%
White	85%	76%	60%	80%	83%
Low Income	78%	78%	65%	83%	83%
English Language Learner	84%	83%	75%	87%	87%
Special Education	77%	74%	59%	80%	81%
Advanced Learner	85%	76%	61%	79%	83%
<b>Parents Overall</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>84%</b>

**Parents of Asian Students**  
Parents of Asian students rated all dimensions of school climate more positively, by a range of 3 to 16 percentage points, compared to parents overall, with the largest differences in the dimensions of *Safety* and *Teaching & Learning*.

A much higher percentage of parents of Asian students reported positive experiences in *Safety*, 79% compared to 63% overall. More parents of

Asian students, 73%, believe *the consequences when students break rules are fair for everyone*, compared to 50% of parents overall and 70% of parents of Asian students agree *bullying is not a common problem at their children’s school*, compared to 46% of parents overall.

Similarly, parents of Asian students also had a higher of percent positive responses related to *Teaching & Learning*, 83% compared to 77% of parents overall. Of note, more parents of Asian students, 74%, reported they had *an opportunity to provide input on the school improvement plan*, compared to 62% of parents overall. Higher percentages of parents of Asian students also agree *their schools are responsive to students’ language and culture*, 85%, compared to 75% of parents overall.

#### Parents of English Language Learners

Parents of English Language Learners (ELL) rated all five dimensions more positively than parents overall, by a range of one to 12 percentage points. ELL parents rated *Safety* 75% positively, compared to 63% of parents overall. Among *Safety* questions, a higher percentage of ELL parents, 69% agree *the consequences when students break rules are fair for everyone*, compared to 50% of parents overall. More ELL parents also agree *harassment based on personal characteristics is not a common problem in their children’s schools*, 71%, compared to 55% of parents overall and that *bullying is not a common problem at their children’s schools*, 63% compared to 46% overall.

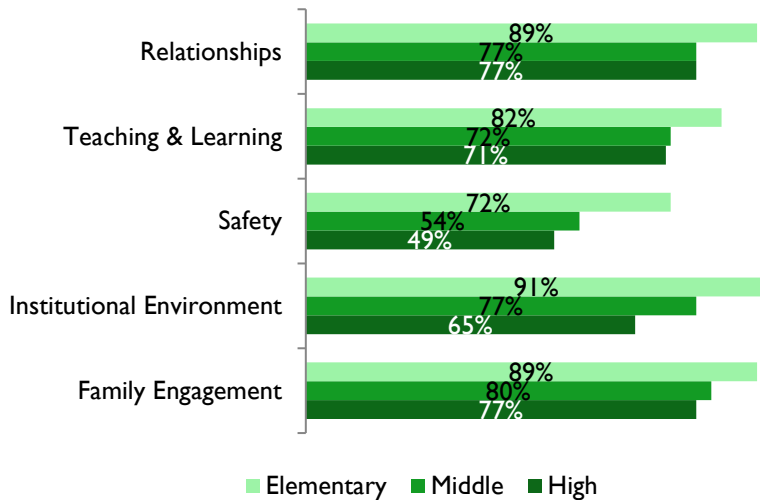
ELL parents also had a higher percentage of positive responses in *Teaching & Learning*, 83% compared to 77% overall, rating all but one question more positively than parents overall. Within *Teaching & Learning*, a larger percentage of ELL parents agree *their schools are responsive to students’ language and culture*, 86%, compared to 75% of parents overall and more ELL parents, 84%, agree *school staff encourage their children to believe that intelligence can grow through effort* compared to 77% of parents overall. Additionally, 74% of ELL parents reported they had *an opportunity to provide input on the school improvement plan*, compared to 62% of parents overall.

#### Highlights Across School Levels

As in previous years, parents of elementary school students had a higher percentage of positive responses across all five dimensions, compared to parents of middle and high school students. Responses for parents of middle school students were also higher on all but one dimension of school climate (*Relationships*), compared to parents of high school students. The percent positive responses by dimension and level are shown in Figure 2 below.



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



The most significant gaps in percent positive between parents of elementary and high school students occurred in the dimensions of *Institutional Environment* and *Safety*. Parents of elementary students rated *Institutional Environment*, 91% positive, compared to 65% of parents of high school students. For example, 90% of parents of elementary students *believe their children's schools are kept in good condition*, compared to just 63% of parents of high school students.

Similarly, parents of elementary students rated *Safety*, 72% positive, compared to just 49% of parents of high school students. Within the dimension of *Safety*, the biggest gap between elementary and high school levels occurred on questions pertaining to harassment and personal property. Eighty-two percent (82%) of

parents of elementary students agree *their children's personal things are safe at school*, compared to just 43% of parents of high school students and 65% of parents of elementary students agree *harassment based on personal characteristics is not a common problem in their children's schools*, compared to 43% of parents of high school students.

### Findings: Open-Ended Responses from Parents of Students of Color

The climate survey asked parents two open-ended questions: (1) What do you feel is your/this school's greatest strength?, and (2) What do you feel is your/this school's greatest challenge? We received 1,985 comments regarding strengths, and 1,874 comments regarding challenges from parents of students of color. The themes listed below are in no particular order – they represent the most 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

Parents of students of color often remarked that strengths of their child's school related to diversity, community, and academics. Parents of students of color often identified **diversity** as a key strength of their schools – diversity of the students and staff, as well as their schools' support of diversity.

"Diversity of staff and student body" wrote one parent, and another emphasized, "[...] makes a strong effort to be welcoming to all our students through its celebration of diversity." With that, there was a lot of positive feedback related to their school **community**, especially communication and community as a whole: "There is a strong sense of community!" praised one parent. "Great communication and inclusiveness," mentioned another. Another parent indicated, "A great strength is Huegel's sense of community. This includes welcoming families into the school, communication, and caring about the students. The learning can't happen without the caring to go along with it." Parents of students of color perceived that their children were in a caring and respectful environment where staff focused on, "Taking care of each and every child."



Parents of students of color also noticed how staff cared for each other and the families belonging to that school community. In a similar vein, participants commented on **support** as a strength of their school, with some parents noting, "they support the kids and their families," and others extolling "the help of the teachers." In addition and without always providing specifics, parents recognized the strengths of staff and leadership, such as the principals. Finally, parents of students of color also distinguished **academic-related** strengths in their child's school related to teaching, learning,

