

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent

From: Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment
Carrie Livingston, Senior Research Associate

Date: September 8, 2011

Subject: **2010-11 PARENT SURVEY**

Attached is a summary of the results of the parent survey sent to ETHS' parent population this past spring. It is an agenda item for the September 12, 2011, Board of Education meeting.

Parent Survey Results 2010-2011

September 7, 2011

Executive Summary

One of our district goals was to gather feedback from parents regarding parent satisfaction with their student's school experience and parent use of such communication venues as Home Access Center. Surveys were distributed to a total of 2334 families. Of these families, 893 surveys were completed representing a response rate of 38 percent. This response rate is above average based on a review of response rates in the literature, particularly at the high school level. Overall, the results from the parent survey are positive. Parent respondents are satisfied with the educational program and instruction in each of the school's departments. They feel that teachers adequately inform parents of student progress, extra-curricular offerings meet the varied interests of students and that they are informed about available academic supports during the school day. Parents are aware of the school's Code of Student Conduct and believe the school sets clear rules for student behavior. They find the Phone Alert system helpful and believe they receive letters and communication in a timely manner. Parents are utilizing the Home Access Center and find it easy to use. They feel that teachers and administrators behave in a respectful and professional manner. Parents feel welcome at ETHS.

Although responses were positive overall, one of the reasons to conduct a parent survey is to identify areas where the school can improve. Responses suggest we need to provide more opportunities for parent involvement, make sure that teachers are updating the Home Access Center information regularly, ensure healthy options are available for school lunches and communicate more about the school lunch menu. Survey results suggest we need to ensure that the school and neighborhood is a safe environment, communicate about the enforcement of the discipline policy, the course opportunities available in the Career and Technology Education Department, and services available to students with regard to post-secondary planning, preparation of college applications, and career decisions. We also need to ensure that information about the various aspects of the ETHS program (curriculum, extra-curricular activities, assessments, etc.) is provided to parents.

One of our district goals was to gather feedback from parents regarding parent satisfaction with their student’s school experience and parent use of such communication venues as Home Access Center. This report provides the results of a parent survey specifically developed for this purpose and administered this past spring to our parent population.

Background

Development work on the parent survey began in early fall of 2010. Surveys from other districts were collected for review. We also contacted an independent research firm that specializes in parent and community surveys. Based on cost estimates from the research firm and review of other surveys, we decided to develop our own survey using formats and question types from our review. A small team of administrators worked on several drafts of the survey. The survey was then shared with a variety of constituencies for feedback including a special committee from the School Improvement Team, the Athletic Director, the IT Director, the Associate Principal for School Services, the Nutrition Director, and the District Equity Team. It was decided to administer the survey in the spring so that parents of students of all grade levels would have experienced a good part of the school year.

In March, a special group was convened to develop a distribution plan for the survey. The plan called for using Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool, to collect survey responses. However, we also took steps to collect survey responses from parents who we knew did not have email/internet access. Both the hard copy survey and online survey were translated into Spanish. The Phone Alert system was utilized to alert parents that a survey would be coming. For parents for whom we had email addresses, we sent an email explaining the survey and providing the web link. For parents for whom we did not have email addresses, we sent a letter and survey in the mail. Surveys were distributed during a four week window from April 20th to May 13th. During this time, phone alerts and email alerts were sent several times. We also utilized Facebook and Twitter as a communication tool.

Surveys were distributed to a total of 2334 families. Of these families, 893 surveys were completed representing a response rate of 38 percent. Figures by ethnicity are shown in Table 1. Parent respondents equally represented students across grade levels 9 through 12.

Table 1. Parent Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	n	%
Black	165	19%
Native American	5	1%
Asian	20	2%
Hispanic	46	5%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0%
Multi-racial	41	5%
White	604	68%
No Response	11	
Total	893	

The survey focused on a number of areas including 1) Educational Services; 2) Behavior and Discipline; 3) Counseling Services; 4) Communication; 5) Parent Involvement; 6) Athletics; 7) School Services; 8) Overall Academic/School Climate; 9) Computer/Phone/Internet Access and Usage; and 10) Overall Satisfaction. Parents were also asked for comments in some open-ended questions. These responses were carefully reviewed and shared with administrators for the purpose of improving the educational experience of Evanston Township High School students.

Survey responses in each area are summarized in the following sections. For most items, the rating scale was from “1” to “5” with “1” representing “Strongly Disagree” and “5” representing “Strongly Agree.” In the following tables, responses for “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” are combined (shown as SA/A) and responses for “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” are combined (shown as SD/D). Since the rating scale was numerical, an average rating is also shown in each table.

Educational Services

Items in this section of the survey focused on instruction in each of the school’s departments as well as academic supports, homework, teacher course expectations and overall quality of instruction. Table 2 shows item responses for this area. Responses are generally very high with 80 percent or more of parents selecting “Strongly Agree” or “Agree.” With the exception of Career and Technical Education, instruction in all subject areas was rated highly with math and science receiving the highest ratings. In the case of Career and Technical Education, a substantial portion of parents (28%) selected “Don’t Know” suggesting there is a group of parents whose students do not take courses in this subject area. Another item receiving a lower rating asked parents whether the school provides adequate supports for students with special needs. A large portion of parents selected “Don’t Know” possibly because they do not have children with special needs. Overall, 84 percent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of classroom instruction at ETHS.

Table 2. Educational Services

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in Career and Technical Education for my students(s).	869	28%	6%	15%	52%	3.83
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in English for my student(s).	875	1%	12%	7%	81%	3.99
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in Fine Arts for my student(s).	874	7%	3%	10%	80%	4.21
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in History for my student(s).	869	1%	6%	6%	87%	4.13
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in Math for my student(s).	873	0.3%	6%	5%	88%	4.25
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in Physical Education for my students(s).	877	2%	6%	10%	83%	4.06
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in Science for my student(s).	876	2%	5%	6%	88%	4.24

Table 2. Educational Services (continued)

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
ETHS provides satisfactory instruction in World Languages for my student(s).	877	4%	4%	8%	83%	4.19
Extra-curricular offerings meet the varied interests of my student(s).	864	2%	4%	8%	85%	4.28
I am informed about the range of academic supports that are available for my student(s) during the day.	875	2%	9%	9%	81%	4.10
There is adequate time during the school day for my student(s) to access academic supports.	871	9%	15%	12%	65%	3.75
There is adequate time outside the school day for my student(s) to access academic supports.	871	7%	9%	14%	71%	3.89
The school provides adequate supports for student(s) with special needs.	869	49%	6%	12%	33%	3.74
Teachers are clear about their course expectations.	871	6%	8%	14%	73%	3.88
Teachers address my students's academic needs satisfactorily	871	1%	9%	16%	74%	3.83
Teachers encourage my student(s) to learn and achieve at a high level.	869	2%	8%	15%	76%	3.98
The level of difficulty of my student's homework is appropriate for him/her.	869	2%	11%	12%	76%	3.87
I am adequately informed of my student's progress.	875	1%	8%	10%	81%	4.07
Overall, I'm satisfied with the quality of classroom instruction at ETHS.	866	1%	7%	9%	84%	4.08

Comments on Educational Services

Following the section of items on educational services, there was a “Comments” section for parents to offer feedback if they so chose. Comments were varied and on a broad range of topics. Common topics that were raised are included in the following summary. Typically, comments were positive about the math, world language, and science departments although there were some concerns about some classes.

- “The math instruction has been fantastic.”
- “Overall, the math, science and language departments have been much stronger than our experience with the English and history departments.”
- “I have been very disappointed with the quality of the biology instruction and especially the textbook used in honors biology last year...”

Parents raised concerns about the English curriculum. They indicated they felt there should be more focus on writing, papers should be reviewed in a timely manner and rigor was an issue. There were also concerns about the rigor of texts, books, and homework in history courses.

- “I feel that my child could receive a more rigorous academic experience in the humanities and social sciences. There could be more reading of higher level material, and expectations for writing could be higher...My child is in a mixed level class and I believe is not being challenged as much as could be.”
- “Prefer to be more challenged in courses such as English/History/Social Studies.”

Some parents pointed out that it was difficult to respond to the general items about teachers because their child’s experiences varied across teachers.

- “Most teachers are excellent--- dedicated, inspiring, get to know my children. In most cases my children appreciate the classes and have learned a lot about the subjects they are studying. It has been tough for my senior with some teachers who don’t seem ‘to get him’.”
- “Obviously, the quality of the instruction depends on the quality of the instructor. From what we can tell, that’s somewhat inconsistent at ETHS. Some teachers are great, some not so...”
- “My satisfaction varies by teacher but the majority of classes have been very good for my student.”

Some parents complained about too much homework while others called for more rigorous homework.

- “There is too much homework for students on a daily basis. They are so overwhelmed trying to get the work done and done well, that there is no time left in the day for extra-curricular activities. While I understand that homework is a way to check for understanding, perhaps 8 problems in math per night might suffice instead of having to do 25.”
- “Homework comes in uneven batches – weeks with very little to do and then a week or two that is filled til late night. I wish it was more consistently challenging.”

There were some concerns expressed about support for students with disabilities.

- “My child who is in special ed does not have the adequate support that I feel she really needs. Her disabilities are not taken into consideration for her academic needs.”
- “Very disappointed with the school on their services for disabled kids.”

Behavior and Discipline

Table 3 shows parent responses relating to behavior and discipline. Almost 100 percent of parents indicated that they are aware of the school’s Code of Student Conduct which is described in “The Pilot.” Also, 89 percent of parent respondents agreed the school sets clear rules for student behavior. About half of parent respondents agreed that the school enforces the discipline policy consistently; another 24 percent responded they didn’t know and 12 percent gave a rating of “3” or “neutral.”

Table 3. Behavior and Discipline

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
I am aware of the school's Code of Student Conduct in the Pilot.	875	1%	1%	3%	96%	4.33
The school sets clear rules for student behavior.	874	2%	4%	5%	89%	4.20
The school enforces the discipline policy consistently.	872	24%	15%	12%	48%	3.61

Counseling Services

Responses relating to Counseling Services were a little lower; between a quarter and one third of parents selected “Don’t Know” when asked whether the Department of Counseling Services provides support for career decisions, assists with post-secondary planning and the college application process. Response patterns, however, differed across grade levels with more parents of freshmen and sophomores responding “Don’t Know” than parents of juniors or seniors. Parents did respond very positively with respect to Counseling Services informing their children of graduation requirements.

Table 4. Counseling Services

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
The Department of Counseling Services provides support for career decisions.	881	31%	11%	19%	39%	3.53
The Department of Counseling Services assists my child/children with post-secondary planning.	880	23%	11%	16%	50%	3.68
The Department of Counseling Services assists my child/children with the college application process.	874	28%	11%	17%	45%	3.65
The Department of Counseling Services helps my child/children to develop a four-year plan.	876	15%	14%	13%	59%	3.72
The Department of Counseling Services informs my child/children of graduation requirements.	879	12%	3%	8%	77%	4.20

Communication

Questions in the communication area revolved around use of Home Access Center, the ETHS website, letters, and other information received from Evanston Township High School. As shown in Table 5, parent responses were positive. Close to 80 percent of parent respondents

agreed that the Home Access Center helps them monitor their child’s progress and is easy to use. A slightly smaller percentage (68%) of parents indicated that they check the Home Access Center to monitor their child’s progress. A large percentage of parent respondents (91%) reported the automated phone call system is helpful. About half of parent respondents indicated they were satisfied with the information they receive about such aspects of the ETHS program as curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and assessments.

Table 5. Communication

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
The online Home Access Center helps me monitor my student's progress.	877	6%	5%	12%	78%	4.27
I regularly check the Home Access Center to monitor my student's progress.	872	2%	16%	14%	68%	3.84
I feel the Home Access Center is easy to use.	877	6%	5%	12%	78%	4.18
I regularly check the ETHS website for information about the school.	878	1%	12%	14%	73%	3.88
Letters and other communications that I receive about important school activities are timely.	881	0.2%	7%	10%	83%	4.08
The phone alert system (automated phone calls) is helpful.	879	1%	3%	5%	91%	4.36
I am satisfied with the information I receive about various aspects of the ETHS program (for example, curriculum, extra-curricular activities, assessments).	876	7%	20%	21%	52%	4.09

Parent Involvement

Table 6 shows item responses relating to parent involvement. Two-thirds of parent respondents agreed they have adequate opportunities for involvement in different activities at the school. About half of parent respondents agreed that the school encourages parent involvement in planning and reviewing school programs. For both of these items, about 20 percent of parent respondents selected the midpoint (“neutral”) of the 5-point scale.

Table 6. Parent Involvement

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
The school encourages parent involvement in planning and reviewing school programs.	849	7%	20%	21%	52%	3.46
I have adequate opportunities for involvement in different activities at m child's school.	864	4%	12%	20%	64%	3.68

Athletics

Responses relating to athletics were positive as shown in Table 7. A little over 80 percent of parent respondents agreed that ETHS athletics provide an adequate range of sports opportunities for students. About 58 percent of parent respondents agreed that coaches behave in a caring, respectful and professional manner; about 20 percent of parents responded “Don’t Know.”

Table 7. Athletics

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
ETHS athletics provide an adequate range of sports opportunities for students.	876	7%	6%	6%	82%	4.19
Coaches behave in a caring, respectful, and professional manner.	774	21%	9%	12%	58%	3.87
Athletic facilities meet the needs of the athletic program.	852	20%	8%	12%	60%	3.89

School Services

Items in this section of the survey focused on the buildings and grounds and food services. Parents felt that the school building is kept in good condition (85%) and the grounds are neat and attractive (91%). Ratings were lower with respect to food services and school lunch menu; however, between a quarter and a third of parent respondents selected “Don’t Know” for these items.

Table 8. School Services

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
The school building is kept in good condition and repair.	880	3%	3%	10%	85%	4.07
The school grounds are neat and attractive.	877	1%	2%	6%	91%	4.20
Food services for students are satisfactory.	878	25%	12%	16%	48%	3.56
The school lunch menu supports healthy eating.	875	33%	15%	20%	33%	3.33

Overall Academic/School Climate

In general, responses were very positive regarding the overall academic and school climate. Table 9 shows the results for these items. For example, 88 percent of parent respondents agreed that teachers show respect for their children and 87 percent agreed teachers behave in a respectful and professional manner. Administrators were rated highly as well. Overall, parent respondents believe the school provides a good learning environment for their children and the school is adequately preparing students for college. Less than 10 percent of parents selected

“Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” for these school climate items. One item received lower positive responses---54 percent of parents selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” when asked if they felt students show respect for other students. An additional 22 percent selected the “neutral” response option for this item.

Table 9. Overall Academic/School Climate

Item	N	Response Options				Rating
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A	1 to 5
I feel welcome at my child's school.	883	0.2%	7%	11%	82%	4.03
I feel teachers show respect for my student(s).	879	1%	4%	8%	88%	4.16
I feel students show respect for other students.	880	10%	15%	22%	54%	3.50
I feel the school meets the social needs of my student(s).	875	2%	9%	15%	74%	3.85
I feel the school provides a good learning environment for my student(s).	878	1%	6%	14%	80%	3.98
My child/children feels safe at school.	880	1%	10%	18%	71%	3.73
The school is adequately preparing my student(s) for future work.	872	5%	7%	12%	75%	3.96
The school is adequately preparing my student(s) for college.	872	2%	6%	8%	84%	4.10
I feel teachers behave in a respectful and professional manner.	884	1%	2%	9%	87%	4.18
I feel administrators behave in a respectful and professional manner.	878	5%	5%	8%	82%	4.10
I feel support staff behave in a respectful and professional manner.	878	8%	7%	12%	74%	3.97

Computer/Phone/Internet Access

A number of items in the survey were included to collect information from parents about computer and internet access, use of ETHS websites and their preferences with regard to communication channels. Tables 10 to 17 show parent responses for these items. The responses indicate that of parent respondents, almost all of them have computers and mobile phones in the household; 86 percent have two or more computers and internet access. About half of parent respondents use a teacher website at some time or other during the year. Most often they use a teacher website for the assignment calendars, downloading assignments, homework solutions or useful links. Eighty-four percent of parents responded they receive information from the high school more than ten times per year. The majority of parent respondents indicated their preferred communication channels for getting information about ETHS are:

- Home Access Center
- ETHS Website
- Automated phone messages/emails
- Emails from teachers/counselors
- Letters/Fliers mailed home

Table 10. Computer Access

Item	N	Answer Options			
		None	One	Two to Three	More than three
How many computers do you have in your household?	869	1%	11%	52%	36%
How many of these computer have internet access?	845	2%	12%	51%	35%

Table 11. Mobile phone

Item	N	Answer Options	
		Parent/Guardian	ETHS Student
Who in your household has a mobile phone?	883	98%	95%

Table 12. Mobile Phone Access

Item	N	Answer Options		
		Voice only	Voice/ Text	Voice/ Text/Data
What kind of mobile phone access is available to your family?	880	4%	38%	59%

Table 13. Parent Teacher Conference Preference

Item	N	Answer Options		
		Morning	Afternoon	Evening
My preference to meet with teachers during Parent-Teacher Conferences is...	871	16%	23%	61%

Table 14. Teacher Website Use

Item	N	Answer Options					
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Once a quarter	Once a semester	Never
How often do you use a teacher website?	867	2%	10%	15%	13%	10%	51%

Table 15. Type of Teacher Website Use

Item	N	Answer Options					
		Assignment Calendar	Downloading assignments	Homework solutions	Useful links	Help Tutorials	Do not use a teacher website
I use a teacher website for the following:	757	34%	15%	11%	12%	5%	50%

Many parents offered additional comments about their use of teacher websites. In general, they indicated that they had not been aware that these sites existed. They also indicated that not all teachers have websites and it would be helpful if they did. Some parents indicated

they would now try to use teacher websites more while others said their child uses the teacher websites but they did not.

- “I did not know the teachers had websites.”
- “Was never even informed they existed!!”

Table 16. Frequency of ETHS Information

Item	N	Answer Options				
		1 to 5 times per year	6 to 10 times per year	More than 10 times per year	I have not received information from ETHS this year	Don't know/ Not sure
How often have you received information from the high school?	879	3%	10%	84%	0.1%	3.0%

Table 17. Communication Channels

Item	N	Answer Options	
		Which communication channels do you currently use to get information about ETHS?	Which communication channels would you prefer to use in the future to get information about ETHS?
Home Access Center	886/876	70%	65%
ETHS Website	886/876	85%	74%
ETHS social media channels	886/876	6%	6%
ETHS Cable Channel 18	886/876	8%	7%
Automated phone messages/emals	886/876	85%	70%
Local news media	886/876	25%	11%
Emails from teachers/counselors	886/876	57%	69%
Daily Bulletin	886/876	17%	20%
Letter/fliers mailed home	886/876	84%	58%
School meetings	886/876	30%	23%
Other	208/188	39%	31%

For the item on communication channels, parents could write in additional communication vehicles that they use. Many parents added they currently use the PTSA list serve to get information about ETHS. They also indicated their preference would be to get emails from the school and from teachers.

Overall Satisfaction

In response to an item about overall satisfaction with the educational program at ETHS, 85 percent of parent respondents selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

Table 18. Overall Satisfaction

Item	N	Combined Options			
		Don't Know	SD/D	Neutral	SA/A
I am satisfied with the educational program at ETHS.	874	0.1%	6%	9%	85%

Open-ended Responses

Parents were also given the opportunity to offer comments in an open-ended item at the end of the survey. What follows reflects common themes cited by parents. Parents commented on the positive school experience of their children.

- “Three kids graduated. Three kids with good social skills, great friends, and a good education (and all either in, or about to start college). Can’t ask for more than that. Thank you!”
- “Our experience with ETHS has been overall a very satisfying one. We are very satisfied with the attention of the staff and the social department. I believe my son’s success is due to the constant vigilance of the teachers and educational boundaries are set up so that students are allowed to learn, and make friends in a safe environment. We love ETHS!”
- “ETHS is well organized, has the best interest of the students as its core value, and I think that ETHS is doing a superb job overall.”

Parents like to use the Home Access Center but indicated that it is not always up-to-date.

- “The Home Access Center is only as good as the information that teachers put into the system. I find several teachers do not update with sufficient frequency to properly track the progress of my children.”
- “The Class work section of the Home Access Center is a great idea – HOWEVER many teachers do not update it consistently making information incorrect and misleading.”

Parents are concerned about safety, crime and drugs at ETHS as reflected in the following comments:

- “Safety in and around the high school is an ongoing concern.”
- “My daughter often tells me of the fighting she sees in the halls at school. In addition, the surrounding areas seem unsafe (not always) however we have seen several altercations on Church, and Dodge.”
- “I am concerned about school safety. The school climate is too permissive for all students. My student describes the school as ‘reckless and out of control’. Set clear expectations and follow them. There are too many exceptions to the rules and the students know it. Admit that there’s a problem, stop acting as though one doesn’t exist.”
- “The safety environment, lack of student to student respect i.e., fights, drug/alcohol consumption and popularity of its use I believe has increased in recent years.”

Some parents feel that more students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities.

- “I believe children should be ‘encouraged’ to participate in extra-curricular activities because not all children are aware and asked to participate.”

- “Academics are in general excellent. Extra-curriculars are too limited for the number of students attending ETHS”

Parents voiced concerns about the upcoming restructured Humanities/Biology courses.

- “We do not agree with de-tracking Honors English, or plans to do so in other curriculums. My student needs differentiated attention to keep her engaged and motivated and achieving to HER highest potential, vs. the ‘she’s good enough.’ approach this de-tracked format promotes.”
- “My child’s favorite courses are his honors Humanities courses and I’m disappointed that his younger sister will not have that experience in the Humanities when she attends ETHS in two years.”
- “The curriculum is not challenging enough, however, especially in the humanities. Biology was the exception, but the plan now seems to be to dilute that, too, despite denials.”

Another common concern was the ratio of counselors to students.

- “I feel the counselor/advisor system at ETHS needs to be re-vamped. There seems to be way too many students to each advisor.”
- “The counselors have so many students and so little time that they can’t prepare them for college and many parents are left to figure out the process by themselves or have to hire outside counselors to help.”

Summary of Findings

The school has not conducted a parent survey in recent history. Overall, the results from this year’s parent survey are positive. Parent respondents are satisfied with the educational program and instruction in each of the school’s departments. They feel that teachers adequately inform parents of student progress and believe the school sets clear rules for student behavior. They are utilizing the Home Access Center and find it easy to use. They feel that teachers and administrators behave in a respectful and professional manner. Parents feel welcome at ETHS.

Although responses were generally positive, one of the reasons to conduct a parent survey is to identify areas where the school can improve. Responses suggest we need to provide more opportunities for parent involvement, make sure that teachers are updating the Home Access Center information regularly, ensure healthy options are available for school lunches and communicate more about the school lunch menu. Survey results suggest that we need to ensure that the school and neighborhood is a safe environment, communicate about the enforcement of the discipline policy, the course opportunities available in the Career and Technology Education Department, and services available to students with regard to post-secondary planning, preparation of college applications, and career decisions. We also need to ensure that information about the various aspects of the ETHS program (curriculum, extra-curricular activities, assessments, etc.) is provided to parents.