

2010 FCPS Working Conditions Survey Individual Item Prompts Community Engagement Construct

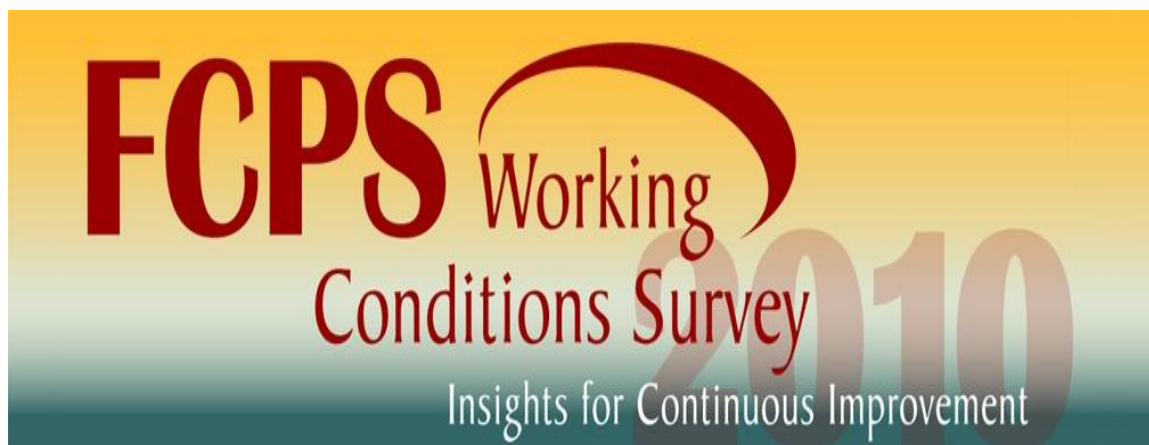


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7.1A: The community we serve is supportive of this school.

Highly effective schools are well integrated into their local community. Schools provide quality education for the children of the neighborhood, and community outreach through its extracurricular activities. Community members and organizations can support the school through volunteer work, donations, proctoring, translating, chaperoning, etc. Together, the school and community work symbiotically to improve the learning opportunities and well-being of all children. A healthy community relationship can benefit the working conditions of teachers.

When reflecting on community support, there are different levels to consider. In addition to parents, local businesses can play an active part in school support. Universities and/or community colleges as well as professional organizations like rotary club, churches and other faith-based organizations, or the local chamber of commerce can help to support teachers and schools.

How do these different levels of community support participate in the activities of your school?

Table Group Activity

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
 - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
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7.1A: Reflections

What are the expectations for community support?

- What are some of the benefits and challenges to this level of community support?

In what ways are parents actively engaged in school support?

- How active is the PTA? What do they do to support teachers? How do teachers work with the PTA to shape their efforts?
- What role do parents play in school support outside of their own child (children)?

In what ways are local businesses actively engaged in school support?

- Does business promote student engagement back into the community?
- How are businesses engaged in promoting school activities?

In what ways are higher education institutions actively engaged in school support?

- Is there research being conducted?
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- Are they promoting civic responsibility?

7.1B: Parents/Guardians are influential decision-makers in this school.

Carefully planning opportunities for parents to have input in school activities and school improvement plans can promote parental involvement and improved integration of parents into the functions of the school.

In what ways are parents engaged in decision-making at your school? Are those the most effective areas parents can be engaged in at the school? What opportunities are available at the school for parents to participate? Are parents aware of those opportunities?

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7.1B: Reflections

Are opportunities provided for parents to be included in school decision making?

- Are the opportunities available to non-English speaking parents?
- Are those opportunities equitable?
- What steps are in place to make parents aware of the opportunities they have to be included in decision making at the school?
- Are the times allotted for parents to participate varied enough to accommodate their variations in work schedules?

How are parents included in school improvement plans?

- How often do parents meet with school members to discuss school improvement plans?

What decisions do parents have in the school through the Parent-Teacher Association?

What part do parents play in athletics and extracurricular activities at the school?

- What are some of the benefits to parent participation in these areas?
- What are some of the challenges to parent participation in these areas?

7.1C: This school works directly with parents/guardians to improve the educational climate in students' homes.

No matter the socio-economic background, every child's home is a unique learning environment that brings both benefits and challenges to each child's education. The school community can be a powerful advocate for improving the educational climate in students' homes through important links to social services, faith-based organizations, professional organizations, local businesses and philanthropy.

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7.1C: Reflections

What role can and should the school play in events outside of the school?

- In what ways can school support services and connections to community social services impact the environment at home?
- What are the limitations as to how the school can work to affect change in students' home educational climate?
- Are there resources available to improve the home educational setting that are being underutilized?

What is currently in place at the school to impact students' home environments?

- What role does guidance have in the home environment?
- What role do school social workers have in the home environment?
- What role do teachers have on students' educational climate at the home?
- Are there other community or district resources available to improve students' home educational environment?

7.1D: This school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community.

Maintaining continuous lines of communication with parents and the community about school activities is an integral part of effective community engagement. Information needs to be consistent, easily accessible, and provided in a variety of formats to meet the different needs of parents. In addition to providing regular information to parents and the community, schools must also maintain a variety of opportunities and settings for parents to be able to communicate back to school staff. Clear steps and procedures in receiving communication from parents can help to make the process more efficient and protect the time of teachers and staff.

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7.1D: Reflections

What steps are taken at your school to provide clear, consistent information regarding school activities?

- How often is the information sent or updated?
- Does the school provide ample time between its communication and the time activities and deadlines are due?
- Is the information provided in a variety of media sources and languages?
- Is the information being acquired by parents and the community? How do you know?

Teachers are responsible for communicating with parents about a variety of school issues. What steps are in place to help support teachers provide high quality, effective communication?

- Are standards/expectations made of teachers regarding parent communication?
- How are new teachers supported in learning effective parent communication skills?
- Is the quality of communication across teachers the same? How do you know?

What systems are in place to provide parents and the community ways to communicate with the school?

- Are those systems effective?
- Are those systems equitable?
- What areas of these communication lines need improvement?

7.1E: The school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.

There are a number of ways a school can promote the involvement of parents and guardians in their child's education. Active maintenance of a school web site can provide electronic access to school activities and events. Promotion and inclusion of PTSAs in school activities can encourage parent participation. Teachers can send regular progress reports and newsletters out to keep parents informed of classroom activities.

A bigger question to consider when reflecting on this survey item centers on faculty expectations. What kind of involvement do teachers hope to receive out of parent/guardian involvement at the school? In what areas are parents currently involved at the school and can lessons be learned from these areas to promote and encourage participation in other areas?

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7.1E: Reflections

What are teachers' expectations of parental involvement?

- Are expectations broad (that teaching is valued profession, that teachers have instructional expertise) about desired support?
- Are expectations specific (volunteer in classroom, attend parent/teacher conferences) about desired support?
- What are some of the benefits and potential challenges to having ideal parental involvement?

How do parents participate in school governance and decision making?

- In what capacity are parents currently involved at the school?
- What are the current benefits and challenges to this level of involvement?

Are opportunities available at the school to contribute?

- What has been done to catalyze their interest?
- What actions do members of the staff take to make parents feel valued at the school?

Is the school open to parents and the community?

- What barriers are in place for them to contribute?
- Are those barriers actionable?

7.1F: Parents know what is going on in this school.

Parent/teacher communication is essential for the success of all students. For parents to be effectively involved in their child's education, they need to be continuously informed of student achievement, classroom activities, expectations, and any concerns a teacher has in their child's educational development. The more informed a parent is about the educational activities of their child, the better chance they have of playing an active role in supporting their child's educational development. At the same time, it is important to remain sensitive to the fact that this process is also time consuming on teachers.

As you reflect on this item, consider what standards and expectations are in place to assure parents are receiving adequate and timely information about their child's educational development. How are those expectations monitored? Are the results consistent across the entire faculty?

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7.1F: Reflections

How do you define what information is useful for parents about student learning?

- How do you know this information is getting out across all of the faculty consistently and timely?
- What feedback are parents giving teachers and the administration about the information they are receiving?

What steps or systems do you have in place to support the promotion of this communication with teachers?

- What is the frequency of communication? Through what medium?
- Are those systems effective? How do you know?
- What effect are these systems having on teachers' available time?
- How are new teachers supported in learning this process?
- How is guidance included in this process?

7.1G: Teachers are supported by parents/guardians and the community in which they teach.

Highly effective schools are well integrated into their local community. Schools provide quality education for the children of the neighborhood, and community outreach through its extracurricular activities. Community members and organizations can support the school through volunteer work, donations, proctoring, translating, chaperoning, etc. Together, the school and community work symbiotically to improve the learning opportunities and well-being of all children. A healthy community relationship can benefit the working conditions of teachers.

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7.1H: Parents/guardians and community members contribute to student success in this school.

Community members and organizations can support the school through volunteer work, donations, proctoring, translating, chaperoning, etc. The school too, should consider its communication and outreach to parents/guardians as well as the community at large. Together, the school and community work symbiotically to improve the learning opportunities and well-being of all children. A healthy community relationship can benefit the working conditions of teachers and contribute to student success.

There are different segments within the community to consider, and each could play a critical role in supporting the work of the school. In addition to parents/guardians, local businesses can play an active part in school support. Universities and/or community colleges as well as professional organizations like rotary club, churches and other faith-based organizations, or the local chamber of commerce can help contribute to schools.

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