



To the Douglas County community of students, parents, employees, and taxpayers,

We appreciate the input of so many people into the community survey process, and the surveys are all in your hands now. We'll look forward to hearing what you have to say about education and the district.

We suspect that some questions will arise about the surveys and their outcomes, and we made some course changes along the way, so we thought we would provide a little more information for those of you who are interested, in the following Q&A format.

Sincerely,

Kevin Raines
CEO, Corona Insights

WHO ARE YOU SURVEYING?

We are conducting five distinct surveys, as follows:

- A DCSD employee survey. This is being sent to every employee of the district via their work e-mail.
- A community survey. This is being sent to a random sample of community members who are not parents of DCSD students via mail.
- A parent/guardian survey. This is being sent to every parent of a DCSD student via the contact e-mails that they have provided to the district. It consists of the community survey questions with some additional questions specifically for parents.
- A high school student survey. This is being sent to all high school non-seniors in the district via their school e-mail, unless their parents “opted them out”.
- A high school senior “exit survey”. This is being sent to all high school seniors in the district via their school e-mail, unless their parents “opted them out”. It consists of the high school student survey with some additional questions specifically for seniors.

DO THE SURVEYS ALL ASK THE SAME QUESTIONS?

No, though there are certainly some common themes. For the most part, the surveys generally fall into three types. The main categories of questions on each survey are as follows:

District Employee Survey

Satisfaction with the district and schools
Selected district policies
Students (variety of questions)
Demographics
Opportunity for final comments

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Community Survey

- School district impacts on the community
- Satisfaction with the district and schools
- School choice
- Funding and services
- Curricula and teaching philosophy
- Teacher pay policy
- Demographics
- Opportunity for final comments

Parent/Guardian Survey

This survey contains all elements of the community survey, plus:

- Curricula and teaching philosophy
- Quality of interactions with other key groups
- Experiences of individual children
 - Satisfaction
 - Special needs
 - Opinions on other selected issues specific to their child(ren)

High School Student Survey

- Overall district evaluation
- School climate and satisfaction
- Teachers and learning
- Student support
- Success
- Demographics
- Opportunity for final comment

High School Senior Exit Survey

This survey is identical to the high school student survey, except it does include an additional “Preparing for the future” segment of questions.

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THE QUESTIONS?

We heard input from a variety of sources. We conducted town hall meetings with employees and parents and community members to hear their suggestions. We interviewed the (then six) school

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board members to hear their suggestions. We interviewed admissions staff at several universities to hear their opinions on skills and issues for college-bound students. We looked at past district surveys to see if they had compelling questions. And finally, we heard input from a variety of people through the District’s “Let’s Talk” forum on their web site.

We used this input to develop draft surveys. We then invited a random sample of 35 students (underclassmen and seniors), parents (parents of younger students, older students, and students with IEPs), community members, and employees (both classified and certified) to take the survey and then give us feedback in the form of an interview. This “cognitive testing” process served to ensure that the survey questions were relevant, unbiased, and well worded, and also to get their suggestions on how to improve the surveys. We used that input to further refine the survey instruments into their final form.

WHAT WAS THE DISTRICT’S ROLE IN THE SURVEYS?

When my company was hired for this project, the District informed us that they intended to keep a distance from the survey process to ensure that there was no concern about neutrality. To that end, District staff provided logistical support in setting up the town hall meetings and board interviews, but offered no other input or editing on the questions, and required no approval of the final design. The survey questions are from my company alone based on our judgment of their value to the district moving forward.

I PROPOSED A GREAT QUESTION TO YOU BUT IT WASN’T INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY. WHY?

You’re probably right. We got a lot of great input and suggestions, and considered it all, but we had to eliminate a lot of good questions from consideration just to keep the survey at a reasonable length. Additionally, some topics are more nuanced than what a survey can capture and may be best addressed by our follow up interviews to be conducted after we analyze the surveys.

In general, we took the following philosophy when prioritizing questions for the surveys:

- We wanted to focus questions on the student experience and education, producing findings that could be actionable in terms of district policies.
- We generally considered big-picture issues more strongly than tactical day to day issues, recognizing that the latter are also important.
- We wanted questions that could be answered thoughtfully by a broad array of people, which meant that we generally tried to simplify or eliminate questions that were highly specialized or technical.
- Ideally, we wanted to ask some questions from past surveys to develop trendlines for the district. We did so in some instances, particularly on the student and employee surveys (though I’ll caution that methodological differences may limit comparability). However, many of the topics we heard as being important had not been addressed in previous surveys, so those questions are new.

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CAN I RECEIVE MORE THAN ONE SURVEY?

Yes there are three ways.

First, if you are a district employee and also a parent of a DCSD student, you will receive both the parent/guardian survey and the employee survey, and you are invited to complete both.

Second, if you are a district employee and not a parent, there is a chance that you could receive the community survey in addition to the employee survey. Again, feel free to complete both.

Third, if you listed more than one personal e-mail as a DCSD parent, you will receive a survey invitation to each e-mail. This will allow all guardians to have input. So if you have more than one adult in your household who receives a survey, feel free to have each adult complete it with their own opinions. In our analysis, we will mathematically adjust for the number of parent/guardian email addresses linked to a student.

WILL MY SURVEY RESPONSES BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes. While the research team at Corona Insights will necessarily have the capability to identify your answers as part of our work, all data will be aggregated in our office and the results will be reported without identifying any individuals who participate.

I COMPLETED THE SURVEY. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? HOW WILL THE DATA BE USED?

We will gather and analyze the survey data, and will follow up with interviews of selected survey respondents to understand the “why” of any particular issues that may stand out in the results. We will then present the results in a number of public presentations.

In terms of actions, the survey is of course one of many tools that the school board and district staff will rely on for decision making. The goal of this research project is to help them make informed decisions on policies and priorities going forward.

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