

## Students Speak Out Survey Results

As of July 9, 2007

\*The SSO Survey is not scientific. Respondents self-selected to participate, and had the ability to participate more than once. Students who participated could opt for a chance to win an iPod shuffle one time only. The survey was primarily designed by Humphrey Institute fellows.\*

**74 students have taken the survey. To learn more about them, see “demographics” (below).**

**In general, student respondents agreed with positive statements about their schools.** Gallup has suggested that some of the statements in the following answer box are associated with student engagement in schools. There were slight spikes in the “rarely” category when students were asked if they looked forward to going to school each day last week, if they have opportunities to choose how they learn at their school, and if their opinions seem to count at their school.

Rate how much you agree with each of the following statements.							
	No Way	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Totally	Rating Average	Response Count
I know what is expected of me at my school.	0.0% (0)	1.5% (1)	9.0% (6)	32.8% (22)	<b>56.7% (38)</b>	4.45	67
A teacher at my schools seems to care about me as a person.	1.5% (1)	2.9% (2)	17.6% (12)	33.8% (23)	<b>44.1% (30)</b>	4.16	68
There is someone at my school who encourages my development.	1.5% (1)	5.9% (4)	14.7% (10)	32.4% (22)	<b>45.6% (31)</b>	4.15	68
At my school, my opinions seem to count.	4.4% (3)	13.2% (9)	27.9% (19)	<b>35.3% (24)</b>	19.1% (13)	3.51	68
What I'm learning now will help me in the future.	0.0% (0)	2.9% (2)	17.6% (12)	33.8% (23)	<b>45.6% (31)</b>	4.22	68
I'm having a lot of fun in school.	2.9% (2)	8.8% (6)	26.5% (18)	29.4% (20)	<b>32.4% (22)</b>	3.79	68
I have opportunities at this school to choose how I learn.	3.0% (2)	15.2% (10)	19.7% (13)	21.2% (14)	<b>40.9% (27)</b>	3.82	66
I looked forward to going to school each day last week.	9.0% (6)	17.9% (12)	<b>26.9% (18)</b>	23.9% (16)	22.4% (15)	3.33	67
My school makes me feel good about myself.	7.4% (5)	7.4% (5)	30.9% (21)	<b>32.4% (22)</b>	22.1% (15)	3.54	68
Someone at my school inspires me to do more than I thought I could.	4.5% (3)	6.1% (4)	16.7% (11)	24.2% (16)	<b>48.5% (32)</b>	4.06	66

**Students like their schools for a number of reasons.** Students Speak Out asked student respondents to check all the factors they like about their school.

- 79.4% said it's preparing them for college.
- 75.4% said their friends go to their school.
- 64.8% said they learn a lot.
- 56.5% said they like the teachers.
- 55.1% said it's interesting.
- 52.2% said it's close to their house.
- 47.8% said they like the sports or other activities.
- 23.2% said other. Responses included:
  - The small learning community they attend
  - Diversity (both racial and education-level)
  - "Yummy food"

**Students said they chose their current school, instead of another one for a number of reasons.** Students Speak Out asked student respondents to check all the factors influencing their choice to attend their current school.

- 61.8% said because their friends go there.
- 52.9% said because it's preparing them for college.
- 51.5% said because it's close to their house.
- 39.7% said because their parents wanted them to go there.
- 36.8% said because they like their schools' learning methods.
- 33.8% said because they like the sports or other activities.
- 29.4% said because they like the teachers.
- 25% said because of another reason. Responses included:
  - Their siblings or parents had gone to their school
  - They liked the small learning community or magnet.
  - Diversity
  - The school environment
  - A few students thought, "I have to go there."

**Of the student respondents who attend Minneapolis Public Schools, 63.6% (14 students) said they have never considered leaving MPS. 36.4% (8 students) said they *had* considered leaving.** Students Speak Out asked those 36.4% to check all the factors that influenced them to consider leaving:

- 50% said they liked the sports/other activities available elsewhere
- 25% said they thought another school would better prepare them for college
- 25% said their friends attended another school
- 25% said another school was closer to their home
- 13% said they wanted to look forward to going to school.

## **If students could change anything about their school, individuals said they would do the following:**

### **Diversity issues**

- “I would change the stereotypes placed on the school. People need to realize that there is talent at North. North gets these stereotypes placed on them from the neighborhood it is located in. The media and other people need to start focusing on the talent that is within the North side of Minneapolis. People target the North side due to the fact that it is full of minorities. This has got to stop.”
- “I wish my school did not think of me as a criminal because I am African American. I am just a middle school student. I am clumsy and I make mistakes. Not dangerous mistakes, but probably annoying mistakes. This does not make me a criminal does it?”
- “I would destroy some of the stereotypes in the teenage youth culture, and make education a more enjoyable activity for students.”
- “I would change some of the restrictions in the school system. I believe that students do have the right to speak out and stand out. If there were no students who actually like school, there would be no one to teach. Teachers would not be getting paid to so called ‘do what they love doing.’”
- “I would like to add more diversity, like more white people, because it seems that there are many Black and Asian students. But overall, I have attended this school for 4 years and it is great! It is full of joy and happy memories.”

### **Course choices, level of challenge, teaching methods**

- “I would add more electives, and more interactive learning...like debate, mock trials and simulations...too often we do bookwork and memorizing!! That's not real learning!!”
- “I would note that the students have to have a required grade-point average and good references to get into a certain Small Learning Community that fits their learning style and their career field.”
- “Having more advanced courses. Enhancing student teacher relationships. More extracurricular activities for students”
- “Regular and mandatory classes should be more challenging for the normal kids.”
- “I would want a class that I could take that teaches me how to study/research.”
- “Get rid of the open we have to take and make it optional so I can add another course that fits my interest. Overall I'd rather not waste my time.”
- “It's not rigorous. I took German for one year at another school and got into 4th year German here.”
- *A number of students said they would change the teaching methods.*
  - “I would change the teaching methods (it's not like I totally disagree with the learning method and teaching methods, it's just the way teachers teach their classes). Sometimes teachers make it boring for students to learn and if I was to be a teacher, the classroom atmosphere would be much more different. Another thing is that I hate how the teachers grade you. It's not so much that the grades and test scores that matter. It's also the attendance and participation that also matters. But either way, my school is one school I would recommend to my peers and other students attending other schools.”
  - “Some teachers at my school don't really have a good method of teaching and I feel like that sometimes they don't really treat me like others are treated.”
  - If they could get teachers who lectured more instead of promoting independent study and forcing students to learn primarily on their own out of textbooks.”

### **Equipment and materials issues**

- “I would like to change the equipment and classes. They are in poor condition and we aren't given enough money to better them!”

- “If I could change anything about my school, it would be the school materials. My school is a great school and I think that we should have better materials because text books are old and written all over. I believe that we should have better materials so students wouldn't leave our school saying bad things like my math text book is so old! I would donate a million dollars for my school if I was a millionaire because I believe that education comes first!”

### **Social issues, School Hours, Communication, and Discipline**

- “Decrease the drug use.”
- “I would change the disorganization, and lack of good communication between the administration and the students.”
- **A number of students said they would change the school hours. Some want to get out earlier. Some want to sleep in.** One student wrote, “I think it's too early and kids don't want to learn so early. Students don't need to get out of school early anyways. Getting off early will only let them go out and do bad things everyday.”
- **A number of students said they would improve the quality of the school lunch.**
- **Some want teachers to provide more discipline. Others want school to be less strict. A number of students mentioned that there are “unnecessary rules”.**
  - “I would make the principals stop paying attention to so much discipline and focus more on what we are and are not learning, and how they can help us learn better. Instead of a lot of unnecessary rules that only make it complicated.” I would have the rules be less ridiculous. As high school students, we should be learning how to be adults. Being told “that shirt is a distraction to the boys in class” is not going to help us make our own decisions.
  - “I would change that they treat us like little kids and that we can't have other people come to our dances.”

## Demographics: Who took the survey?

### Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Language

- 74 students total participated. Note: Not all students answered all questions.
- Only students 13-19 years old could participate.
  - 43.3% were 17 years old.
  - 23.9% were 16 years old.
  - 23.9% were 13-15.
  - 9% were 18-19.
- 65% were female. 34.3% were male.
- Ethnicity:
  - African-American 29.9%
  - Hmong 23.9%
  - White 16.4%
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native 10.5%
  - Biracial/multiracial/other 10.5%
  - Other Asian or Pacific Islander 6.0%
  - Latino 1.5%
  - African immigrant 1.5%
- English was the language “most frequently spoken” in 73.1% of the student respondents’ homes. Hmong was the second most frequently spoken, at 17.3%. Small numbers of students cited Vietnamese, “Hmonglish” (Hmong and English), and Kiswahili as the most frequently spoken languages.

### Residences and Schools Attended

- 93.2% of students surveyed attend high school. 5.4% graduated in the last two years. 1.4% are working on their GED.
- 57.5% of students surveyed live in Minneapolis. Others live in Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Fridley, New Brighton, New Hope, Plymouth, Robbinsdale, St. Cloud, and St. Paul.
- The student respondents living in Minneapolis (42) attended the following schools:
  - Conventional Minneapolis Public School 57.1%
  - Other (mostly Choice is Yours - Suburban school via open enrollment) 23.8%
  - Minneapolis alternative school 9.5%
  - Chartered school 7.1%
  - Magnet or IB Program 2.4%
  - Home and/or private 0.0%
- Of those attending conventional MPS high schools (24), students respondents attended:
  - North 54.6%
  - Roosevelt 22.7%
  - South 9.1%
  - Southwest 4.6%
  - Washburn 4.6%
  - Edison 4.6%

## **ABOUT STUDENTS SPEAK OUT:**

StudentsSpeakOut.org is an initiative of the Citizens League Minnesota 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Project (MAP 150). MAP 150's purpose is to find ways of cultivating citizens' ability to participate in designing public solutions by developing new spaces and roles that respect citizens' experiences and ideas as relevant to the policy discussion. People affected by the problem should be included in defining it. StudentsSpeakOut.org is a project whose face is a social networking Web site. We are testing a variety of strategies for involving young people as active citizens by meeting them where they are (on the Web, using technology, and in both school-based and outside-of-school learning environments). The Web site was at first Minneapolis-focused, and has now expanded to all of Minnesota and Milwaukee, with potential for further expansion nationally.

There are forum discussions where students and adults raise questions and discuss ideas for solutions. We've "turned the tables" and asked students to act as commentators on the education-related ideas of high-profile adults in Minnesota. The Web site was also the host of the "I Am Minnesota's Future" Video Contest, a pilot-level contest providing a forum for students to articulate what adults and youth must do to ensure a better future in Minnesota.

There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work, too, that occurs to cultivate active citizenship and bring the site to life. For example: Student leaders from Minneapolis and from Minnesota's alternative-education programs have project coordinators who assist them in investigating topics of their choice on video and in written story, and who connect the students to decision-makers working in their scope of interest.

In Milwaukee, students learn how to use the site to address education matters they care about via workshops, and adults participate in separate workshops to learn how to support the students on the site. The workshop designs and in-person recruiting strategies built on the successes of Minnesota's site, and the strategies are succeeding (as evidenced by rapid growth of site participation—almost 80 new participants since its launch in mid-April 2008.)

There are a number of strategies for facilitating more dialogue amongst students regarding respect, and other issues affecting students, using the site's discussion forums and cultivating student leaders to run the discussion. Most important to the students' willingness to participate is their trusting that there is an audience willing to consider their ideas. If that's you, and you would like to know more about working with Students Speak Out to involve students in your work, contact us: [studentspeakout@map150.org](mailto:studentspeakout@map150.org)