Community Priorities Survey

Results and Analysis

Nyack Public Schools
Purpose of the Study

In the Community Priorities Survey, Nyack Public Schools asked parents, staff, and the community for feedback on where we, the district, should focus our efforts to best prepare students for life after high school. The purpose of the survey was to determine the community’s priorities and how well the district’s current initiatives are aligned with those priorities.

K12 Insight partnered with Superintendent Montesano and his leadership team to develop the Community Priorities Survey, which addressed the following topics:

- Alignment with Nyack Public School District’s mission
- Profile of a graduate
- Managing the district and its schools
- Strengths, needed improvements, and wishes
- Communication
Details of the Study

The survey was open from Nov. 30, 2015 to Jan. 15, 2016.

K12 Insight emailed individual invitations with survey links to parents, and district staff sent email notifications with a link to the survey to all staff members. Community members could access the survey through a link posted on the district’s website. Paper surveys were also available, and participants could take the survey in English, Spanish, or Creole.

Participants learned about the survey via the district’s website and Let’s Talk! homepage. Flyers were also posted in each school and district office. Reminders were sent to parents who had not yet taken the survey on Dec. 7, 16, and 21, 2015, as well as on Jan. 13 and 15, 2016.

This report summarizes survey results. Results do not reflect random sampling; therefore, they should not be generalized to all members of the Nyack Public Schools community. Rather, results reflect only the perceptions and opinions of survey participants. Findings for each item in the report exclude participants who did not answer. In charts and graphs, data labels less than 5 percent are not shown.
Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responding Group</th>
<th>Number of Invitations Delivered</th>
<th>Number of Responses via Email Invitations</th>
<th>Public Access Link Responses and Paper Surveys</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents, Staff, and Community Members</td>
<td>2,644</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your relationship to Nyack Public Schools? (N=954)

- District employee: 24%
- Parent of a student currently enrolled in Nyack Public Schools: 72%
- Parent of a student who will attend Nyack Public Schools: 5%
- Member of the community served by Nyack Public Schools: 11%
- None of the above: 1%

Note: The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
**Participation (Continued)**

Please select your child(ren)’s school. (N=667)

- Liberty Elementary School: 16%
- Upper Nyack Elementary School: 19%
- Valley Cottage Elementary School: 18%
- Nyack Middle School: 35%
- Nyack High School: 42%

What is your primary work location? (N=226)

- Liberty Elementary School: 12%
- Upper Nyack Elementary School: 13%
- Valley Cottage Elementary School: 23%
- Nyack Middle School: 16%
- Nyack High School: 28%
- District Office: 6%
- Other: 3%

**Notes:**
- The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
- Only parents answered this question.

**Note:** Only district employees answered this question.
Participation (Continued)

**How long have you lived in the Nyack community?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not live in the community served by Nyack Public Schools.</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Which of the following best describes the neighborhood where you live?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Nyack</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Nyack</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyack</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Grandview</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Nyack</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Cottage</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alignment with Nyack Public School District’s Mission

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Nyack Public Schools:

- Provides a harmonious and caring environment (N=940)
  - Strongly Agree: 35%
  - Agree: 54%
  - Disagree: 6%

- Promotes an environment that fosters scholastic excellence (N=937)
  - Strongly Agree: 29%
  - Agree: 54%
  - Disagree: 10%

- Uses the richness of its diversity to meet the needs of students (N=940)
  - Strongly Agree: 27%
  - Agree: 49%
  - Disagree: 12%

- Provides diverse and challenging programs (N=937)
  - Strongly Agree: 27%
  - Agree: 47%
  - Disagree: 17%

- Fosters partnerships among students, staff, parents, and community (N=936)
  - Strongly Agree: 27%
  - Agree: 50%
  - Disagree: 14%

- Promotes critical and creative thinking (N=935)
  - Strongly Agree: 25%
  - Agree: 50%
  - Disagree: 15%

- Fosters self-respect and a respect for others (N=938)
  - Strongly Agree: 32%
  - Agree: 55%
  - Disagree: 7%

- Promotes an acceptance of responsibility in a global society (N=927)
  - Strongly Agree: 23%
  - Agree: 51%
  - Disagree: 13%

- Nurges a love of learning in all students (N=936)
  - Strongly Agree: 24%
  - Agree: 45%
  - Disagree: 19%

- Develops essential skills and attitudes for a productive life (N=936)
  - Strongly Agree: 25%
  - Agree: 53%
  - Disagree: 12%
Profile of a Graduate

How important is it to you that students demonstrate the following skills upon graduation from high school?

- **Demonstrate a mastery of content knowledge (N=937)**
  - Very Important: 61%
  - Important: 31%
  - Not at All Important: 6%

- **Communicate effectively with individuals from diverse cultures and perspectives (N=943)**
  - Very Important: 77%
  - Important: 19%
  - Not at All Important: 5%

- **Collaborate effectively, actively listening and responding to the others’ ideas (N=940)**
  - Very Important: 81%
  - Important: 18%
  - Not at All Important: 5%

- **Use technology tools that enhance communication (N=938)**
  - Very Important: 66%
  - Important: 27%
  - Not at All Important: 5%

- **Create and develop new ideas and innovations (N=935)**
  - Very Important: 68%
  - Important: 28%
  - Not at All Important: 5%

- **Use various types of reasoning (analytical, comparative, deductive, cause-effect) to solve problems (N=937)**
  - Very Important: 81%
  - Important: 16%
  - Not at All Important: 3%

- **Appreciate the diversity of cultures and understand the world from a perspective other than their own (N=939)**
  - Very Important: 75%
  - Important: 20%
  - Not at All Important: 5%

- **Demonstrate knowledge and skills in personal health and fitness to make healthy decisions (N=937)**
  - Very Important: 58%
  - Important: 33%
  - Not at All Important: 7%

- **Demonstrate knowledge and skills in basic and personal finance (N=940)**
  - Very Important: 64%
  - Important: 27%
  - Not at All Important: 7%

- **Exhibit ethical leadership and responsible citizenship (N=936)**
  - Very Important: 78%
  - Important: 19%
  - Not at All Important: 3%
Managing the District and Its Schools

How important is it to you that Nyack Public Schools excel in the following aspects of district and school management?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not at All Important</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping students improve their health and wellness (N=945)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing students with before- and after-school academic enrichment programs (N=943)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing students with a variety of extracurricular activities that they find interesting (N=941)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring that parents and community members are welcome to visit schools (N=943)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing community members opportunities to discuss concerns about the district or a school with a staff member (N=940)</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships between schools and the community (N=946)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nyack Public Schools’ Strengths

Which of the following are Nyack Public Schools’ strengths? (N=909)

- Performing and Fine Arts: 69%
- Academic Programs: 53%
- Response to Cultural and Economic Diversity: 47%
- Teaching and Learning Process: 43%
- Relationships and Sense of Community: 43%
- Athletics: 42%
- Communication: 40%
- Extracurricular Programs: 39%
- Student Wellness (physical and emotional): 28%
- Response to Individual Needs and Potential: 25%
- Community Partnerships: 25%
- Creativity and Innovation: 25%
- Other: 3%

**Note:** The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
Areas for Improvement

Which of the following are areas where Nyack Public Schools needs improvement? (N=777)

- **Response to Individual Needs and Potential**: 44%
- **Teaching and Learning Process**: 42%
- **Academic Programs**: 39%
- **Communication**: 34%
- **Creativity and Innovation**: 34%
- **Student Wellness (physical and emotional)**: 29%
- **Extracurricular Programs**: 24%
- **Relationships and Sense of Community**: 23%
- **Response to Cultural and Economic Diversity**: 23%
- **Community Partnerships**: 23%
- **Athletics**: 14%
- **Other**: 13%
- **Performing and Fine Arts**: 10%

**Note:** The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
## Most Effective Ways to Communicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Communication <em>from</em> School Overall Rank</th>
<th>Communication <em>with</em> School Overall Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email from teachers or staff members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call from teachers or staff members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting in person with teachers or staff members</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyack school district website</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail to my home address</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through translation services (e.g., Spanish or Haitian Creole liaison)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Access to a Computer

To what extent do you have access to a computer? (N=654)

- Very little: I rarely have access to a computer (6%)
- To some extent: I sometimes have access to a computer (92%)
- To a great extent: I can access a computer whenever I want (6%)

Notes:
- The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
- Participants who do not have access to a computer at all did not answer this question.

Where do you access a computer? (N=641)

- At home: 97%
- At work: 75%
- At a community center: 2%
- At the public library: 8%
- Other: 9%

Notes:
- The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.
Receiving Information from Nyack Public Schools

**Do you use a cell phone to access your email? (N=644)**
- Yes: 91%
- No: 9%

**Do you receive robo or emergency calls and emails from the school? (N=646)**
- Yes, on my cell phone: 74%
- Yes, in my email: 50%
- Yes, on my home phone: 63%
- I do not receive emergency or robo calls: 3%
- I do not receive emergency or robo emails: 2%

**How do you receive flyers or letters home? (N=637)**
- Peachjar sends an e-flyer to my email: 88%
- Paper flyer sent home in my child's backpack: 47%
- Other: 3%

*Note: The sum of percentages may exceed 100 percent because participants could select more than one response option.*
## Suggestions for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you could immediately change one or two things in the Nyack Public Schools, what would they be? N=529</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was a perceived need for better communication between parents/the community and schools and district staff. Participants requested that information regarding student progress, announcements, and district decisions be accessible, timely, and clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants described their displeasure with the emphasis on testing and Common Core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants described changes related to the type and amount of opportunities available to students, especially in the form of accelerated courses and enrichment for students excelling academically. For students in general, participants expressed the need for increased academic rigor, especially in math and science, additional courses focusing on life skills, developing cultural awareness, and a decrease in homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher accountability and teacher quality were areas listed as in need of improvement. Support for parents and students from guidance counselors in particular, especially in regard to college preparation, was also mentioned by some participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents reported wanting a more student-centered approach to learning (e.g., project-based learning and hands-on learning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents recommended more support for students at various academic levels, particularly those struggling academically. Participants mentioned the identification of students in need, gaining an understanding of their needs, and differentiated instruction to accommodate those needs as the specific areas in need of improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings and Next Steps

- Strong majorities of participants agreed that Nyack Public Schools is preforming according to the district’s mission. The statements that received the highest levels of agreement are:
  
  *Nyack Public Schools provides a harmonious and caring environment.*
  *Nyack Public Schools fosters self-respect and a respect for others.*

- At least 90% of all survey participants agreed that all of the skills listed in the survey were important for students to demonstrate upon graduation. As a result, it’s clear the Nyack community supports aligning learning standards with 21st century outcomes for today’s students.

- Survey participants identified performing and fine arts and academic programs as strengths of Nyack Public Schools. However, 44% of participants felt that the district could improve in the area of responding to individual students’ needs and potential.

- The call for more individualized instruction and/or attention to individual student needs was also reflected in the open-ended comments, with many participants calling for a more student-centered approach to learning and both rigorous learning opportunities for high achieving students as well as more academic support for low-achieving students.

- Next, district leaders will use these survey findings to articulate a vision statement and work to ensure all of the district’s programs are aligned with that new vision.