

Summary

As part of its ongoing School Change Reform effort, NHPS again administered a survey to school level leaders, to gather feedback on the services provided by the NHPS central office. Seventy-two) school-based leaders (principals and APs) provided generally positive and improving feedback on the functions and support provided by the NHPS central office. Of particular note are the 20+ percentage point increases in satisfaction with the sense of empowerment and accountability reported by school-based leaders. Although support for English Language Learner students and Special Education students continues as a challenge for the district, with relatively lower satisfaction rates for the second year, the survey showed 15 percentage point increases in positive feedback on both these areas. School leaders also reported very positive feedback for the new Teacher Evaluation and Development program being implemented for the first time this year, an increase of more than 40% of respondents expressing satisfaction over the same question asked last year. According to the survey, time to focus on instruction and teacher coaching remains a challenge for school leaders, given the portion of their time spent on discipline, parent interaction, and paperwork.

Methodology

The district invited all school-based Principals and Assistant Principals to take the central office effectiveness survey between April 7th and April 29th, 2011. The survey was anonymous, with school leadership identifying only whether they worked in a K-8 or a High School, and whether they were a principal or an assistant principals. A total of 72 school leaders took the survey this year (36 P's and 26 APs, 26 from HS and 46 from K-8 schools), compared to 74 last year.

The questions on the survey largely mirrored the questions posed on the same survey last year. Some questions were adjusted and/or added in order to garner more useful and complete feedback, and a few questions were added that mirror other surveys administered last academic year. School leaders were asked, in each question, to provide a satisfaction level with the central office service, selecting from options ranging from exemplary, satisfactory, needs improvement, problematic, and don't know/not applicable.

Given the methodology, the survey allows assessment of both absolute levels of satisfaction, as well as changes in satisfaction levels between last year and this year. The detailed reporting exhibit compares the results for all questions to last year, as well as breaking out results by K-8 and HS, and by Principal and AP. The exhibit provides the percentage of responses that were exemplary, the percentage satisfactory, the sum of these two as the "overall satisfaction" and the percentage needs improvement or problematic for each survey question. Respondents had an option of "not applicable" as well – those responses are not listed, but are simply the difference between the total response listed and 100%.

Results

The central office effectiveness survey, as last year, was divided into a number of distinct sections, aligned to the primary functions of the central office. In the following discussion, the number in parenthesis reflects the percent of respondents registering exemplary or satisfactory responses.

Leadership and Governance: Results on overall leadership and governance from the central office remained high, with strong marks for vision and goals (97% Exemplary or Satisfied), communication (89%), and outcome orientation (87%). The survey reflected an uptick of 12 percentage points in modeling self-evaluation as a strategy for improvement, to 79% overall satisfaction. Feedback on a culture of trust and supporting schools was stable over the two years at approximately 70% overall satisfaction.

Performance Management: This year's survey saw significant upticks in the percentage of school-based leaders registering positive feedback on the NHPS's systems for holding schools accountable (93%, up 15 percentage points), allowing schools flexibility (81%, up 22 percentage points) and affording appropriate autonomy commensurate with performance (77%, up 27 percentage points). Approximately 60% of respondents noted positive feedback on the provision of supervision to struggling schools and in facilitating schools to share good practices within the district, two areas of ongoing priority. Another area for additional focus is in providing support and training in accessing outside social services for students in need, in which 50% of respondents described the NHPS work as needing improvement or problematic. A new question on the supervision and support provided by the directors of instruction, who principals report to, showed relatively positive feedback, with the High School leadership noting significant stronger support in the areas of disciplinary decisions and operational decisions, and comparably high support in K-8 and HS for instructional decisions and leadership development.

Curriculum and Instruction: Feedback on key elements of curriculum and instruction remained positive and relatively unchanged from last year, with strong marks on guidance on quality learning and instruction (81%), curriculum (77%), and curriculum training meetings, aka CIA meetings (80%). One new question showed room for improvement, in the curriculum's differentiation to meet all student's needs (46%). There was also room for improvement in targeted questions about the programming available to support ELL (58%), SPED (65%), High Achieving (53%), and Remedial students (66%) – but it is worth noting that the feedback in ELL and SPED were significantly improved over last year's, with 15 point gains in positive responses in both ELL and SPED.

Early Childhood: For clear reasons, early childhood is the one segment of the survey where a significant number of respondents did not respond – but among respondents, positive feedback significantly outweighed negative feedback. Of the people responding to the questions, twice as many were satisfied with developmentally appropriate practice as were dissatisfied (43% overall satisfied compared to 21% needs improvement or problematic), 2.5 times as many were satisfied with early childhood

training (38% vs. 15%), three times as many were satisfied with using data (38% vs. 13%), and four times as many were satisfied with student enrollment and staffing (40% vs. 10%).

Professional Development: Professional development (or training) feedback remained positive this year, including in supporting site-based professional development (78%), and differentiated development for experienced (75%) and new (84%) teachers. Reaction to professional development for administrators was somewhat less positive, with 60-70% of respondents satisfied overall. There is a significant exception in professional development for struggling administrators, where, although a significant number of school leaders didn't respond, satisfaction was roughly split between positive (37%) and negative (32%) feedback.

Youth Development Activities: Providing schools support on behavior, discipline, and other aspects of youth development remains a challenge, although there has been progress in the last year. Overall satisfaction was 51% on behavior intervention, 48% on positive behavior supports, and 54% in promoting discipline policies. While the result this year reflects room for improvement, last year the overall satisfaction with behavior supports was 34%. Satisfaction with support for student attendance fell 12 percentage points, potentially an outgrowth of midyear layoffs of truancy staff. Satisfaction remained high on providing afterschool support (70%). Satisfaction was significantly higher for support for students going on to college (60%) than it was for students going on to employment (32%)

Assessment and Data Analysis: Satisfaction remained high with Data analysis, particularly in the provision of timely and useful analysis of assessments (90%) and useful comparative data (88%). Overall 76% of respondents found the student assessments useful in defining student needs and guiding instruction. However, for both the assessments and the data analysis, satisfaction was significantly lower for high schools than for K-8 schools, with only 56% of high school leaders satisfied with the interim assessments, compared to 88% for the K-8 schools.

Operations and System Support: Similar to last year, feedback on operations and system support remained generally positive, with overall satisfaction feedback higher than 70% for most functions, including HR processes, student registration, transportation, food, safety and security, and information technology. Areas in need of improvement include building maintenance (61%), midyear registration of students (58%), helping parents to engage their students engage (62%), and supporting partnerships with non-profits (64%).

Evaluation and Development: Questions about teacher evaluation and development were asked in two sections, both under professional development, and in a freestanding section. Responses to the new TEVAL system from school-based administrators were positive, 90% giving positive feedback on the way the process recognizes exemplary performance and offers concrete and useful feedback. 70% gave positive feedback on the way the process identifies and helps to correct poor performance. Overall 68% of leaders agreed that they were satisfied with the TEVAL process, an increase from 22% agreement with the same statement in a similar survey done last year by the New Teacher Project.

The survey also gives a sense of the challenges, with only 24% of school leaders agreeing that they have time to focus on the evaluation and development of their teachers, and 43% agreeing and 25% neutral that they have sufficient support to evaluate and develop teachers. 73% of school leaders agree that NHPS maintains a high standard of performance for teachers, and 78% think NHPS maintains high standards for administrators.

School Leadership Time: The survey also asked school leaders to estimate the percentage of their time they spend on various tasks, and the percentage they would like to spend. That data flags the significant amount of time spent on student discipline, parent interactions, and paperwork, as compared to the amount of time that administrators would like to be spending working with teachers and reviewing student achievement data, particularly at the high school level. For example, 80% of high school leaders reported spending less than 20% of their time in classrooms, while 86% think they should be spending more than 20% of their time.

Next Steps.

The results of the Central Office Effectiveness survey are being reviewed by the NHPS senior and departmental leadership, to help determine priority initiatives and changes for the 2011-2012 academic year. Specific departments are reviewing relevant areas, including both overall feedback and changes between this year and next.

Several areas of priority are immediately clear. Special education support, ELL support, and discipline, will remain on-going priorities, although they did show improvements this year. Better parent engagement activities and stronger connections to non-profit activities are existing priorities of the School Change initiative, and the survey results only underscore their importance. Determining ways to free administrator time to focus on the core leadership work of instruction and teacher coaching will be a key priority for the 2011-12 year.

The central office effectiveness survey will be administered again in the 2011-12 school year, to track ongoing progress and improvements.