

**School Climate Surveys
District Results for 2008-09**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Research Services
1500 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, Florida 33132
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Overview

Each school year, the School Climate Survey is administered to gather information on the perceptions that students, their parents, and school staffs hold concerning their schools and their performance. In 2008-2009, the survey was distributed to approximately 90,200 parents, 54,200 elementary, secondary, and adult students, and 25,000 staff. This report summarizes selected major points from the results of that survey, as they pertain to the Pre-K through 12th grade program. In addition to districtwide averages, results are broken down by regional center. Information identical to that summarized for the district is reviewed for the regular schools of each region. Alternative, special education, and vocational/adult schools are not included in this report.

Results continue to be very similar to those in past years. Although there is variation from region to region, the majority of respondents from the three groups surveyed (parents, students, and staff) were satisfied with their schools in Miami-Dade County. An analysis of selected survey items indicates an overall increase in satisfaction over the past five years. As in previous survey administrations, at the district level parents and staff from all educational levels (elementary, K-8, middle, and senior high) provided overall school grades in the “B” range. In an improvement over past years, district averages from older students were also in the “B” range.

About the 2008-09 Surveys

School Climate Surveys of parents, students, and staff have been regularly administered in the Miami-Dade County Public School district since the early 1990s. The purpose of these surveys is to gather information regarding what these groups think about the school and their perceptions concerning how the school can be improved. Results from several of the most recent years are available by school on the Department of Research Services website: <http://drs.dadeschools.net>. In addition to providing information to the public, survey results are intended to assist schools in the identification of priorities for their annual School Improvement Plans, and to track trends for the Districtwide Scorecards.

The 2009 surveys were administered in January and February. Thirty-seven percent of the parents who were surveyed in 2009 responded; considerably lower than last year's 43 percent. Student returns remained steady at 82 percent. The staff response rate also remained steady at 75 percent. Twenty-one schools failed to return completed forms from at least one of the target groups (parents, students, or staff). Of these schools, 16 or 76.2 percent were charter schools.

Detailed by-school results were provided to the schools at the end of the school year. The primary purpose of these reports was to facilitate an in-depth view of the learning climate at each school. The present report represents a byproduct of these by-school reports and summarizes selected districtwide and regional results.

The patterns of the responses for all groups were very similar to the previous year's patterns, and do not deviate greatly from the response patterns of earlier administrations. All groups were generally positive in their responses, as they have been in previous years, expressing general agreement with the survey items. On average, parents and staff have a high percent of agreement with the items indicating a high degree of satisfaction with their schools. Students at the elementary level also have a high average agreement on the items, but middle and senior high students are less likely to express satisfaction with their school. In the appendices the item by item results are listed by educational level (elementary, K-8, middle and senior) for each of the three responding groups--parents, staff, and students--for the district and also for the regional centers, and the charter schools as a group.

Staff responses to two items could be interpreted as reflective of the present budgetary difficulties. Approximately 18 percent fewer staff felt satisfied with their present state of job security when compared to staff responding to the same item in 2008. In addition, approximately 12 percent more staff reported being limited in carrying out their job responsibilities as a result of insufficient resources (i.e., funds, books, equipment, supplies, etc.). These changes were observed among staff at each of the four educational levels surveyed.

The results for selected items reported below pertain to the Pre-K through 12th grade program. Results for the K-8 schools have now been calculated as a distinct level for the sixth year. However, the K-8 schools are still relatively few, and the summary results are more volatile than those for the other levels. Charter school results, presented as a separate "region," are also less reliable, due in part to difficulties in obtaining accurate counts regarding the number of staff working at some schools. Data regarding "other" and adult student programs were excluded from this report but are available for each location on the Department of Research Services website.

Results for Selected Items

Safety, Quality, and Overall Climate

Of the items that are comparable across all the groups surveyed (students, parents, and staffs), three are most often the source of queries. One is the item on school safety (“The school is safe and secure;” Table 1). Another is the item concerning quality of education (“Students are getting a good education at this school;” Table 2). The third is the general item about whether the school’s overall climate is positive and promotes learning (Table 3).

The breakdown of these three responses by regional center for 2009 is displayed in the following three tables. There are several patterns that are observed across all the items--districtwide and within their respective regions. Taken by region, some variation is observed, with Regional Center III usually exhibiting the highest ratings. Charter schools, while diverse in composition, fare quite well on the surveys and outperform district averages at almost all levels. The variation across regions is much larger for the middle and senior levels than for the elementary and K-8, for each of the three respondent groups. The greatest across-region variation is at the senior high level, where ratings can vary by 20 percentage points.

Table 1
Responses Concerning School Safety in 2009
Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels

	North	North Central	South Central	South	Charter	District
Staff						
Elementary	92	88	93	89	99	90
K-8	96	95	99	94	98	96
Middle	86	77	93	85	96	87
Senior High	87	84	92	82	88	86
Parents						
Elementary	89	88	88	89	94	89
K-8	89	91	89	91	90	90
Middle	76	71	86	79	89	80
Senior High	70	74	86	78	88	79
Students						
Elementary	85	80	90	86	92	86
K-8	89	83	87	77	84	84
Middle	61	55	78	65	80	68
Senior High	63	65	80	77	83	74

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the school is safe and secure. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.

Taken by educational level, going from elementary down the rows through the senior level, there is a tendency for approval to decrease. Respondents of each group at the elementary and K-8 levels show the highest percent agreement, and the middle school respondents the lowest, with senior high respondents averaging only a few points higher.

Table 2
Responses Concerning Quality of Education 2009
Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels

	North	North Central	South Central	South	Charter	District
Staff						
Elementary	91	88	95	93	95	92
K-8	96	95	99	92	93	95
Middle	87	78	91	85	95	86
Senior High	85	78	86	82	88	83
Parents						
Elementary	92	93	94	92	96	93
K-8	94	92	94	90	92	93
Middle	84	81	90	85	90	86
Senior High	76	78	89	85	87	83
Students						
Elementary	91	87	92	90	91	89
K-8	84	82	83	79	79	81
Middle	70	66	77	69	80	73
Senior High	66	65	77	78	72	71

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the school is safe and secure. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.

Table 3
Perceptions of Overall School Climate in 2009
Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels

	North	North Central	South Central	South	Charter	District
Staff						
Elementary	87	84	91	87	95	88
K-8	93	92	96	89	92	92
Middle	80	71	88	79	94	81
Senior High	84	74	83	76	92	80
Parents						
Elementary	92	91	94	91	96	93
K-8	94	92	93	91	92	93
Middle	77	73	84	79	88	81
Senior High	67	71	84	78	84	77
Students						
Elementary	79	75	83	78	82	78
K-8	70	69	65	65	67	67
Middle	46	45	61	53	64	53
Senior High	48	51	67	64	62	58

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the school is safe and secure. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.

At the K-8 level, students in grades comparable both to the elementary (K-5) and the middle (6-8) levels are surveyed, inviting a comparison to the ratings at both those levels. At the K-8 level both staff and parent ratings are much higher across all the items than at the middle school level, and as good as or better than the elementary level.

Considered by responding group, students tend to rate their school lower than their parents and teachers. In a few instances, the student level of agreement falls below half at the middle and senior levels. Parents tend to show greater satisfaction, frequently averaging higher than staff on overall climate at the elementary and K-8 levels. Staff respondents, however, tend to show the highest degree of satisfaction with their school across all educational levels. Staff in K-8 schools seem to be particularly satisfied with their schools.

Over time, the general trend for all groups is one of increased satisfaction. Table 4 displays the percent agreeing with the same three items as mentioned above in two year intervals over the past five years. It is easily seen that the majority of the triads (sets of three percentages) show an increase in agreement over the past five years. Among middle school and senior high students, where the lowest levels of agreement are found, there is a consistent increase at each point for all the items. In only a few instances are there decreases over the time period; with staff showing inconsistent but minor changes in percentages.

Table 4
Trends for Three Important Items Tracked Over the Past Five Years
Percent Agreeing at Two-Year Intervals

Educational Level	Elementary			K-8			Middle			Senior		
	2005	2007	2009	2005	2007	2009	2005	2007	2009	2005	2007	2009
Staff												
Safe & Secure	91	91	90	95	96	96	88	88	87	88	83	86
Good Education	92	92	92	95	97	95	85	87	86	84	82	83
Positive Climate	87	88	88	93	91	92	79	81	81	82	76	80
Parents												
Safe & Secure	86	87	89	89	88	90	76	77	80	73	75	79
Good Education	92	93	93	92	94	93	81	83	86	79	82	83
Positive Climate	92	92	93	90	93	93	75	77	81	71	74	77
Students												
Safe & Secure	84	84	86	79	83	84	60	64	68	71	69	73
Good Education	87	89	89	78	85	81	63	70	73	66	68	71
Positive Climate	75	76	78	64	70	67	46	50	53	53	55	58

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree to the item. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with the statement.

 = improvement from 2005 to 2007

 = improvement from 2007 to 2009

Grading the School

The last item in each survey asks the respondent to give his or her school a grade analogous to the grade that students receive for their work. This grade may be regarded as a summary of the attitudes that the respondent holds toward the school. The district and regional averages of those school grades, by responding group and by level, are shown in Table 5. At the district level there is no grade below “B-.” At the regional level, the results are also on the whole quite favorable. Among the regional grades, approximately 77% are in the “B” range, 16% in the “A” range and 6% in the “C” range.

Table 5
2009 Rating of Overall School Grade, Averaged by Region and District

	North	North Central	South Central	South	Charter	District
Staff						
Elementary	B+	B	A-	B+	B+	B+
K-8	A-	A-	A	B+	A-	A-
Middle	B	B-	B+	B	B+	B
Senior High	B	B-	B	B	B	B
Parents						
Elementary	B+	B+	A-	B+	A-	B+
K-8	A-	B+	A-	B+	B+	A-
Middle	B	B	B+	B	B+	B
Senior High	B-	B-	B	B	B+	B
Students						
Elementary	B+	B	A-	B+	A-	B+
K-8	B	B	B	B	B	B
Middle	B-	C+	B	B-	B	B-
Senior High	C+	C+	B	B	B	B-

Selected Items

In most years, the percentage of respondents agreeing to the survey items rarely changes by more than a few percentage points from previous years. However, this year five items have changed by more than five percentage points at the district level. The two items on the staff survey concern job security and insufficient classroom resources, both changing in the negative direction. The two items on the parent survey and the single item from the student survey all have to do with the principal's performance, all three changing in the positive direction. These are all substantial differences and are noteworthy both in their relevance to school reform and budget issues.

**Table 6
Items of Greatest District-Level Change 2009**

		Elementary % Agree	K-8 % Agree	Middle % Agree	Senior % Agree
Staff					
I have a feeling of job security in my present position.					
	2009	68	68	62	59
	2008	84	86	80	79
I am limited by insufficient resources (e.g., funds, books, equipment, supplies, etc.)					
	2009	35	34	41	52
	2008	24	23	28	39
Parent					
The principal does an effective job running my child's school.					
	2009	87	86	80	77
	2008	87	86	77	70
The principal is available and easy to talk to.					
	2009	78	70	65	60
	2008	77	70	63	54
Student					
My principal does a good job running the school.					
	2009	87	73	63	62
	2008	84	70	58	56

Appendices

Methodological Notes
District Summary of Parent, Student, and Staff Responses

Methodological Notes

Survey Reliability

All measurement involves some error. However, there are several methods of estimating how accurate or reliable responses are to a survey. Reliability coefficients for the parent, student, and staff forms of the *School Climate Survey* were estimated from an internal consistency measure referred to as Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach 1951). The value of an alpha depends on the average inter-item correlations (i.e., similarity or consistency in responses from item to item) and the number of items on the survey. The average correlation among items on a survey increases as the consistency of ratings across the various items increase. The closer the value of alpha approaches 1.00, the higher the survey's reliability. The total reliability estimate for the parent form (alpha = 0.96), student form (alpha = 0.88), and for the staff form (alpha = 0.88) support the usefulness of the surveys as reliable instruments.

Caveats

Several methodological factors must be considered when interpreting these survey results. In general, the larger the sample, the more accurate the results. The districtwide results reported here are based on sample sizes of several tens of thousands. These sample sizes may be excessive for insuring district-level reliability, but they are the result of aggregating the individual school samples necessary for intended interpretations at that level.

In theory, with district-level samples of these sizes, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus one percentage point of what they would be if the entire population had been surveyed with complete accuracy. In the school-level applications of the data derived from the *School Climate Surveys*, as the sample size decreases, the margin of error increases.

Other possible sources of error include wording and question order, inadequate weighting of the data, and (perhaps most important for this survey process) the refusal of sample members to respond to survey items or the survey as a whole. While it is difficult or impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these influences, there are some mitigating factors.

The response rates for this survey process are among those generally considered by the field to be more than minimally adequate for providing meaningful data. Follow-up telephone survey studies conducted in previous years by Research Services regarding similar procedures suggest that districtwide survey results are exceedingly reliable (Romanik & Froman 1992). Also, consistent patterns of response across similar items can substantially contribute to the readers' confidence in the reported opinion percentages. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that whatever factors contribute to response bias, they are consistent from one year to the next. Thus, yearly changes in reported opinions (except in cases of extremely aberrant response levels) are advanced as representing real changes worthy of serious consideration.

Additionally, the opinions offered in the survey represent anonymous and self-reported perceptions by parents, students, and staff and may not precisely describe the actual situation in the district. However, these opinions represent a reality to the respondents and should afford insight into the impression the district is making on the local community.

District Summary of Parent Responses

Survey Item	Elementary			K-8			Percent Responding* Middle			Senior		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
	1	89	6	5	90	6	5	80	10	10	79	12
2	90	4	5	91	4	5	76	11	13	71	14	15
3	22	18	60	19	15	65	24	21	54	26	19	54
4	82	13	5	83	14	3	73	18	8	69	19	12
5	74	20	6	72	22	6	72	18	9	68	22	10
6	89	6	5	89	5	5	84	7	9	76	10	14
7	62	19	19	50	23	26	41	23	36	36	30	34
8	85	8	7	82	9	9	79	11	10	79	11	10
9	94	3	3	92	4	4	80	12	8	74	17	9
10	92	6	3	91	7	3	77	15	8	70	20	10
11	92	6	3	90	7	4	78	14	7	69	19	11
12	90	8	3	86	11	3	78	15	7	73	18	9
13	92	7	1	91	8	1	82	13	5	79	15	6
14	93	3	4	90	5	5	79	10	11	72	15	14
15	89	6	6	85	8	7	72	14	14	62	20	19
16	94	4	2	95	4	1	89	7	3	87	9	4
17	94	4	2	94	4	3	89	7	5	86	8	6
18	94	4	3	94	4	2	88	7	5	86	9	5
19	83	14	3	87	11	3	82	12	6	74	18	9
20	86	10	4	81	12	8	76	13	10	74	16	10
21	87	11	4	85	11	4	80	14	6	78	16	7
22	90	7	3	88	8	4	80	13	8	74	16	10
23	89	8	3	88	10	3	77	15	8	74	17	9
24	83	11	6	84	11	5	72	14	14	74	14	12
25	81	13	6	82	14	3	72	15	13	71	16	12
26	83	12	5	83	14	3	72	16	11	66	19	15
27	87	9	4	86	10	4	80	13	8	77	16	7
28	78	16	6	70	21	8	65	23	12	60	28	13
29	79	17	4	77	18	4	72	21	7	65	25	9
30	74	22	4	68	29	3	75	18	7	72	17	11
31	91	4	4	89	6	5	86	9	6	77	14	9
32	88	7	6	85	9	7	78	13	9	69	19	13
33	93	4	3	93	5	3	86	8	6	83	11	6
34	93	5	3	93	5	2	81	12	8	77	14	9
35	B+			A-			B			B		

*A = strongly agree + agree, D = strongly disagree + disagree, U = undecided/unknown. Item percents for an educational level may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

District Summary of Student Responses

Survey Item	Percent Responding*														
	Elementary			K-8			Middle			Senior					
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D			
1 I feel safe at my school.	86	8	6	84	10	6	68	17	15	73	13	14			
2 My school building is kept clean and in good condition.	60	15	25	62	17	22	48	19	34	56	16	28			
3 Students in my school usually follow school rules.	39	22	38	32	28	40	22	26	52	37	24	39			
4 There are too many students in my classroom and that affects how much I learn.	19	10	71	17	12	71	17	14	69	20	15	64			
5 My teachers require that I work very hard for the grades I get.	90	6	3	86	10	5	82	12	6	81	12	7			
6 My school has enough books and equipment to help me learn.	85	7	8	76	11	12	65	16	19	57	16	27			
7 Food served for lunch at my school looks good and tastes good.	38	20	42	23	21	56	23	21	56	23	25	51			
8 I like the choice of classes I have at this school.	70	21	10	57	23	21	55	18	26	59	15	26			
9 My teachers are friendly and easy to talk to.	82	10	8	75	15	10	59	22	19	66	19	14			
10 My teachers make learning fun and interesting.	84	9	6	68	18	14	51	24	25	48	26	25			
11 My teachers make me want to learn.	84	9	6	69	19	13	56	23	21	50	27	24			
12 My teachers know a lot about the subjects they teach.	92	5	2	89	8	3	81	12	7	77	14	9			
13 My teachers give me meaningful homework that helps me learn.	86	8	7	70	17	13	59	21	21	51	23	25			
14 My teachers are interested in how I do in the future.	81	13	5	71	21	8	60	25	15	58	25	17			
15 My teachers let me know how I am doing on my schoolwork.	90	6	4	82	10	8	75	12	13	69	14	16			
16 Violence is a problem at my school.	30	13	58	23	18	59	37	23	40	20	19	60			
17 Gangs are a problem at my school.	17	10	72	13	14	74	21	22	57	14	18	67			
18 Student drug and alcohol use are problems at my school.	12	6	82	11	11	78	21	23	57	25	24	51			
19 My principal does a good job running the school.	87	7	6	73	16	11	63	19	17	62	23	15			
20 The assistant principals are available when needed.	75	17	9	61	25	14	55	26	18	46	31	22			
21 My guidance counselor helps me with school and personal problems.	71	21	8	56	31	13	55	29	16	53	26	20			
22 Adults at my school care about me as an individual.	74	18	9	57	28	14	46	33	21	42	33	25			
23 Adults at my school help me when I need it.	83	11	7	69	19	12	60	24	17	54	27	19			
24 I like coming to my school.	72	13	15	60	18	21	53	20	27	55	19	27			
25 I am getting a good education at my school.	89	7	3	81	13	6	73	18	10	71	18	10			
26 The overall climate or feeling at my school is positive and helps me learn.	78	15	7	67	22	10	53	28	18	58	24	18			
27 What overall grade would you give to your school?	B+			B			B-			B-					

*A = strongly agree + agree, D = strongly disagree + disagree, U = undecided/unknown. Item percents for an educational level may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

District Summary of Staff Responses

Survey Item	Percent Responding*											
	Elementary			K-8			Middle			Senior		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
1 At my school I feel safe and secure.	90	4	5	96	1	2	87	5	8	86	5	8
2 At my school the school building is kept clean and in good condition.	82	5	14	87	4	9	80	5	15	73	6	21
3 At my school personnel work together as a team.	85	6	8	89	4	6	80	8	12	76	10	14
4 At my school administrators solve problems effectively.	83	8	9	87	7	6	77	10	13	74	12	14
5 At my school I feel that my ideas are listened to and considered.	80	10	10	83	9	8	74	12	14	69	15	15
6 At my school adequate disciplinary measures are used to deal with disruptive behavior.	75	9	16	79	9	12	68	9	23	67	11	22
7 My principal is an effective administrator.	87	7	6	91	5	4	81	9	10	84	9	7
8 My principal represents the school in a positive manner.	89	6	5	93	4	3	88	7	5	91	5	3
9 My principal demonstrates good interpersonal skills.	83	7	10	86	6	7	80	8	11	82	8	10
10 My principal deals with conflict constructively.	82	10	8	86	8	5	76	13	11	77	14	9
11 My principal responds in a reasonable time to my concerns.	87	7	5	90	6	3	83	10	7	81	11	7
12 My principal treats me with respect.	90	5	5	93	4	3	90	5	5	89	5	5
13 My principal is receptive to constructive criticism.	75	16	8	78	14	8	70	21	10	67	24	9
14 My principal is supportive of teachers.	86	8	7	90	7	4	82	10	8	83	10	8
15 I am limited by too many students in each class.	23	7	69	27	6	68	32	9	58	41	10	49
16 I am limited by student deficiencies in basic academic skills.	48	10	42	37	9	54	59	9	32	65	9	25
17 I am limited by lack of concern/support from parents.	50	10	40	32	8	59	54	9	36	56	12	32
18 I am limited by lack of concern/support from the principal.	8	8	85	5	6	88	9	10	81	9	11	80
19 I am limited by lack of concern/support from the district administration.	17	25	58	16	23	61	22	27	51	24	30	46
20 I am limited by insufficient resources (e.g., funds, books, equipment, supplies, etc.).	35	9	56	34	8	58	41	9	49	52	10	38
21 I am limited by school violence.	6	5	90	3	3	94	14	10	77	12	12	76
22 I am limited by student gang activity.	2	5	93	2	3	95	8	13	79	10	15	75
23 I am limited by student substance abuse.	2	5	93	1	4	94	7	17	76	14	23	63
24 Students generally come to my class at the beginning of the term prepared for the grade level or courses I teach.	49	11	40	64	12	25	43	11	46	38	14	49
25 I feel satisfied concerning how my career is progressing at this school.	79	12	10	82	10	8	72	15	13	70	15	15
26 I have a feeling of job security in my present position.	68	15	17	68	14	17	62	17	21	59	17	24
27 I like working at my school.	90	6	4	91	5	3	86	8	6	89	6	5
28 Staff morale is high at my school.	65	15	19	72	14	14	57	18	26	52	19	29
29 I frequently feel overloaded and overwhelmed while working at my school.	40	12	48	38	13	50	40	13	47	40	12	48
30 Annual teacher evaluations are fair and reasonable.	88	10	3	85	12	2	82	15	3	81	15	4
31 Annual teacher evaluations are used to improve teacher performance.	81	14	5	78	17	4	71	20	9	63	24	12
32 Inservice programs keep me informed of the latest educational strategies.	85	8	7	84	9	6	78	10	12	74	12	15
33 I believe children attending my school are receiving a good education.	92	6	2	95	4	1	86	9	5	83	11	6
34 The overall climate or atmosphere at my school is positive and helps students learn.	88	7	6	92	5	3	81	9	10	80	11	9
35 What overall grade would you give to this school?	B+			A-			B					

*A = strongly agree + agree, D = strongly disagree + disagree, U = undecided/unknown. Item percents for an educational level may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

References

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