



The
Satori Group Ltd

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C-PP Area School District Constituent Research Report June 19, 2017

Executive Summary

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Corning-Painted Post Area School District conducted an exploratory, inductive study of constituent perceptions about the district's performance in the areas of school climate, trust, educational quality and customer service. Constituent groups including community members without students in C-PP schools, employees, parents and students completed surveys and participated in focus groups during the data gathering phase of the study. The quantitative and qualitative data collected were analyzed to generate the following findings.

Global Findings

- C-PP teachers, staff, leaders, parents, and students navigate a complex and diverse organizational-social structure in their schools that is influenced by internal factors related to social identity, and external factors related to educational accountability.
- Corning-Painted Post Area School District is broadly viewed by its constituents as an institution that delivers an effective, high-quality educational experience characterized by student access to enriching opportunities and by mutually supportive relationships.
- Tacitly held negative attributions about effort, responsibility, and fairness pose challenges for relationship quality and trust within the C-PP school community, while open communication about these concepts leads to alternative explanations and more empathetic views.
- The district has room for improvement when it comes to accountability, responsiveness, and communication.

Population-specific Findings

- Disparities in educational outcomes and access to opportunity exist for certain student groups.
- High demand for and insufficient supply of qualified substitute teachers and technical support personnel has educational consequences in C-PP schools.
- Middle school students have the impression that inappropriate behavior and bullying on the bus and at school are not effectively addressed.

A full discussion of these findings begins on page six of this report.

In addition to discussing findings, this report offers recommendations for responses the District might explore during its next strategic planning effort. These recommendations include:

- Hire for social-emotional competence and work toward instituting a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) component into regular instructional practice.
- Focus on single-loop learning in District performance improvement efforts.
- Review the mission, vision and core beliefs.
- Create avenues for everyone to be equitably valued as contributors to the school community.
- Decrease demand for substitutes, expand access to qualified substitutes, and promote student attendance.

This research reveals a number of strengths the district can apply in responding to the findings of this report including: strong leadership, supportive relationships, the power to provide a wide range of opportunities to students and experience in delivering a high quality educational experience.

Methodology

The exploratory, inductive research documented in this report employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative primary research methods to gather stakeholder perceptions on the concepts of school climate, trust, educational quality, and service satisfaction. These methods included constituent surveys and focus groups.

Survey questions were designed to measure the concepts of school climate, trust, educational quality, and service satisfaction. Several questions were indexed together and averaged to capture overall ratings on these dimensions. In some cases, the ratings occurred on a three-point scale ranging from “not confident,” to “very confident.” In other cases, ratings occurred on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree,” to “strongly agree.” These index ratings were summarized and presented by constituent group. In addition, answers to open-ended questions were reviewed for the emergence of themes. The summary of survey data informed the content of focus group questioning routes. A summary presentation of survey data is attached as *Appendix I*.

Focus group participants were prompted to respond to questioning routes designed to probe deeper on areas of survey data that were ambiguous or concerning. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. Focus group transcripts were coded for the emergence of themes, and representative comments were harvested from these transcripts as evidence of themes. During focus groups, respondents completed an exercise in which they selected from a graphic of a “diversity wheel,” types of difference that they believe play a part in how people are treated in their school or building. A summary of focus group data is attached as *Appendix II*.

Secondary data on conditions in the Corning-Painted Post Area School District and educational outcomes achieved by its students were gathered from sources such as the New York State Education Department, The Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, and directly from the District.

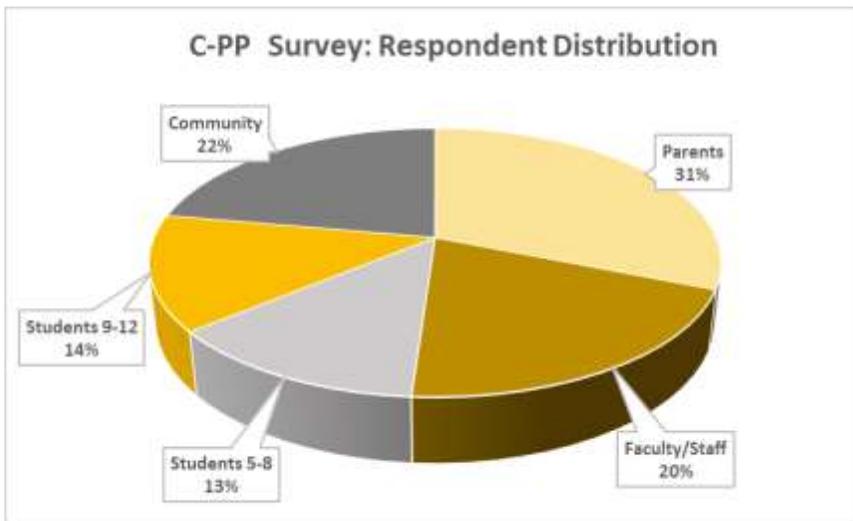
Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants

For this study, the researcher used a representative sampling method. Because findings were to be generalized to the specific population of Corning-Painted Post Area School District constituents, rather than to the general public, randomization was not necessary.

Survey Respondents

The opportunity to respond to a survey was offered universally to all members of all constituent groups through a variety of communication channels in the hope of producing, through voluntary response, a representative sample of constituents. The concentration of respondents in each group was compared with the concentration of the student body representing that group in the district to assess representation, and efforts were made to recruit more respondents accordingly to assure representativeness of the sample.

Overall, 1,505 respondents participated in all surveys. The distribution of respondent groups is depicted in the following chart. Please note that each group answered a customized version of the survey.



The tables below present the representativeness of respondent groups with respect to the overall population of constituents.

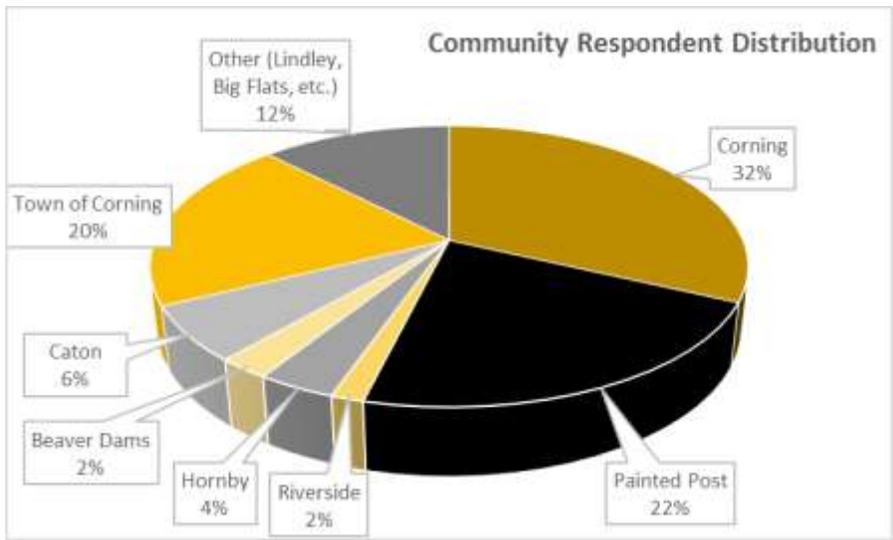
PARENT RESPONDENTS			
	Response Percent	% of All District Students	Response Count
Erwin Valley	9.6%	9.3%	45
Calvin U. Smith	6.6%	6.6%	31
Winfield Street	3.6%	5.1%	17
Hugh Gregg	3.8%	4.7%	18
William E. Severn	5.3%	9.4%	25
Frederick Carder	9.0%	9.6%	42
C-PP Middle School	25.4%	21.0%	119
C-PP High School	36.3%	33.7%	170
High School Learning Cent	0.2%	0.7%	1
	TOTAL RESPONSES		468

FACULTY RESPONDENTS			
	Response Percent	% of All District Staff	Response Count
Erwin Valley	7.3%	6.9%	22
Calvin U. Smith	10.3%	7.8%	31
Winfield Street	4.3%	5.5%	13
Hugh Gregg	5.0%	4.4%	15
William E. Severn	8.0%	9.7%	24
Frederick Carder	8.0%	7.0%	24
C-PP Middle School	24.6%	19.2%	74
C-PP High School	23.6%	26.7%	71
Administration Building	5.6%	10.5%	17
Bus Garage	1.3%	0.4%	4
Other (please specify)	2.0%	1.9%	6
		TOTAL RESPONSES	301

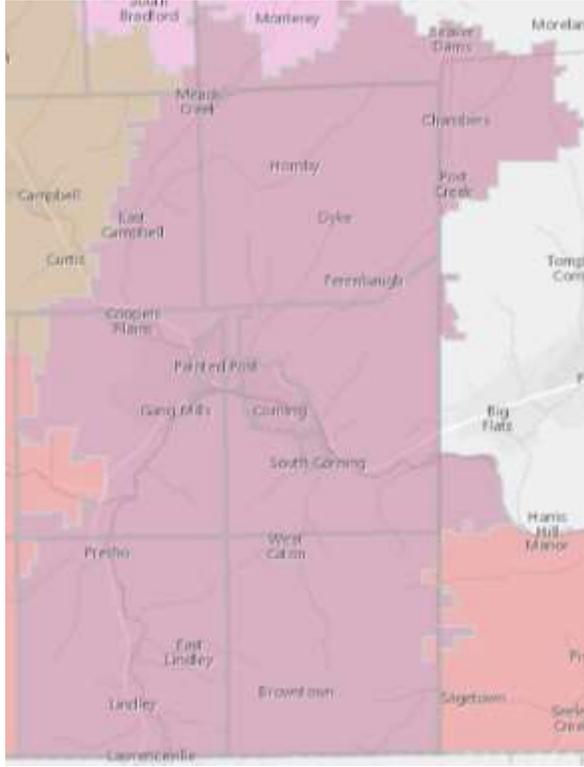
STUDENT RESPONDENTS			
	% of Student Responses	% of All C-PP Students	Response Count
Elementary	30.3%	44.6%	122
Middle	17.2%	21.0%	69
High School	52.0%	34.4%	209
Other	0.5%		2
		TOTAL RESPONSES	402

The numbers presented in the tables above show that some groups were somewhat under-represented including: parents from Winfield, Gregg, and Severn; Elementary and Middle School students, and employees from Winfield, Severn, C-PP High School and the Administration Building. Meanwhile, some groups were somewhat over-represented including: parents from C-PP Middle School and C-PP High School; employees from Smith, Gregg and C-PP Middle School, and high school students.

Community respondent distribution is presented in the chart below:



The District’s boundaries are presented in the following map:



Focus Group Respondents

The opportunity to participate in focus groups was offered universally to all members of all constituent groups through a variety of communication channels. When response to this offer was weak, district staff worked with schools to prompt participation among stakeholders. Early focus groups were attended by a rather homogeneous set of participants, raising a threat to content validity from the overrepresentation of shared views held by members of this homogeneous population. To offset this

validity threat, additional student groups were recruited to represent a broader variety of backgrounds and perspectives. In addition, each Board of Education member was interviewed individually. The following table shows the number of focus groups and interviews held by category of constituent.

CONSTITUENT CATEGORY	# OF GROUPS HELD	# GROUPS ATTEMPTED
High School Parents	1	2
Middle School Parents	1	2
Middle School Faculty	1	2
District Staff (includes PPS Group which maybe were mainly Elementary)	2	2
Secondary Staff	1	2
Elementary Staff	1 interview	1
Elementary Parents	1	2
High school Faculty	1 group plus 1 interview	2
Middle School Students	3	3
Elementary Faculty	2	2
School Admin	1	1
District Admin	1	1
Community	2	3
High School Students	6	6
Board of Education	9 interviews	9

Global Findings and Discussion

Findings of the survey and focus group data analysis that affect the C-PP community globally are discussed in this section.

Finding 1:

C-PP teachers, staff, leaders, parents, and students navigate a complex and diverse organizational-social structure in their schools that is influenced by internal factors related to social identity, and external factors related to educational accountability.

Finding 1 Discussion:

Organizational-Social Structure

A public school system encompasses a **diverse social landscape** including adults, children, and adolescents, and includes people of a variety of races, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, income levels, educational experience, and cultural perspectives.

Layered over that landscape is a **hierarchical organizational structure** that governs power and decision-making dynamics that in turn influence policies and practices within the schools. This organizational structure includes a range of employees including: administrators, bus drivers and monitors, cafeteria workers, clerks, coaches, custodians, general education teachers, instructional support staff, related arts teachers, resource officers, secretaries, and Special Education teachers. Additional stakeholders include Board of Education members, community-based organizations, general education students, parent leaders, parents/guardians, Special Education students, taxpayers/voters, and union leaders. A chain of decision authority in this structure includes points of engagement for voters, faculty, building administrators, and district administrators while ultimately resting with the superintendent and the Board of Education.

Complicating the social landscape is the fact that some (arguably many) **individuals who make up this organizational-social structure occupy multiple roles within it**. There are C-PP teachers who are who are parents of C-PP students (at least two that attended parent focus groups for this study), and, of course, C-PP students who are also children of C-PP teachers (at least one that attended a student focus group). There are teachers who are union leaders and teachers who are coaches. There are taxpayer-voters who are relatives of current C-PP students and parents of recent graduates. There are Board of Education members who are also parents of C-PP students and who are former C-PP teachers. The principal researcher of this study is also a parent of C-PP students and a parent leader involved with athletics.

With so many people occupying so many roles, **relationships** among coworkers cover the spectrum from people who are relatives by blood or marriage, people who were once married, people who are lifelong friends, former schoolmates, people who were once the teachers of current employees, and so forth. Similar patterns exist among students, parents, and Board of Education members.

Internal Influencing Factor: Social Identity

This analysis recognizes **social identity** as an internal factor that influences **interpersonal interactions** and **status relationships among peer and non-peer groups**, and it defines **social identity** as a **broad array of group or personal classifications used to describe or define self or others**. To learn more about the organizational-social context in C-PP schools, facilitators asked focus group participants which differences on a "diversity wheel" play a part in how people are treated in C-PP schools. The participants selected a wide variety of differences, including everything from appearance (11% of all selections) to geographic location (2% of all responses). Race, physical ability, sexual orientation, and age each accounted for 7% of responses, while personal habits accounted for 9% and personality and income each accounted for 8% of responses.

In general, focus group participants evaded the topic of racial diversity, which is unsurprising given the culturally rooted tension surrounding race relations in the United States and the negative stereotypes and implicit biases toward minority groups that linger in the American collective consciousness. Beyond exhibiting an apparent awkwardness about concepts of racial and social diversity, some participants in our focus groups denied altogether that differences play a part in how people are treated, expressing this in terms such as, *"I haven't witnessed any racism or anything across the board, and I don't hear about it across the board; and I think I would hear about that,"* and, *"I think in our building, people are pretty much treated evenly. It's pretty professional amongst each other."*

Instead, they discuss the dynamics of inter-group relations in terms of social identity and group status that spans a multitude of group types, including: athletes and non-athletic students; teachers and students; subject teachers and related arts teachers and support staff; people living on low incomes and the well-off; those with disabilities and those without; black and white students, strong and quiet personalities, people with a “bad” reputation and those with a “good” reputation, people with powerful friends and those who keep to themselves, and so on. These group labels turned up in responses when people in focus groups attempted to explain differences, sharing of responsibility, quality of relationships, and ways of earning trust.

Focus group participants who did touch on **race** paint a picture of a lack of understanding and a lack of competencies. For example, a student in a racially diverse focus group explained his¹ experience saying,

"In a way, I see the race thing going on. But not like persecuting, like obviously. Like I am friends with like a bunch of white kids - I will say it like that since it sounds stupid - and like I don't think there has been a day that I do not hear like some kind of black joke, but like not in a bad way. I think they're funny usually, but...yeah, it kind of pops up and you know and I hear like other religious jokes like Muslim and what not - but like in a harmless way, well, not harmless in case someone is offended, but they seem pretty harmless."

This statement encapsulates the self-consciousness with which participants approach the subject of race. While most adult participants sidestepped the question of race by instead discussing personality or group affinities, this student directly addresses the racial undercurrent of routine social experiences between black and white friends. In the student's words, it is evident that people struggle with how to act. The white students can't *not* put a spotlight on the black friend's otherness, and the black student can't judge this attention to his difference as negative...that is, to a point. He allows for the possibility of harm only in the case that, "*someone*," were to feel offended.

An additional theme that emerged in the focus group conversations and board of education interviews was the **lack of racial diversity** in the District, particularly among faculty, staff, and administration. Board members describe past, unsuccessful attempts to recruit non-white teachers and administrators to the District. While stakeholders do worry about a lack of in-group role models for non-white students, and believe the educational environment would be enriched by more diversity among educators, participants have little faith that diverse educators will be attracted to the C-PP area to live and work. At present, according to school district data, three percent of district employees are non-white, compared with 13 percent of the student body who are non-white.

Focus group participants also exhibit uneasiness when discussing **income differences**. In a student focus group, two students expressed a belief that some people, "*Think that because they have more money they think they are better than other people*," and another student chimed in to defend her wealthy friends, saying, "*Personally I don't have a lot of money Like most of my friends are wealthy. So I don't think [they] treat me differently or we don't do certain things because I don't have as much money I [don't] think our relationship is any different.*" On the same topic, a middle school parent noted, "*I don't think supervising adults intend that. They maybe don't know or notice. [In drama club] we learned that directions we were giving to students were maybe not well received*

¹ I do not know if this participant was male or female and I opted to use male pronouns.

because of differences in how they are spoken to at home. We changed and got them to open up and feel more accepted." Whether related to socio-economic status, racial diversity or other differences, stakeholders describe apparent bias, but they express doubt that individuals are conscious actors in it.

External Factor: Accountability Context

Systems of *accountability* at work in public education include standards-based student testing, school district report cards, and teacher Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR). In response, school systems establish practices used to measure and prove accountability such as student measures of academic progress, curriculum design, selection and sequencing, test preparation, student "tracking," teacher assignment, and use of technology. Together, these accountability systems and practices create a build-up of performance pressure that surrounds leaders, faculty, students, and parents alike. School, teacher and student quality all are assessed, at least in part, by student performance on standardized tests. The financial risk of low student test scores for schools and teachers is loss of funding or income; the financial incentive of high test scores and high class ranking for students is their competitive position for scholarship assistance to cover the increasingly unaffordable cost of a college education.

Since this accountability context arose in the era of "Race to the Top," U.S. Department of Education grants which incentivized use of these measures and practices through a competitive grant funding process, it comes as no surprise that a fast-paced academic conditioning program ensued in many school districts, including C-PP. In its efforts to hold itself accountable for the delivery of a high-quality education for all students, C-PP leaders have instituted internal processes and initiatives that, while substantively valuable, introduce new turbulence into a system that has not experienced states of equilibrium in some time. In the past three years, Corning-Painted Post Area School District has undertaken the merger and renovation of its high schools and middle schools, the implementation and corrected implementation of Engage NY learning modules, the definition and redefinition of curriculum matrices, the roll-out of a massive grant-funded technology initiative, and an Elementary School facilities upgrade. With each of these initiatives comes a need for staff adaptation to new instructional routines, new workflows and patterns of interacting with co-workers, new problems to address and processes to address them, and added avenues to engage in decision making. High school faculty discussed in a focus group examples of how the rapid pace of change has affected their experience at work, while also pointing out the benefits. One participant commented, *"I've been here 10 years and I've taught three different curriculums in the same course. I've taught three different algebra curriculums, and three different geometry curriculums. So it's hard to gain confidence if you have to change your curriculum every three years or so. So hopefully they'll decide to stick with this one."* Responding to this, another participant described work done by faculty to build curriculum matrices as well as to design positive extra-curricular experiences. At that point, another participant noted, *"And so to have all those focused directions, I think can be difficult to plan for. But with all of the achievements that our students are striving, and [earning], and being praised for -- and you see all those different things, so that's where the pride comes in, I think, from that end."* Similarly, elementary and secondary faculty discussed technology changes as both a challenge and an advantage.

In any system, periods of equilibrium are necessary, if only to allow for dissatisfaction to arise and create opportunity for punctuated periods of advancement. The recent pace of accountability-related change and adaptation advanced by C-PP leaders may be adding to the levels of pressure felt by staff to meet performance targets amid conditions over which they do not have full control ... pressure which, in turn, can be felt by students and parents. While faculty and staff express dedication to the shared goal of educational excellence, they seem to want better, not more. They experience stress particularly about any engagement expected of them that borrows time from the instructional day, especially if that time cannot be covered by a substitute who can deliver quality instruction.

Finding 2:

Corning-Painted Post Area School District is broadly viewed by its constituents as an institution that delivers an effective, high-quality educational experience characterized by student access to enriching opportunities and by mutually supportive relationships.

Finding 2 Discussion:

Majorities of all survey respondent types express at least partial confidence in C-PP teachers, leaders, policies, facilities, and curricula and tools used in the classroom. As an example, 81% of parents are partially or very confident that their child, *"Feels successful learning Math the way it is being taught in class this year."* The figure is 86% for English Language Arts. In addition, 71% of parents agree or strongly agree that, *"In general, a C-PP education prepares students for college, the military or the workforce after high school graduation."*

An Effective, High-quality Educational Experience

In focus groups, constituent groups with either a proximate or distant relationship to the District find it easy to talk about C-PP's positive attributes and successes. Those with more distant relationships discuss C-PP effectiveness in terms of student academic and athletic achievements celebrated in the media or that they are aware of through their own social networks. For example, one participant commented, *"I'll give just a general impression. I just remember, when I applied for colleges and universities, and I came from a big graduating class...and the number of people that went to Cornell or Ivy League doesn't match at all. What is coming out of the East and West and the Hawks...the proportion of kids that are going to top notch universities, it just blows my mind. I'm surprised at how many come out of Corning...absolutely."*

Those with closer relationships can point to specific attributes of the educational experience that lead them to conclude that it is of high quality and is effective. They attribute the District's success to dedicated teachers, expansive academic and extra-curricular opportunities, and strong, responsive leadership. As one student put it, *"... Academically, I think the school has set me up perfectly. They have a vast amount of range of classes for me to take. I want to study sports medicine and I can take anatomy, physiology, and sports comprehension here in high school which most [kids] have never heard of until they are in college. So, I am not worried because the school did a great job in setting me up academically."*

Participants also point to teacher quality and school/district leadership as cornerstones of a positive overall educational experience at C-PP. A middle school parent noted, *"Our daughter is in 7th grade and we have yet to hit that dud teacher. All the teachers...we have loved them; they're really great teachers, just fabulous. I feel so much warmth and love. I feel really good about the teachers and I get overwhelmingly complimented by them about her or whatever, year after year. That has to be coming from somewhere: leadership, building climate, management styles."*

In addition, people in the focus groups say C-PP compares favorably to other districts. One elementary parent pointed out, *"We specifically moved here at the time we did because this was the only school district in the region we felt could prepare our kids,"* and another chimed in to say, *"We did the same thing. Our son would have gone to private school in Dallas."* A community member in a focus group described how C-PP distinguishes itself to newcomers to the area saying, *"Our schools are good enough that the high taxes don't matter; here you get what you pay for. In the South, taxes are lower but a lot of people use private schools. ... The school district is a quality product but I would go on record saying I dealt with attracting people to the area and this District and Horseheads are where more people landed because it is so good. ... It's an exceptional school system."*

Access to Enriching Opportunities

Participants in focus groups praised the expansive list of opportunities offered in C-PP's secondary schools. The opportunities cited include the International Baccalaureate program, college-level courses, a broad array of electives, competitive athletics teams, state-of-the-art athletic and performing arts facilities, and student leadership in the areas of technology, journalism, music, and performing arts, to name a few. As one high school student explained, *"This is where a diverse group of kids can excel at basically anything. If someone cannot excel in one thing there is something else in the school..."* And a middle school student cited participation as a factor in school spirit, saying, *"A lot of people do take advantage of sports, drama club, National Junior Honor Society."* A middle school parent who is also a high school teacher noted, *"I think our district is amazing with extra-curricular opportunities with the play, tech, sports, different clubs. ... My colleagues I see in a whole new light now. Seeing them as a Dad, I say thank you for the energy and focus and commitment. I'm very happy with it."* Regarding extracurricular opportunity at the elementary level, a parent focus group participant said, *"I think the intramural program is really cool and should be extended to all the schools."*

Mutually Supportive Relationships and Leadership

Participants in constituent groups describe mutually supportive relationships within the schools and accessible, capable leaders.

A high school teacher noted, *"In this building, every email is answered that I'm sending to administration. They're constantly in the hallways. We had the ceiling drop right in the math hallway. We were out in the hallway, and it wasn't three or four minutes and we had Robin and one of our assistant principals there as well. So, I think the dean of students as well, very responsive here as well."*

A school administrator summarized this sentiment saying, *"I would say we're all very fortunate to be in the position we're in right now because, I mean, we work for a very good school district. We have*

strong leadership at the top and...believe it or not, we all get along well with each other and like working with each other, which makes your job a little bit easier."

An elementary parent declared, *"I feel like my input is valued; I've always had positive interactions. If there was an issue there was always a good response; I get feedback."*

High school students describe a, "school bond," arising from the opportunity to develop social skills. *"I think what she was saying about people skills. This is good for us being that this is a big school. You can always find yourself talking with someone new, those you have not seen or talked with before. For me, I like to talk with new people and I like doing this and the people skills help."*

A board member discussing District leadership, summarized, *"They really set the day-to-day example in leadership and team work. They are a very collaborative group, executing what is placed before them from the state and the Board of Education. They have their own connections to the buildings and connections to the leaders in the buildings."*

Subsequent to these favorable impressions about relationships and opportunities, and within the context of prompts about school spirit and sense of belonging, a number of focus group participants expressed pride in their school and in the Corning Hawks, while also noting that sense of belonging varies with levels of involvement.

Finding 3:

Tacitly held negative attributions about effort, responsibility, and fairness pose challenges for relationship quality and trust within the C-PP school community, while open communication about these concepts leads to alternative explanations and more empathetic views.

Discussion of Finding 3:

While majorities of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with favorable statements about safety, relationship quality, sense of belonging, respect for diversity and trust, average ratings on some components of these concepts and/or among some respondent groups fell in the neutral range, suggesting ambiguous views among some respondents. Respondents may find it hard to agree with a statement such as, *"I am on good, open and honest terms with the teacher or teachers working directly with my student at this school,"* if, for example, they are on good terms with some teachers and not with others. A similar quandary could be experienced by respondents on any survey question in the categories of school climate and trust. To gain clarity where ambiguity was present in survey results, focus group questions probed for understanding. These areas of ambiguity included: feeling heard and valued; feeling differences are respected; believing responsibility for student learning is shared appropriately among co-workers in buildings, assumptions about the effort level of people with mutual accountability for student learning (students, parents, and teachers,) and elements of trust including priority of interest, goal sharing, and fairness. Focus group discussions revealed that perceptions about sharing of responsibility, levels of effort made by others, and the fairness with which people are treated pose challenges to relationship quality and trust.

Negative Attributions, Relationship Quality and Trust

While many aspects of relationships across diverse age groups, income levels, racial / social identities, job levels, and interest groups throughout C-PP are described by focus group participants as prosocial and positive, **negative attribution** also emerges when participants discuss sharing of responsibility, observable effort, and trust. In social psychology, "Attribution theory deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment"² When the "social perceiver," attributes negative intent as the cause of the observed event, this report refers to this as negative attribution.

Negative attribution about **responsibility and effort** revealed in stakeholder focus groups poses **challenges to the relationship quality** so essential to student learning. While acknowledging variance in responsibility levels and individual capacity to shoulder responsibility, faculty participants describe a dynamic where their negative attributions lead to the assignment of blame for inadequate student outcomes. Amid comments such as, *"I hate that teachers get the blame for everything,"* and, *"There is a lot of blame and finger pointing,"* there is also recognition that people don't necessarily understand their counterparts' scope of responsibility, and can't truthfully claim to be able to reliably see evidence of effort and work. For example, one faculty member admitted to judging coworkers who leave the building empty-handed but another quickly pointed out that she has access to electronic files and works from home, *"But you wouldn't see it."* On the other hand, a process-related tool known as a, "tracker," allows teachers to see their coworkers' progress on instructional sequencing, which some teachers admit can generate judgments about coworkers who have not covered units at the scheduled pace. Considered alongside the reality that the teacher who did not hit the performance target may not be the same one held accountable for the students' academic outcomes, and the complexity and challenge of shared responsibility come to light. Also representative of negative attribution at play in the district, a school administrator expressed a general view that attributes to a group of people the intent to actively, "disempower themselves," rather than accept responsibility, *"And I find that people who feel powerless have a great capacity to complain. And so I think that's ...what you're seeing is people who disempower themselves by finding other reasons for success not being there."*

Student comments, too, reveal their perception that teachers attribute negative intent to explain student behaviors that detract from their learning. They describe ideal student-teacher interactions in terms such as, *"One-on-one. Like pulling somebody aside instead of embarrassing them in front of the class and saying something about how they're lazy or not going to school. Just pull them aside one-on-one and ask them how their life outside of school is going or like if they need any help here or there."*

Students attribute negative intent when they draw a distinction between people who, "Care," and people who, "Don't care." For example, students believe that school spirit is high among students who, "Care," but that there other students who, "Just don't care." Also, they express a belief that some teachers care and others don't with comments such as, *"Yeah, it's like they don't care whether you succeed or not. They're like, 'I don't care why your work's late, so I don't care why,'"* and *"Some teachers do not care and are snappy,"* and, *"Yeah, some teachers may not care as much as others. They may not care what some person thinks. If it's not affecting the teacher, it's not their problem."*

Negative attribution also **impacts trust** when constituents believe that **favoritism** directed toward certain individuals or groups, and **stigma** directed toward other individuals or groups, can explain the

² (Fiske, & Taylor, 1991), as sourced from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/attribution-theory.html>

inconsistent application of rules and policies that they observe and perceive as unfair. Representative comments include:

"If you have played sports or are a good student then you are favored." – High School Student

"I think some of it's reputation like I mean if like there's a kid that has a bad reputation...the teachers might treat him differently or that they expect a kind of behavior so they might...question it. Like I can walk down the hall and another kid will get screamed at for not having a pass. They smile at me and ask me how I am doing and don't ask me for a hall pass. Then I see them yell at others for not having a hall pass." – High School Student

"Where like from the start teachers are not really equal or they are equal in the class because like they'll treat one kid one way and then they'll allow another kid to slide and like not get punished for not doing their homework or something. And another kid gets their grade brought down because they didn't do it. Stuff like that. Like maybe their social status or like if they come to school a lot." – High School Student

"Consistency. Or, yeah, because seniority becomes a problem. Um, I mean, 'cause you've got to be consistent with how you treat this person versus this person. I mean...it's kind of black and white on that perspective...because if you allow so-and-so to take off for 30 extra days, but Joe is not allowed to do it, you know that's going to cause some issues amongst the morale at the school, teachers, and Aides and stuff. Um, so...people should be treated fair across the board, no matter what." – Secondary Staff Member

"I feel teachers [believe] I'm right you're wrong; I'm big you're little." – Middle School Student

"A lot of people didn't feel heard because it seemed like there was favoritism and unfair decisions: jobs, room assignment, team assignment, who got to go to a conference. It was predictable who would get their wishes and then others were asked to do things that didn't make sense." – Middle School Teacher

"I think there are people who have, um, a personal relationship with the principal. And therefore, they have their ear more often. And that is the person...that they're hearing. And they'll often follow their thoughts and opinions on what should be done. And um, there are people who are just working and just don't have time to form that relationship." – Elementary School Teacher

"We are a very, very – I don't want to say rich – but we have a lot of Special Education. ...So, you've got that population of students that gets a huge bit of the budget and then you've got the athletes. And then there's this group in the middle they're certainly good students but they may not be stellar. They might not be an athlete or band member or something and there is...they're just kind of there, like a middle child." – District Staff

"Parents [of lower socio-economic status] themselves are not nearly as respected or given the benefit of the doubt as higher SES. If a parent doesn't show up for meeting and they're from a lower SES background, it's expected and fulfills a belief. If a parent from a higher SES doesn't show, there is always an excuse and it's not viewed as negative until it happens repeatedly." – Elementary School Staff

"And so that creates some distrust, I think, in knowing that – I'm thinking from their perspective – 'I told him or her no and you said yes.' But people know there's avenues to go around and that creates distrust at that level, I'm sure." – School Administrator

Even while they question fairness or whether people are doing enough to support student learning, it appears that openly communicating about these issues led participants to check the appropriateness of the expectations held within the school building, and between home and school which led to the expression of **more empathetic views**. For example, during a discussion about outward signs of effort an elementary teacher volunteered, *"Sometimes I think we don't understand the pressure on parents. To us, maybe it's only 20 minutes reading or 10 minutes spelling or bringing in a cardboard box. Maybe we don't understand what we are asking of people; everything we ask them to do might not fit so neatly in their lives."* A high school student recognized the need to calibrate expectations, saying, *"I think a lot of us, like, put all the blame on the teachers but I think we need to take like a step back sometimes because I really did not think about how many students are coming to them on a daily basis."* In a discussion among middle school students about bullying, one student came around to the conclusion that, *"I think because people who are bullying don't know who the person they bully is; they don't know if they go home to a rough home or if they are dealing with anything rough."*

Finding 4:

The district has room for improvement when it comes to accountability, responsiveness, and communication.

Discussion of Finding 4:

Ambiguous survey responses (ratings in the neutral range) related to the extent to which people agreed that their opinions were heard and valued at their school and the extent to which people agreed relationships at school are positive. Focus group facilitators asked parents, teachers, staff, and students questions designed to shed light on why people might find it hard to agree with these statements. The ensuing discussions revealed the importance of accountability, responsiveness, and communication and suggest C-PP has room for improvement in these areas.

Many participants describe positive experiences of teacher, school, and District **responsiveness**. When people have a problem or concern, it is typically addressed. This responsiveness engenders trust and relationship quality. In addition, participants distinguish between, "being heard," and, "getting their way." In some groups, participants speculated that people may find it hard to agree their opinions are heard and valued because they didn't get the outcome they wanted. But comments made in the focus groups suggest that people are willing to accept a disappointing response, and still count it as being, "responsive," particularly if it is accompanied by an explanation of the constraints preventing their preferred solution. However, administrators and staff describe barriers to adequately explaining these constraints, *"I think, in many cases, they don't understand the bigger picture of all of the rest of the pieces that go in, to fit. So you listen, and you may or may not have the ability or the time to be able to explain to them all of those other moving parts but when they don't have an understanding of the way everything works together, and they don't get their way, then it feels like to them that they weren't heard."*

Accountability and responsiveness are two sides of the same coin. Both concepts relate to actions that people take. While *accountability* emerges from self-initiated action such as fulfilling responsibilities, expectations and promises, *responsiveness* is, by definition, a function of how a leader responds when someone else solicits an action, such as an employee, parent, or student request for problem-solving action.

By participants' standards, the cornerstone of both accountability and responsiveness is, "**follow-through,**" a term offered time and again. In this sense, accountability can be construed as doing what you say you will do. Faculty participants describe scenarios in which District leaders say one thing and do another, and they say the District could build more trust by being more accountable. For example, the District may ask for participation on decision-making task forces, but educators have the impression that, *"When they decide if they are going to do something, they just do it. Even when they put out a survey, they tweak results to support what they want,"* or, *"You know right now it's, all the decisions have been made and you're just a voice box going back to the building...it's hard to defend."* A staff participant commented, *"Trust levels will go up more if something actually comes from these Focus Groups. Because otherwise you know it was a lovely hour and a half of giggling but..."*

A related perception expressed by particularly elementary faculty is that meetings are not meaningful. After being asked to participate and devoting time to it, faculty members characterize committee meetings as, *"Wasted time,"* and, *"Less of a place where good discussion happens."* They see it as a missed opportunity to improve curricula. One representative comment was, *"Those committees determine the curriculum that they are going to use; the convener is responsible to be looking at what is up and coming; and the tools are all there, the information is out there."* Other examples of accountability disappointments included participants' expressed frustration about times when the District has strongly promoted a new initiative but the implementation falls short of the buildup, or contains wrinkles that suggest details were not given proper attention. For example, when the high schools were combined, teachers described having to, *"Get my classroom desks and chairs out of the garbage."*

Students have had mixed experience with getting a response when they have a situation to address. High school students articulate a variety of ways to get help and support from adults at school, and give examples of when this has worked well for them. On the other hand, there are times when they bring a problem to leaders and do not see resulting change. As one student put it, *"I've had like really bad experiences with a specific teacher. ...So the signs are clear she needs work and I say she needs to be organized. I have heard that they're not having good experiences (other students). It is times like this that you do not feel like you are heard. Your perspective, all of them, should be listened to. Those are good ideas that are missing."* A middle school student put it this way, *"I feel like adults have authority and they have enough of it that they can go to somebody and stop the problem but they don't use it, so I don't feel like they care."*

Communication

By participant standards, **communication** is the remedy for many wounds. In particular, people link trust and effort to communication. Even within the domain of service satisfaction, people link quality of service to communication. While constituents are quick to associate, "communication," with everything

from interpersonal relations to service quality to trust, they express a very broad continuum of actions that count as communication. In addition, they are wary to sign up for more email or more meetings.

Participants discuss communication both in general terms and in terms of specific actions. One action that is particularly emphasized is responding to email. This is especially true of coworkers throughout the district. People appreciate an **email reply** even if it is not a full answer or a solution to a problem. This sentiment was expressed in statements like, *"I would rather you tell me that you are busy and you will get back to me. I would like the answer but if you don't have the answer and you do not get back to me I am upset twice,"* and, *"Communication; administrators, faculty, and staff have a lot of students to deal with on daily basis. On the same aspect, where individuals come from...families in different circumstances such as caring for an aging parent; so what do they need to see? Just an email response; the communication piece."* Many participants noted that the superintendent responds to email in a timely fashion and also acknowledged that, because of duties away from a desk, many types of faculty and staff cannot answer email right away. However, waits of more than a few days for an email reply are seen as a dismissal of the person's need.

When it comes to **home-school communication, parents** believe that a variety of **communication actions** are expected of them including, *"Answer the phone, respond to email, read info that comes home, talk to student..."* In addition, they expect of the schools and district timely, practical communication. Their expectations include, to name a few: notification if the bus is ahead of schedule; a signature on teacher emails indicating the grade level and subject; advance notice of registration deadlines for tests such as PSAT, AP, etc.; advance notice of school-based meetings; pushed out communication of students' missing assignments and tardiness, information about student clubs. It may be true that the District and teachers do provide these types of notifications, but parents have a perception that, *"Unless you know how to find the information it is not easy. We need resources available somewhere that is easy to find."* **Teachers** discuss communication from parents as a buffer against assumptions they might make in its absence. For example, a teacher described a situation in which a student was not turning in homework assignments. She might have assumed that the parent wasn't making an appropriate effort to support the student at home had the parent not communicated the reason for the missed assignments. The parent had explained that homework can fall through the cracks on nights when she is called into work unexpectedly and has to gather the children in a hurry and bring them to the grandparent's house. Receiving this type of communication helped the teacher to understand the circumstances creating barriers to the parents' support of student learning at home. In general, too, teachers say that if a parent is checking in with them, it gives them assurance that the parent is invested and engaged in their child's education. Interestingly, students did not describe communication as a standard for trust, relationship quality, or any other domain.

Community members, as well as some other participants, believe they would participate as spectators in school-sponsored activities such as the play, sporting events, and fundraisers if they know about them ahead of time. They concede that this information is probably available online or through electronic newsletters but wonder, *"How am I supposed to know to go to the site and sign up for that?"* In addition, the community participants are interested in hearing about practical items such as, *"Changes that will involve us...like the construction and things like that,"* and *"Like for Head Start, they're just one piece, but we're in and out of the buildings a lot that we're kind of late finding out stuff, and they're changes that directly impact us."* There was no clear sign that one or two specific channels of communication would be effective in reaching everyone, as participants mused that some

people, *"Take the newspaper,"* and others do not. And, when it comes to social media, *"You would have to be into Facebook first of all; and then it would have to come to mind to look at the school district."* One participant summed up effective communication as, *"The rule of seven. You have to send it out seven times. Communicate, communicate, communicate."* Beyond earned and social media, community members say they interact with C-PP especially when students fundraise, and they believe that these interactions, along with athletic contests and music/theater performances, are opportunities to have drive-to-web postcards distributed to people who are not as connected with district communications vehicles.

Population-Specific Findings and Discussion

Finding 1:

Disparities in educational outcomes and access to opportunity exist for certain student groups.

Discussion of Finding 1:

Disparities in **educational outcomes** exist for C-PP students with disabilities and students with economic disadvantage, as these groups demonstrate proficiency on state ELA and Math exams at far lower rates than their counterparts at every grade level tested. As an example, 59% of general education third-graders are proficient on state ELA exams, while just 9% of students with disabilities are. In addition, 70% of students without economic disadvantage are proficient based on the same test while just 30% of students with economic disadvantage are.

While discussing the effect of policy on educational quality, Board members described a policy recently reviewed concerning approval of field trips. They framed this review in terms of equitable access to opportunities when these opportunities require families to contribute money. As one Board member put it, *"One big thing that has been a stickler has been the field trip policy; it has been about the haves and have-nots because of the level of field trips and the dollar amount. It's a true issue of fairness and equity. Some Board members have been sticklers: if the students are the center of all we do, how can we allow a trip when all students don't have access because of income?"*

In addition, survey and focus group participants alike reveal through their comments a perception that certain programs get more than a fair share of district budget spent on them which in their view reduces access to opportunity for students who are not a fit for these programs, which include: athletics, band, Special Education, and International Baccalaureate.

Finding 2:

High demand for and insufficient supply of qualified substitute teachers and technical support personnel has educational consequences in C-PP schools.

Discussion of Finding 2:

On the topic of access to substitute teachers and technical support staff, focus group participants described an **overall shortage of instructional staff capacity** in the schools. A Board member described a national trend of fewer people entering the teaching profession, saying, *"Another big issue is the declining teacher pool and our ability to hire dedicated, welcoming teachers. People aren't going*

into education so certain areas are hard to fill. Where in the past you had a big pool of candidates, now in some cases you have to take what there is and not always what we would like." This overall professional shortage affects the local recruitment of qualified substitutes because a key source for substitutes is student teachers. Another capacity-related issue that compounds a known substitute coverage problem is that several positions are now shared among two or more schools so that support staff are not as available as they had been in the past to assist with coverage. So, while access to substitutes has improved, participants say that the quality of substitute coverage has not. Based on participants' observations, strategies have been initiated by the District to address substitute quality, including incentivized pay for enduring or especially qualified substitutes. Another component of the problem is the level of demand for substitutes. Based on 2013 survey data, 124 C-PP teachers (35.6% of classroom teachers) were absent more than 10 school days. The rate of teachers absent more than 10 days was 38% in Horseheads Schools and 46% in Hornell schools.³ Whether or not the District's rate is at an acceptable standard, classroom coverage for at least 1,240 instructional days is the demand the District is attempting to meet.

Staff and faculty also discussed access to **technical support** for instructional technologies. The groups describe what appears to them to be a capacity shortage in technical support staff. On the other side of the equation, demand is intensified by the roll-out of initiatives such as One-to-One and Elementary Chrome Books. In addition, people relate practices that compound the problem. For example, staff are expected to enter a request for support and then wait patiently for the appointed helper to arrive. But they describe wait periods of three months or more and admit to by-passing the defined process in order to get help. One administrator explained, *"We're supposed to leave the tech guys alone, or women, when they come to the building and I'm sorry, I say, 'I need this fixed.' And I just ... I ask ... while I got him in the building. And we're not supposed to do that."*

In a teaching environment where educators are under pressure on a daily basis to meet pacing targets, disruptions to instruction caused by inadequate substitute coverage or long wait periods for technical support have **educational consequences** for students. First, when teaching assistants are pulled from one classroom to cover another, the class left without the TA has to adapt its routines, causing disruption to children's experience of instruction. The same is true for periods when instructional technology cannot be used as planned. Secondly, when teachers need to use substitutes, they cannot rely on any subject material being covered with students or even adequately reviewed due to the ill-preparedness of the substitutes they can access. As one Elementary teacher put it, *"I find ... a lot of them are uncomfortable teaching the math. And that becomes very stressful for them as well in the morning ... trying to figure out, how do you do this math this way? And we can't leave, um, vague math or review math and keep on our pacing schedule as well. So, that does become difficult, 'cause oftentimes they teach it incorrectly. And then you have to go back and reteach it anyway. So, that's not knowing what to do."*

As a practical matter, these instructional disruptions carry consequences commensurate with a student absence. Therefore, the number of a given student's absences could be added to that student's teachers' absences to arrive at a total number of days of missed instruction due to anyone's absence.

³ Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/flex/Reports.aspx?type=district>

Finding 3:

Middle school students have the impression that inappropriate behavior and bullying on the bus and at school are not effectively addressed.

Discussion of Finding 3:

Survey responses suggested that the majority (79.1%) of middle school students and fifth-graders agree or strongly agree that they, "Feel safe at school." On the other hand, in comments about safety and bus service, and on open-ended questions about how their school could improve, respondents describe bullying, fighting and poor treatment that is not effectively addressed. Therefore, focus group facilitators asked middle school participants to comment further on these issues. In the ensuing discussion, middle school student participants describe their view of unruly behavior on the part of some students and ineffective adult responses to that behavior. Representative comments include:

"I used to ride the bus a couple times and kids are completely out of control. It's not really different from hallways. There is language I don't like, bullying on bus, and nothing is done about it."

"Sometimes monitors don't handle things like they should. One time a kid was crying on our bus because a toy was taken away and he didn't get it back. She grabbed him by the arm and yanked him and told him she was going to kick him off the bus, then made him stand outside the bus. This was maybe a 2nd grader."

"It's mostly a kid issue; some of these children need to be disciplined. They need to be a little more disciplined with kids; the bus driver needs to harp on them."

"I think bullies continue doing stuff because punishments are really nothing. There is no lasting damage. They go to a room, make a plan, and then never follow it."

"I disagree that punishments aren't good enough; there are no punishments. They go up to ISP, lie to teachers, come back down, and hurt more people."

"Discipline is a big thing that needs to be worked on. A girl stabbed a pencil into someone's neck, she got two days of ISP, but her uncle pressed charges."

"I think that the spirit level is low because so many kids misbehave, and kids don't feel safe, and people just want to get out."

The disruptive or harsh behavior of some students is, at best, bothersome and, at worst, anxiety-producing for other students. In the limited view of adolescents, use of stricter discipline or "punishment," would correct the problems. The middle school has implemented a behavior response program designed to empower the offender to learn from past mistakes and grow. Because the results of this process are not immediate, offending students may still repeat troubling behaviors, leaving other students with the impression that the program is ineffective.

Another insight that emerged from this discussion is that several students report overcrowding on their bus. This was mentioned in survey comments as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion:

An effective education correlates to students' fitness for long-term survival and success in life. By establishing a system of tax-payer funded, tuition-free public education for all, the United States has demonstrated that it is in the national interest for an effective education to be universally available to all residents of this country. But the accountability systems designed to prove the effectiveness of public education have had the effect of creating a fast-paced, competitive academic environment in U.S. school systems that exerts pressure to perform on students, faculty, support staff, administrators, and parents. With competition comes winners and losers, and educational disparities exist to prove that advantaged groups achieve at higher rates than peers without advantage.

Although the Corning-Painted Post Area School District offers a broad range of opportunities that make for a high quality educational experience, and student outcomes are generally positive, performance pressure has prompted district leaders to advance a rapid sequence of initiatives to improve educational quality. In addition, C-PP is not exempt from achievement gaps as students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students demonstrate proficiency at far lower rates than their peers on state tests.

Within this micro- and macro-accountability context, a complex, diverse organizational-social ecosystem in the C-PP Area School District governs identity, reputation, and status, which in turn affect trust and relationship quality. Negative attribution, social identity, favoritism, and stigma appear to influence interpersonal relations, application of rules and policies, and access to opportunity. While many constituents describe positive, pro-social relationships, others describe blame, finger-pointing, judgment, and discouraging messages given to students at school.

Furthermore, in a teaching environment where educators are under pressure on a daily basis to meet pacing targets, anything that subtracts time from instruction produces teacher stress that might contribute to strained interactions among coworkers, between teachers and students, and between parents and teachers.

One hypothesis implied by the findings of this research is that, throughout C-PP, perceived contributors to school-wide academic achievement goals are favored while perceived detractors from these goals are stigmatized. Data collected for this research is not sufficient to test this hypothesis, but it is worth exploring in future research if the district deems it valuable. Further research could explore the questions: (1) Are adult and child contributors to school-wide achievement favored and are adult and child detractors to school-wide achievement stigmatized in the C-PP community? (2) Is the favoring or stigmatizing of individuals or groups a survival mechanism (subconscious or conscious) used to position oneself on the winning side in a competitive accountability environment? (3) Is there a relationship between the favoritism and stigmatization of individuals and groups and the existence of advantage-based disparities in educational outcomes?

Recommendations

Given the pace of change and the need for equilibrium expressed by constituents, this research concludes that it is not the right time to launch a large-scale initiative in response to these research

findings. However, systems theory suggests that small interventions often can have large effects in complex systems with multiple layers of bonded relationships, such as the C-PP organizational-social structure. In addition, interventions at the Board/admin/policy-making level and that involve non-faculty staff can be prioritized for early action. The District's next strategic planning process offers an opportunity to consider exploring the following recommendations:

1. Hire for social-emotional competence and work toward instituting a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) component into regular instructional practice.

- Explore recruiting and interviewing methods designed to produce insight about candidates' social-emotional intelligence and identify a practice to adopt immediately.
- Explore SEL programs that address ***both adult and child*** skill development. Select a program, then offer a book study or other low-commitment, overview-level learning opportunity on it to get feedback on how it might be received by staff if designated for future implementation. Here are a few options:
 - *Conscious Discipline* is one well-respected and well-researched option that transforms school climate and academic performance when fully implemented. It addresses the SEL of children and adults. <http://consciousdiscipline.com/research/>;
<http://consciousdiscipline.com/resources/implementation-guides-administrators.asp>
 - *FLIP-IT* is an easily-learned technique that incorporates SEL into everyday responses to child behavior, especially younger children but has been used with adolescents as well. <http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/flip-it/>
 - *Second Step* is an SEL program used in area schools. <http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step>
- Use curriculum team meetings to explore the above and other SEL approaches that could potentially be implemented district-wide.
- Begin implementation with bus monitors, ISS monitors, study hall monitors, and lunch/recess monitors.
- Examine student discipline data for trends and identify individuals or groups experiencing chronic reoccurrence of disciplinary actions.
 - Create response plans that address the underlying developmental needs of these individuals or groups.
 - Explore restorative justice approaches to the District's student discipline program.

2. Focus on single-loop learning in District performance improvement efforts.

Single-loop learning asks, "Are we doing things right?" while double-loop learning asks, "Are we doing the right things?" It would go a long way toward strengthening trust if administrators and faculty (not to mention students) felt they were given the time to master and improve upon the new practices that have been implemented in the past few years.

- Suspend scrutiny of the district's theory of change (the rationale for how its activities lead to certain results).
- Focus staff development activity on fidelity to existing curricular frameworks, meaningful teacher / staff collaboration, and skill development in professionals and students.

When conditions call for it, systems naturally move out of states of equilibrium through disruption and re-ordering. In the meantime, the conditions of the equilibrium allow for questions to arise that challenge assumptions about the rationale used for how district activities lead to the result of workforce- and college-ready students.

3. Review the mission, vision and core beliefs.

Periodic review of the language of foundational statements such as the mission, vision and core beliefs is an opportunity for the organization to test its own assumptions and assure its foundational statements accurately represent its intentions and activities.

- Examine the meaning of the foundational statements to ensure they connote concepts the District wants them to convey, and nothing it doesn't want them to convey.
- If stakeholders decide to revise the statements, include language that evokes and promotes a culture of equity, strengths-based development, and positive attribution (belief that others have good intentions.)

4. Create avenues for everyone to be equitably valued as contributors to the school community. The District has many strengths to draw on in responding to the findings of this research. Among them are overall educational quality, supportive relationships, strong leadership, and the power to provide a wide range of opportunities to students.

- Drawing on these strengths, district and building leaders must set the tone and example for a culture of equity throughout the district by treating everyone in a consistent, positive manner and applying / enforcing policy in a consistent manner.
- Structure the content of routine performance assessments to actively notice and celebrate the strengths exhibited by every individual; craft individual response plans that develop and apply strengths; emphasize intrinsic motivation
- Expand and fine-tune opportunities to appeal to a broader variety of student strengths beginning at the elementary level so that every student finds an avenue for contributing to the school's success.
- Designate some faculty meetings for attendance by instructional and other support staff to promote teamwork, shared understanding and sharing of responsibility.
- Assure meaningfulness of meetings requiring faculty participation.

5. Decrease demand for substitutes, expand access to qualified substitutes, and promote student attendance.

- Examine leave policy and forecast the potential net budget effect of allowing unused personal and sick leave to be converted to a summer pay allotment. Decide if a policy change is beneficial and, if it is, implement it.
- Develop a substitute preparation program and recruit job-seekers to participate.
 - Partner with Workforce New York and Child Care Aware to identify (and potentially train) suitable recruits. (Many family child care providers give up the role after having received training in basic health/safety, child development, and early literacy.)
 - Partner with retiree groups to identify suitable recruits

- Participate in national, state, or local initiatives that promote the teaching profession and that advocate for comprehensive, high quality teacher preparation programs.
- Examine student and teacher attendance data for trends and identify individuals with absence at a threshold of greater than 10 school days.
 - Create individual response plans for those with the threshold absence
 - Examine district attendance policies, structures and activities and revise accordingly to encourage more children to attend school more than 90 percent of school days.
 - Capture appropriate data to examine and scrutinize any transportation (missed bus) or scheduling (half days) issues that might contribute to student absence.

Appendices

Appendix I: Survey Data Summary

C-PP Area School District Constituent Research: Survey Data Summary

Spring 2017

Trends in Survey Data

Trends identified in the survey data informed the design of focus group questioning routes for deeper probing into the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of constituents. The survey was designed to capture constituent beliefs about **school climate**, **levels of trust**, **confidence in educational quality**, and **service satisfaction**. Each of these concepts was operationalized through a series of questions that were later indexed to arrive at an overall measurement of respondent perceptions of the concept. The trends identified in each of these domains of measurement are summarized in this section.

School Climate

The concept of *school climate* includes the following dimensions:

- Safety
- Sense of Belonging
- Quality of Relationships
- Avenues for Engagement
- Diversity
- Assumptions about Effort

The survey contained a series of twelve-to-fourteen questions on this concept for faculty and staff, parents, students in grades five through eight, and students in grades nine through twelve. Community members answered seven questions on this concept, covering the dimensions of *Sense of Belonging* and *Avenues for Engagement*, and one question classified under *Relationships*. In all cases, respondents expressed their level of agreement with the statements. Agreement was assigned values and calculated on a continuum where “1” equals “strongly disagree” and “5” equals “strongly agree.”

Safety:

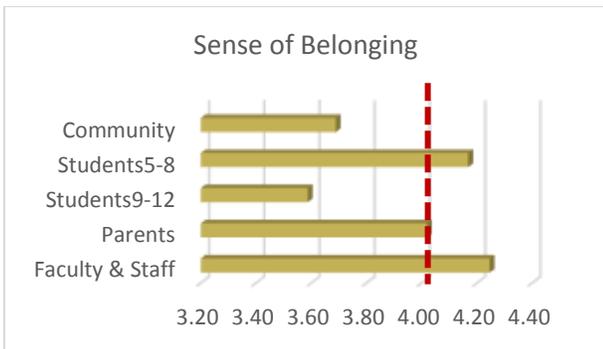
Includes expressed agreement with feeling safe in the building.



- Majorities (79-86%) of respondents in all groups agree or strongly agree that they or their student is safe at school.
- A somewhat slimmer majority (70%) of High School students agree they feel safe at school.

Sense of Belonging:

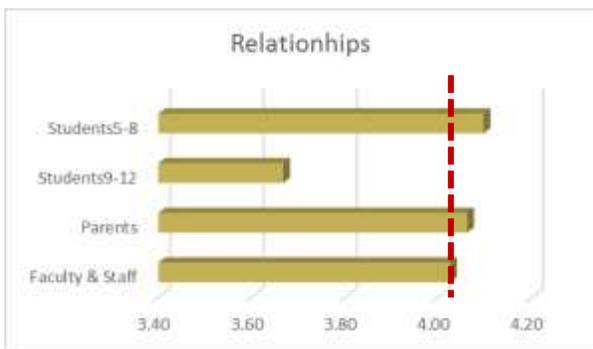
Includes expressed agreement with feeling welcome in the school, being a proud member of the individual school community, and being a proud member of the Hawks community.



- Majorities (54-89%) of respondents agree or strongly agree to statements about their sense of belonging. Slimmer majorities occur with high school student and community respondents.
- One exception is that only 44% of Community respondents agree they are proud members of the Hawks community.
- All groups except faculty feel more affinity for school than for "Hawks community."

Quality of Relationships:

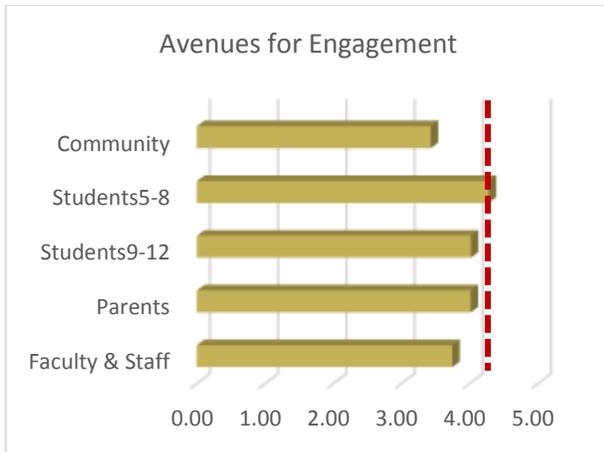
Includes expressed agreement with feeling opinions are heard and valued, and being on good terms with or feeling positive about relationships with others at school.



- Majorities (53-86%) of respondents agree or strongly agree to statements about the quality of their relationships, with slimmer majorities on questions about opinions being heard/valued.
- Students express more positive relationships with adults at school than with peers.

Avenues for Engagement:

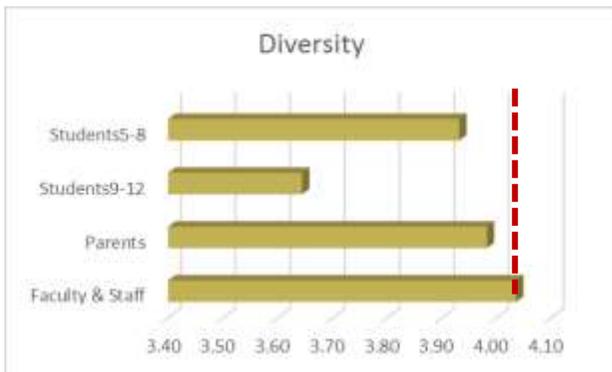
Includes expressed agreement with sharing of responsibility, understanding what is expected of you, knowing how to get help and support and, for community members, having opportunities to participate in decision making and support student learning.



- Except for community members, majorities (68-89%) of respondents agree or strongly agree to statements about being engaged with schools.
- Only 68% of faculty & staff agree that responsibility for student learning is appropriately shared among co-workers.
- Most community members do not see opportunities for individuals or groups to support student learning, but 55% agree that individuals have opportunities to participate in District decision-making.

Diversity:

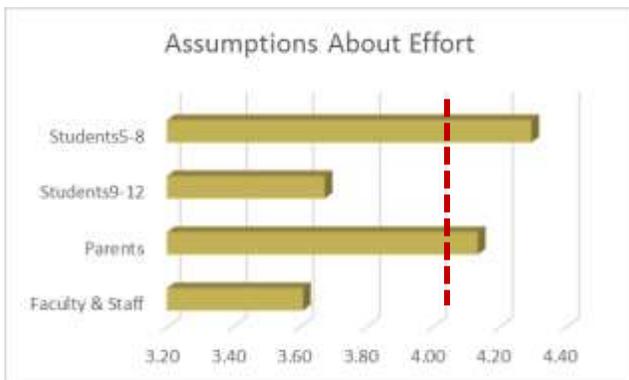
Includes expressed agreement that family customs and differences are respected at school.



- Majorities (57-84%) of respondents agree their customs and differences are respected.
- Only 57% of high school students agree their differences are respected at school.
- Across the board, there is less agreement that differences are respected compared with respect for customs.

Assumptions About Effort:

Includes expressed agreement that other constituents are trying their best to teach, learn, or support learning (as appropriate for the respondent group) and agreement that other groups believe they are trying their best.



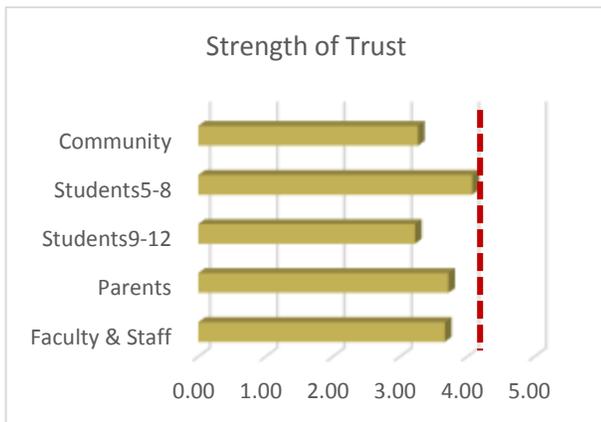
- Except for faculty's beliefs about parents, majorities (61-87%) of respondents believe others try their best.
- Only 43% of faculty members believe that adults at home try their best, but 82% of parents expect adults at school believe it.
- 61% of faculty members believe students try their best, but 63% of HS and 82% of MS students expect them to believe it.
- 84% of parents, 63% of HS students, and 87% of MS students believe teachers try their best, but 78% of teachers think these groups believe it.

Trust

The concept of trust was operationalized through combinations of four questions answered by adult respondents and three questions answered by student respondents. The set of questions differs slightly from group to group based on whether their relationship is direct with the district or with a particular school. Within each respondent group, questions were indexed together to measure strength of constituent trust as summarized in the chart and notes below.

Trust:

Includes expressed strength of belief that the District or School wants what is best for students, that the District attempts to balance employee and taxpayer interests and that the District uses resources wisely and for the intended purpose of educating students, that the District or School shares the same goals as the respondents, and that the District or School will treat the respondent fairly.



- Majorities (58%-78%) of faculty/staff, parents, and younger students exhibit trust in the District or their school. *(Staff answered about District.)*
- Overall, less than half of high school students and community members exhibit trust in the District or their school *(Community answered about District.)*
- On average, trust reaches a “strong,” level only for students in grades 5 – 8, and just barely.

Confidence in Educational Quality

The concept of “confidence in educational quality,” was operationalized on five dimensions:

- The expertise of teachers and leaders, plus the suitability of policies
- The effectiveness of the curriculum used in schools
- The adequacy of facilities and equipment for learning
- The presence of support in school for students as needed
- General belief that a C-PP education prepares students for college, military, or workforce

Respondents answered anywhere from eight to fourteen questions in the Educational Quality section of the survey, depending on their relationship with the school and student age group. (Younger students answered the fewest questions.) The questions were then indexed for average ratings on the dimensions listed above, and these averages appear in the charts below. The answer scale included five fixed choice responses: “not confident,” “partially confident,” “very confident,” “don’t know,” and “doesn’t apply to me.” Therefore, the confidence levels presented in the charts below occur on a three-point scale and have been averaged using the total number of respondents that expressed a level of confidence at all. Partial confidence is indicated as the target level occurring at the number two (2) on the scale. However, general belief was assessed in a different section of the survey (for reliability purposes) on a five-point agreement scale.

Expertise & Policies:

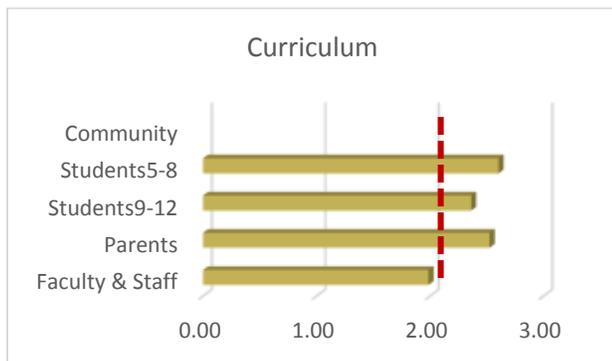
Includes expressed confidence that leaders and teachers have suitable expertise, that appropriate policies govern teaching and discipline, and that learning standards are appropriate.



- Majorities of all respondent types (56%-93%) express at least partial confidence in expertise and policies, including state learning standards.
- However, the slimmer majorities reflect somewhat lower confidence that state learning standards are appropriate.
- Among respondents, community members express the lowest levels of confidence in this domain.

Curriculum:

Includes expressed confidence in the appropriateness of materials and processes used in the classroom, the Engage NY Modules specifically (faculty & staff), in student ability to learn subjects the way they are taught (students & parents), and in the enriching effect of electives and specials.

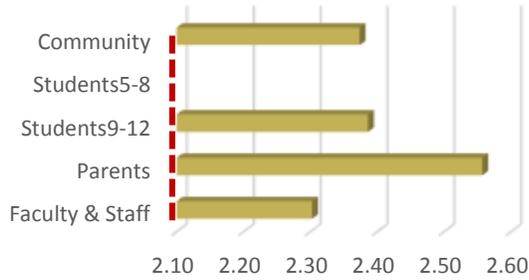


- Majorities of students and parents express at least partial confidence that students can learn subjects the way they are now taught.
- Fewer than half of faculty respondents express at least partial confidence that Engage NY Modules are accurate or effective, or they can effectively teach using them. (Comments suggest Math is better than ELA.)

Facilities & Equipment:

Includes expressed confidence in the statement that schools and classrooms are well designed and equipped for learning. Faculty & Staff also answered about their access to technology.

Facilities & Equipment

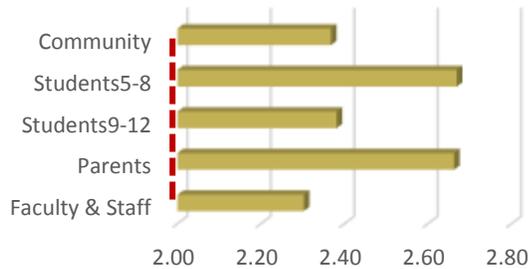


- Majorities (69%-87%) of respondents express at least partial confidence that schools and classrooms are well designed and equipped for learning.
- Among the groups, faculty and staff express the lowest levels of confidence in this dimension of educational quality.
- Parents express the highest levels of confidence.

Presence of Support:

Includes expressed confidence that, at school, students can access support for learning as needed. Parents also answered about their access to support for helping their student succeed.

Presence of Support

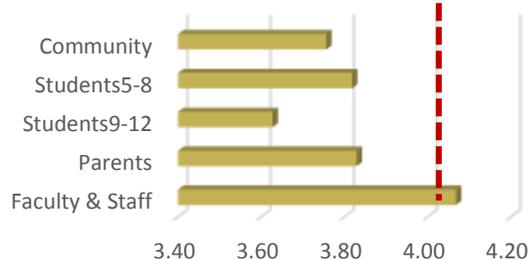


- Majorities (70%-90%) of respondents express at least partial confidence that students can access support/extra help at school for their learning.

General Belief that a C-PP Education Prepares Students for College, Military, or Workforce:

Includes one question assessing agreement with the statement that, in general, a C-PP education prepares students for these adult roles.

General belief in effectiveness of C-PP education (5-Point Scale)



- Majorities (61%-83%) of respondents express agreement that a C-PP education in general prepares students for future roles.
- Among the groups, faculty and staff is the only one that, on average, expresses agreement at 4 points or higher on the scale.

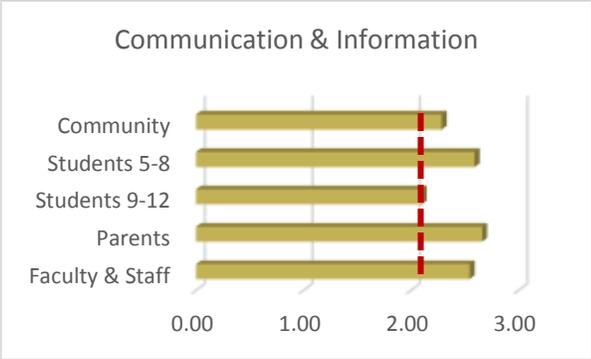
Service Satisfaction

Questions primarily presented in the “experience” section of the survey operationalized the concept of service satisfaction. Respondents used fixed choice responses on a scale including “not satisfied,” “partially satisfied,” and “very satisfied.” In some cases, respondents could choose as a response, “don’t know,” “does not apply to me,” and/or “I don’t understand the question.” In calculating averages for levels of satisfaction, these non-ratings were not included on the total number of responses.

All constituent groups answered three questions about communication, except younger students who answered two. Beyond that, questions for faculty and staff were unique to their relationship to the District and are therefore not compared with corresponding questions for other groups. Similarly, the set of questions about service satisfaction for community members is unique to that group. Students and parents are presented as comparison groups on the similar sets of questions they answered on the dimensions of Bus Reliability and Experience, Food Service Experience, and Extracurricular Opportunity. The following charts summarize the levels of service satisfaction for various constituents based on their relationship with C-PP Schools.

Communication and Information:

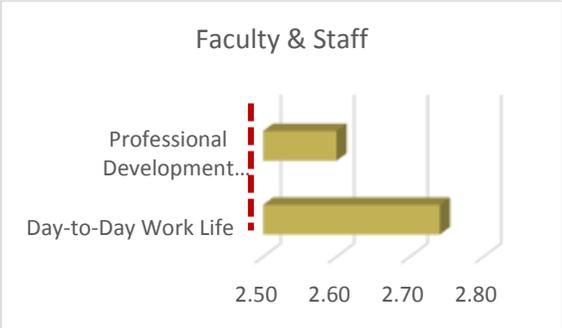
Includes expressed satisfaction with communication and information received from the District or School, ease of finding information with the tools available, and District or School responsiveness to questions/concerns.



- For the most part, majorities (61-95%) of constituents are at least partially satisfied with communication received, finding information, and responsiveness.
- Community members are less than partially satisfied with District responsiveness (only 36% partially or very satisfied.)

Faculty & Staff Employee Satisfaction:

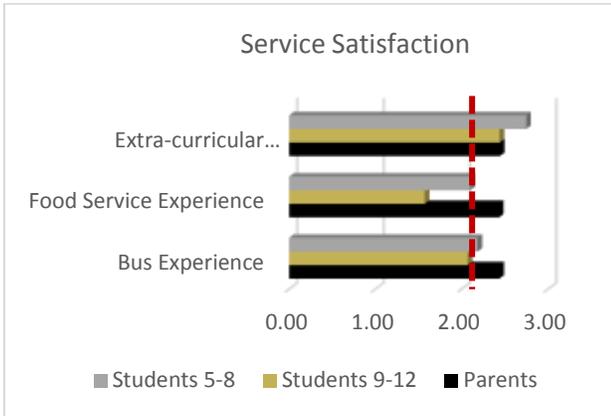
Includes expressed satisfaction with processes for requesting subs, time off, etc., and with opportunities for professional development.



- The most frequently selected response on these two questions was “very satisfied.”
- Comments suggest that, while the process for finding substitutes is satisfactory, the low availability of subs is a concern as this also has an effect on capacity of teaching assistants in their usual roles in classrooms.

Student & Parent Satisfaction:

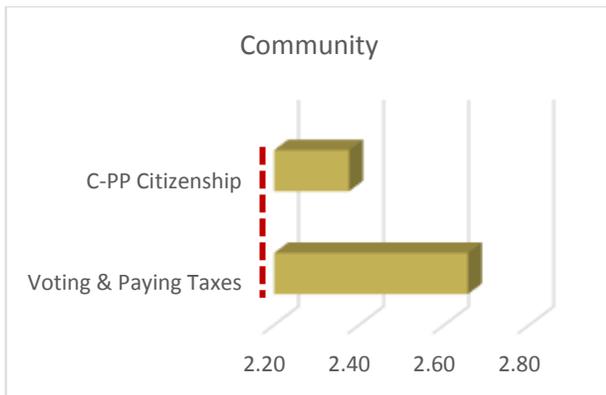
Includes expressed satisfaction with aspects of bus service, aspects of food service, and opportunities for extra-curricular involvement.



- High School students are less than partially satisfied with food service and just about partially satisfied with bus service.
- Majorities (85%-91%) of students and parents express satisfaction with extra-curricular opportunities.

Community Satisfaction:

Includes expressed satisfaction with voting (including convenience of polling places) and tax-paying processes, and with aspects of C-PP citizenship, including school-related neighborhood traffic and sales of C-PP buildings.



- The most frequently selected response on all questions in this domain was, "very satisfied."

Appendix II: Focus Group Data Summary

**C-PP Area School District Constituent Research Report
Spring, 2017**

Trends in Focus Group Data

Probing for Deeper Understanding of Survey Trends

The District’s research objective is to learn about opportunities to improve in the areas of school climate, trust, educational quality, and service satisfaction. Therefore, further probing was not warranted for areas where the district received highly favorable survey ratings. Focus group

questioning routes for employees of the district, students, parents, and community members addressed ambiguous or concerning survey ratings. As such, they were designed to really probe for problems even while survey results suggested a very positive overall relationship between the school district and its constituents. While each individual focus group question corresponded to a specific performance domain -- e.g., trust -- focus group discussions ultimately spanned these boundaries by evoking themes that apply in more than one domain. In particular, participants discussed the concepts of school climate and trust using similar terms and frames of reference. Therefore, these two domains are combined for analysis. In addition, while the objective of the research is mainly to learn areas for improvement, focus group participants by and large describe very favorable views of the District and the Schools. These favorable views are summarized in the following analysis under the heading, "C-PP Strengths."

C-PP Strengths

Focus group participants by and large express very favorable views about the Corning-Painted Post Area School District. In fact, people in early focus groups had so much positive to say about the District, it wasn't clear how easy it would be to learn how leaders could take steps to improve. Even when participants could identify a criticism to make, it often was delivered apologetically or with a caveat about the problem being an exception to an overall experience of quality. This section compiles participants' assessments of C-PP's strengths, which they framed in terms of **educational quality, access to opportunity, mutually supportive relationships, and leadership.**

Educational Quality and Access to Enriching Opportunities

Participants in all focus groups assess C-PP as delivering the highest level of quality public education in the geographic area. People in the groups who have had experience at other schools say there is no comparison. People flock to C-PP schools because of the District's expertise in the delivery of Special Education and also because of the expansive list of opportunities offered in the secondary schools. The opportunities cited include the International Baccalaureate program, college-level courses, a broad array of electives, competitive athletics teams, state-of-the-art athletic and performing arts facilities, and student leadership in the areas of technology, journalism, music, and performing arts, to name a few. Participants also point to teacher expertise and dedication as a cornerstone of a positive overall educational experience at C-PP.

In discussing confidence about being prepared for the future, a high school student commented, *"But academically, I think the school has set me up perfectly. They have a vast amount of range of classes for me to take. I want to study sports medicine and I can take anatomy, physiology, and sports comprehension here in high school which most [kids] have never heard of until they are in college. So, I am not worried because the school did a great job in setting me up academically."*

High school teachers discussing the challenges of adapting to frequent change in the instructional environment returned more than once to the mission effectiveness of that work with comments such as, *"But with all of the achievements that our students are striving for, and [earning], and being praised for ... and you see all those different things. So that's where the pride comes in, I think, from that end."* A middle school teacher inserted at the end of their focus group, *"I am young and*

inexperienced and I know there's room for improvement, but I love my job and I'm proud to say I work here. It's a pleasant place to come to work every day even if things are imperfect. I'm proud of the building and the opportunities for kids."

A community member reflecting on the overall effectiveness of a C-PP Education commented, *"I'll give just a general impression. I just remember, when I applied for colleges and universities, and I came from a big graduating class...and the number of people that went to Cornell or Ivy League doesn't match at all. What is coming out of the East and West and the Hawks...the proportion of kids that are going to top notch universities, it just blows my mind. I'm surprised at how many come out of Corning...absolutely."*

Mutually Supportive Relationships and Leadership

Participants in all constituent groups describe mutually supportive relationships within the schools and accessible, capable leaders.

A high school teacher noted, *"In this building, every email is answered that I'm sending to administration. They're constantly in the hallways. We had the ceiling drop right in the math hallway. We were out in the hallway, and it wasn't three or four minutes and we had Robin and one of our assistant principals there as well. So, I think the dean of students as well, very responsive here as well."*

A school administrator summarized this sentiment saying, *"I would say we're all very fortunate to be in the position we're in right now because, I mean, we work for a very good school district. We have strong leadership at the top and...believe it or not, we all get along well with each other and like working with each other, which makes your job a little bit easier."*

A middle school parent beamed about her experience in the school district, saying, *"Our daughter is in 7th grade and we have yet to hit that dud teacher. All the teachers...we have loved them; they're really great teachers, just fabulous. I feel so much warmth and love. I feel really good about the teachers and I get overwhelmingly complimented by them about her or whatever, year after year. That has to be coming from somewhere: leadership, building climate, management styles."*

High school students attribute describe a, "school bond," arising from the opportunity to develop social skills. *"I think what she was saying about people skills. This is good for us being that this is a big school. You can always find yourself talking with someone new, those you have not seen or talked with before. For me, I like to talk with new people and I like doing this and the people skills help."*

A Board member discussing District leadership, summarized, *"They really set the day-to-day example in leadership and team work. They are a very collaborative group, executing what is placed before them from the state and the Board of Education. They have their own connections to the buildings and connections to the leaders in the buildings."*

Subsequent to these favorable impressions, and within the context of prompts about school spirit and sense of belonging, a number of focus group participants expressed pride in their school and in the Corning Hawks, while also noting that sense of belonging varies with levels of involvement.

Areas for Improvement: School Climate & Trust

Two focus group questions in these domains inquired as to why someone might find it hard to agree with statements about *being heard and valued* and about *sharing responsibility* appropriately for student learning. Another question investigated the *role differences play in how people treat each other* in C-PP buildings. Parents and faculty/staff discussed the cues they use to assess *level of effort* on the part of others. In addition, all constituent groups received a question about what the district could do to earn more *trust*. Finally, students were asked about levels of, "school spirit," and other groups were asked about affinity for Hawks and school communities to assess their sense of belonging to the school or district community. Across multiple constituent groups, participants discussed these climate and trust concepts in terms of **accountability and responsiveness; communication; social identity, consistency, and fairness; and attribution.**

Accountability and Responsiveness

Accountability and *responsiveness* are two sides of the same coin. Both concepts relate to actions that people take. While *accountability* emerges from self-initiated action such as fulfilling responsibilities, expectations and promises, *responsiveness* is, by definition, a function of how a leader responds when someone else solicits an action, such as an employee, parent, or student request for problem-solving action.

By participants' standards, the cornerstone of both accountability and responsiveness is, "**follow-through,**" a term offered time and again. In this sense, accountability can be construed as doing what you say you will do. Faculty participants describe scenarios in which District leaders say one thing and do another, and they say the District could build more trust by being more accountable. For example, the District may ask for participation on decision-making task forces, but educators have the impression that, "*When they decide if they are going to do something, they just do it. Even when they put out a survey, they tweak results to support what they want,*" or, "*You know right now it's, all the decisions have been made and you're just a voice box going back to the building...it's hard to defend.*" A staff participant commented, "*Trust levels will go up more if something actually comes from these Focus Groups. Because otherwise you know it was a lovely hour and a half of giggling but...*"

A related perception expressed by particularly elementary faculty is that meetings are not meaningful. After being asked to participate and devoting time to it, faculty members characterize committee meetings as, "*Wasted time,*" and, "*Less of a place where good discussion happens.*" They see it as a missed opportunity to improve curricula. One representative comment was, "*Those committees determine the curriculum that they are going to use; the convener is responsible to be looking at what is up and coming; and the tools are all there, the information is out there.*" Other examples of accountability disappointments included participants' expressed frustration about times when the District has strongly promoted a new initiative but the implementation falls short of the buildup, or contains wrinkles that suggest details were not given proper attention. For example, when the high schools were combined, teachers described having to, "*Get my classroom desks and chairs out of the garbage.*" In addition, the history of the band's handling of the merger was raised. While the District was not blamed for that problem, it is notable that, along with logistical details of

the move, it remains on the minds of high school faculty. The combining of the high schools was not raised in a negative light by any other constituent group.

Faculty, staff and administration participants also describe **accountability** in general terms of fulfilling one's **responsibilities**. While acknowledging variance in responsibility levels and individual capacity to shoulder responsibility, participants describe a dynamic where perceptions about levels of effort, engagement and accountability lead to the exchange of **blame** for inadequate student outcomes. Amid comments such as, *"I hate that teachers get the blame for everything,"* and, *"There is a lot of blame and finger pointing,"* there is a recognition that people don't necessarily understand their counterparts' scope of responsibility, and can't truthfully claim to be able to reliably see evidence of effort and work. For example, one faculty member admitted to judging coworkers who leave the building empty-handed but another quickly pointed out that she has access to electronic files and works from home, *"But you wouldn't see it."* On the other hand, a process-related tool known as a, "tracker," allows teachers to see their co-workers' progress on instructional sequencing, which can generate judgments about teachers who have not covered units at the scheduled pace. Some teachers admitted to judging the prior grade teacher for not adequately covering material with students, and others spoke in general terms about high school blaming middle school, middle school blaming elementary, and so forth. To be clear, failure to hit instructional targets does have educational consequences for students, as teachers say they do not have time to re-teach uncovered content if they are to stay on pace with their own instruction in the current year. All other factors affecting student learning aside, a student can hardly be expected to learn something she hasn't been taught. Combine this with the reality that the teacher who did not hit the performance target may not be the same one held accountable for the students' academic outcomes, and the complexity and challenge of shared responsibility come to light.

Even while they question whether teachers and parents are doing enough to support students, participants also expressed a need to check the appropriateness of the **expectations** held within the school building, and between home and school. For example, a participant noted that a teacher may innocently enough hold a flawed expectation that any family can sit together at a kitchen table to look over materials sent home, not realizing that circumstances in many homes can't support such a scenario. One administrator described a communiqué issued to staff that conveyed, *"Change your lenses or walk a mile in somebody else's shoes... Don't be the watcher. We all have a job to do and when we all do it and we do it well, things are awesome. But when we're too busy worrying about what the other person is [...], then we're not doing."* The fact that such a communication was warranted underscores the point made by participants about, "finger pointing." Even a high school student recognized the need to calibrate expectations, saying, *"I think a lot of us, like, put all the blame on the teachers but I think we need to take like a step back sometimes because I really did not think about how many students are coming to them on a daily basis."*

Many participants describe positive experiences of teacher, school, and District **responsiveness**. When people have a problem or concern, it is typically addressed. This responsiveness engenders trust and relationship quality. In addition, participants distinguish between, "being heard," and, "getting their way." In some groups, participants speculated that people may find it hard to agree their opinions are heard and valued because they didn't get the outcome they wanted. But comments made in the focus groups suggest that people are willing to accept a disappointing response, and still count it as being, *"responsive,"* particularly if it is accompanied by an explanation

of the constraints preventing their preferred solution. However, administrators and staff describe barriers to adequately explaining these constraints, *"I think, in many cases, they don't understand the bigger picture of all of the rest of the pieces that go in, to fit. So you listen, and you may or may not have the ability or the time to be able to explain to them all of those other moving parts but when they don't have an understanding of the way everything works together, and they don't get their way, then it feels like to them that they weren't heard."*

Students have had mixed experience with getting a response when they have a situation to address. High school students articulate a variety of ways to get help and support from adults at school, and give examples of when this has worked well for them. On the other hand, there are times when they bring a problem to leaders and do not see resulting change. As one student put it, *"I've had like really bad experiences with a specific teacher. ...So the signs are clear she needs work and I say she needs to be organized. I have heard that they're not having good experiences (other students). It is times like this that you do not feel like you are heard. Your perspective, all of them, should be listened to. Those are good ideas that are missing."* A middle school student put it this way, *"I feel like adults have authority and they have enough of it that they can go to somebody and stop the problem but they don't use it, so I don't feel like they care."*

Communication

By participant standards, **communication** is the remedy for many wounds. In particular, people link trust and effort to communication. Even within the domain of service satisfaction, people link quality of service to communication. While constituents are quick to associate, "communication," with everything from interpersonal relations to service quality to trust, they express a very broad continuum of actions that count as communication. In addition, they are wary to sign up for more email or more meetings.

Participants discuss communication both in general terms and in terms of specific actions. One action that is particularly emphasized is responding to email. This is especially true of coworkers throughout the district. People appreciate an **email reply** even if it is not a full answer or a solution to a problem. This sentiment was expressed in statements like, *"I would rather you tell me that you are busy and you will get back to me. I would like the answer but if you don't have the answer and you do not get back to me I am upset twice,"* and, *"Communication; administrators, faculty, and staff have a lot of students to deal with on daily basis. On the same aspect, where individuals come from...families in different circumstances such as caring for an aging parent; so what do they need to see? Just an email response; the communication piece."* Many participants noted that the superintendent responds to email in a timely fashion and also acknowledged that, because of duties away from a desk, many types of faculty and staff cannot answer email right away. However, waits of more than a few days for an email reply are seen as a dismissal of the person's need.

When it comes to **home-school communication**, **parents** believe that a variety of **communication actions** are expected of them including, *"Answer the phone, respond to email, read info that comes home, talk to student..."* In addition, they expect of the schools and district timely, practical communication. Their expectations include, to name a few: notification if the bus is ahead of schedule; a signature on teacher emails indicating the grade level and subject; advance notice of registration deadlines for tests such as PSAT, AP, etc.; advance notice of school-based

meetings; pushed out communication of students' missing assignments and tardiness, information about student clubs. It may be true that the District and teachers do provide these types of notifications, but parents have a perception that, *"Unless you know how to find the information it is not easy. We need resources available somewhere that is easy to find."* **Teachers** discuss communication from parents as a buffer against assumptions they might make in its absence. For example, a teacher described a situation in which a student was not turning in homework assignments. She might have assumed that the parent wasn't making an appropriate effort to support the student at home had the parent not communicated the reason for the missed assignments. The parent had explained that homework can fall through the cracks on nights when she is called into work unexpectedly and has to gather the children in a hurry and bring them to the grandparent's house. Receiving this type of communication helped the teacher to understand the circumstances creating barriers to the parents' support of student learning at home. In general, too, teachers say that if a parent is checking in with them, it gives them assurance that the parent is invested and engaged in their child's education. Interestingly, students did not describe communication as a standard for trust, relationship quality, or any other domain.

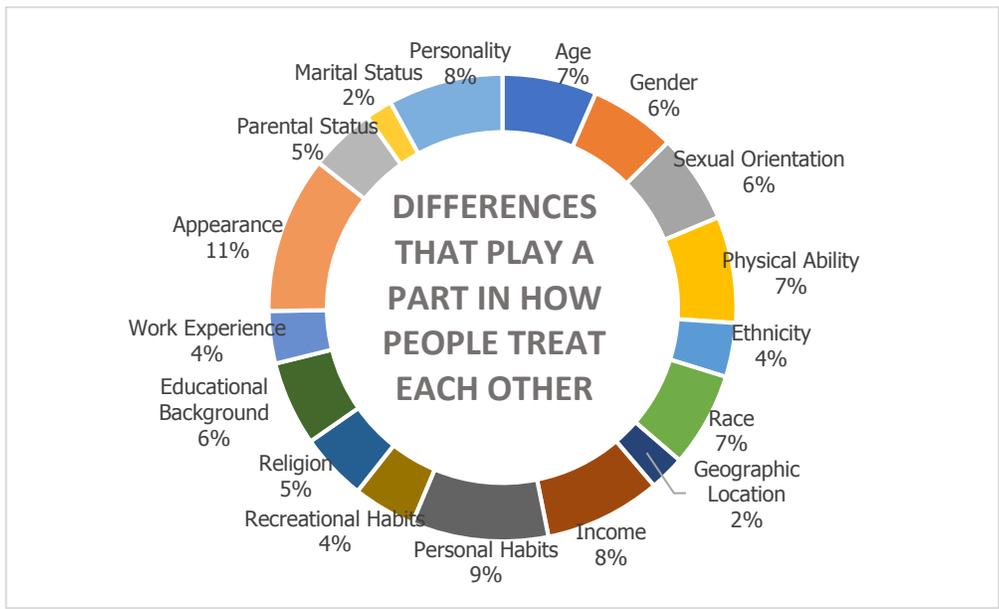
Community members, as well as some other participants, believe they would participate as spectators in school-sponsored activities such as the play, sporting events, and fundraisers if they know about them ahead of time. They concede that this information is probably available online or through electronic newsletters but wonder, *"How am I supposed to know to go to the site and sign up for that?"* In addition, the community participants are interested in hearing about practical items such as, *"Changes that will involve us...like the construction and things like that,"* and *"Like for Head Start, they're just one piece, but we're in and out of the buildings a lot that we're kind of late finding out stuff, and they're changes that directly impact us."* There was no clear sign that one or two specific channels of communication would be effective in reaching everyone, as participants mused that some people, *"Take the newspaper,"* and others do not. And, when it comes to social media, *"You would have to be into Facebook first of all; and then it would have to come to mind to look at the school district."* One participant summed up effective communication as, *"The rule of seven. You have to send it out seven times. Communicate, communicate, communicate."* Beyond earned and social media, community members say they interact with C-PP especially when students fundraise, and they believe that these interactions, along with athletic contests and music/theater performances, are opportunities to have drive-to-web postcards distributed to people who are not as connected with district communications vehicles.

Social Identity, Consistency and Fairness

If there is an area where the District and Schools lose trust and relationship capital with constituents, it is a function of **fairness** or, more to the point, a perception of **unfairness**. Participants of every stripe observe isolated situations where **rules and policies are inconsistently applied** and **opportunities are inconsistently accessible**, depending on **personal relationships** and **group status**. These personal and group affiliations relate to **social identity**, a concept that is explored first below as it relates to focus group discussions on the concept of "difference." Social identity is then explored as a factor in the fairness and consistency with which people are treated in C-PP institutions.

Social Identity

As a probe into issues surrounding diversity, focus group questions prompted participants to discuss how **differences** factor into the way people are treated in the buildings. Some groups were further prompted to think specifically about how difference factors into the *respect* that people receive. Participants were given a diversity handout and asked to check the types of difference that they see as factors in how people treat each other in the building where they have a relationship. The groups' responses are quite evenly distributed, as reflected in the chart below:



A number of participants skirted around the topic of difference, or, **diversity**. The topic can be sensitive or charged, and there are complex, culturally rooted reasons for that. Most Americans subconsciously harbor latent negative stereotypes of minority groups while at the same time internalizing group-based shame about the historically inequitable treatment of minorities by advantaged groups, such as whites. Implicit bias remains a part of this cultural subconscious, and is manifest in disparities in the health and educational outcomes experienced by minority groups. But, admitting that bias exists is taboo. For one thing, it comes across as an admission of moral failing. Secondly, admitting that bias exists agitates a comfortable belief among advantaged groups that all successes are the result of skill and effort alone and, by extension, that all failures stem from inability and indolence. What's more, we haven't been taught how to identify and process bias as society evolves toward greater multiculturalism.

When it comes to interacting with people who are different, focus group participants who did touch on race or disability paint a picture of a lack of understanding and a lack of competencies. For example, a student in a racially diverse focus group explained his⁴ experience saying,

"In a way, I see the race thing going on. But not like persecuting, like obviously. Like I am friends with like a bunch of white kids - I will say it like that since it sounds stupid - and like I don't think there has been a day that I do not hear like some kind of black joke, but like not in a bad way. I think they're funny usually, but...yeah, it kind of pops

⁴ I do not know if this participant was male or female and I opted to use male pronouns.

up and you know and I hear like other religious jokes like Muslim and what not - but like in a harmless way, well, not harmless in case someone is offended, but they seem pretty harmless."

This statement encapsulates the self-consciousness with which participants approach the subject of race. While most adult participants sidestepped the question of race by instead discussing personality or group affinities, this student directly addresses the racial undercurrent of routine social experiences between black and white friends. In the student's words, it is evident that nobody knows how to act. The white students can't *not* put a spotlight on the black friend's otherness, and the black student can't judge this attention to his difference as negative...that is, to a point. He allows for the possibility of harm only in the case that, "someone," were to feel offended.

Since **disparities do exist** in the experience of some student groups, questions about implicit bias must be raised. **Vast educational disparities** exist for students with disabilities compared with general education students and for students with economic disadvantage compared with peers who are not economically disadvantaged. As an example, 59 percent of general education third-graders are proficient on state ELA exams, while just 9 percent of students with disabilities are. In addition, 70 percent of students without economic disadvantage are proficient based on the same test while just 30 percent of students with economic disadvantage are. Similar gaps persist through grade levels and across subjects. The sample size was not big enough to register a comparison value of ELA proficiency for grade three students who are Black or African American.

An additional theme that emerged in the focus group conversations and Board of Education interviews was the **lack of diversity** in the District, particularly among role models. Board members describe past, unsuccessful attempts to recruit non-white teachers and administrators to the District. While stakeholders do worry about a lack of role models for non-white students, and believe the educational environment would be enriched by more diversity among educators, participants have little faith that diverse educators will be attracted to the C-PP area to live and work. At present, according to school district data, three percent of district employees are non-white, compared with 13 percent of the student body who are non-white.

Because bias is implicit and because it isn't talked about, it goes unnoticed. Accordingly, **many participants in our focus groups denied altogether that differences play a part in how people are treated**, expressing this in terms such as, *"I haven't witnessed any racism or anything across the board; and I don't hear about it across the board; and I think I would hear about that,"* and, *"I think in our building, people are pretty much treated evenly. It's pretty professional amongst each other."* Instead, they discuss the dynamics of inter-group relations in terms of **social identity** that spans a multitude of group types, including: athletes and non-athletic students; teachers and students; subject teachers and related arts teachers and support staff; people living on low incomes and the well-off; those with disabilities and those without; black and white students, strong and quiet personalities, people with a "bad" reputation and those with a "good" reputation, people with powerful friends and those who keep to themselves, and so on. Therefore, this analysis recognizes **social identity as a broad array of group or personal classifications that people use to identify themselves and that factor into their status with peer and non-peer groups.**

Consistency and Fairness

Focus group participants characterize social identity as a factor that affects the fairness with which people are treated. The following comments illustrate the types of observations that lead participants to express a belief that favoritism produces advantage for some groups and that stigma produces the unfair treatment of other groups.

"If you have played sports or are a good student then you are favored." – High School Student

"I think some of it's reputation like I mean if like there's a kid that has a bad reputation...the teachers might treat him differently or that they expect a kind of behavior so they might...question it. Like I can walk down the hall and another kid will get screamed at for not having a pass. They smile at me and ask me how I am doing and don't ask me for a hall pass. Then I see them yell at others for not having a hall pass." – High School Student

"Where like from the start teachers are not really equal or they are equal in the class because like they'll treat one kid one way and then they'll allow another kid to slide and like not get punished for not doing their homework or something. And another kid gets their grade brought down because they didn't do it. Stuff like that. Like maybe their social status or like if they come to school a lot." – High School Student

"Consistency. Or, yeah, because seniority becomes a problem. Um, I mean, 'cause you've got to be consistent with how you treat this person versus this person. I mean...it's kind of black and white on that perspective...because if you allow so-and-so to take off for 30 extra days, but Joe is not allowed to do it, you know that's going to cause some issues amongst the morale at the school, teachers, and Aides and stuff. Um, so...people should be treated fair across the board, no matter what." – Secondary Staff Member

"I feel teachers [believe] I'm right you're wrong; I'm big you're little." – Middle School Student

"A lot of people didn't feel heard because it seemed like there was favoritism and unfair decisions: jobs, room assignment, team assignment, who got to go to a conference. It was predictable who would get their wishes and then others were asked to do things that didn't make sense." – Middle School Teacher

"I think there are people who have, um, a personal relationship with the principal. And therefore, they have their ear more often. And that is the person...that they're hearing. And they'll often follow their thoughts and opinions on what should be done. And um, there are people who are just working and just don't have time to form that relationship." – Elementary School Teacher

"We are a very, very – I don't want to say rich – but we have a lot of Special Education. ...So, you've got that population of students that gets a huge bit of the budget and then you've got the athletes. And then there's this group in the middle they're certainly good students but they may not be stellar. They might not be an athlete or band member or something and there is...they're just kind of there, like a middle child." – District Staff

"Parents [of lower socio-economic status] themselves are not nearly as respected or given the benefit of the doubt as higher SES. If a parent doesn't show up for meeting and they're from a lower SES background, it's expected and fulfills a belief. If a parent from a higher SES doesn't

show, there is always an excuse and it's not viewed as negative until it happens repeatedly."
– Elementary School Staff

"And so that creates some distrust, I think, in knowing that – I'm thinking from their perspective – 'I told him or her no and you said yes.' But people know there's avenues to go around and that creates distrust at that level, I'm sure." – School Administrator

Community stakeholder open-ended survey responses also hint at an impression that the *athletics department receives more than a fair share of the budget. For example, one comment was, "It seems a disproportionate amount of money and effort are used for sports. Looking at the newly renovated high school one can see that sports is the main focus."*

Whether or not these perceptions of favoritism can be substantiated, focus group participants clearly link this belief to their assessment of the District's trustworthiness and of the quality of their relationships within the District.

Attribution

All of the foregoing summary of data relating to trust, school climate, social identity, and fairness converges in this section with additional descriptions of conflicted interpersonal relations. When considered along with the foregoing data, participant comments shed light on a culture in which it is common for people to make negative attributions about the intentions of others. In social psychology, "Attribution theory deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment"⁵ If the "social perceiver," attributes negative intent as the cause, he may be more likely to react negatively. The above sections document similar interpersonal dynamics in the *specific contexts* of accountability, social identity, trust and fairness. This section adds scenarios related by focus group participants that suggest negative attribution is at play in *general contexts*. The following are representative comments:

"They just are kind of like 'Well you're just skipping school because he just wants to and he's the one who is late...' They are not going to try to get involved. They don't care." – High School Student

"So at the high school I was only there my freshman year and I left. I was told by my English or History teacher that by the time I was like 18 years old I'd be a high school dropout living in a cardboard box and all this bad crap. But I mean I [am] 19 and I'm still in school but I'm going to be graduating soon. And you know up here they've just been really supportive. And really nobody's ever told me that I will be living in a cardboard box here so it's just nice to get the positive reinforcement/feedback." – HSLC Student

"One on one. Like pulling somebody aside instead of embarrassing them in front of the class and saying something about how they're lazy or not going to school. Just pull them aside one on one and ask them how their life outside of school is going or like if they need any help here or there." – HSLC Student

⁵ (Fiske, & Taylor, 1991), as sourced from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/attribution-theory.html>

"Again, like I've been bullied like before like when I moved here in third grade up until ninth grade when I was constantly bullied and I was pushed down the stairs and everything else. This happened in CFA when it was still open. And so like I think people are just like quick to assume than like really know. Because that's just how everyone was like taught." – High School Student

"I added 'social skills' on here. There's a lot of...very inconsiderate kids without any manners, that don't know how to talk nicely to each other...say please, and thank you, open a door, I mean, all the stuff that we were taught." – Secondary Staff

"I think because people who are bullying don't know who the person they bully is; don't know if they go home to a rough home, if they're dealing with anything rough. You tell and nothing is done and it repeats itself." – Middle School Student

"For some reason attendance always comes up now, at end of year. Maybe they've made angry calls, we send letters; pretty soon, we have conflict. We're in middle of a fight between a teacher and a parent and everyone has forgotten that the child has missed all of this curriculum, and all she knows is adults are angry." – Elementary Staff

"And I find that people who feel powerless have a great capacity to complain. And so I think that's ...what you're seeing is a people who disempower themselves by finding other reasons for success not being there." – School Administrator

"Some of the people who were the most – unhappy were – I don't know if they felt the office was someplace that they couldn't just stop in. We all have open doors. They all know how to make an appointment. We tell them that frequently. But they would rather do nothing and complain about it than to be part of the solution. Sorry." – School Administrator

From these comments, it appears that people make assumptions about what causes the behaviors of others without really investigating the cause of the behavior. They subsequently react to people based on those assumptions. In addition, there were additional comments about adults gossiping and arguing in earshot of children, and this was seen as negative role modeling by the people who observed it.

Areas for Improvement: Services and Educational Quality

During focus groups, students and parents discussed their experience with bus service, food service, and extra-curricular opportunities. District employees discussed their experience with substitute services and with technology services. Both groups also discussed curricular practices and tools. While some of the themes that emerged on areas of improvement were strictly service-related and did not impact educational quality (food service), others did have educational consequences (technology and substitute teachers). Therefore, the concepts are analyzed together in this section.

Services

The chief complaints about **cafeteria food** relate to its institutional nature. Students describe tough, chewy or soggy textures that they associate with the process of pre-cooking frozen foods

and then keeping them warm. They express a desire for healthier, fresher foods while also, paradoxically, comparing the palatability of cafeteria food to that of fast food, with fast food being viewed as superior in taste. Parents are skeptical about the availability of “junk food” offerings and wonder what rationale, if any, justifies their existence in the school cafeteria. Both groups have positive things to say about the variety of options offered in the cafeterias, but believe more variety would be welcome. The burrito bar at the high school seems to be a hit. The offering of water bottles received mixed reviews, with some people welcoming the access to bottled water and others decrying the cost.

One constructive criticism about **bus service** is that the buses are too crowded. We heard this particularly from middle school students, who represent a broad range of physical sizes and statures. A number of students describe a necessity to sit three to a seat, which is uncomfortable as it is, but then is complicated by the presence of book bags, athletic and musical equipment carried by many students on the bus. Middle school students describe chaos or antisocial behavior on some buses that is not well-managed by the bus staff. Others say their bus staff are too strict. Some students and parents describe unreasonably long bus rides and say that, given the length of some afternoon bus rides and early lunch times, snacks should be allowed on buses. One parent expressed frustration with missing the bus when it arrives early without notification, which was cited in the Communication section of this report.

People are by and large satisfied and impressed with **extra-curricular opportunities**. One high school student even said, *"This is where a diverse group of kids that can excel at basically anything- if someone cannot excel in one thing there is something else in the school that is there for them."* The one criticism brought up by Middle School Parents was inconsistent access to inter-scholastic and intramural sports. People question why there are not two basketball teams when there are two teams for many other sports. In addition, some families may find it hard to support participation in intramurals.

Educational Quality

Staff and faculty focus group participants discussed access to substitute teachers and tech support, and whether access to these services had improved since last school year. Views on whether access to substitute teachers had improved were mixed, with some saying it had improved, others saying it had not and several acknowledging that the use of teaching assistants and related arts teachers to cover staff absence is still an issue causing disruption in the instructional day. In addition, stakeholders in multiple constituent groups say the quality of substitutes is inadequate, even if access to coverage has improved. In the context of the substitute issue and elsewhere, faculty, support staff, administrators and Board members independently expressed a **shortage of instructional staff capacity** in the schools. One cause that was described is a national trend of fewer people entering the profession. It affects the local recruitment of quality substitutes because a key source for substitutes with knowledge of the field is teaching students. Another capacity-related issue that compounds the substitute coverage problem is that several related arts positions are now shared among two or more schools so that related arts teachers are not as available as they had been in the past to assist with coverage. Based on participants' observations, strategies have been initiated by the District to address coverage gaps and substitute quality, including staggered scheduling of teacher pull-outs and incentivized pay for enduring or especially qualified substitutes.

Another component of the problem to think about is the level of demand for substitutes. Based on 2013 survey data, 124 C-PP teachers (35.6% of classroom teachers) were absent more than 10 school days. The rate of teachers absent more than 10 days was 38% in Horseheads Schools and 46% in Hornell schools.⁶ Whether or not the District's rate is at an acceptable standard, classroom coverage for 1,240 instructional days (and counting) is the demand the District is attempting to meet.

These fluctuating patterns of classroom coverage have **educational consequences** for students in two ways. First, when teaching assistants are pulled from one classroom to cover another, the class left without the TA has to adapt its routines, causing disruption to children's experience of instruction. Secondly, when teachers need to use substitutes, they cannot rely on any subject material being covered with students or even adequately reviewed due to the inadequate quality of substitutes they can access. As one Elementary teacher put it, *"I find ... a lot of them are uncomfortable teaching the math. And that becomes very stressful for them as well in the morning ... trying to figure out, how do you do this math this way? And we can't leave, um, vague math or review math and keep on our pacing schedule as well. So, that does become difficult, 'cause oftentimes they teach it incorrectly. And then you have to go back and reteach it anyway. So, that's not knowing what to do."*

As a practical matter, use of a substitute equates to the loss of an instructional day for students in that classroom. That means that, as a theoretical exercise, the number of teacher absences could be added to a given student's absences to arrive at a total number of days of missed instruction due to anyone's absence.

Staff and faculty also discussed access to **technical support** for instructional technologies. The groups describe what appears to them to be a capacity shortage in technical support staff. On the other side of the equation, demand is intensified by the roll-out of initiatives such as One-to-One and Elementary Chrome Books. In addition, people relate practices that compound the problem. For example, staff are expected to enter a request for support and then wait patiently for the appointed helper to arrive. But they describe wait periods of three months or more and admit to by-passing the defined process in order to get help. One administrator explained, *"We're supposed to leave the tech guys alone, or women, when they come to the building and I'm sorry, I say, 'I need this fixed.' And I just ... I ask ... while I got him in the building. And we're not supposed to do that."*

In a teaching environment where educators are under pressure on a daily basis to meet pacing targets, slow access to technical support has **educational consequences**. One Elementary level teacher described an instance when the library computers required a system upgrade and student profiles to be re-set on the day her class was to take NWEA assessments. With nobody in the building to bypass or facilitate that process, it was a scramble to identify an appropriate course of action. No sooner had the teacher decided to return the students to the classroom for instruction, when they were called back to take the NWEAs. The slowly addressed technology situation resulted in lost instructional time, so cherished in the context of pacing accountability. In another instance, a high school teacher describes a lack of access to temporary computers for students with school-issued devices out for repair. *"Each student has a laptop. But when that laptop breaks, they don't*

⁶ Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/flex/Reports.aspx?type=district>

have loaners, or the loaners don't work right, or the loaners battery isn't working, or they bring in their computers like they're supposed to and it takes a week and a half to get back. And there isn't any -- I know my team's been asking for computers in the classrooms there's a couple for each team just so when this happens, if there's no loaner, we have one." Another theme that came up pertaining to technology was **inequitable access**. According to participants, the programs that have provided devices to students have not extended to students in Special Education. However, some of these students (15:1) have access to computers in the classroom, which one participant says is, *"Where the loaners went."* Students described as 12-1-1 and 8-1-1 do not have access to laptops.

Although discussed in a previous section in the context of fairness, the concept of **consistency** also arises in the context of educational quality when students and their parents experience inconsistent levels of instructional value depending on the school or classroom where they happen to be placed. In addition, teachers relate consistency to educational quality when they describe having disparate access to professional development opportunities, conferences and technological equipment and training.