



Tamalpais Union High School District

Listening Campaign Report Summary of Findings Based on Family Interviews San Andreas High School

November 16, 2011

Presented by:



**NATIONAL
EQUITY
PROJECT**

Summary of Findings: San Andreas High School

Overview:

The intention of a Listening Campaign is to capture the participants' thoughts, feelings, and questions about their experiences at the schools and in the district. Family members were invited to participate in one of several opportunities that took place during September and October of 2011. They were held both at each of the five sites as well as three neighborhood locations – Marin City, Tiburon, and West Marin. During the Listening Campaign, interviews were conducted in small group and, when requested, one to one formats. One hundred three parents in total participated in the Listening Campaign.

- Drake High School – 30 participants
- Redwood High School – 30 participants
- San Andreas High School – 9 participants
- Tam High School – 40 participants
- Tamiscal High School – 15 participants

Listening Campaign Guiding Questions:

A summarized version of the Mission statement with three guiding questions were offered as prompts for the conversation.

The Mission of TUHSD is dedicated to the development of creative, passionate, and self-motivated learners. Through this Mission, our community has defined TUHSD success as having all students being able to:

- Demonstrate mastery of core competencies
- Access and critically analyze information
- Pose substantive questions
- Communicate effectively

Therefore, we would like to know – what is your experience as it relates to the above?

- 1. What is working well at your school? (and who benefits?)**
- 2. What isn't working well at your school? (and who is impacted?)**
- 3. What would you change about your school for the Mission to be true for all students?**

Themes of Responses:

A team of coaches reviewed the transcripts of interviews conducted during the Listening Campaign to surface themes and patterns in participants' responses. The following themes emerged:

- 1. School Structure & Programs**
- 2. Communication**
- 3. School Connection to Parents and the Community**
- 4. Academic Experience of School**
- 5. Experience of the School Culture and Climate**

1. School Structure and Programs

The responses selected for this category indicate a range of participant perceptions, experiences and ideas related to the courses offered at sites, grading policies, curriculum, and scheduling. Parents express both appreciation for unique course offerings and programs as well as desire for greater variety to meet the diverse needs of all students. There is, again, a range of opinions around the current curriculum with some experiencing it as relevant and adequate for preparing students for college to others questioning its relevance and rigor. Courses and instructors seem to influence at least some of this variability. Parents at the alternative schools tended to report greater satisfaction with their children's schedules while parents at the comprehensive high schools tended to report a very full, almost unmanageable schedule for their children. The comments below are a sampling of the range and richness of the Listening Campaign data from across the five sites. And while this is not meant to be an exhaustive representation of peoples' experiences, it offers a window into how parents in the district are experiencing their school's structures and programs.

- I know that for my son what works is the small class size because there is more individual attention.
- One of the things I like is he also takes a class at Redwood. It is very different. It is a lot of work. I like him being able to mix Redwood with here, it is a really good balance. If it was more than 2 classes, he'd probably be snowed under again, but he is doing well. I'm happy he is taking the class, even if it is just the one, it helps prepare him.
- I think it is important that the district has this school. My son was getting more and more resistant to homework. He wasn't willing to participate – he would be in class and would read the material and assimilate it and pass the tests with As and Bs but he is frustrated by the structure of HW and views it as busy work that holds him back rather than solidifying his understanding.
- One of the nice things about not having homework, having the opportunity to get him involved in sports or other programs. He can also help out at home.
- I'd like him to have things to do after school, he used to be bogged down with HW so he couldn't do sports. The MCAL ruling is that if they are in school here, they can't participate in any sports. I think if you've come here and worked to get your grades up you should be allowed to participate.
- The career counselor helped my daughter get a job. That helped her build her social skills. The ability to have a job that puts her out into the community is important to her. If we were in a different school where she had HW, she wouldn't be able to do it.
- The teachers are excellent at drawing kids out. Here only complaint is that they don't have PE.
- The bus schedule makes for trouble when you have to wait an hour before the next bus shows up.

2. Communication

The responses selected for this category indicate a range of participant perceptions and experiences related to communication, both between the site and parents and between teachers and students. The use of technology to facilitate timeliness of communication as well as increase access to information has been met with mixed reviews. Some are definitely benefiting because of technological advances, while others have found technology to have created unintended consequences in communication. There seems to be a common request for consistency across the site in their use of technology for communication (posting homework and grades, for example). The variability in experience with communication tends to depend on the individual teacher. The comments below are a sampling of the range and richness of the Listening Campaign data and are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of peoples' experiences.

- I would like to know earlier – the day he is fooling around. He was 3 days behind before I heard from the teacher and it was already Friday night and he was out – that's my one thing to take away. When you see them falling back into the bad behavior that got him into the school in the first place – let me know – I don't want him to fall back.
- We don't know what the curriculum really is or what the kids are doing. We don't want to bug my son, but I don't know what he does in school.
- Some communication or involvement would be good, a meeting at the beginning of the school year ... they worked out the goals with the student and we were left out of that. It would nice to have a meeting to learn about those goals.
- I'd like to have an agenda, to know what my child is doing. If each of their teachers could provide something at the start of the year so I'd know what they are doing and the goals that are set for them.
- I would like to know more about what she is doing. I know they have 6 teachers, but she doesn't communicate with us, so I'd like to have a relationship with the teacher like I did in Elementary school.
- I'm trusting he's engaged and doing what he is supposed to be doing, but I don't know if I don't hear anything.
- In the bigger school they get lost in the mess; there's not communication with the parents.
- It was the first time that a teacher called to give me good news about my niece. She was a D and F student and they seem to be really helping her do what she needs to do.

3. School Connection to Parents and the Community

The responses selected for this category reflect the range of experiences, perceptions, and beliefs related to the connection parents feel to the school and the connection of the school to the broader community. Parents both took responsibility for their part in establishing and maintaining a positive and proactive connection with the school, and they also raised issues and requests for support from the site to facilitate such connections. In particular, families who do not live in the neighborhood of the school face challenges regarding transportation and communication. The comments below are a sampling of the range and richness of the Listening Campaign data and are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of peoples' experiences.

- There have been a couple of issues where he had the freedom and choice and I thought it was a parent/child decision. We need to be in a partnership to support my son.
- For parents too, here, we all seem to feel the same way. We have similar issues with our kids. In the other school we felt alone.

4. Academic Experience of School

The responses selected for this category indicate a range of participant perceptions, and ideas around students' and families' academic experiences of the school. Comments in this section refer to the academic aspects of school such as classes, instruction and homework. The comments below are a sampling of the range and richness of the Listening Campaign data and are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of peoples' experiences.

- I have no idea if he has something due or not – I don't want to micromanage and I appreciate the freedom. But he doesn't have tests and doesn't have HW – but isn't there something I should be bugging him about?
- My son was so deficient in his old school. He has now caught himself up. He could graduate early but I don't want to kick him out in the world yet so we're doing the college thing – he's taking a class at College of Marin.
- The kids don't bring their HW home, they do all of their work at school. Sometimes I don't think it pushes them very much, it is busy work and isn't necessarily relevant work.
- Here there is no note taking like when he was at Drake so he can't work on that goal. What happens when you go to college where you have to take notes?
- It was a wonderful day when my son came home from school and told me he realized he wasn't stupid. In the big school, if you ask a question and don't get it, they move on or you don't ask because you look stupid.
- I have two boys and have learned that boys and girls learn differently. Meeting children where they're at. How do we get the schools to meet the boys where they are at?

5. Experience of the School Culture and Climate

The responses selected for this category indicate a range of participant perceptions, experiences and ideas related to the school culture and climate. Comments about environment, inclusiveness and personalization are examples of elements included in this school culture and climate section. The comments below are a sampling of the range and richness of the Listening Campaign data and are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of peoples' experience.

- My son, after being here for a week said, "you're going to go meet my chill teachers". He hadn't liked his teachers since he was little. It was impressive how well his teachers knew him after only a week.
- Teachers are very engaged and know how to reach the kids. They want to know how they are doing. They don't go to a parent to raise a concern first, they go to the child and call the parent if they feel they need more support.
- There are a lot of kids here who have problems and bring a lot to the table, so she doesn't feel so odd with all that she is dealing with.
- My husband's concern was that this school wouldn't prepare our son for college. In my mind, this kid has been under a lot of stress and this is his way of telling us (he stopped doing HW). He was pretty good before about getting to school, but he was never happy, it was not a positive. Now he feels he has a say about what he is doing, he is able to do it, and he's getting feedback about what he is doing. Some pressure has been taken off him and now he can focus on building some skills other than doing HW.
- The sensitivity of the students here is good. Every kid who comes here has struggled in one way or another so they don't give each other a hard time.
- Her second week here, her math teacher told me she didn't turn in a paper from the day before. That's what my daughter needed. I like the communication the teachers do have with the parents. I was able to get up on my daughter after that phone call from her math teacher. I'm feeling like it's going to be a good school year. She's talking about school, what the teacher said, I've never had that experience before.
- My son also finds the teachers interesting and engaging. I didn't get that before, he'd say "I'm just a number, they're just getting a paycheck". I don't necessarily feel that way, but something is happening here so he feels that he knows teachers want to be here, they want him to be successful.

