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Media Contact:
Maggie Reynolds
Public Information Specialist
208-332-6976
mreynolds@sde.idaho.gov

Surveys: Parent and staff satisfaction is up, students in grades 3-8 are more engaged

BOISE – The latest State Department of Education survey results show that the satisfaction levels of Idaho parents has increased since 2021, as has the level of engagement for students in grades 3 through 8.

Idaho high school students, who were added to the SDE surveys in 2019, continue to report much lower engagement than their younger counterparts. School staff satisfaction remains above pre-pandemic levels in spite of a small downturn from 2021.

The engagement surveys evaluate students' curiosity, involvement with and optimism about their schools. Surveys given to parents and staff measure satisfaction with the tools, support and overall instructional environment in Idaho schools. All three surveys are conducted each spring in accordance with Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra's accountability plan to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The surveys were not conducted in 2020 due to the pandemic.

"Measuring the success of our schools takes a lot more than just test scores," Superintendent Ybarra said. "These surveys give us a way to ask more than 'how are you performing?' They give our communities a chance to express how they feel about Idaho schools."

The 2022 results for students show marked differences between students in grades 3 through 8 and those in grades 9 through 12.

Grades 3 through 8 showed improvement in overall engagement compared to 2021 numbers. The 2022 survey drew 121,604 respondents, up 3 percent from the previous year. Their overall engagement was 53.5 percent, up slightly from 53.2 percent in 2021. But results have not yet rebounded to pre-pandemic levels: 58 percent of students in grades 3 through 8 reported overall engagement in 2019.

For students in grades 9 through 12, overall engagement dropped 12 percentage points – from 43.1 percent in 2019 to 31.1 percent in 2022. In 2021, overall engagement in grades 9 through 12 was 32.2 percent. The 2022 school year saw 68,401 students in grades 9 through 12 respond to the survey, up from 65,974 in 2021.

"Looking at these results, especially for our high schoolers - it's clear that the pandemic had a significant impact on how our students are feeling day-to-day in school, which certainly does not come

as a surprised given the turmoil of the pandemic years,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “It’s encouraging to see engagement and participation in the survey are both beginning to rebound among third through eighth-graders.”

“And we’re seeing a rebound in satisfaction from our parents and staff, including results that exceed pre-pandemic levels,” the superintendent said. “That’s something to celebrate, since both groups have great impact on students’ morale and outlook.”

Staff satisfaction remains above pre-pandemic levels, despite a downturn in participation and reported satisfaction since 2021. The number of staff members completing the survey dropped 8 percent, from 21,245 to 19,451 in 2022. Overall, 75.9 percent of staff report satisfaction, down from 79.3 percent in 2021, but still above 2019’s pre-pandemic level of 75.7 percent.

Fewer parents responded to the survey last spring than in past years, but results show a rise in overall satisfaction. This year, 45,735 parents took the survey, a 10 percent decline from 2021. However, parents’ overall satisfaction came in at 75.1 percent, up from 74 percent in 2021 and 74.5 percent in 2019.

“Though it’s clear that there is still work to be done, these results should lend Idahoans some comfort,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Our educational communities are healing from the enormous disruptions of the past two years. As we continue to move toward normalcy both in and out of school, I believe we’ll continue to see improvement in all areas – from test scores to engagement and beyond.”

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Attached: Parent, student and school staff survey results