**Blake Middle School 2013 Parent/Student Survey**

**Executive Summary**

The Blake Middle School Site Council conducted a survey in February 2013 that gathered information to examine current practices with a goal of finding out how to better meet the needs of our students. The focus areas of the survey were: Academic Expectations and Student Stress; Balancing Middle School with Student Life; Peer/Teacher Connections and School Communication. The response rate of 82% provided substantial information from parents and students by grade. As it was the second year of conducting the survey, comparisons were possible from the prior year’s results. The data was statistically analyzed, discussed and recommendations were made. Below is a summary of some of the key results and actions that have been taken or will be implemented in the coming year.

The questions in the survey category of Academic Expectations and Student Stress focused on homework, time management and study skills. The majority of parents and students reported spending 1 – 3 hours doing homework per night. A concerted effort to review homework practices has been conducted for each grade to promote meaningful assignments. In addition, “No Homework Weekends” have been implemented on designated dates to provide a well-deserved break for the students. Students and parents alike also reported needing assistance in the areas of studying and test preparation. Teachers and administrators are currently discussing how they can better guide parents and students in those areas. Additionally, best practices will be shared with students in class and a parent forum to offer strategies to help their children succeed will be offered in the spring. Lastly, the utilization of school and teacher websites had mixed responses on the survey between parents and students. We strongly encourage using the websites that are full of pertinent information, assignments and references. Any feedback or problems accessing the websites should be reported to the teacher or administration immediately.

Balancing Middle School and Student Life was the second survey category which attempted to identify issues created by schoolwork conflicting with extracurricular activities, screen time, and family time. Blake Middle School students are very busy, with a great majority involved in extra-curricular activities during the week and weekends. Finding the right balance between homework and activities can be challenging. Further study is warranted to identify what is a good balance and setting a clear expectation for students and parents to guide them. Assistance with time management as it relates to advance studying had a high response rate, similar to last year. This will be addressed in the study skills best practices research and parent forum mentioned above.

The survey category for Peer/Teacher connections and School Communication included questions about contacting teachers, the role of guidance counselors, access to school administration and general school information. In response to some confusion brought to light by the survey, the role of the guidance department has been presented at Parent Information Night. The guidance counselors have conducted topical workshops, open session coffees, and email updates on current events for parent information. Students and parents are strongly encouraged to contact their guidance counselor with any questions or issues as needed. Additionally, as a community, we would like every student at Blake to have at least one adult at school with whom he or she can talk to for any reason. A Student Connectedness Survey was recently done to have each student identify an adult at school they can talk to, with the goal that they have at least one connection. The results of this survey will be reviewed in the coming months and actions taken as needed. Lastly, school communication, which continues to evolve, had very favorable survey responses again in 2013. Blake information is available in a variety of channels including the district and school websites (Medfield.Net), principal’s blog, Twitter account (@nat\_vaughn), teacher websites, newsflashes and email.

We are very appreciative for all those who completed the survey and provided very useful information. In February, we are requesting that you complete the 2014 survey that will be similar to the last two years with a few refinements. Thank you for helping the administration and Site Council gather information to enhance current practices at Blake Middle School.