**Blake Middle School Parent/Student Survey**

**2011-2012**

**Executive Summary**

The Blake Middle School Site Council conducted a survey in February 2012 that gathered information to examine current practices for better meeting 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. With a successful 77% response rate, we compiled substantial information from parents and students by grade and by gender. The data was statistically analyzed and discussed at length by the Site Council. Below is a summary of some of the key results and actions that have been taken and will be implemented or examined 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 time spent nightly on homework, as reported by both parents and students, indicated that the majority of students are spending 1-3 hours per night. Grade level and departmental expectations for homework are being discussed and will continue to be examined in a thoughtful manner throughout the next academic year. Stress caused by homework was reported for many students and warrants further investigation to determine strategies for reducing it. Use of the school website is highly valued, however more information was requested, including homework assignments and academic curricula. This year the website has been enhanced to include homework assignments sorted by cluster, and teachers are putting more information online for student reference. To reduce stress related to studying and testing, study skills will be specifically addressed in classes and parent workshops will be offered to help parents support their children with study strategies.

Balancing Middle School and Student Life was the second survey category. It attempted to identify issues created by schoolwork that conflicted with extracurricular activities, screen time and family time. Generally, answers to these questions show a positive balance among schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and family time. Screen time was harder to clearly define, so the answers for parents and students were inconsistent. While using computers to complete homework or access school websites is necessary, screen time for social media, gaming, and videos can be distracting and needs to be limited. These questions will be clarified in our next survey to obtain clearer answers and to ascertain the balance of school and student life.

The survey category for Peer/Teacher connections was extremely important as we endeavor to value each and every student. While the survey results were very positive, we are committed to making a best effort to ensure every student feels connected at Blake. It is imperative that everyone feels valued by teachers, peers and the administration, especially as the students move from grade 6 to grade 7 to grade 8. Each student should have at least one adult at school with whom he or she can speak comfortably for any reason. This year we will be asking parents to discuss this matter with their children at home, and teachers will be including this important message during Advisory sessions.

The final survey category, School Communication, included questions on contacting teachers, the role of guidance counselors, access to school administration and school information. Most respondents reported satisfaction with communication, but a need for a better understanding of the role of guidance counselors was indicated. Going forward, the guidance department will be offering parent forums by grade at the beginning of the school year to clarify their role, communicate grade-level expectations, answer questions and address concerns for the upcoming year. Communication is constantly improving at Blake with newsflashes, the new principal’s blog, continual website enhancements, teacher accessibility through email, and social media such as the principal’s twitter account.

We are very appreciative of all those parents and students who completed the survey. When reading and analyzing the information included in this report, it is important to keep in mind that this is one set of data from the 2011-2012 school year. We are committed to distributing the survey annually to look for trends, patterns, and changes in our data. At the beginning of February, we will be requesting that you complete the 2013 survey, which will be similar to last year’s, with a few refinements. Thank you for helping the administration and Site Council gather information to enhance current practices at Blake Middle School.