Coatesville Area School District

Communications Audit

June 2021

Prepared by: Trapani Communications

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Table Of Contents

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Introduction - Goals and Methods

The Coatesville Area School District is a district that enjoys tremendous community pride and has many dedicated and talented staff and faculty members. Many CASD students excel, and school community members overwhelmingly point to the diversity in the student body as one of the district's greatest strengths. Over the last decade Coatesville has weathered its share of challenges, including a significant leadership scandal, a Grand Jury investigation, several racial incidents, financial struggles, administrative changes, and charter school flight that threatens to bankrupt the district. Despite this, many in the community still steadfastly support the district and want it to succeed.

The research conducted for this audit shows that communication is a growth area for all parts of the district. While many pointed to improvements in communication over the last year, there is still much work to be done. Coatesville, like every school system in the country, faced enormous challenges during the pandemic. Planning for and communicating information about school reopening plans in a timely manner was critical and took priority over nearly every other communication need.

As CASD emerges from the pandemic, it's important for the district to communicate with parents about post-pandemic plans for the coming school year, as well as to capitalize on a captive audience to strengthen both internal and external communication.

Communications Consultant Beth Trapani has been working with the Coatesville Area School District to provide communications support since just before the pandemic began. It is the goal of this communications audit to provide a comprehensive analysis of the district's communications strengths, gaps, and opportunities for growth.

More specifically, the goals of this audit were to:
- **Seek data, opinions and perceptions from all major stakeholder groups.**
- **Determine themes and potential communication gaps.**
- **Propose recommendations for ways in which to improve the effectiveness and management of communications based on gathered data and information.**

The National School Public Relations Association conducts extensive research nationwide and finds a strong correlation between high-achieving school systems and those that intentionally focus on proactive, planned, inclusive communications. As communication in a school district increases and improves, employees, parents and community members tend to feel more informed, involved, and invested. Ultimately, this often leads to higher student outcomes and support for schools.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

At the same time, school districts are limited in their resources and must carefully choose how they will leverage their communication time, energy, and resources. Often, simple changes and systems can be put in place that cost little money or time but reap huge payoffs in terms of the ability for audiences to feel informed and have a chance to dialogue with school administrators and school board members.

Good communication flows from strong leadership. Most of the recommendations in this audit will only be successful if the responsibility for them is shared by the district's administrators, as well as those appointed to assist in the implementation of them.

Finally, it should be noted that when school systems undertake a communications audit, it's assumed they wish to view the system and its work through the perception of others. However, whenever opinions are solicited there can be a tendency to dwell on perceived problem areas. This can help to guide improvement. It's also important to recognize the good work of employees, the positive attributes of the system, and the support of the community. It is obvious from surveys and focus groups that there is a tremendous amount of pride in the Coatesville Area School District.

It's important to recognize the community support the district enjoys, as well as the good things happening and the great work being done by the kind, caring and skilled educators and staff members who work for the Coatesville Area School District.

Scope and nature of the study

This report presents the findings and recommendations from 8 focus groups and a total of 1,431 surveys, for a total of about 1,525 different voices:

- 640 **parents** out of a possible 3,660 families responded – 17% response rate;
- 276 **staff members** out of a possible 638 – 43% response rate;
- 418 high school **students** out of a possible 1,715 - 24% response rate;
- 68 **community members** out of a possible 24,766 - .002% (statistically insignificant)
- 29 **Spanish surveys** out of a possible 410 contacts in the district's messaging system that have chosen Spanish as their primary language - 7% response rate

The focus groups were each approximately an hour to an hour and a half long, conducted in April 2021 over Zoom by Beth Trapani. Participants were identified by administrators, with direction that was provided by Trapani Communications. It was recommended they make an attempt to choose a diverse group instead of selecting people who are always quick to volunteer and lead initiatives.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Groups varied in size from 6 to 20 participants (average size was 15), and participants were instructed to speak freely without fear that their comments would be attributed to any one individual. Many participants were very forthcoming and quick to respond with praise, criticism, and suggestions for improvement.

The same basic questions were put forth to each group, such as:
- What is your overall perception of the school district?
- What kinds of communication are working well?
- What could be better?
- Do you feel informed?
- Does anyone solicit your feedback or input?
- Where do you get information about the district and where/how would you like to get information?
- What changes do you think the district could make to improve communications?
- What are your priorities for areas of improvement?

From these questions sprang a lot of facilitated conversation as the group drilled down to specifics in some areas that were clearly important to them. At times, conversations veered into directions that were not germane to communications (e.g. administrative direction or lack of direction on a specific topic, programs that are or are not offered, etc.) This is a common challenge in school focus groups. As much and as quickly as possible, participants were redirected back to the topic of communications. However, some of the topics explored do overlap with communications and it's nearly impossible to explore communications without also discussing the district's programs and initiatives.

The information gathered in the focus group was used to help inform survey questions. Surveys were distributed electronically to four different groups: staff, parents, students, and community members.

Some notes regarding the focus groups and surveys:
- The response rate to the communication surveys was fairly low. It's recommended that the district survey annually to evaluate its communications efforts and any potential changes. Survey participation may increase as the district improves communication and outreach.

- The surveys did not drill down very specifically at each school level. Future surveys can focus on school-specific information if the district choses to do so. It's recommended that a first-time survey focus more generally on the *district* culture as a whole. However, some survey responses did identify issues at specific schools and levels.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

- Surveys were not distributed via paper, due to pandemic challenges and a lack of time for data analysis. However, it's clear that in order to more fully reach some families and community members, paper outreach may be required.

- The open-ended comments at the end of the surveys contain a lot of information and suggestions. Its recommended administrators read these comments. These will not be made part of the public report since some contain sensitive personal information related to personnel and/or students. Many do not pertain directly to communications and instead focus on operations, teaching, programming, management, etc.

- Despite many challenges, support for the school district is generally strong, and all groups pointed to the excellent staff, students, and parents, and said they felt proud to be a member of Coatesville Area School District community. They want to see good things for their district and are willing to help support it in its efforts to improve.

- It should be noted that a separate marketing plan has been submitted to the school district with strategies and tactics aimed at better promoting the district and recruiting students to help stop charter drain. Marketing and Communications are closely related but also separate functions.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

1. ***All communication efforts must be tied to the district's goals and objectives.***
   Communication efforts must be driven by the district' overall mission, goals, and objectives. They should be designed to support student success as well as engender community support and engagement. Communication should be a part of every administrator's goals, as well. Effective communication should be embedded in the operations of every department. This will require some training and ongoing discussion.

2. ***Internal communication must be a priority.***
   School systems that are most effective in communicating externally have strong internal communication systems, as well. It's important that staff and faculty feel informed, understand the district's goals, hear about district news before the external public (whenever possible), learn about initiatives while they are still in development, and have opportunities for input. The district should set norms and expectations for internal communication. It should be imbedded in employee expectations. Even the most robust and prolific communications department and plan will not be able to compensate for regular deficits in day-to-day internal communication.

3. ***The district should work to ensure communication is an integral part of any plans for changes, improvements, initiatives, etc.***
   Each major initiative or change should have its own simple communications plan (that includes internal and external communications), and that plan should be shared with administrators to ensure that everyone is operating with consistent messages and information, and understands who is responsible for each part of the communication.

4. ***Technology should be used to support an efficient, timely and effective system of communication.***
   The district should continue to work to refine its use of its website, email, texting, social media, and other means of communicating through technology.

5. ***Good communication practices begin with administration.***
   Coatesville's administrative teams can embrace and model good communication. Their communication should be proactive, thorough, collaborative, inclusive, and transparent. Emails and phone calls must be returned in a prompt fashion, there must be a concerted effort to communicate decisions and updates to all of those affected from the outset, and ideally, those affected should be part of the decision-making process whenever reasonable and possible.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

1. **Communication in the district is often perceived as disorganized, reactive, and last minute.** This follows the sense that planning is not occurring in a timely manner, and decision making is not collaborative or inclusive.

2. **There's a lack of consistency in communication.** While some information and areas are clearly communicated, others are not - or feel very rushed. While some schools, administrators, and teachers seem to communicate thoroughly and effectively, this experience is not consistent throughout the district.

3. **Internal communication is the largest area of weakness.** Staff report feeling uninvolved, uninformed, and not valued in part because they don't receive information as a priority audience or in a timely manner. Staff have said repeatedly they don't know who to contact in district office since employees frequently change, there's no staff directory, no organization chart on the website, and no information about administrative leadership.

4. **Staff want more involvement in decision making.** Staff are eager for information and participation and would like more collaboration across departments and grade levels.

5. **Nearly every audience would like more communication from the School Board about the decision-making processes and the business of the Board.**

6. **The district and school websites are disorganized, confusing, and don't provide enough information.** The template is limited and outdated, but there's also a lack of useful, updated information.

7. **Parents, staff and community members still prefer email as their first choice for communication, followed by text messages and the district website.** Many said they were frustrated that social media has become the primary source of information for the community.

8. **There's a desire by all parents, staff, students, and community members and agencies/organizations to be more involved with the district's decision-making, promotion and partnership of the school district.** As the district emerges from the pandemic, there's an opportunity for renewed connections and involvement.

9. **There's a sense from all groups that the district should focus more of its communication on academics.**

10. **There's a tremendous amount of community pride, and people want to see the district and its students succeed.**

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

This report contains more recommendations than can be accomplished in a single year. It is recommended that the district identify target areas to address each year and build them into a Strategic Communications Plan.

Recommendation 1: Hire a full-time Community Relations and Communications Director

The district has been operating without anyone in this role on a full-time, in-district basis. Trapani Communications has been providing pandemic-related and general communication guidance, direction, and services, and is available to continue to develop higher-level projects, executive-level communication, crisis communications, communication plans, promotional videos and materials, and general support. The district needs someone who can be on-location, consistently in the district, to perform a wide variety of daily tasks and manage a number of projects including: development of 'positive news' district newsletters, website updates, social media updates, positive-news photos and videos, meetings with community groups, parent support/volunteer organizations, and support for the district's new education foundation.

For the last few years, Melanie Crescenz, the superintendent's former administrative assistant, has been performing many of these duties, most notably publishing a weekly, online newsletter that focused on the many positive things happening in the district. This newsletter was noted numerous times in staff and parent focus groups, and has been well received. She has also maintained the district's social media pages. She continued with her work on these projects after transferring to the human resources department, but as of July 1, 2020, is no longer able to work both full-time in human resources and spend time on these efforts.

A majority of school districts in Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery County do have someone in this role. If communication is truly a priority for the district, a full-time, on-site employee should be allocated to these efforts.

Recommendation 2: Commit to a change in culture with regards to communication.

Any culture change in a professional organization must originate with leadership. No singular person on the team can be responsible for a systemic change, shift, or improvement in communications. It must be shared by all of the district's administrators and eventually, other staff members. *"How will we communicate about this?"* should become a question administrators regularly ask of themselves and each other.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Recommendation 3: Improve and strengthen internal communication.

Employees who are involved in decision making, who are informed, and who feel valued, function more effectively and are more supportive of their district's efforts. The internal framework of communication is the infrastructure that supports all external communication efforts. When an issue emerges or when the district begins to communicate about a decision or issue, it's essential the communication process begins with staff. Staff should also receive notification *before* parents about most issues.

Suggestions for action include:

a. **Make a greater attempt to involve employees in decisions that impact them.**
   Morale often hinges on whether employees believe their concerns are heard and respected. Administrators can solicit their input via committees, surveys, focus groups, etc. earlier in the decision-making process. It's important to explain to staff that not every decision can be made with staff input. However, decisions that will have a significant impact on staff should include employee input whenever possible. It's suggested that administrators discuss this and work together to find ways to involve employees in decision-making processes. Administrators can look to other high-performing school districts for examples of staff collaboration models.

   When administrators are considering new initiatives, it's important to prepare a simple communications plan to involve and communicate with staff and other audiences about the decision, its timeline, and its implications. While gathering input may slightly extend decision-making timelines, it can pay big dividends in efficacy and morale.

   It's important to note that many school administrators unknowingly under-communicate. Because they are so intimately involved with their decisions and processes, there's the tendency to assume that if they've talked about an important change or initiative once or twice, or sent out a memo, that people have heard about it. Research shows it takes multiple communications for someone to truly absorb a message. Many employees, including teachers, are so laser focused on their classroom work and the details of their own responsibilities (interfacing with students, parents, etc.) that they sometimes 'miss' some of the district-wide news. One email is almost never enough when it comes to larger initiatives.

b. **Ensure meeting minutes/summaries/handouts are kept for all staff/faculty meetings, and sent to staff and then archived.** Some administrators do maintain minutes, but it's not clear that all do. Some employees said they are not included in staff meetings and feel 'out of the loop' because of it. When critical meetings are held, a summary of key decisions/information should be sent to all staff.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

c. **Involve staff in agenda development for faculty/staff meetings.**
   This is an opportunity for employees to be more involved and to increase two-way communication and feedback from front-line and classroom faculty and staff.

d. **Create a district communication protocol that encourages broader sharing of information, including the creation of fact sheets, summaries, and frequently asked questions.**
   Many teachers and staff members said they felt as though people who need to have information are often left without it. The solution is not to share everything with everyone because this will create information overload. However, a protocol that looks at each change/initiative/communication and analyzes how best to ensure that everyone who might need to know about it does receive it, could help to ensure more thorough communication.

e. **Establish a District Staff Communication Council**
   Bring employees of each type (support staff, teaching staff, etc.) together for a minimum of three to four times a year to meet with the superintendent and other district administrators to discuss district initiatives, progress, positives, concerns, etc. This would be an excellent opportunity to open the flow of communication between district office and the schools. Minutes from these meetings should be shared with the entire staff shortly after the meetings.

f. **Enhance the use of small teacher committees for a number of specific matters such as: technology, professional development, graduation, etc.** Teachers who serve on these committees can interface regularly with administrators and bring topic-specific concerns to them as well as help them to build rapport with staff.

g. **Implement a district-wide internal newsletter/memo (consider a biweekly or monthly simple format – simply bullets, etc.) that includes information about curricular changes, events, activities, issues, etc. in the schools as well as district-wide issues.**
   In focus groups and in surveys, staff said they would very much appreciate an internal newsletter. This is also an opportunity to highlight the work of staff and build morale.

h. **Create a digital directory of district office staff members along with job descriptions ('who to go to') so that staff can more easily get a sense of who district office administrators and staff are, what they're responsible for, and what they can address.**

i. **Create a new, standard communication protocol in which an email is sent introducing new staff members to other employees in the school/building.**
   This was a suggestion from staff who said there's a lot of turnover and staff are often not sure who is coming or going.

j. **Create a new, standard communication protocol in which staff receive parent communication prior to parents receiving it.** While it's not always possible or reasonable to do this (e.g., sensitive or controversial information, or emergency information), staff have said they regularly do not receive information that parents do, and then get questions from parents and don't know how to answer those questions. There's also a general frustration that things make it to social media before staff learn about it from administrators.

k. **Use a detailed, monthly calendar review protocol for administrators to address the feeling from staff that information comes to them late and is sometimes disorganized.**

l. **Evaluate the faculty suggestion that department heads and chairs be reinstated.** Faculty seem to feel strongly that communication has suffered since these positions were eliminated.

m. **Work with custodial, food service, and support staff to better strengthen communication and involvement in decision-making.** Increase efforts to include these employees in staff meetings. Administrators should meet with these groups on a regular basis to solicit their input and feedback and talk with them about how best to support them in their work and ensure they are receiving adequate information. Share feedback from this report with all supervisors.

n. **Encourage employee feedback/suggestions**
    Develop additional ways – electronically or on paper – that employees can make suggestions for improvements at the building and district level.

o. **Establish an employee recognition program**
    Identifying and recognizing employee accomplishments and achievements can be an important part of continuing to create positive culture and communications.

Recommendation 4: Work to address the feeling of disenfranchisement from the support staff, custodial staff, cafeteria staff, and others.

Focus group and survey data indicates morale is extremely low among this group, and they feel communication is very poor.

Suggestions for action include:

a. **Establish regular meetings with the superintendent's administrative team and union leadership to address issues.**
b. **Ensure superintendent meets regularly with support staff to discuss concerns, initiatives, etc.**

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

c. Discuss concerns/issues with the administrative team and create protocols to address/improve concerns.
d. Recognize support staff by profiling them in "A Day in the Life" feature in district newsletters (internal and external).
e. Recognize support staff during annual "Support Staff Appreciation" day (similar to "Teacher Appreciation Week").
f. Ensure support staff are included in all school communications. Brainstorm ways to get around the fact that many staff don't have access to email throughout the day. Explore whether information can be shared via text.

Recommendation 5: **Increase parity and consistency in communication from school to school to create a stronger sense of district unity.**

Suggestions for action include:

a. **Provide training and protocols for principals and administrators with regards to communication. Allow principals to collaborate on communication best practices.**
b. **Bring principals together to meet collectively with PTO Presidents from all schools to discuss emergent issues.**

Recommendation 6: Develop a district-wide communications plan that includes a crisis communications component.

It's recommended that Coatesville develop a communications plan that is simple, clear, and updated annually. Any plan should include timelines and specific staff members responsible for completion. This communications audit provides a foundation for developing such a plan.

Recommendation 7: **Create a standard practice to establish a communications plan for each significant district initiative or key issue as it arises.**

Each plan should incorporate answers to the following:

1. Who needs to know?
2. What do they need to know?
3. When do they need to know?
4. How will we tell them?
5. What do we want them to do with the information they receive?

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Key Messages and Frequently Asked Questions could be developed for each issue. Both can be distributed to staff members and parents, so they fully understand the reasoning and timeline for initiatives. A timeline and calendar can also be used to help keep district initiatives on track and on time, and communication can be a built-in component, so staff and parents have ample notification time.

Recommendation 8: Provide communications training and work sessions for administrators and other staff members.

Communication training/workshopping would help the administrative team to operate with the same guiding sense of communication guidelines and would give them a chance to discuss emerging communication issues. It's recommended that the entire administrative team commit to inclusive, collaborative, transparent communication. This could begin with a review of this audit so administrators can look for growth areas as well as collaborative solutions to issues such as a lack of consistency.

Recommendation 9: Establish expectations for communication between teachers and parents

While parents generally seem to be pleased with communication from teachers, focus group and survey comments also noted that there's a wide range of communication from teachers (which is a common issue in school districts). **It's suggested that administrators work collaboratively with teachers to promote proactive communication with parents throughout the school year.** Templates can be provided to make classroom-to-home communication simple (teachers who already have exemplary communications in place can share examples to be used as templates.) Alternatively, programs such as Class Dojo or SeeSaw could be explored for elementary communication.

Recommendation 10: Expand communication from the School Board of Directors

Each of the focus groups agreed they'd like a brief summary of school board discussion/action items to be emailed to them. Suggestions for action include:

a. **Develop a one-page summary of each board meeting to be emailed to staff/parents/community and posted on the website** (allow parents and staff to opt into/out of this communication.) Currently, CCAP publishes its own notes on social media. It would be helpful if someone from within the district would provide an official district summary, including links to presentations, etc. This would promote transparency.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

b. **Develop factsheets about initiatives and changes the Board is considering that include the description, reasoning, timeline, next steps, how to provide feedback, meeting dates, etc.**

Recommendation 11: **Strengthen outreach to the Coatesville community and improve partnerships and communication with service providers and social service agencies.**

Like most school districts, Coatesville struggles to find ways to reach its community members who don't have children in the school district. In surveys, the majority of community members said they'd like to see a quarterly newsletter from the school district, summarizing major decisions and initiatives, and highlighting positive stories about the district. Distribution may be a challenge, but perhaps the district can partner with the municipalities to achieve this. It's also suggested that they partner more closely with the library and other community centers where people gather.

It is not recommended that the district print a paper newsletter and mail it to each home. This becomes expensive and the news that's printed quickly becomes outdated. It can also be a labor-intensive endeavor.

Across numerous focus groups and in survey comments, community members, staff and parents said they wished the district would collaborate more closely with the many social service agencies and organizations that work with the youth of the school district. It's recommended the district develop a stronger database of community partners and establish regular meetings with them. In many districts, this group is known as a "key communicators" group. The title doesn't matter, so long as this kind of collaboration, communication and partnerships exists. In the focus group with community members, many had ideas for how their organizations could better partner with the school district, but said they often felt as though forming a robust partnership with the district was challenging.

Recommendation 12: **Develop a parent communication council that meets with district-level administrators a few times each year.**

This group could help to provide feedback on suggestions such as issuing paper as well as digital report cards and finding out where communication gaps lie.

Recommendation 13: **Make a slight adjustment to the Monday Morning Message from schools so that new information is either at the top of the message or displayed in a different color, etc., to note that it is 'new.'**

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Parents repeatedly said they like the consistency of the Monday Morning Message but find they're too repetitive and therefore new information is missed because it's buried under older information.

Recommendation 14: Form an alumni network to build increased community support and pride.

Recommendation 15: Create a unified calendar for the district's website.

Repeatedly, many requested a unified calendar that could warehouse information from each school.

Recommendation 16: Work to redesign the website in a way that better accommodates users' needs and provides more information, serving as both an important communication and promotional tool.

In addition to a new Blackboard (the district's website company) design template, the website is lacking in the kind of information that staff, parents, community members, and students have said they want and expect from a school website. Material is outdated and difficult to find, and in many instances, is inadequate. (e.g., currently the Administration tab only includes information about the superintendent, and not any other administrators.) It's recommended that the district conduct staff (teachers, in addition to counselors, aides, secretaries, and administrators) and parent focus group to help inform the changes, as well as provide ample time for new content to be developed. Nearly every area of the website is deficient. A plan is also needed for each school to train staff (secretaries, principal) to update its own school pages.

Recommendation 17: Publish a table of organization on the website.

Staff and parents would benefit from being able to see who is responsible for each area in the district.

Recommendation 18: Increase the communication focus on academics.

Survey and focus group data indicated that many members of the school community would appreciate more information about the district's academic progress.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Recommendation 19: Create videos that feature the district's students and teachers.

This is a tactic also suggested in the district's marketing plan. As Coatesville works to strengthen its image in the community, it's important to showcase the voices of the district's many talented students and faculty members. "Day it the life" and "Profile" videos could help the community get to know some of the district's many talented teachers and other staff members, while videos featuring the district's students would demonstrate the quality of its student body and the many impressive achievements of its students.

Recommendation 20: Provide increased bilingual support for the district's Latino families as well as other families who do not speak English.

It's been noted by many, including Spanish-speaking families who responded to the survey, that the district lacks the ability to provide any kind of consistent communication and outreach to families who don't speak English. While some letters/emails are translated into Spanish and sent to Spanish-speaking families, there is no one in district office or at most of the district's schools who speaks Spanish (other than a Spanish teacher who is usually teaching a class) who can answer questions and interact with families. One of the district's elementary principals does speak Spanish and does her best to provide bilingual support. A new website should have a feature that allows families to translate text into other languages.

Recommendation 21: Improve the opt-in and opt-out system for district notifications and emails.

Numerous parents said they were frustrated that they received many notifications about sports their child was not participating in, while they missed other important announcements and notifications. A simple opt-in/opt-out system may provide a solution.

Recommendation 22: Increase the use of text messaging for parents/staff.

Parents indicated that email is the best way to reach them, followed by text messaging. National research also indicated this is a more effective way to reach lower-income families who may not always maintain the same email address.

Recommendation 23: Consider posting morning announcements and other important messages on a physical bulletin board in the high school.

Students said in the focus group and in survey comments that they'd like to see the messages printed and posted in a lobby, cafeteria, and/or library.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Recommendation 24: **Send emails to high school students as well as parents.**

Students said their parents don't always check email and they sometimes miss important information.

Recommendation 25: **Consider discussing communication with high school leadership and other students, annually, to look for ways to strengthen and improve.**

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Summary

Every member of the Coatesville Area School District wants to see its students and its schools succeed. The district has experienced a tremendous amount of turmoil and change, and is struggling to work through a number of existing challenges. Despite this, support for the schools from those who have familiarity with the district is often very strong; Faculty and staff care deeply for their students, parents want the best for the schools, community groups are eager to support the district, and students have a lot of pride and many successes to celebrate.

As the district embarks on efforts to strengthen communications, it's important that it does so in a systematic way, rather than simply pushing out *more* information. Some parents and staff felt there was already too much information being sent out, which is common in many systems where communication isn't organized or streamlined. One survey respondent said that communication felt like a "spray and pray" approach where a number of things were sent out randomly, while other more important things were missed. Inconsistent, last-minute communication about any number of issues seems to stem from a scattered leadership approach in which decisions aren't made in a timely manner and the right people aren't invited to the decision-making table or included in the decision-making process.

The Coatesville Area School District has an opportunity to place a renewed focus on communications, marketing, and promotions. In order to do this properly, it will need to hire a full-time employee who can support this mission. Those efforts can be guided by the research in this communications audit, and with the support of a school communications professional. It will also need to create a more systemic, collaborative approach to management and leadership and move from operating in crisis mode to working in a clear, thorough, proactive, timely, student-centered manner.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - Elementary Teachers

Describe the district:
- Diverse - ethnically, culturally, financially, and with regards to religions
- We have a lot of Coatesville Pride - this is a wonderful place to be
- There are a lot of rumors that this place is bad, but it's so positive here
- The teaching staff is extremely dedicated, and they give the students so much TLC

What do we communicate well?
- We've done a fairly good job communicating about professional development and curriculum changes to our staff.
- We communicate well about the successes of our sports teams (but don't focus enough on academics)
- In early 2020 we communicated well about our budget issues
- Our Monday Morning Messages seem to be effective
- When something happens in the school, we get information out quickly to stop rumors

How can we improve communication?
- Things get missed from different departments, internally, and we miss information we should have and know.
- Decisions aren't made in a timely manner.
- Developing documents in Spanish is an after-thought (suggested we have a Spanish-speaking liaison in district office)
- We are bleeding kindergarten kids to charters and need to get communication to them early
- Would like changes in how twice-weekly administrative meetings are run
- Some information from the district should go out in a timelier manner
- Administrators should receive information before staff/parents

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - Secondary Teachers

Describe the district:
- People have a perception that we have lots of fights, but that's just not true
- We are considered the armpit of Chester County
- There's a perception that we are very mismanaged
- We are run like a mom-and-pop shop
- We need to professionalize everything, including a shift from being reactive to being proactive

Examples of positive communication:
- Athletic department has done a good job improving communication this year.

How can we improve communication?
- We should give parents and teachers more of a voice
- We should send printed report cards because some parents don't check email
- More outreach to the churches
- More outreach to Coatesville Youth Initiative, Brandywine Health, etc.
- Email needs to be more timely - we get information too late (e.g., an email on a Friday morning about something that needs to be done by Friday afternoon)
- Every building received different information - why is this? Principals aren't on the same page
- We should have a district directory with information about who to contact
- Would like a return to department supervisors (e.g., art supervisor) to help facilitate communication; We need department heads
- Administrators seemed overloaded; Why not ask teachers for help and support?

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - CASD Administrators

Describe the district:
- Diversity is a real positive; There are friendships among students across all race lines, and not a lot of racial divisions
- The district has tremendous pride
- We are all about supporting our kids and making sure they have lots of opportunities
- Community is very close-knit
- Teachers and administrators care tremendously for our students
- Our schools are built on relationships
- "We take care of one another - and that's a bit of a secret. The impression is completely the opposite, but it's just not true."
- We don't do a good enough job promoting ourselves.
- Parents need to do more speaking up to tell others this is a good place.

Suggestions for positive promotion:
- Communicate with relators
- Use social media
- Continue with Facebook live events
- Stream concerts, other events
- More intentionally share the positives
- Would like the high school to get its TV news studio up and running

What do we communicate well?
- We've done a fairly good job communicating about professional development and curriculum changes to our staff.
- We communicate well about the successes of our sports teams (but don't focus enough on academics)
- In early 2020 we communicated well about our budget issues
- Our Monday Morning Messages seem to be effective
- When something happens in the school, we get information out quickly to stop rumors

How can we improve communication?
- Things get missed from different departments, internally, and we miss information we should have and know.
- Decisions aren't made in a timely manner.
- Developing documents in Spanish is an after-thought (suggested we have a Spanish-speaking liaison in district office)
- We are bleeding kindergarten kids to charters and need to get communication to them early
- Would like changes in how twice-weekly administrative meetings are run
- Some information from the district should go out in a timelier manner
- Administrators should receive information before staff/parents

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - Secretaries and Classroom Aides

Describe the district:
- The district feels like family
- Employees are fiercely loyal
- We are very diversified
- We are caring
- We are resilient
- We are an extremely dedicated staff

Most people get information about the district from social media, neighbors and our website
Suggestions for positive promotion:
- We need a family/school liaison to reach out to families who leave for charter.
- We need a clear plan to reach our families.

What do we communicate well?
- Outreach to parents from teachers is strong
- Monday Morning Messages are fantastic, and details are well communicated

How can we improve communication?
- We need consistency
- The website is very inadequate
- The only person listed under administration is the superintendent - no one knows what other people do, and secretaries aren't updated when there's an administrative change. Would like a digital directory for the entire district
- We aren't kept up to date with what happens in district office.
- Technology department doesn't follow up on tickets; We don't have voicemail for administrators and our phone service goes out every few days.
- We need updated computers - they are so old that we can't even participate in zooms

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - CASD Custodial, Maintenance and Cafeteria Staff

Describe the district:
- Reactive
- Lots of changes in atmosphere
- New administrators are feeling their way

General thoughts about communication:
- The district doesn't communicate with us
- We're never told about lockdowns
- There's little to no communication to us and it was even worse during COVID
- We are largely forgotten about; We get very little respect
- Custodians are not included on district emails
- We don't have scheduled staff meetings - only when there's a problem
- Our opinions are never asked - we're not involved in planning, and no one asks us for input
- We're not included as members of the school community
- There's really no way for us to be heard
- They want us to be members of the team, but they don't act like we are members
- Outsourcing is a problem - the people they hire aren't qualified
- We have principals will walk right past us and not say hello, then five minutes later email you to tell you to do something

Suggestions:
- The district needs to get involved more with the community
- We need to offer more programs for people who speak Spanish
- There needs to be more accountability and discipline for students
- We would like more transparency and follow-up
- Someone should communicate more thoroughly with us
- We would like to be appreciated with a simple 'thank you' for the work we do

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Focus Group - CASD Parents

Describe the district:
- Very community-driven
- Strong sense of pride
- Outsiders view the district negatively and there's a long-standing stigma
- Talented teachers who go above and beyond

Suggestions for positive promotion:
- Focus on successful alumni
- Find ways to reach people (including older residents) who are not connected with technology
- Be more proactive and highlight the positives
- Work with realtors
- Get parents to stop posting so many negatives on social media
- Get the word out about our improvements, including special education
- Electronic billboards
- Host community days
- Host events at the library and partner with community groups

How can we improve communication?
- Elementaries send a lot of information home, then it drops off at middle and high school - there is not as much parent outreach there.
- Parents love the Monday Morning Message but sometimes there's too much information or it's too repetitious. Can they pin new information at the top? Sometimes things get missed because this is one of the only sources of information.
- Would like a centralized calendar on the new website.
- Frustrated that parents get opted out of emails and can't get back on the list
- Bus transportation communication is sometimes poor.
- Administration could plan more in advance and be more proactive.
- Hire a communications director.
- Very little bilingual support.
- Paper is important - not everything should be electronic.
- We need more support for families who don't read or write
- We need more parent involvement across the board - bring parents back into the fold - especially at secondary levels

Focus Group - High School Students

Describe the district:
- Extremely diverse
- Supportive community
- Many talented students

General thoughts about communication:
- Where do people get information about the district? Facebook, Twitter, Word of Mouth
- Students would like the district administrators to send emails to their student email addresses (including afternoon announcements)
- Students say sometimes their teachers are left out of the communication loop and don't know things they should have been told by administrators (e.g., dates for Keystone Exams.)
- Our school does a better job communicating about athletics than academics
- Changes should be better communicated - many things fall through the cracks

Would like secondary students to be involved in showcasing the district's music programs to elementary students; Feel there is need for more student involvement.

Focus Group - Community Members

Describe the district:

- The district has so many good qualities and lots of diversity, but it has a bad reputation
- High taxes
- We have incredible educators
- The perception is that we are not strong academically
- The perception is that there are too many distractions here.

Suggestions for positive promotion:

- We need materials that highlight all the positive things we offer
- We need more outreach to preschool families
- Focus on more positive promotion in the Daily Local
- Form a team that works on improving the district's image (a team of ambassadors)
- Transportation is a huge barrier for students in the district - Brandywine Health Foundation could partner with the district to provide a driver education program
- CASD providing low or no cost spaces in the schools to different social service agencies within the district could be helpful - so that more supports have a hub
- We need to hear directly from the students

How can we improve communication?

- Strengthen community partnerships
- CASD needs to do a better job understanding what social service agencies are doing
- Expand communication beyond the parents and students - there are lots of people in the community who are willing to help but there's no system in place to manage all of that
- Stronger use of Facebook
- Give students a stronger voice
- There's not much communication to any community groups
- Consider texting parents - Head Start uses this and was able to translate it into different languages
- A Child's Place would like to be placed on the district's website - need a whole "Community Partners" page of the website
- Could we incorporate school district updates into local township meetings

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Key Assumptions used for the analysis of surveys:
- Most survey questions were scored with a Likert scale rating of 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
- Generally, areas with 70% or more agreeing to a statement (4 - Agree, or 5 - Strongly Agree on the survey question) were considered a strength.
- Generally, areas with fewer than 50% agreeing with a statement are considered areas in which to focus improvement efforts.

Staff Survey
276 Respondents

Areas of Strength:
1. CASD embraces families of different cultures - 78% Agree/Strongly Agree (95% rated this a 3 or higher)
2. One of the assets of CASD is the diversity of the student body - 91% Agree/Strongly Agree
3. CASD has caring and dedicated teachers - 89% Agree/Strongly Agree
4. CASD has strong athletic programs - 79% Agree/Strongly Agree
5. I am proud to work in the district - 71% Agree/Strongly Agree

Areas in which to focus improvement:
1. **The district communicates effectively what I should know** - 35% agree/strongly agree (66% rated this at a 3 or higher - 31% rated this at a 3)
2. The district communicates effectively with parents and the community - 44% agree/strongly agree (79% rated this at a 3 or higher - a third 31% rated this at a 3)
3. I feel the building I work in communicates effectively with staff - 48% agree/strongly agree (71% including those who rated this at a 3 or higher)
4. **There is consistency in communication between schools** - 16% agree/strongly agree; 58% disagree or strongly disagree
5. **My opinion as an employee is valued** - 37% agree/strongly agree (with 36% rating this at a 3)
6. Administration includes input from staff - 38% agree/strongly agree
7. **There's clear direction from district office regarding goals and procedures** - 28% agree/strongly agree (43% rated this a 2 or lower; 29% rated this at 3)
8. I know who to go to with questions in the district - 41% agree/strongly agree (28% at 3)
9. I'm pleased with communication from the superintendent - 40% agree/strongly agree (32% at 3)
10. My position is valued by the community - 38% agree/strongly agree (29% at 3)
11. I find the website to be useful - 43% agree/strongly agree (27% at 3)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

12. I feel confident about the direction of the district - 42% agree/strongly agree

⇒ *77% of staff wanted the district to focus on more positive promotion (99% rated this at 3 or higher.)*
⇒ *36% of respondents feel that effective and strong communication is an asset of the district (38% at a 3.)*
⇒ *25% of the respondents believe that community outreach is a district asset. (40% at a 3.)*

Themes from Staff Survey Comments
- Parents hear about things before staff do, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement and that staff are not truly valued and trusted. It also leads to poor communication and the sense that no one is sure what's happening. ("There have been several times this year that I read about important information on a community page posted by parents instead of hearing directly from the administration.")
- Staff are not involved in decision making.
- There aren't enough meetings across departments or grade levels to ensure solid communication about academics.
- Information should be provided to parents in Spanish, as well as other languages, as needed.
- There's a lack of consistency in operations and communications from school to school. ("Procedures across buildings are VERY inconsistent. Expectations for staff at different buildings are also inconsistent. We went from every single thing have to be the same, to way too much inconsistency.")
- The district website is very deficient and doesn't include enough information.
- Staff aren't sure who to contact in district office for any number of issues. ("Many times, people who answer the phone at the building don't even know who is working there, and it's from lack of communication.")
- Communication is improving but needs more improvement.
- Aides/paras are afterthoughts and don't get enough communication.
- Employees want information from the School Board.
- Many old systems from the previous administration are still in place, and those practices are no longer applicable.
- Sometimes the district overcommunicates (e.g., schools still send information to parents every time there's a fire drill.)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Excerpts from Survey

Not every survey question is included in this audit as some are quite lengthy and difficult to represent as they break down preferences for communication (email, text, etc.), places they currently receive information by school, etc. This information has been summarized and provided in the survey notes, above. Full surveys will be archived for district use.

1. Our school district as a whole clearly and effectively communicates information that I should know.
273 responses

Rating	Count (Percent)
1	24 (8.8%)
2	67 (24.5%)
3	87 (31.9%)
4	73 (26.7%)
5	22 (8.1%)
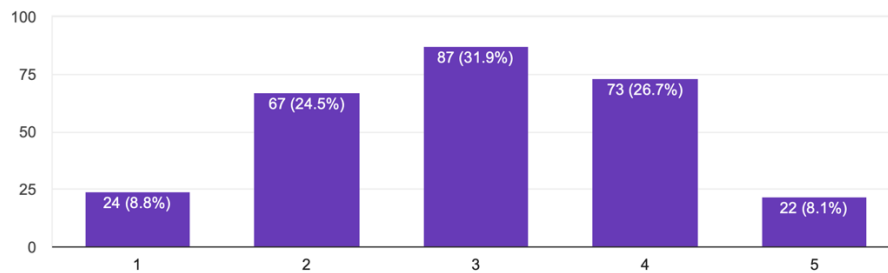
2. Our school district as a whole clearly and effectively communicates with parents/community members.
270 responses

Rating	Count (Percent)
1	9 (3.3%)
2	48 (17.8%)
3	94 (34.8%)
4	84 (31.1%)
5	35 (13%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
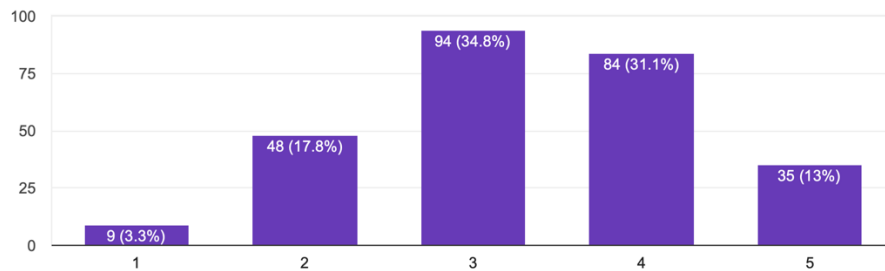
3. I feel that the school/building where I work communicates effectively with staff.
270 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 22 (8.1%)
- 2: 56 (20.7%)
- 3: 66 (24.4%)
- 4: 75 (27.8%)
- 5: 51 (18.9%)
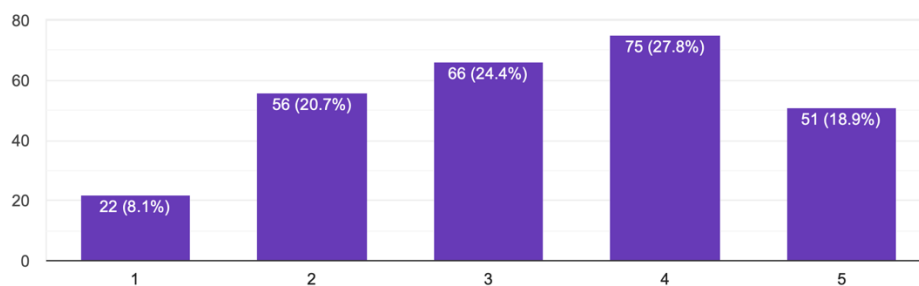
4. I feel that the school/building where I work communicates effectively with parents.
268 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 11 (4.1%)
- 2: 24 (9%)
- 3: 79 (29.5%)
- 4: 87 (32.5%)
- 5: 67 (25%)
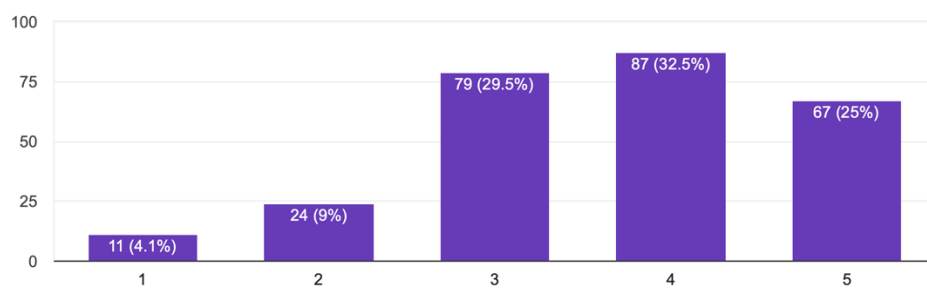
5. I feel my opinion as an employee is valued.
270 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 43 (15.9%)
- 2: 57 (21.1%)
- 3: 69 (25.6%)
- 4: 68 (25.2%)
- 5: 33 (12.2%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
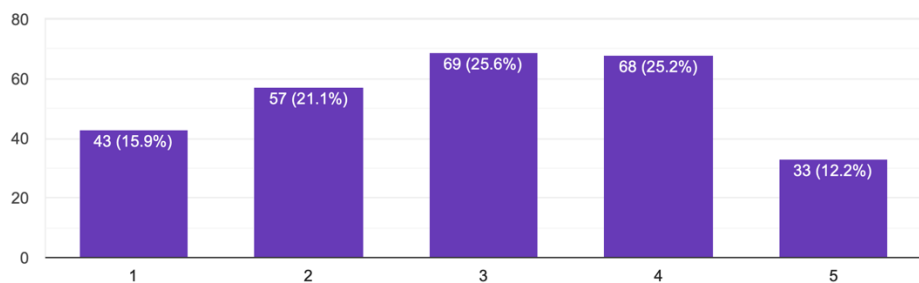
6. I feel as though administrators attempt to include input from staff when making major decisions.

269 responses
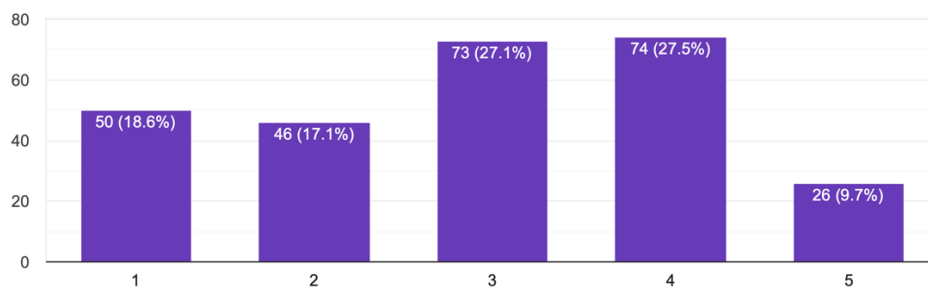
7. I feel as though there is clear direction from district office with regards to goals, initiatives, and procedures.

271 responses
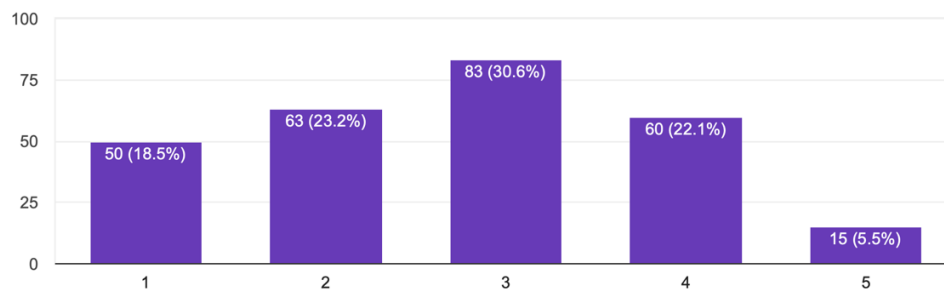
8. I know who to go to with questions/concerns in the district.

272 responses
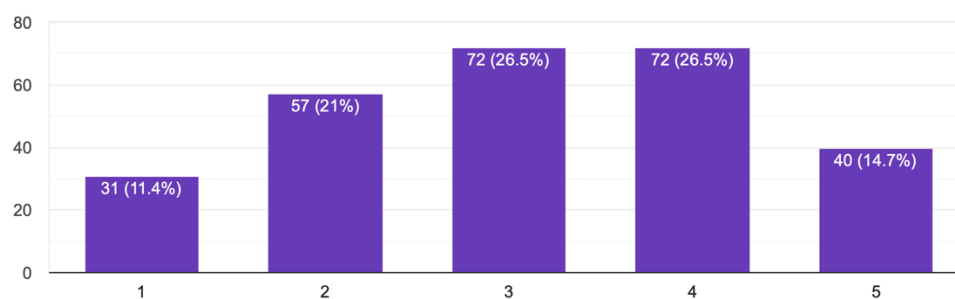
11. I would like the district to consider an internal newsletter for staff, summarizing district initiatives, school board issues, employee issues, etc.
269 responses
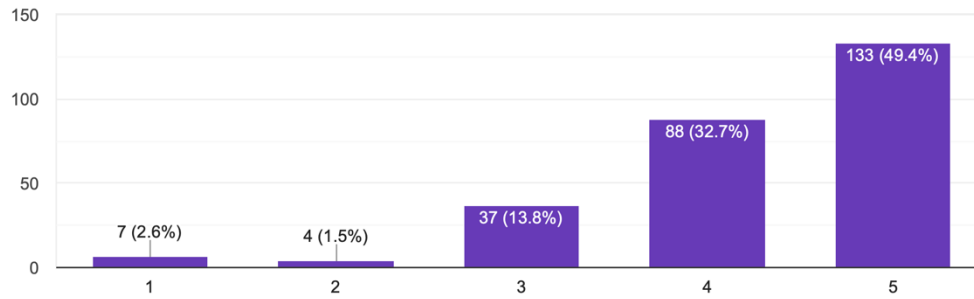
12. I would like more direct communication from the school board in the form of meeting summaries and/or quarterly newsletters.
270 responses
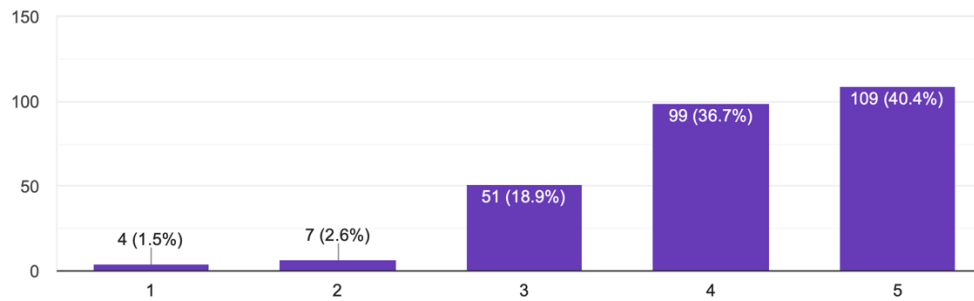
13. I am pleased with the level of communication from the superintendent.
274 responses
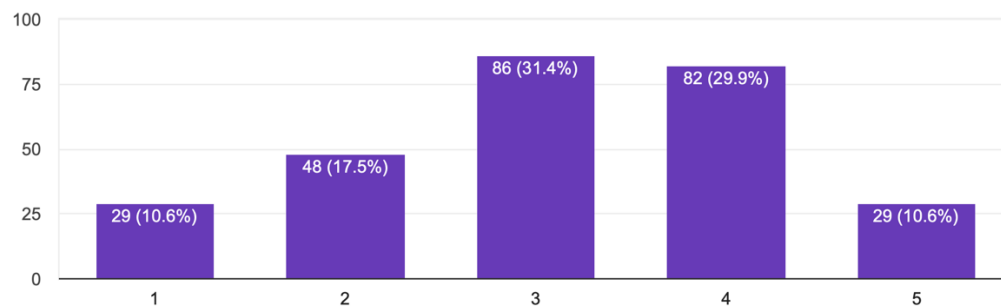
16. I believe visitors (parents, etc.) feel welcome in our schools. (Please consider this question outside of the context of the pandemic.)

263 responses
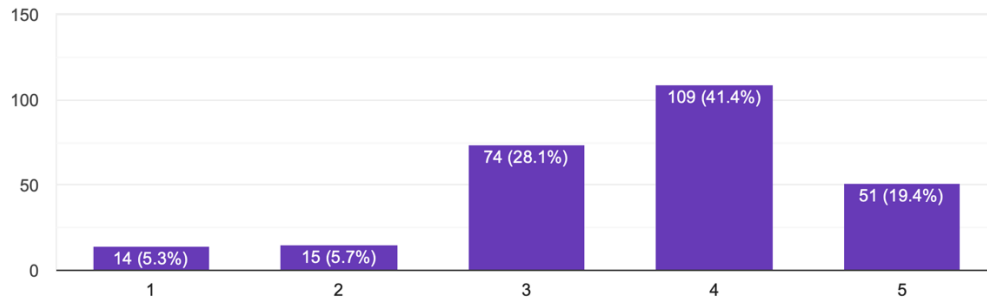
17. I feel there is a good deal of consistency in procedures and communication between schools at the same level across the district.

272 responses

- ● Strongly Disagree
- ● Disagree
- ● Neutral
- ● Agree
- ● Strongly Agree
- ● Not Applicable
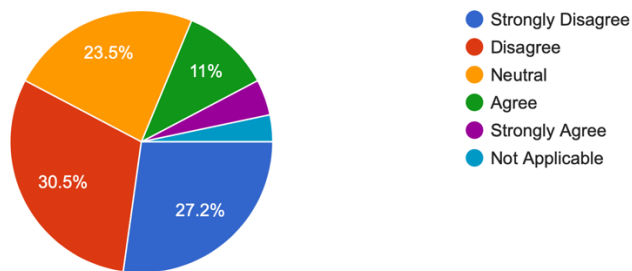
18. Our school district embraces students and families of different cultures and ethnic groups.

271 responses

34
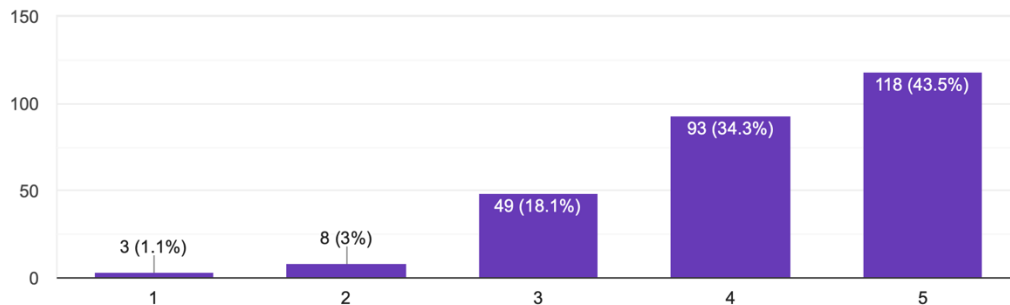
19. Our school district embraces students with different learning styles.
271 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 6 (2.2%)
- 2: 24 (8.9%)
- 3: 71 (26.2%)
- 4: 98 (36.2%)
- 5: 72 (26.6%)
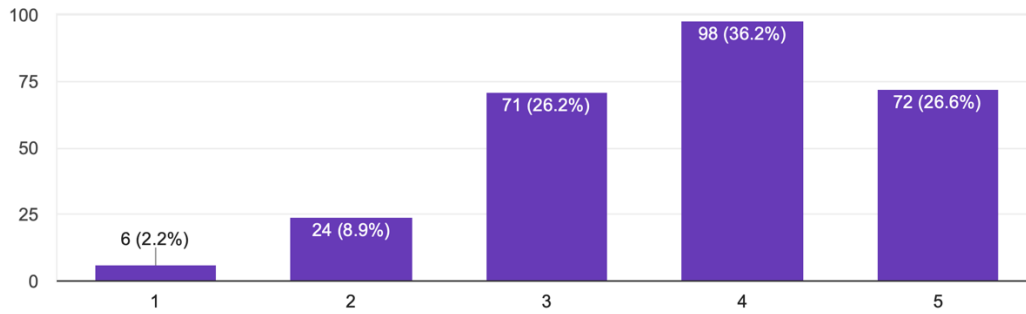
20. I find the website to be a useful source of information.
272 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 28 (10.3%)
- 2: 54 (19.9%)
- 3: 74 (27.2%)
- 4: 86 (31.6%)
- 5: 30 (11%)
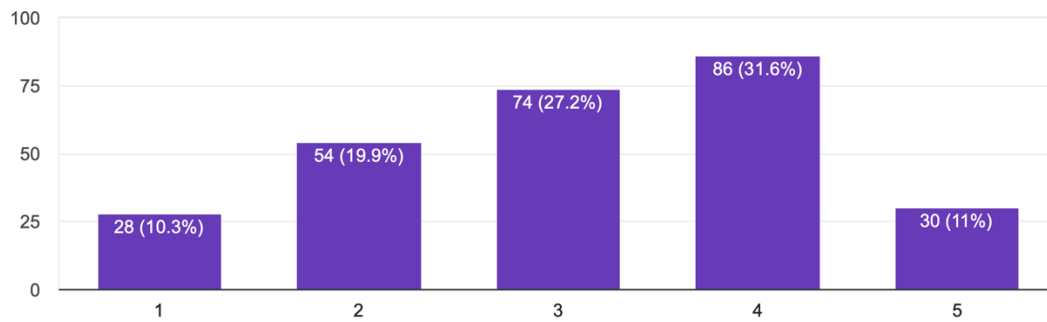
21. I would like the district to focus more efforts on promoting the positives of our school system.
268 responses

Bar chart:
- 1: 2 (0.7%)
- 2: 1 (0.4%)
- 3: 46 (17.2%)
- 4: 119 (44.4%)
- 5: 100 (37.3%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
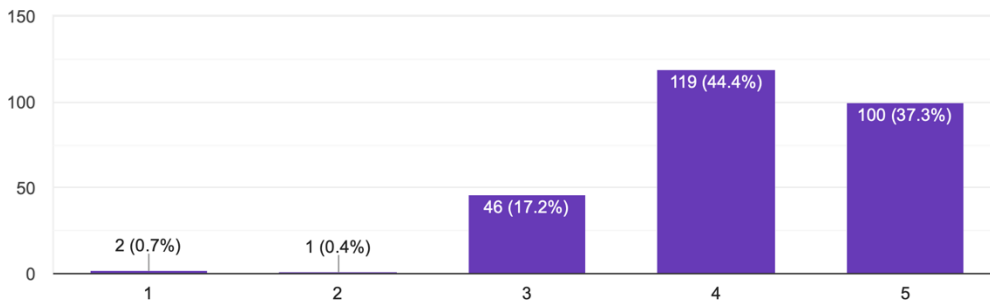
23. I feel confident and hopeful about the direction the Coatesville Area School District is heading.
274 responses
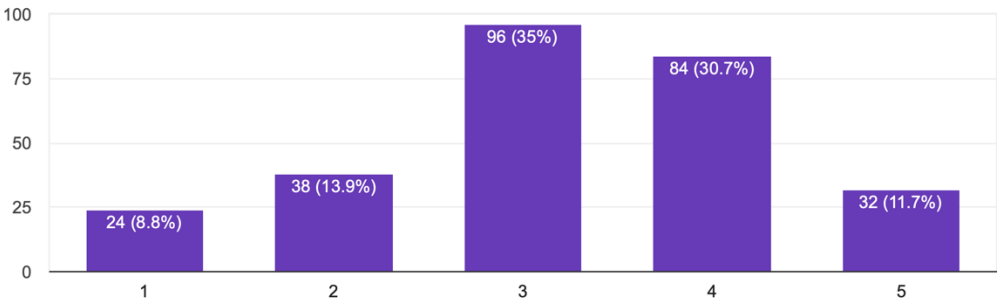
24. I am proud to work in the Coatesville Area School District.
271 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
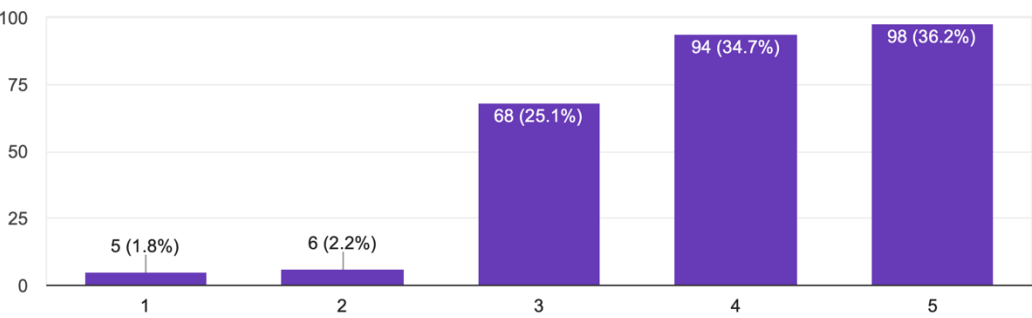
Parent Survey
640 Respondents

Areas of Strength:
1. Our district communicates information I should know - 73% agree/strongly agree
2. I feel informed about what happens in my child's school - 76% agree/strongly agree
3. My child's school communicates in a timely manner - 72% agree/strongly agree
4. Policies are clearly communicated - 71% agree/strongly agree
5. The district embraces different cultures - 84% agree/strongly agree
6. I'm proud to be a parent in the Coatesville Area School District - 73% agree/strongly agree
7. Diversity of the student body is a strength of the district - 73% agree/strongly agree
8. Caring, dedicated educators are a strength of the district - 84% agree/strongly agree

Areas in which to focus improvement:
1. The website is useful and well-designed - 53% agree/strongly agree
2. I'm satisfied with the support my child received with planning for the next year - 57% agree/strongly agree
3. There's a good deal of consistent communication between schools - 55% agree/strongly agree
4. **Strong fiscal management is a strength of the district - Only 22% agree/strongly agree**
5. Effective communication is a strength of the district - 49% agree/strongly agree (with 35% at 3)

⇒ Parents rate email as their preferred method of communication (83%) followed by text messaging (60%)
⇒ Parents would like more information about:
   o Things happening in their child's school - 79%
   o Academic progress of my child - 78%
   o Information to better support my child - 73%
   o Administrative plan for the district - 72%
   o School Board decisions - 64%
⇒ Interestingly, many of the survey comments *did not reflect the answers to the survey questions.* Overall, the survey questions were scored in a relatively positive manner, but responses in the open-ended section of the survey were less positive and more specific.

Themes from Parent Survey Comments
- The website is outdated and doesn't hold much valuable information; It's hard to find information on the website. ("The information I'm looking for feels like following clues in the movie National Treasure, and it's not clear where to look for information. The calendar is frustrating and complicated. The directory is maddening; There are names

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

but no information about who does what. And if you don't know how to spell their name, you'll never find it.")

- There are concerns that parents are overloaded with emails from the schools.
- The district should place a greater emphasis on academics. ("Coatesville has always focused on sports, and I'd like to see more focus on academics.")
- Parents would like more classroom communication. ("Coming from a local charter school, I got daily communication at the elementary level from teachers.")
- Parents feel communication about many things from schools and the district comes too late - not enough timely notice for events, activities, changes, deadlines, etc. ("Things we don't need to know about, like fire drills, are over-communicated, but other things are sent out late - the night before or the morning of.")
- Monday Morning Message is useful but too repetitive.
- Would like more parent involvement and opportunities to volunteer. ("I get very little information about my child's test scores or academic progress in school.")
- Parents would like to be able to subscribe/unsubscribe from emails (e.g., many parents get emails about sports even when their child isn't involved.)
- Parents would like more outreach to the community.

Excerpts from Survey

Not every survey question is included in this audit as some are quite lengthy and difficult to represent as they break down preferences for communication (email, text, etc.), places they currently receive information by school, etc. This information has been summarized and provided in the survey notes, above. Full surveys will be archived for district use.

1. Our school district as a whole clearly and effectively communicates information that I should know.
637 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
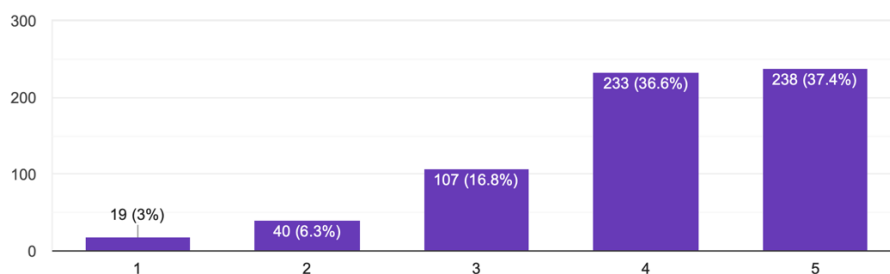
2. I feel informed about what's happening in my child's school.

638 responses

Rating	Count
1	14 (2.2%)
2	33 (5.2%)
3	108 (16.9%)
4	207 (32.4%)
5	276 (43.3%)
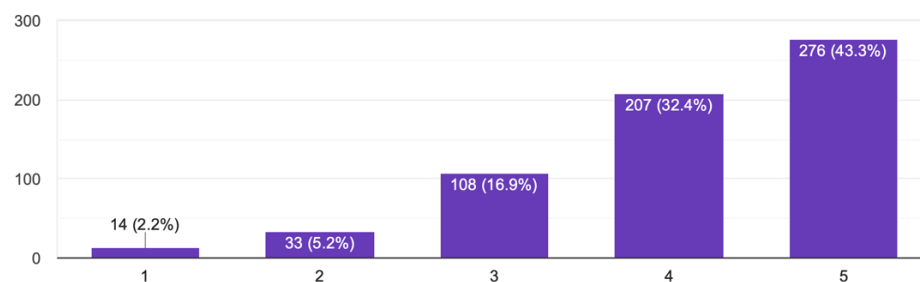
3. I feel my child's school communicates information that I need to know in a timely manner.

640 responses

Rating	Count
1	15 (2.3%)
2	49 (7.7%)
3	113 (17.7%)
4	203 (31.7%)
5	260 (40.6%)
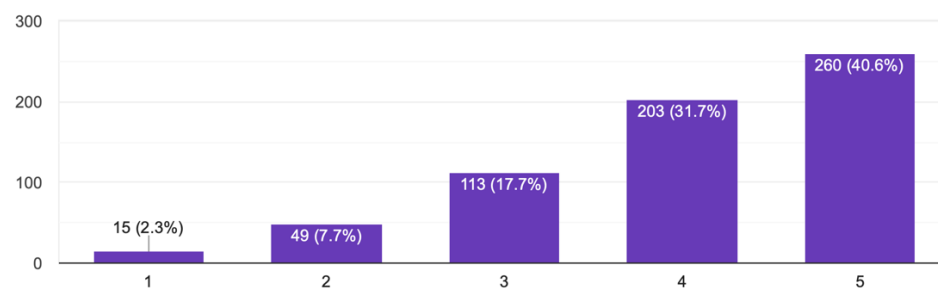
4. I feel my opinion as a parent is valued.

639 responses

Rating	Count
1	29 (4.5%)
2	46 (7.2%)
3	151 (23.6%)
4	203 (31.8%)
5	210 (32.9%)
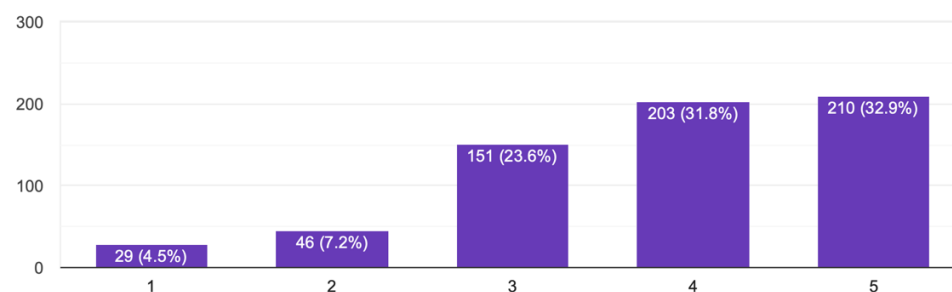
5. I know who to go to with questions/concerns in the school district.
638 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	43 (6.7%)
2	55 (8.6%)
3	122 (19.1%)
4	177 (27.7%)
5	241 (37.8%)
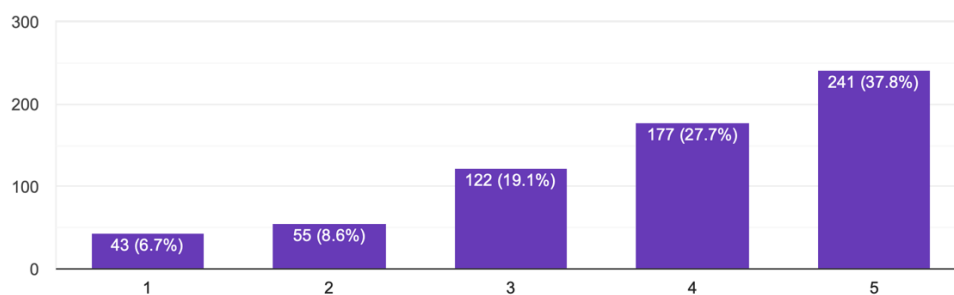
6. Communication from teachers about my child's progress is proactive and effective.
637 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	33 (5.2%)
2	53 (8.3%)
3	108 (17%)
4	163 (25.6%)
5	280 (44%)
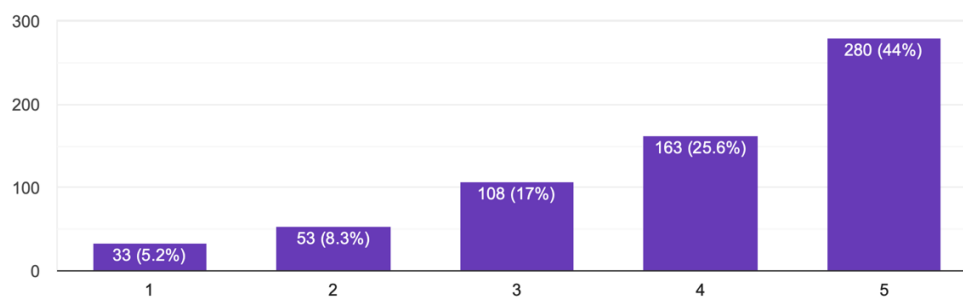
10. I feel welcomed in my child's school. (Please consider this question outside of the context of the pandemic.)
635 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	12 (1.9%)
2	21 (3.3%)
3	102 (16.1%)
4	176 (27.7%)
5	324 (51%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
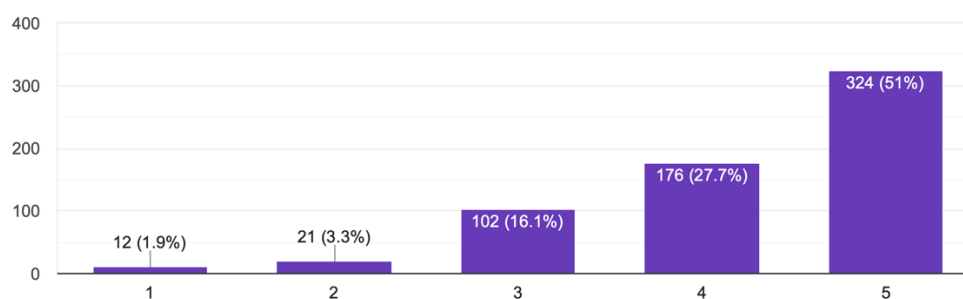
11. Parent/teacher conferences are well-organized and useful.

635 responses

Bar chart showing:
- 1: 18 (2.8%)
- 2: 36 (5.7%)
- 3: 143 (22.5%)
- 4: 157 (24.7%)
- 5: 281 (44.3%)
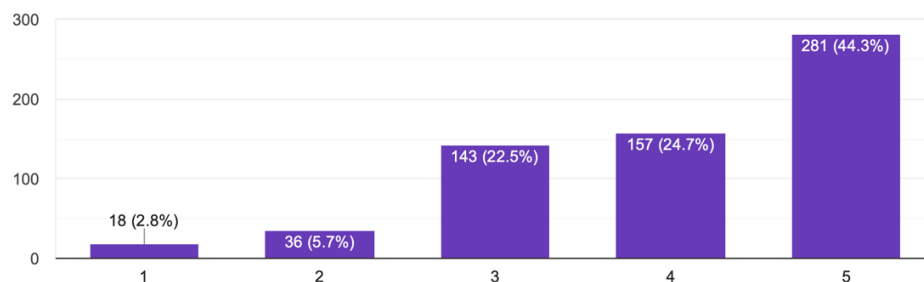
14. I find the website to be a useful source of information.

633 responses

Bar chart showing:
- 1: 49 (7.7%)
- 2: 81 (12.8%)
- 3: 167 (26.4%)
- 4: 180 (28.4%)
- 5: 156 (24.6%)
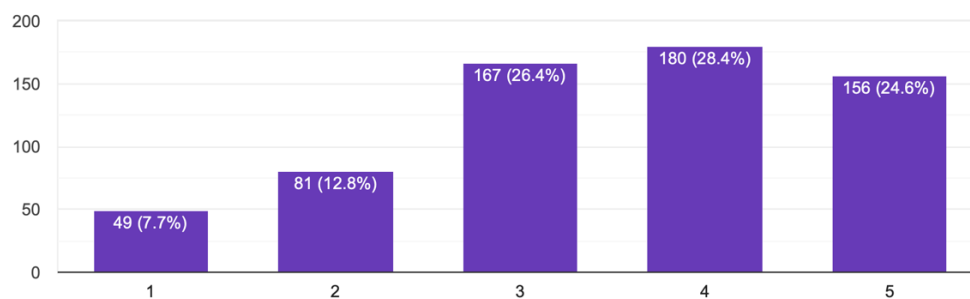
15. Our school district embraces students and families of different cultures and ethnic groups.

632 responses

Bar chart showing:
- 1: 12 (1.9%)
- 2: 10 (1.6%)
- 3: 75 (11.9%)
- 4: 204 (32.3%)
- 5: 331 (52.4%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
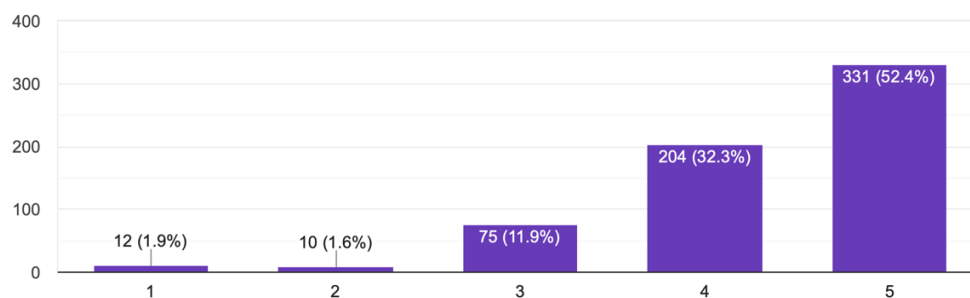
16. Our school district embraces students with different learning styles.

635 responses

	1	2	3	4	5
	34 (5.4%)	46 (7.2%)	147 (23.1%)	190 (29.9%)	218 (34.3%)
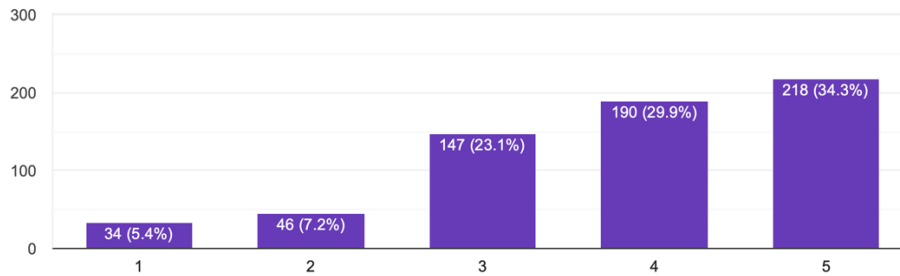
17. I feel satisfied with the support my child has received with planning for the next school level or college transition.

629 responses

	1	2	3	4	5
	58 (9.2%)	65 (10.3%)	150 (23.8%)	184 (29.3%)	172 (27.3%)
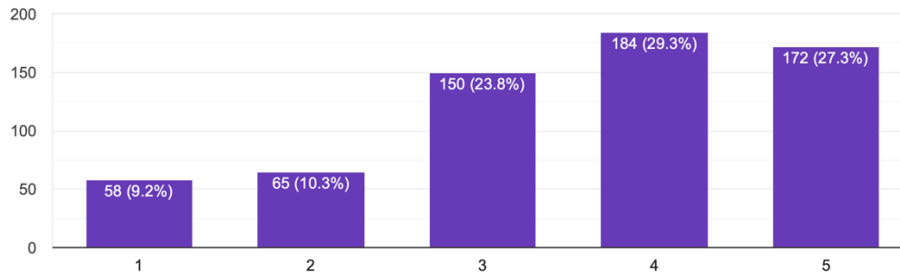
18. I feel there is a good deal of consistency in communication and procedures between schools at the same level within the district.

627 responses

	1	2	3	4	5
	44 (7%)	67 (10.7%)	220 (35.1%)	159 (25.4%)	137 (21.9%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
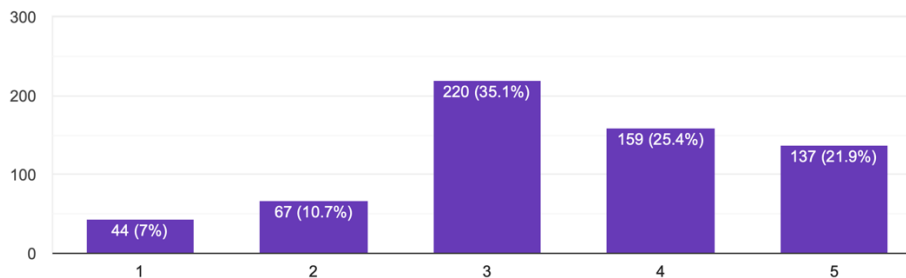
19. I feel as though I receive enough communication from our school superintendent.
631 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	41 (6.5%)
2	36 (5.7%)
3	153 (24.2%)
4	216 (34.2%)
5	185 (29.3%)
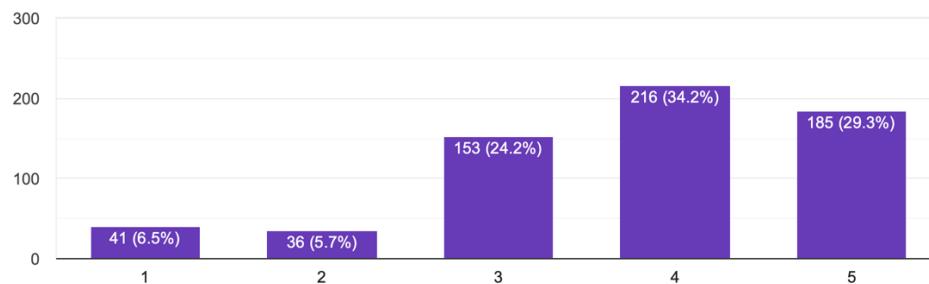
22. I feel confident and hopeful about the direction the Coatesville Area School District.
626 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	24 (3.8%)
2	53 (8.5%)
3	164 (26.2%)
4	218 (34.8%)
5	167 (26.7%)
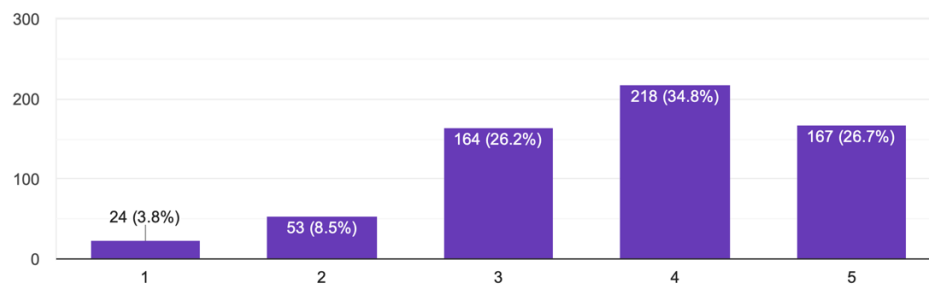
23. I am proud to be a parent in the Coatesville Area School District.
627 responses

Rating	Count (Percentage)
1	26 (4.1%)
2	33 (5.3%)
3	104 (16.6%)
4	199 (31.7%)
5	265 (42.3%)
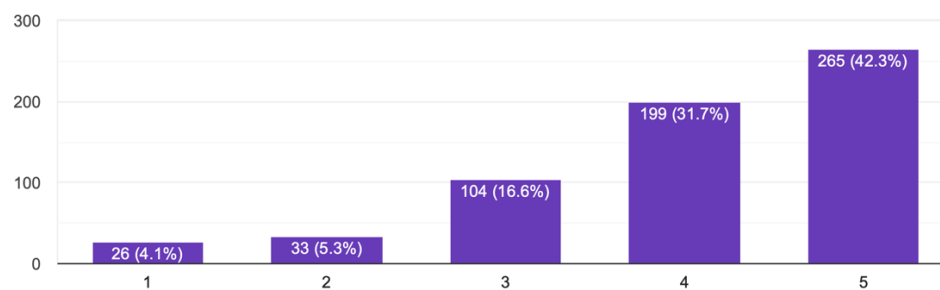
Student Survey
418 Respondents

Areas of Strength:
1. **The district embraces students of different cultures** - 78% agree/strongly agree
2. **I'm proud to be a student in the CASD** - 70% agree/strongly agree (21% at 3)
3. **Office staff is welcoming** - 63% (90% responded with a 3 or higher)
4. Teachers set clear guidelines - 62% agree/strongly agree (89% responded with 3 or higher)
5. **Teachers and administrators work to promote a positive atmosphere** - 62% agree/strongly agree (89% responded with a 3 or higher)
6. Strong athletic programs are an asset of the district - 74% agree/strongly agree
7. The diverse student body is an asset - 67% agree/strongly agree

Areas in which to focus improvement:
1. **The district clearly communicates information I should know** - 33% agree/strongly agree (41% at 3)
2. I feel informed about what's happening in my school - 42% agree/strongly agree (32% at 3)
3. **I'm satisfied with the help I received for making plans after graduation** - 38% agree/strongly agree (35% at 3)
4. I'd like to see more positive promotion regarding the district - 76% agree/strongly agree (97% scored 3 or higher)

⇒ The number one way respondents said they receive information is from other students (63% rated this as first), followed by the district website and Instagram (54% rated this as second and third)

Themes from Student Survey Comments
- The website needs to be updated.
- There isn't enough support for the district's music program and the arts ("The drama club last year had to provide its own paint and drop cloths, while the athletes get a weight room.")
- More communication about clubs is needed. ("You sort of have to figure things out for yourself. We should have a club fair in the beginning of the school year where every club sets up a table explaining what they do, and then students can join.")
- Students want to receive the same emails that are sent to their parents. ("There are a few things that I didn't know about because my parents didn't check their emails and that's where the info was sent.")
- Information comes too last minute - not enough time to plan.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

- Students would like to see a physical place (billboard, etc.) in the lobby, cafeteria or library where announcements are posted. Also suggested that first period teachers read announcements, so they aren't lost on the loudspeakers.
- Students would like the school to use Instagram.

<u>Excerpts from Survey</u>

1. The Coatesville Area School District as a whole clearly and effectively communicates information that I should know.
416 responses
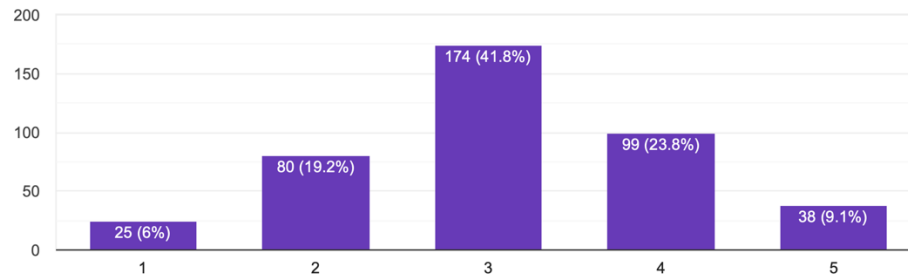
2. I feel informed about what's happening in our school.
413 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
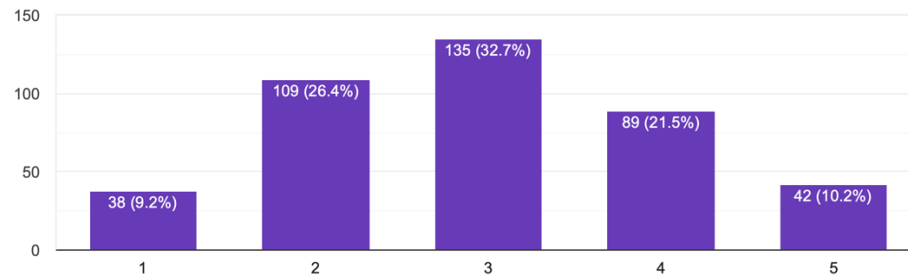
3. I would like more information about student achievement, student success stories, initiatives, activities, and events across the district.

414 responses
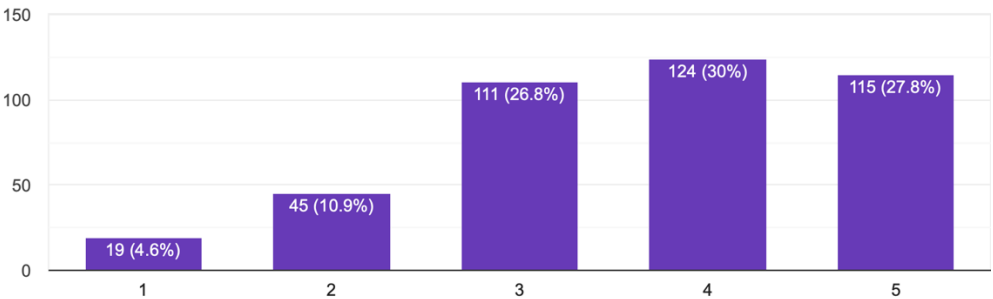
5. The office staff in my school is warm and welcoming.

414 responses
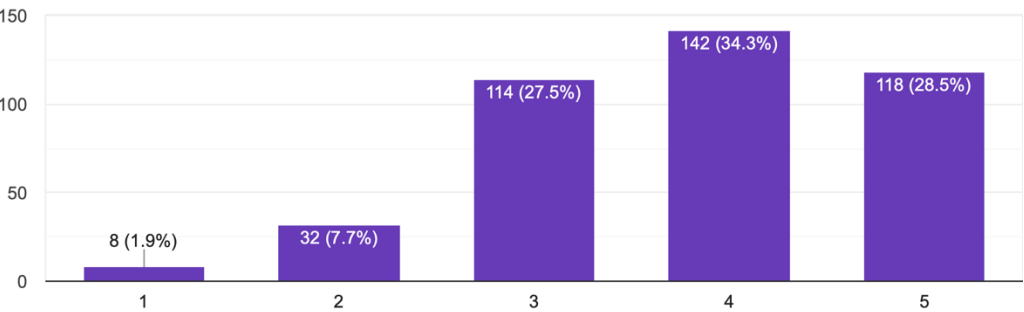
6. Our school is neat and clean.

415 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
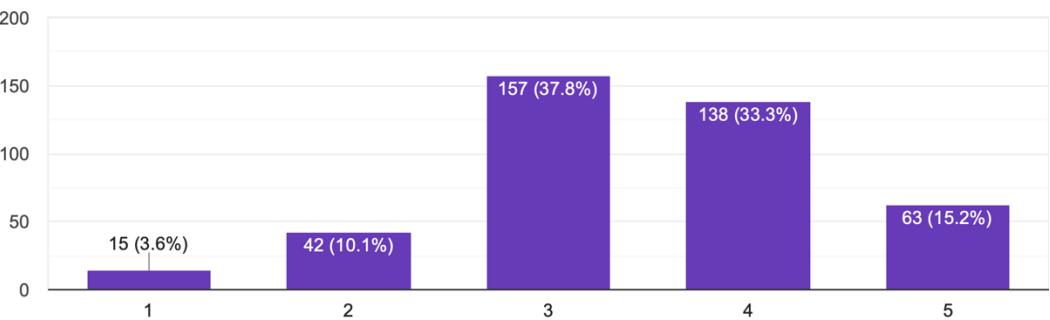
7. Our teachers set clear expectations and guidelines.
415 responses

Rating	Responses
1	6 (1.4%)
2	38 (9.2%)
3	113 (27.2%)
4	176 (42.4%)
5	82 (19.8%)
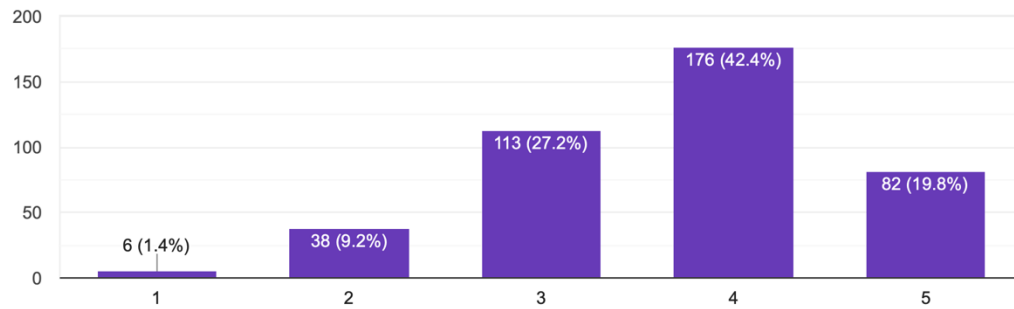
8. School policies and procedures are clearly communicated.
415 responses

Rating	Responses
1	13 (3.1%)
2	45 (10.8%)
3	146 (35.2%)
4	149 (35.9%)
5	62 (14.9%)
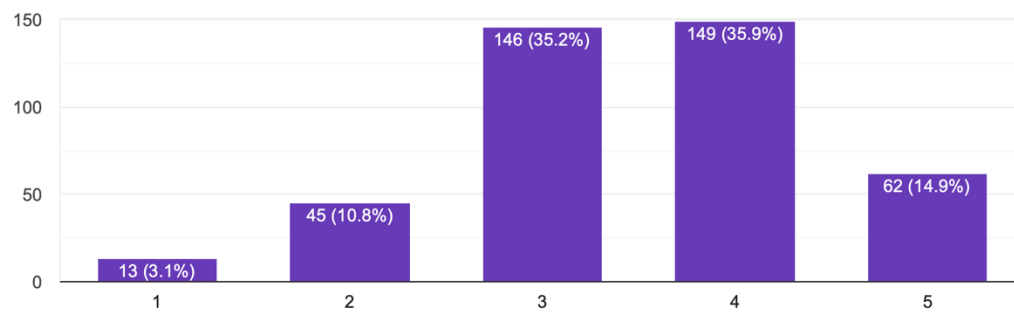
11. If I want to talk to someone about something that's upsetting me, there is at least one trusted adult who I feel comfortable turning to with my concerns.
417 responses

Rating	Responses
1	42 (10.1%)
2	59 (14.1%)
3	86 (20.6%)
4	100 (24%)
5	130 (31.2%)

47

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
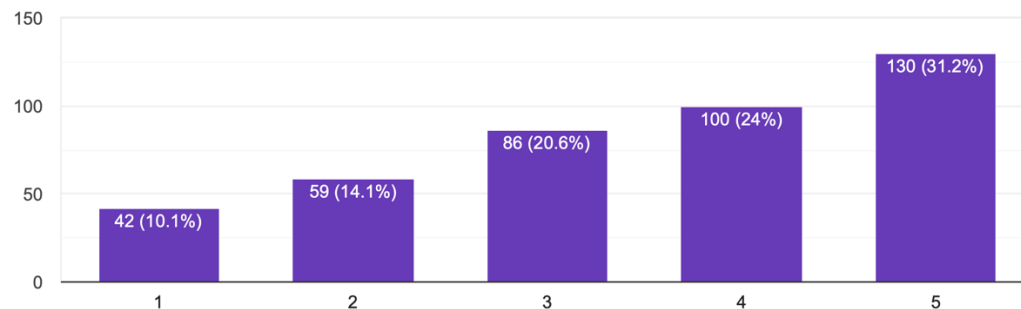
12. Our school district embraces students and families of different races, cultures and ethnic groups.

416 responses
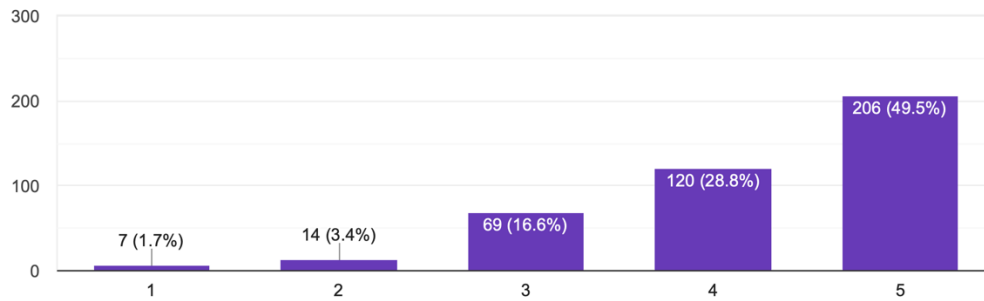
13. Our school district embraces students with different learning styles.

416 responses
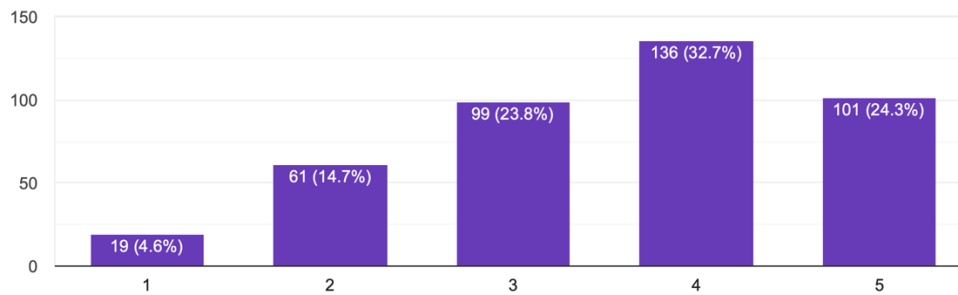
14. I feel as though our teachers and administrators work to promote a positive atmosphere in our school.

417 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
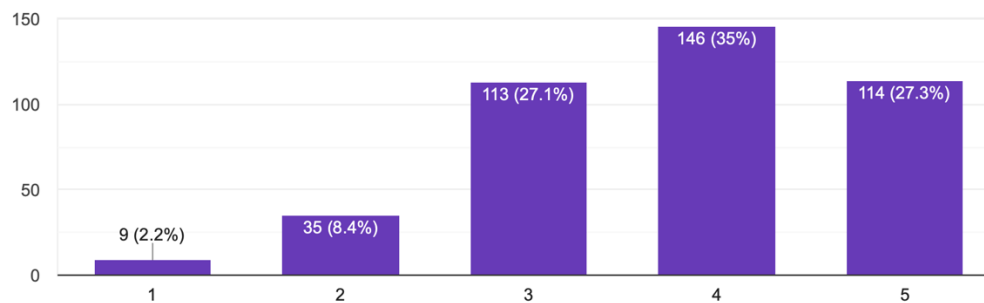
15. I feel as though our extra-curricular activities are well organized and supported.

415 responses

Rating	Count
1	20 (4.8%)
2	46 (11.1%)
3	123 (29.6%)
4	140 (33.7%)
5	86 (20.7%)
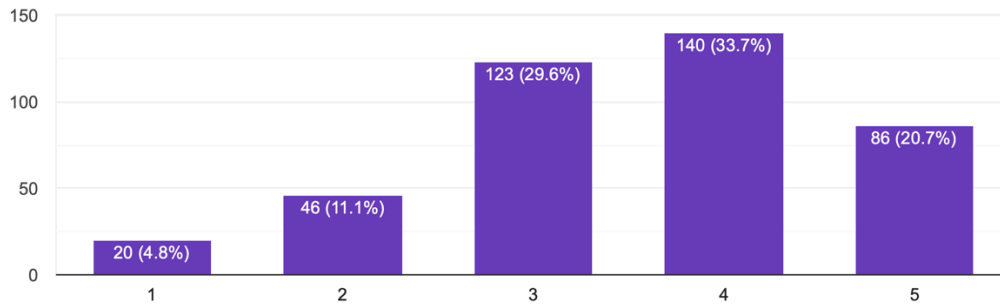
17. I would like to see the district work to promote more positives about the Coatesville Area School District to the community.

416 responses

Rating	Count
1	5 (1.2%)
2	7 (1.7%)
3	88 (21.2%)
4	145 (34.9%)
5	171 (41.1%)
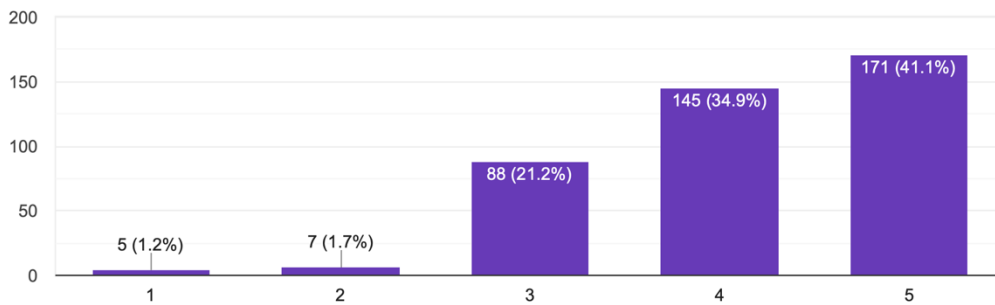
18. I am proud to be a student in Coatesville Area School District.

417 responses

Rating	Count
1	20 (4.8%)
2	16 (3.8%)
3	89 (21.3%)
4	106 (25.4%)
5	186 (44.6%)

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
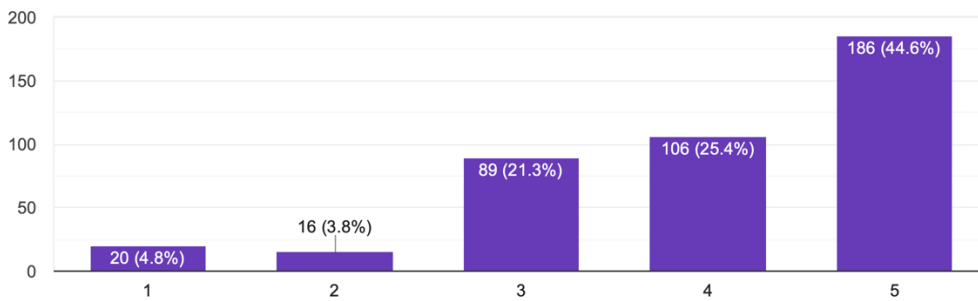
Community Survey
68 Respondents

Community members want more information about:
- School board decisions - 90% agree/strongly agree
- Administrative plans for the district - 90% agree/strongly agree
- District budget - 85% agree/strongly agree
- Academic achievement - 75% agree/strongly agree
- Events that are open to the community - 75%

⇒ Community members would like to receive a newsletter from the district - 79% agree/strongly agree (95% at 3 or higher)
⇒ Community members prefer email communication followed closely by Facebook.

Themes from Community Survey Comments
- Community would like more information about the budget and School Board decisions
- More involvement/outreach to the Latino community is desired
- Community would like the district to more thoroughly leverage community resources and volunteers. ("I believe a robust volunteer program should be developed to help staff the cafeteria and recess, among other things.")

1. I believe the quality of our school district impacts my property value.
67 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
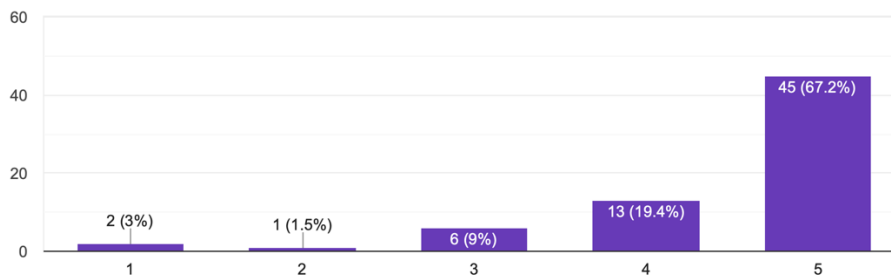
2. The School District as a whole clearly and effectively communicates information that I should know.
66 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

34.8%
7.6%
19.7%
31.8%
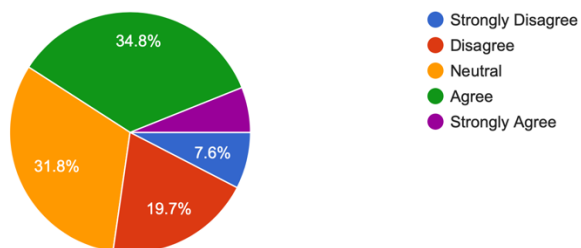
3. I would like more information about student achievement, student success stories, and activities and events in the district that I could attend.
67 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

26.9%
47.8%
23.9%
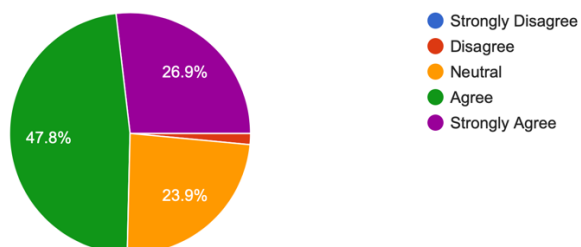
5. I would like to receive a newsletter from the school district, summarizing major decisions and initiatives, and highlighting positive stories.
67 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
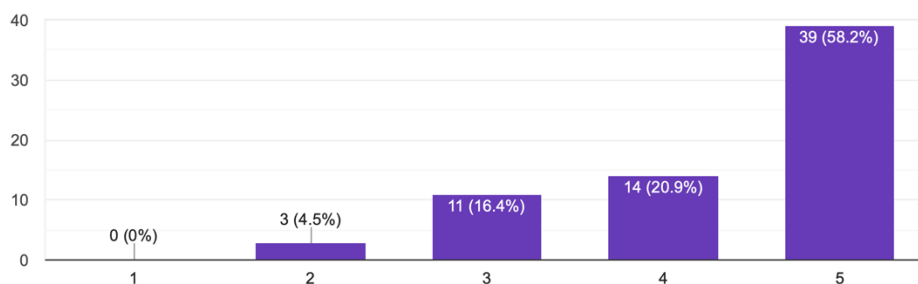
10. I feel confident and hopeful about the direction in which the Coatesville Area School District is heading.

67 responses
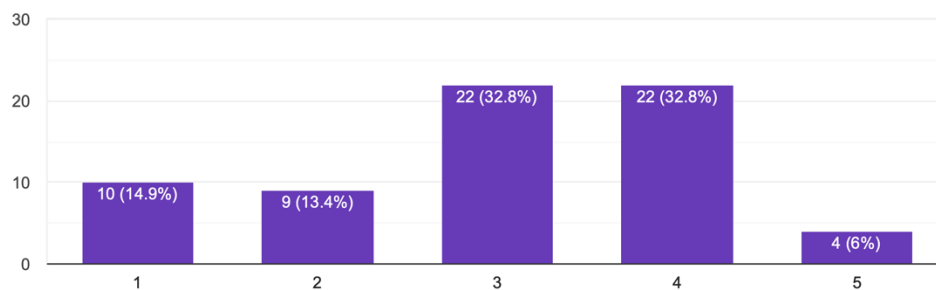
11. I am proud to be a resident/community member in the Coatesville Area School District.

67 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
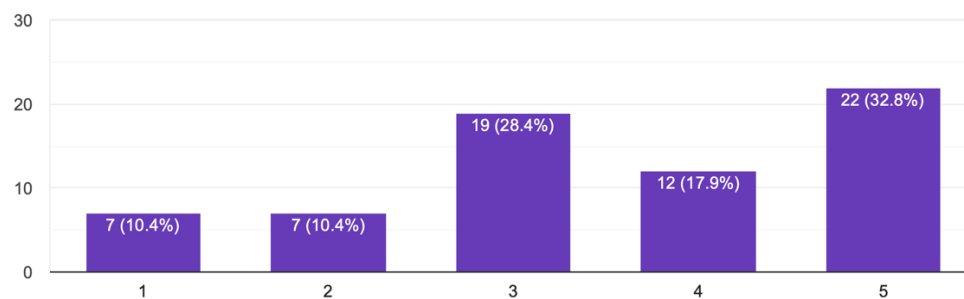
Spanish Surveys

A total of only 29 Spanish surveys were submitted. Spanish surveys were sent to staff (2 responses), the community (4 responses), students (4 responses) and parents (19 responses.)

- The two staff surveys and four community surveys rated nearly every question a 4 or 5 (agree or strongly agree.)
- The four student surveys provided ratings of mostly 1, 2, or 3 (Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral.) Three of the students felt like the school provided a positive atmosphere, while one did not. Two students said they were proud to be CASD students, while one was neutral, and one said they were not. One student commented that the district should do more to assist students who speak Spanish: "Some teachers think we don't want to learn, when in reality we just don't understand English."
- Spanish speaking parents said they most prefer to receive communication via paper (58%), then text messages (42%), then email (37%.) Most Spanish parents gave ratings of 3, 4, and 5 to most questions. They did comment that a social worker who speaks Spanish is needed, and that they don't have anyone who can assist them when they need to call the district offices or schools.

Our school district as a whole clearly communicates information I should know:

1. Nuestro distrito escolar en su conjunto comunica de forma clara y eficaz la información que debo conocer.
18 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
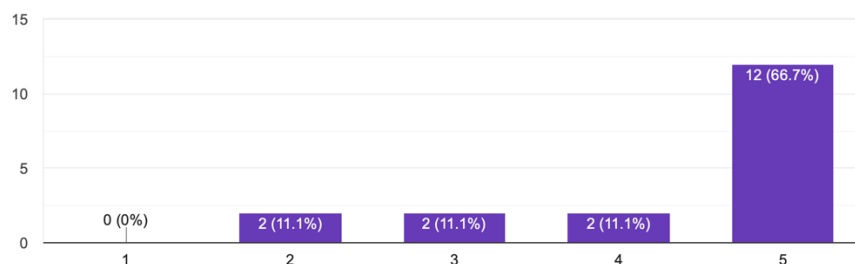
I feel my opinion as a parent is valued.

4. Siento que mi opinión como padre es valorada.
19 responses
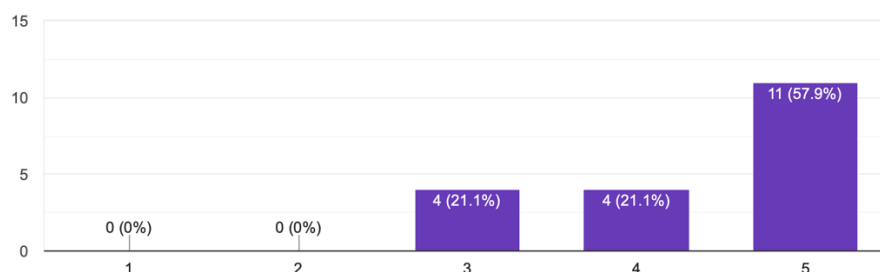
I know who to go to with questions or concerns.

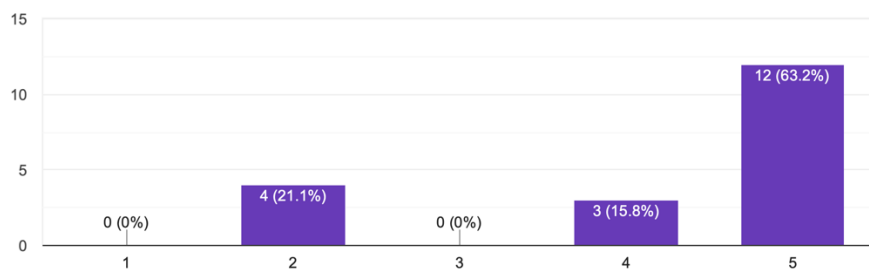### 5. Sé a quién acudir si tengo preguntas o inquietudes en el distrito escolar.
19 responses
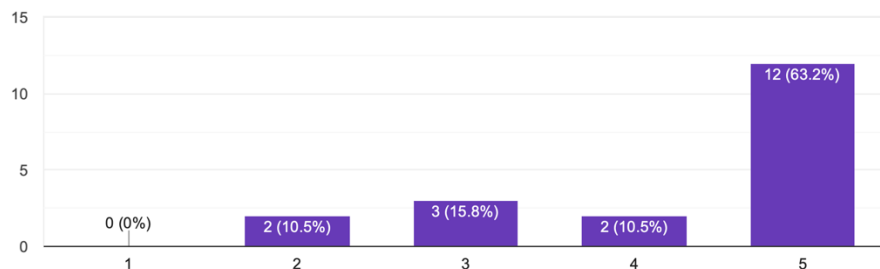
Communication from my child's teacher is proactive and effective.

6. La comunicación de los maestros sobre el progreso de mi hijo es proactiva y efectiva.
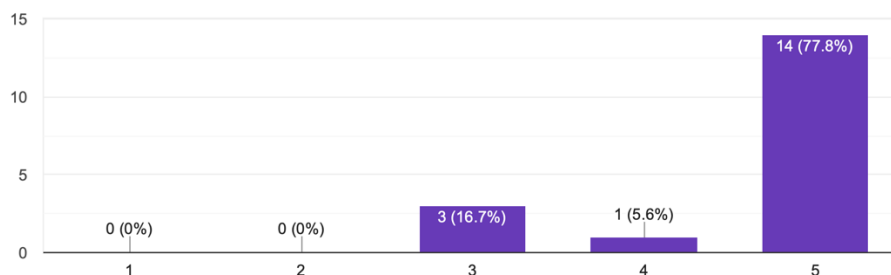19 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

I feel welcomed in my child's school (outside the context of the pandemic.)

10. Me siento bienvenido en la escuela de mi hijo. (Considere esta pregunta fuera del contexto de la pandemia).
18 responses

Parent teacher conferences are well-organized and useful.

11. Las conferencias de padres y maestros están bien organizadas y son útiles.
18 responses
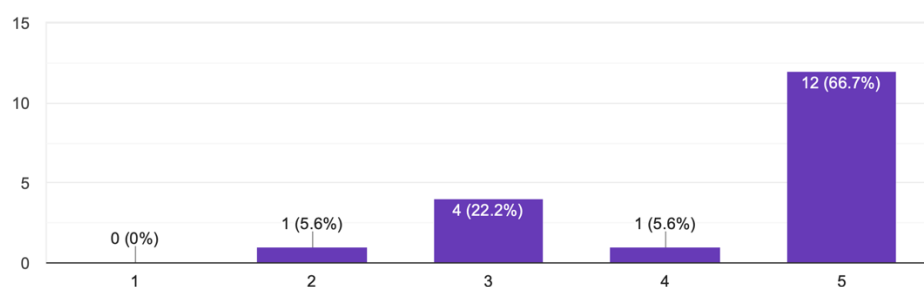
School policies and procedures are clearly communicated.
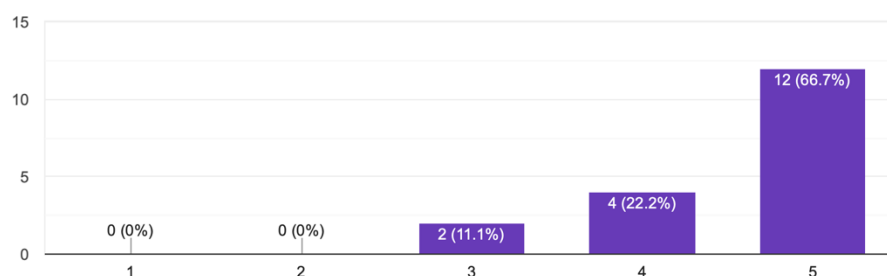
13. Las políticas y los procedimientos de la escuela se comunican claramente.
18 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools
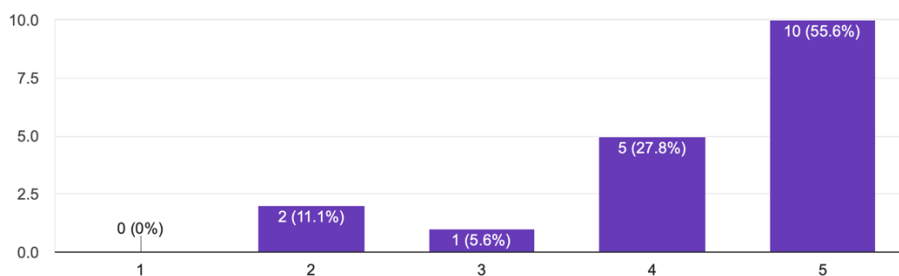
The website is a useful source of information.

14. Considero que el sitio web es una fuente de información útil.
18 responses

Our school district embraces students and families of different cultures and ethnic groups.

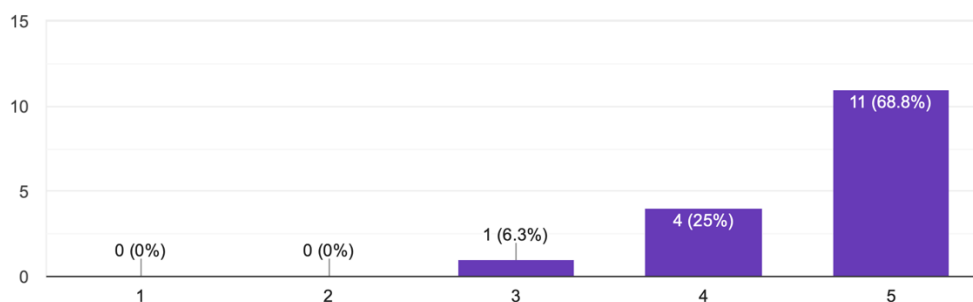13. Las políticas y los procedimientos de la escuela se comunican claramente.
18 responses
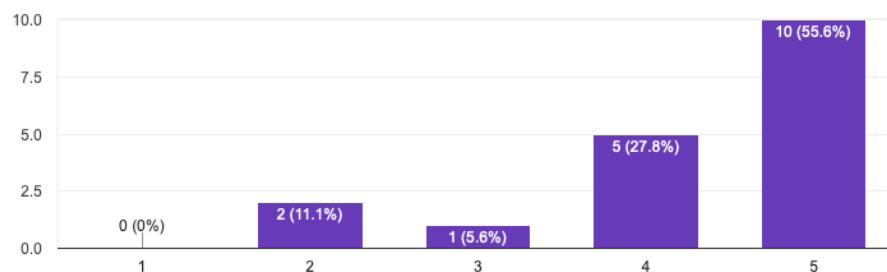
Our district embraces students with different learning styles.

16. Nuestro distrito escolar acoge a estudiantes con diferentes estilos de aprendizaje.
16 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

I feel satisfied with the support my child has received with planning for the next year or transition.

17. Me siento satisfecho con el apoyo que mi hijo ha recibido para planificar el próximo nivel escolar o la transición universitaria.
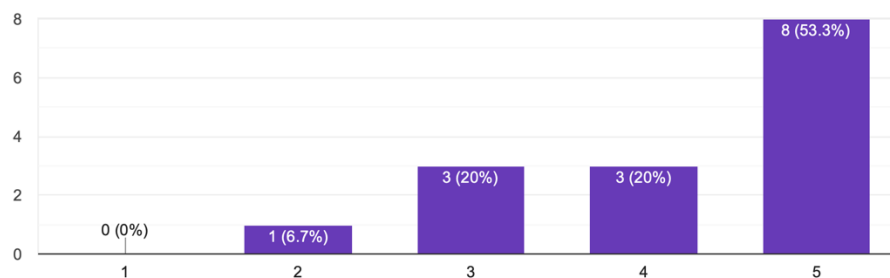16 responses
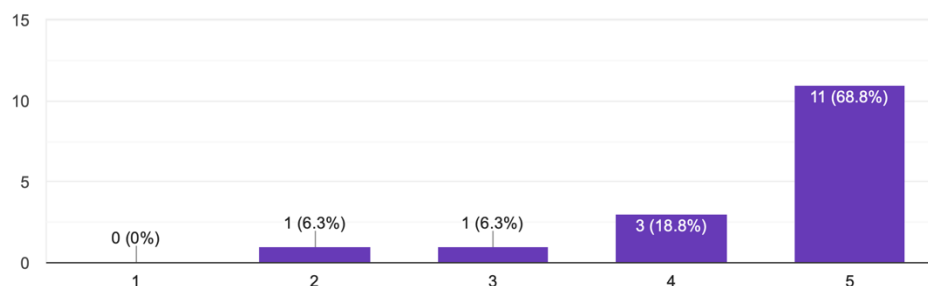
There's a good level of consistency between schools with regards to communication and procedures.

18. Siento que hay mucha coherencia en la comunicación y los procedimientos entre las escuelas del mismo nivel dentro del distrito.
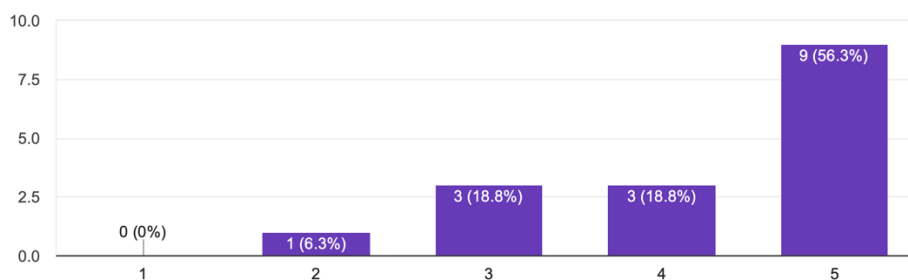15 responses

I'm satisfied with the level of support from the superintendent.

19. Siento que recibo suficiente comunicación de nuestro superintendente escolar.
16 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

I would like to see the district communicate engage in more positive communication and promotion about the good things happening in our schools.

20. Me gustaría que el distrito se comunique y participe en una comunicación y promoción más positivas sobre las cosas buenas que están sucediendo en nuestras escuelas.
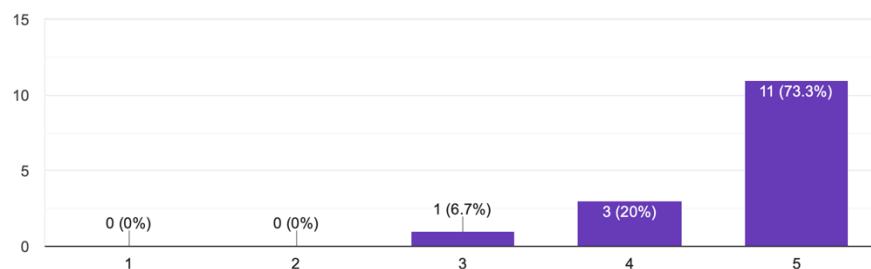15 responses
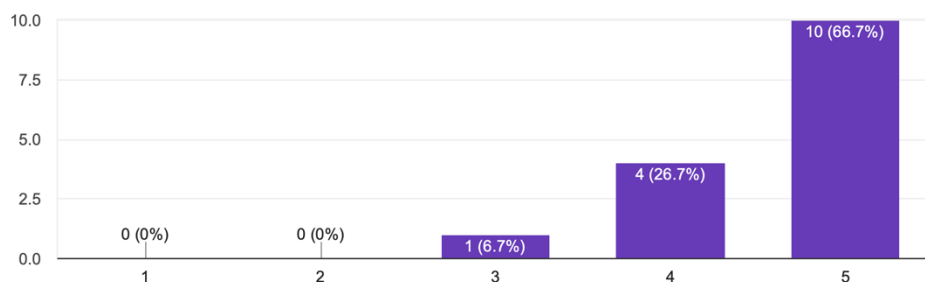
I'm confident and hopeful about the direction of the school district.

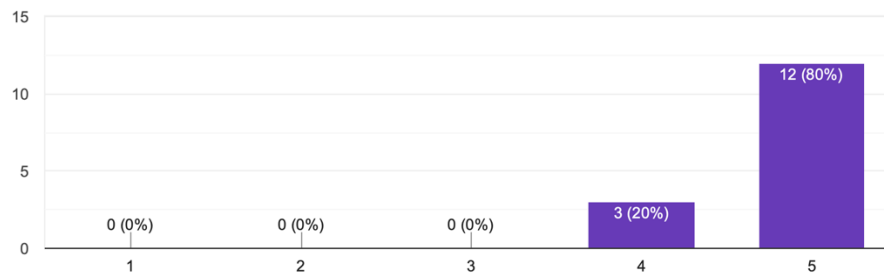22. Me siento confiado y esperanzado sobre la dirección del Distrito Escolar del Área de Coatesville.
15 responses

I'm proud to be a parent in the Coatesville Area School District.

23. Estoy orgulloso de ser padre en el Distrito Escolar del Área de Coatesville.
15 responses

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools

Beth Trapani is a school communications consultant who works with districts and schools around the Greater Philadelphia region, helping them to better reach and interact with their many audiences. Her focus is on helping school districts build support, internally and externally, to strengthen their systems and provide increased opportunities for students to succeed.

Beth specializes in proactive, issue-based communication and messaging, helping superintendents and school boards to manage a wide variety of situations and initiatives. For the last 15 years, her company, Trapani Communications, has provided comprehensive communication support to school districts across the Greater Philadelphia region. She also focuses on crisis communication, using a background in journalism to help districts and other organizations respond to a variety of urgent and contentious communication needs.

For years Beth was one of the Delaware Valley's most familiar voices and faces in her role as a morning anchor and reporter for KYW radio, KYW TV and UPN-57 TV News in Philadelphia. She spent the first part of her career as a print and broadcast journalist, working at newspaper and radio stations across Pennsylvania, including Pittsburgh's KDKA and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. She graduated with honors from Carnegie Mellon University, with degrees in professional writing and social history.

After leaving news, Beth transitioned to work for Bellevue Communications, a prominent Philadelphia public relations firm. There she used her media skills to help corporations such as Temple University Health System, the Kimmel Center, and Comcast, focusing primarily on crisis communications.

Beth is often asked to present to groups of school administrators, and works with several local Intermediate Units and the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education to provide workshops and seminars. She also works with several statewide organizations such as the PA Association of School Administrators in a variety of capacities.

Trapani Communications includes a team of experienced designers, writers, and videographers with backgrounds and expertise in education and public relations.

Trapani
Communications
Consulting for Schools