

CORNERSTONE ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

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Introduction

Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School is an independent public charter school located in San Jose, California. The school opened in September of 2009. In the 2013-2014 school year, Cornerstone Academy enrolled students from kindergarten through fourth grade. Cornerstone Academy focuses on preparation for college by establishing a strong foundation in fundamental skills, particularly literacy and math.

Design of the Survey

The Survey Research Initiative at Teachers College, Columbia University created a survey for parents of Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School to gather information on the school's overall performance. The parent survey was created online through Qualtrics in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The survey consisted of a combination of multiple choice items and open-ended questions.

Survey questions sought information about overall satisfaction with the school culture, the academic program, the working and learning environment, and satisfaction with the school's staff and administration. The survey also gathered data on parent volunteering. The survey included 55 multiple choice items and three open-ended questions.

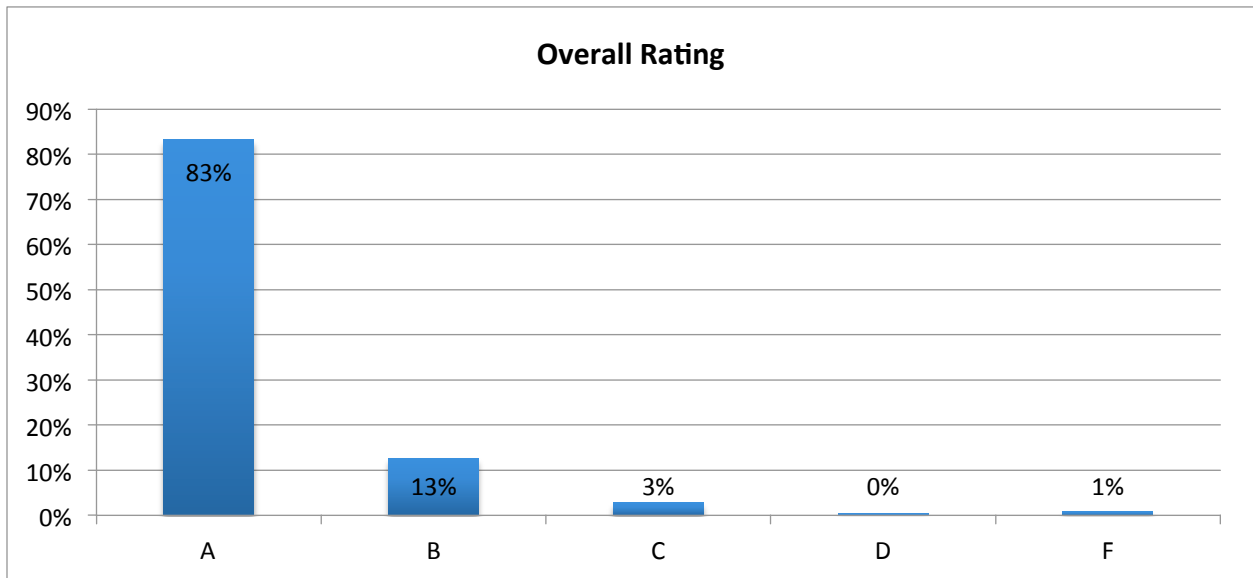
The survey was available online and in a paper version to all parents of Cornerstone for a period of four months. Two hundred and thirty-one parents took the survey.

Organization of the Report

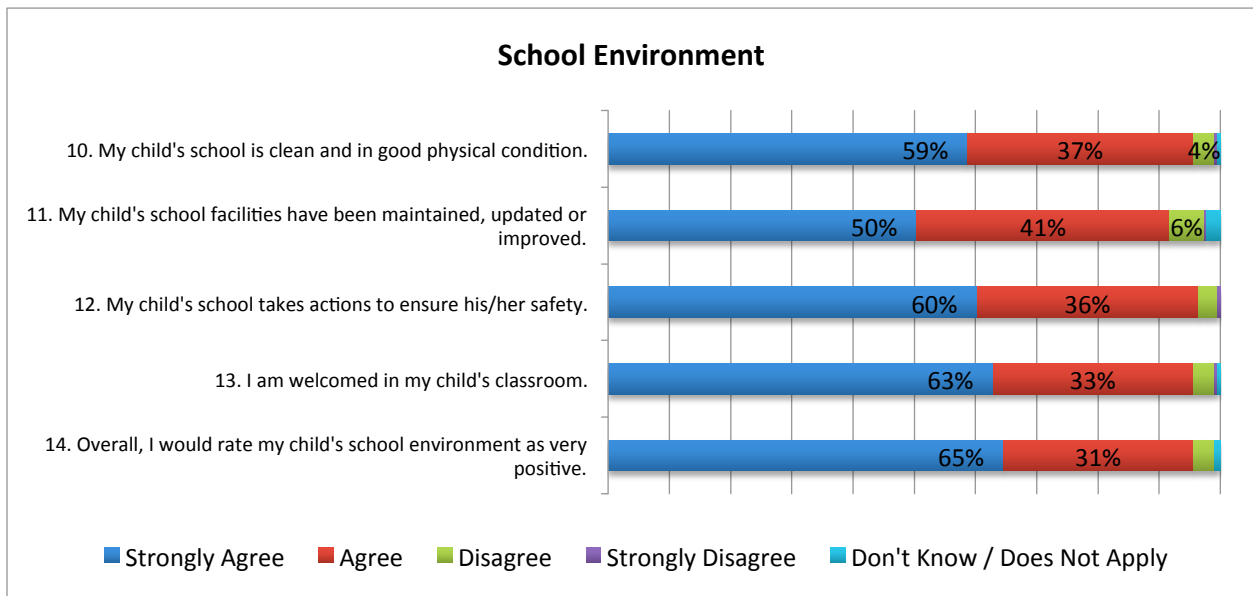
We have organized this report into different sections, based on the organization of the survey. The multiple choice responses from parents are summarized in Charts & Graphs. In the following section, we present the overall trends in the results.

The two appendices present demographic characteristics of the respondents and the responses to the open-ended questions that were submitted as part of the survey. The open-ended questions gave participants an opportunity to comment on both Cornerstone's areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement.

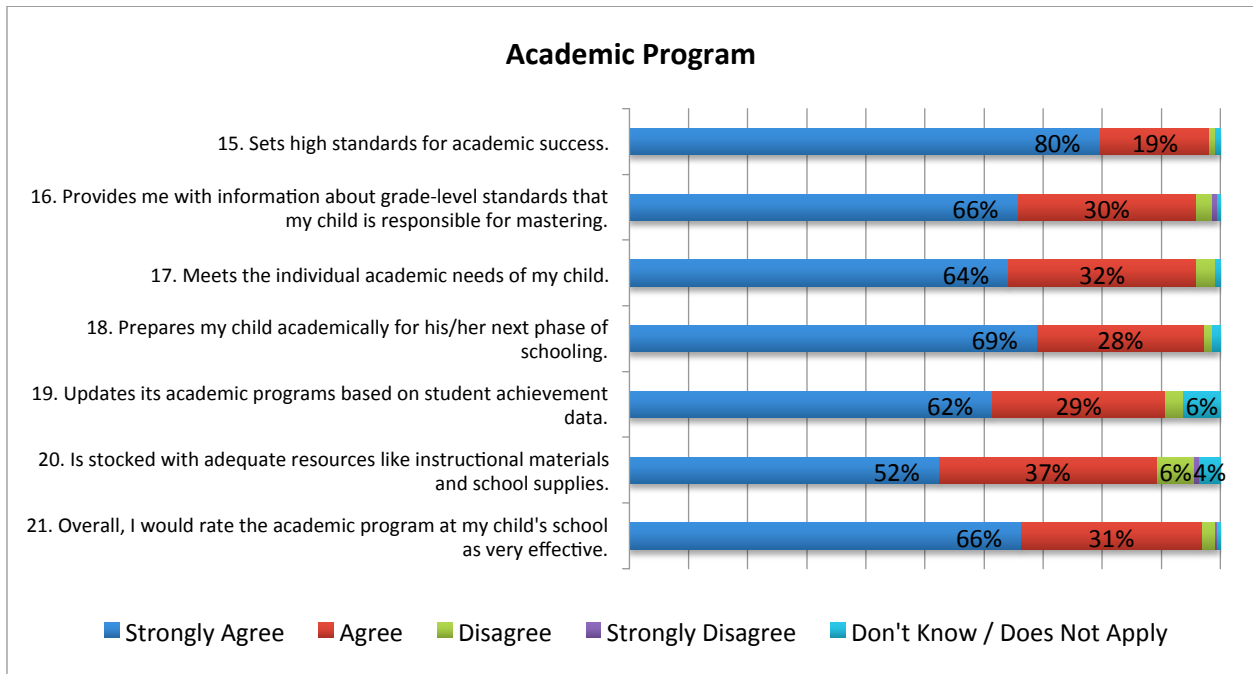
Charts & Graphs



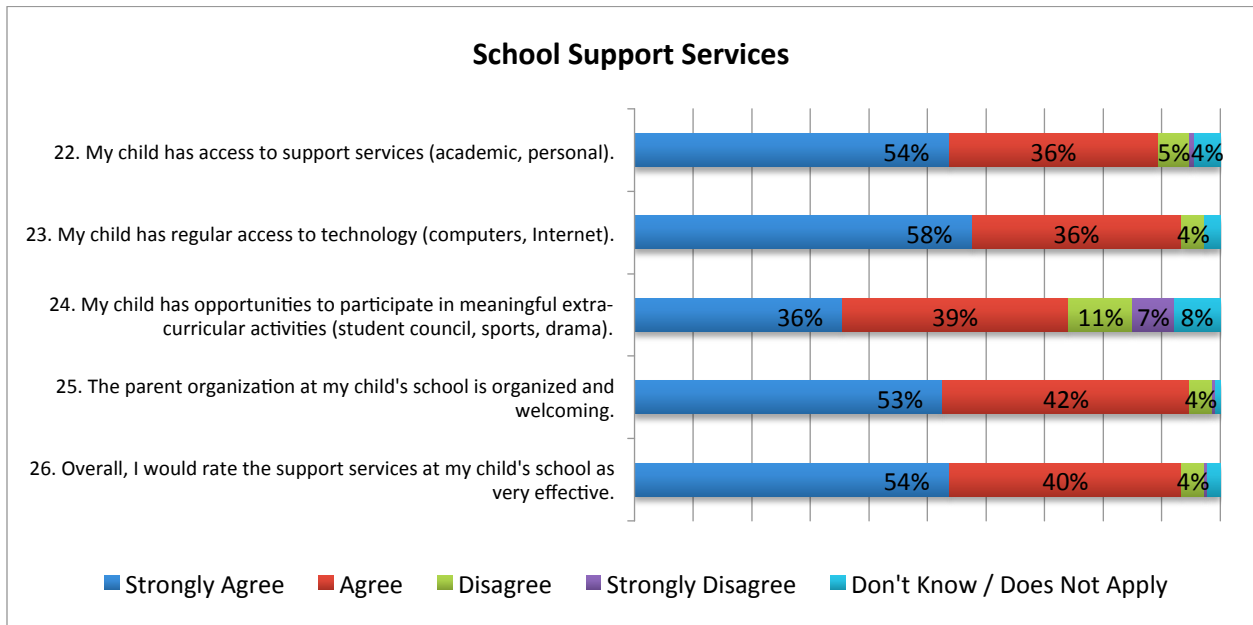
In general, nearly all parents held a positive view of the school. Most respondents (179 parents / 83%) gave Cornerstone Academy an overall rating of A. Twenty-seven parents (13%) gave the school a B. Only a very small number of respondents gave Cornerstone Academy a C (6 parents / 3%), D (1 parent, less than 1%), or F (2 parents / 1%).



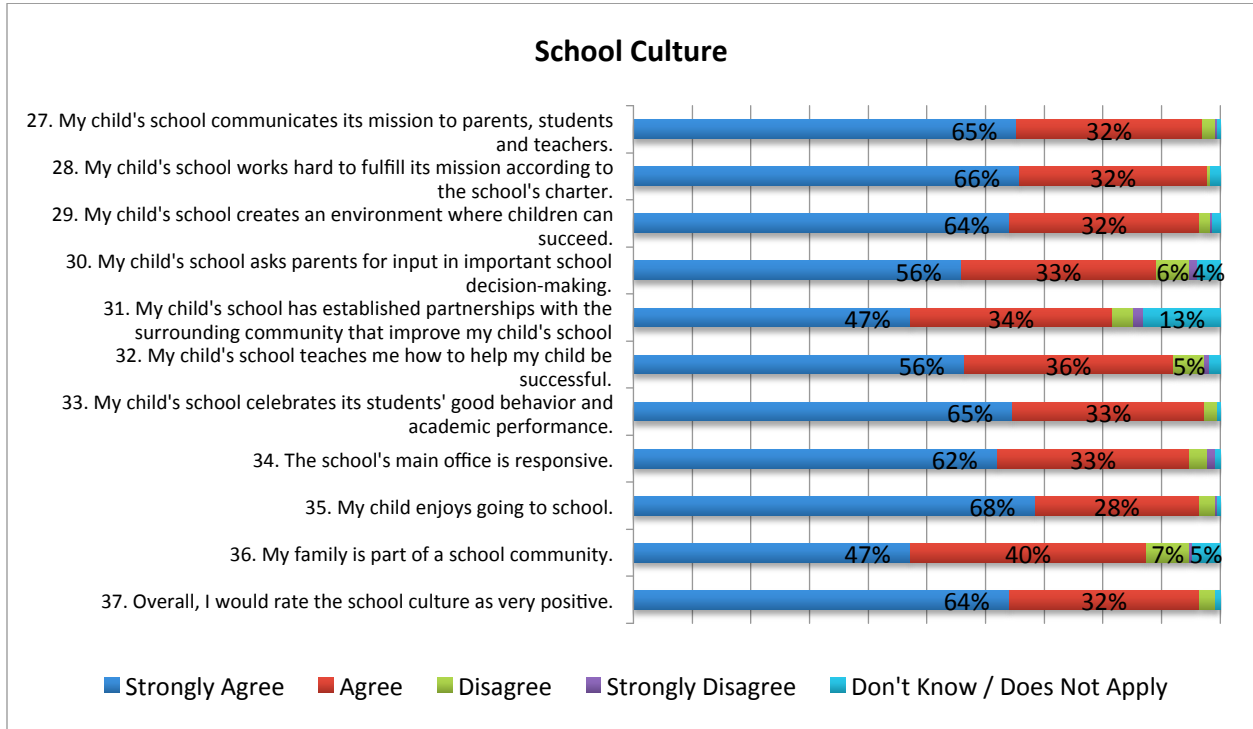
Nearly all parents agreed or strongly agreed with all five statements regarding school environment. While sentiments were largely positive across the board, the weakest category referred to the upkeep of the school's facilities: 91% (209 parents) agreed or strongly agreed, while 7% (14 parents) disagreed that the facilities were well-maintained.



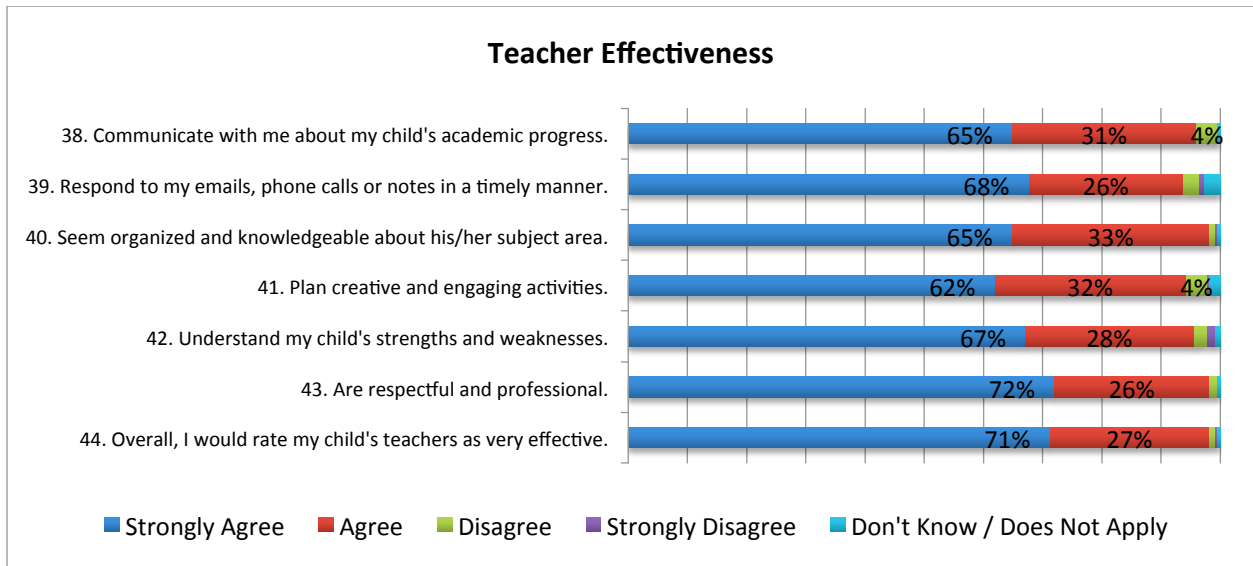
Parent evaluations of Cornerstone’s academic program were generally positive. In particular, a significant majority (180 parents / 80%) strongly agreed that the school sets high standards for academic success. The least enthusiastic response referred to adequate resources. Fourteen parents (6%) disagreed and two parents (1%) strongly disagreed with this statement.



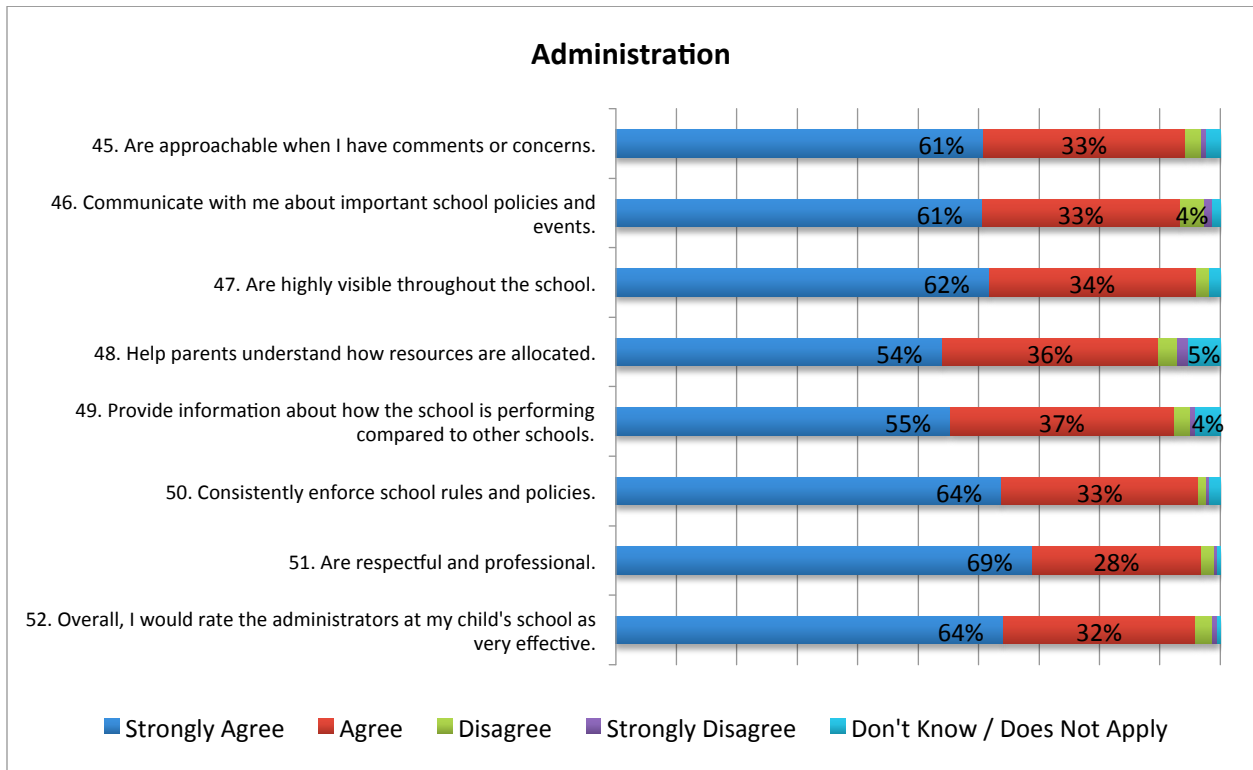
The majority of respondents rated the school’s support services positively; however, a larger portion of parents expressed negative views on whether or not their child has opportunities to participate in meaningful extra-curricular activities: 25 parents (11%) disagreed and 16 parents (7%) strongly disagreed.



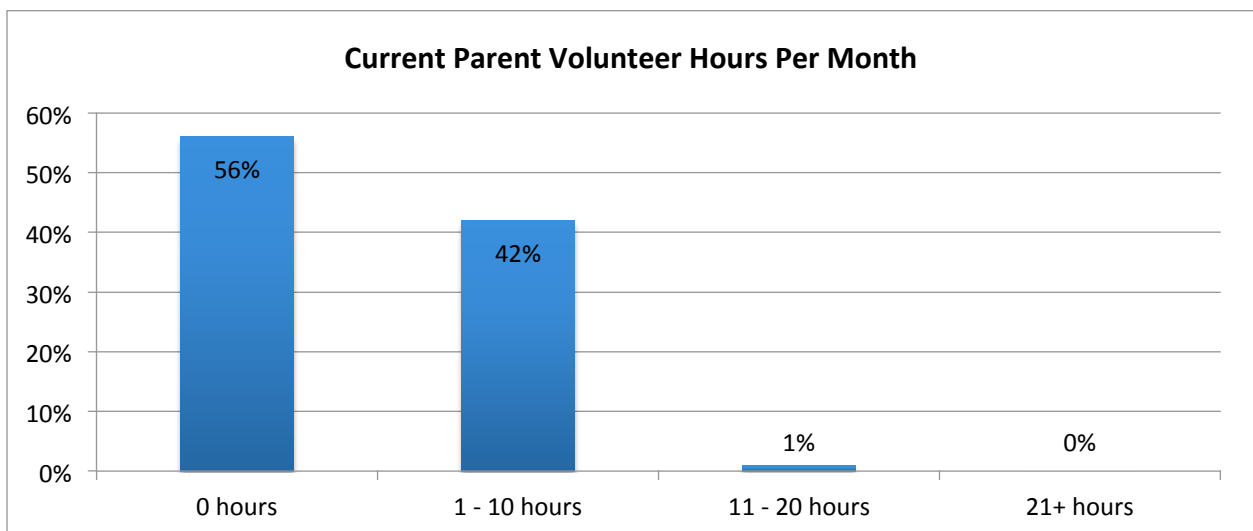
The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all eleven statements about school culture. Significantly, 30 parents (13%) responded “Don’t Know / Does Not Apply” to the statement “My child’s school has established partnerships with the surrounding community that improve my child’s school.”



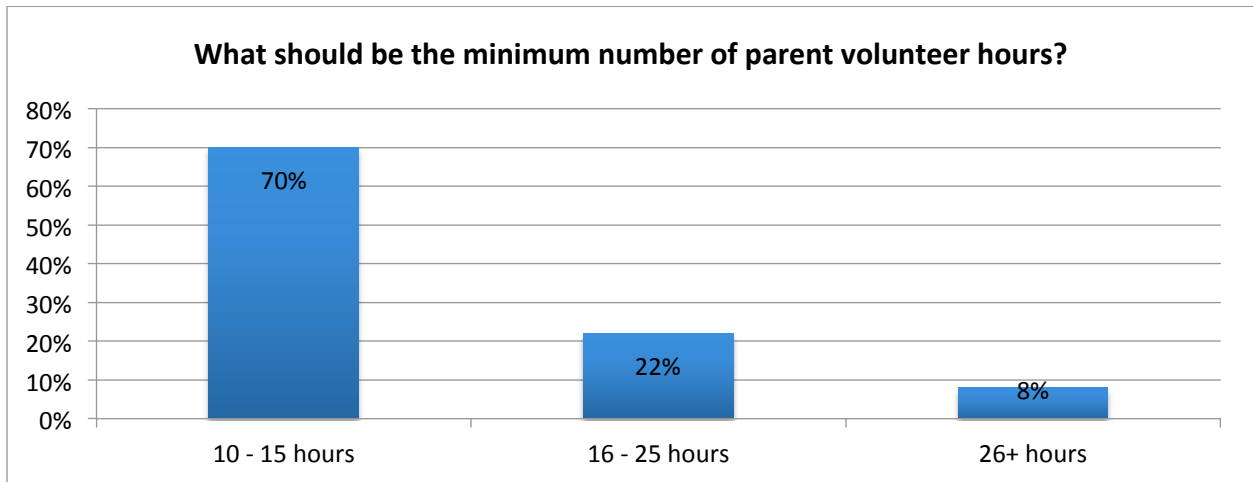
Teachers received overwhelming support from respondents: 61 parents (27%) agreed and 161 parents (71%) strongly agreed that their child’s teacher is very effective. On the other hand, a small minority (8 parents / 4%) expressed negative views regarding both parent/teacher communication and lesson planning.



Administrators also received strong support from respondents: 71 parents (32%) agreed and 143 parents (64%) strongly agreed that administrators at their child’s school are very effective. A few respondents did not know if administrators helped parents understand resource allocation or how Cornerstone’s performance compared to other schools (12 parents / 5% and 9 parents / 4%, respectively).



A majority of respondents (123 parents / 56%) reported no volunteer hours per month. Those parents that did volunteer largely reported 1 – 10 hours (91 parents / 42%). Three parents (1%) indicated 11 – 20 hours, and one parent (less than 1%) indicated 21+ hours.



A substantial majority of respondents suggested that the minimum number of parent volunteer hours should be 10 – 15 (128 parents / 70%). Fewer respondents suggested that the minimum should be higher.

What would help you increase the number of hours you volunteer?

Representative quotations are listed below. The frequency of similar responses is in parentheses.

- I wish I could volunteer more, but I don't have the time. (16)
- My family and/or work responsibilities make it difficult to volunteer. (14)
- I am able to do weekend volunteer work. (9)
- I would love to help out more. Just let me know what needs to be done. (8)
- When my children are a little older, I will have more time to volunteer. (7)
- I am able to volunteer after work hours. (5)
- If the school announced volunteer opportunities further in advance, I could volunteer more. (4)
- There needs to be better communication about volunteer needs. (4)
- I could volunteer more if I had a babysitter. (3)
- Schedule more field trips. (2)
- Is there anything I can do from home? (2)
- The school should have mandatory volunteer hours. (2)
- I don't know. (2)
- I could volunteer more if I could bring my 2 year old with me to school. (1)
- I wish I could sign up for volunteer opportunities online. (1)
- I wish there were more Spanish language volunteer opportunities. (1)
- There should be more classroom volunteer activities rather than field trips. (1)
- If parents were more involved with the school, they would volunteer more.
- Teachers should post regular volunteer tasks (weekly or monthly). (1)

Conclusion: Comparing Stakeholder Responses

Overall, parents who took the survey expressed overwhelmingly positive views of Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School. Most parents gave the school an A rating. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents gave all categories – the academic program, support services, school environment, school culture, teachers, and administrators – high marks. It is useful, then, to explore the questions and categories in which the school received relatively less enthusiastic responses in order to identify potential areas for growth and improvement.

Academic Program and Support Services

Parents seemed quite pleased with the academic program at Cornerstone, praising the school's high academic standards, individual attention, and rigorous preparation for the next grade. Slightly fewer parents expressed the same enthusiasm for the school's resources, such as instructional materials and school supplies.

Likewise, parents largely approved of the school's support services. They believed that there were appropriate academic and personal services for students as well as adequate access to computers and the internet. Respondents also praised the parent association as organized and welcoming. The chief complaint, although held by a minority of respondents, revolved around extra-curricular activities (i.e. student council, sports, and drama).

School Environment and Culture

Cornerstone received high marks for its cleanliness and physical condition, its attention to safety, and its welcoming environment. Despite the general approval, a few respondents noted that it may be time to update or improve some of the facilities.

The questions about school culture garnered positive responses across the board. Parents believed that the school communicates its mission well and works hard to fulfill it, that it cultivates and celebrates student success, that it welcomes parental input, and that it creates a welcoming community for families. One question asked about whether or not Cornerstone had established neighborhood partnerships. Few parents disagreed, but many did not feel as if they knew the answer. Perhaps there is room for Cornerstone to expand its community outreach, or, if such efforts are currently underway, better communication with parents may be necessary.

Teachers and Administration

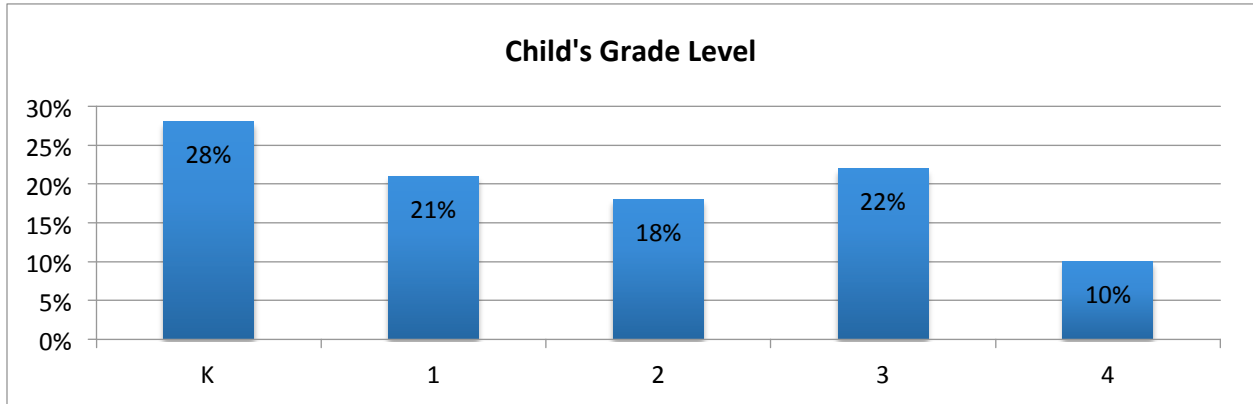
Survey respondents also gave their children's teachers and administrators strong reviews, although their responses indicated some potential areas for improvement. While most respondents felt that Cornerstone's teachers were organized and knowledgeable about their subject area, understood students' strengths and weaknesses, and responded promptly to parents. A small minority of respondents felt teachers needed to communicate better with parents about their child's academic progress.

Similarly, parents praised administrators' efforts but also offered some insight about relative weaknesses. Whereas respondents overwhelmingly agreed that Cornerstone administrators were approachable, respectful, and professional, respondents indicated less agreement that administrators adequately explained the school's resource allocation and its performance relative to other schools.

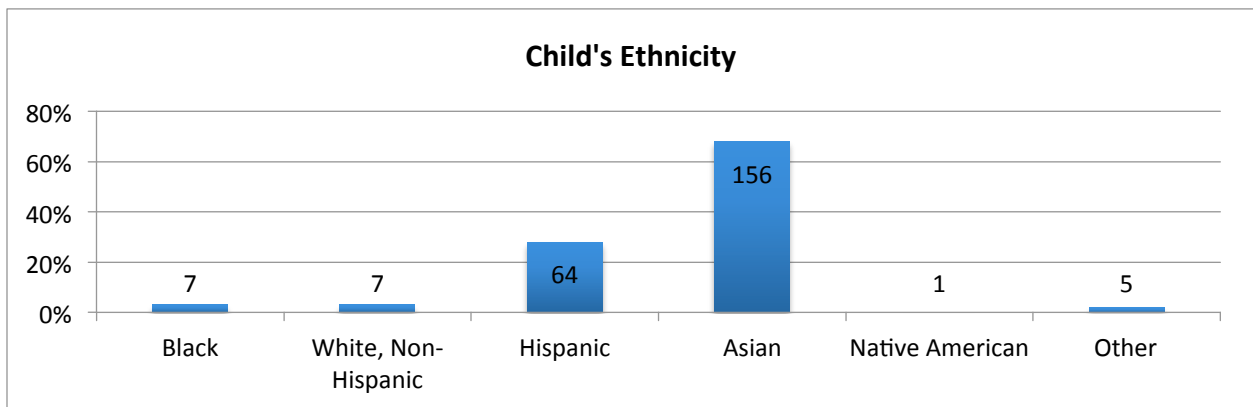
Parent Volunteer Hours

This survey also provided a snapshot of current parent volunteer practices as well as ideas for changes in the volunteer program. Nearly all respondents indicated that they volunteer ten hours or less each month (a slight majority said they do not volunteer at all). When asked what the minimum number of parent volunteer hours ought to be, most respondents chose the smallest option (10 – 15 hours). The open-ended comments revealed a frequent desire among parents to volunteer more, but they said that the current volunteer opportunities rarely fit their schedules. Cornerstone may have more success increasing parent volunteer hours if there were more weekend or after-school opportunities.

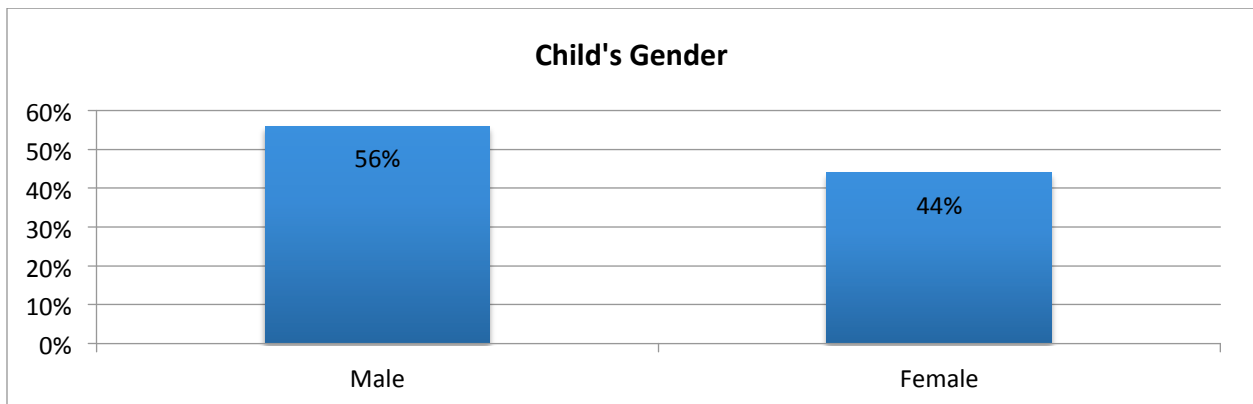
Appendix I: Respondent Demographics



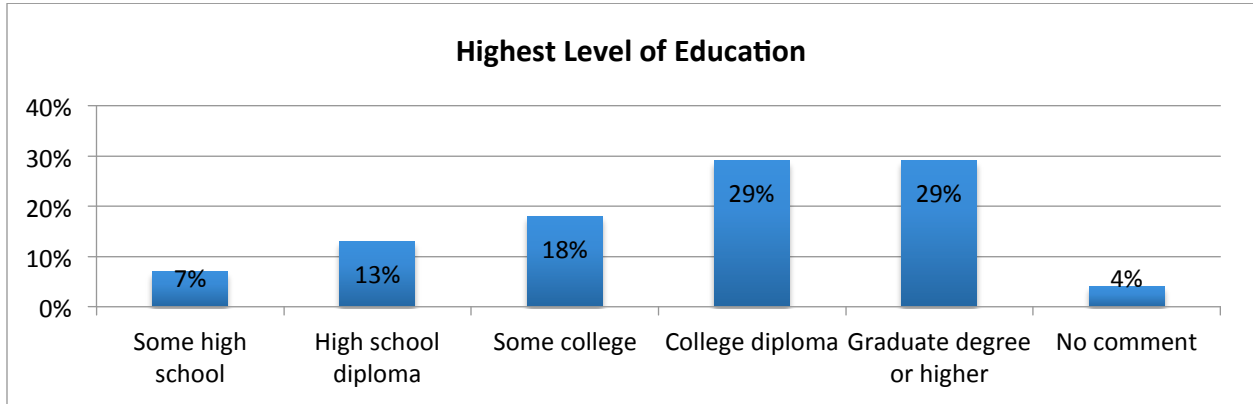
Kindergarten parents had the highest representation in the survey (64 parents / 28%). Fourth grade parents had the lowest representation (23 parents / 10%).



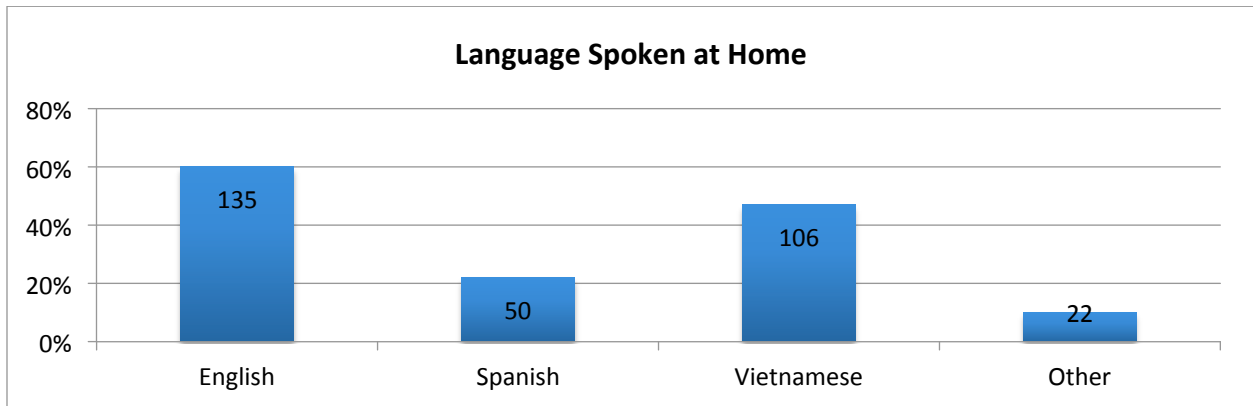
The majority of survey respondents identified their child as Asian (156 parents). The second largest group identified their child as Hispanic (64 parents). Parents could choose more than one category.



A slight majority identified their child as male (125 parents / 56%).



A majority of survey respondents completed college, with 65 parents (29%) earning a college diploma and 66 parents (29%) earning a graduate degree.

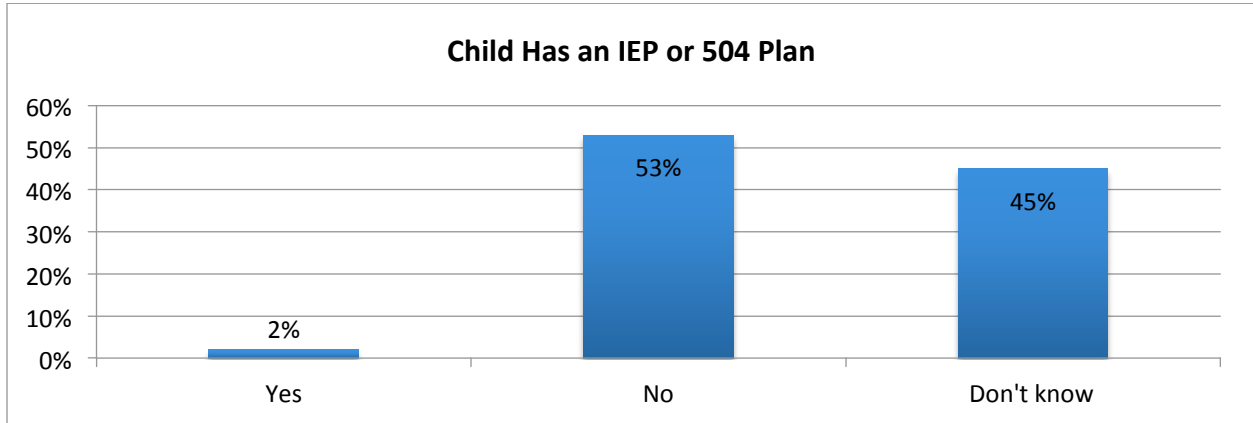


The survey revealed significant linguistic diversity at Cornerstone. Parents who selected “Other” listed thirteen languages besides English (135 parents), Spanish (50 parents), and Vietnamese (106 parents). Parents could choose more than one category.

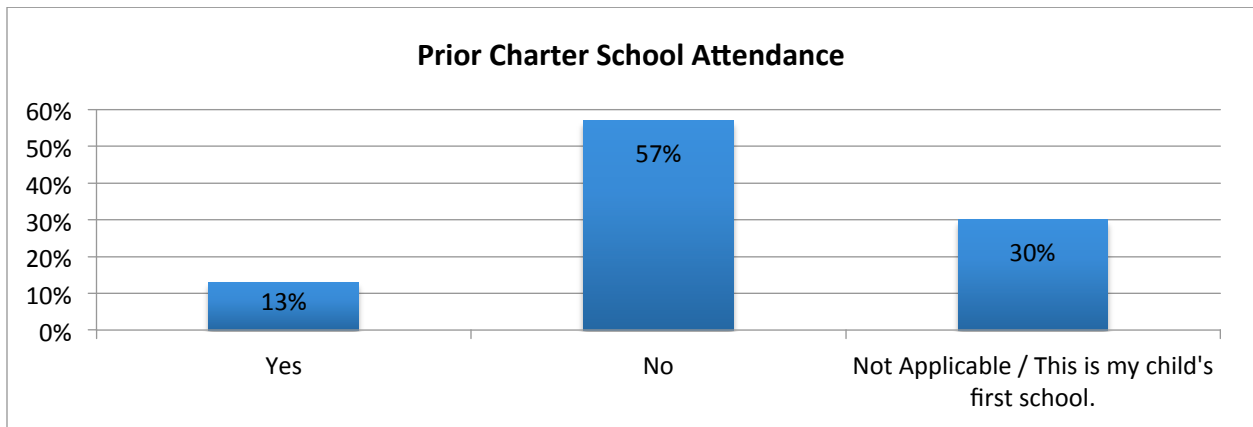
Other Languages Spoken At Home

The frequency of similar responses is in parentheses.

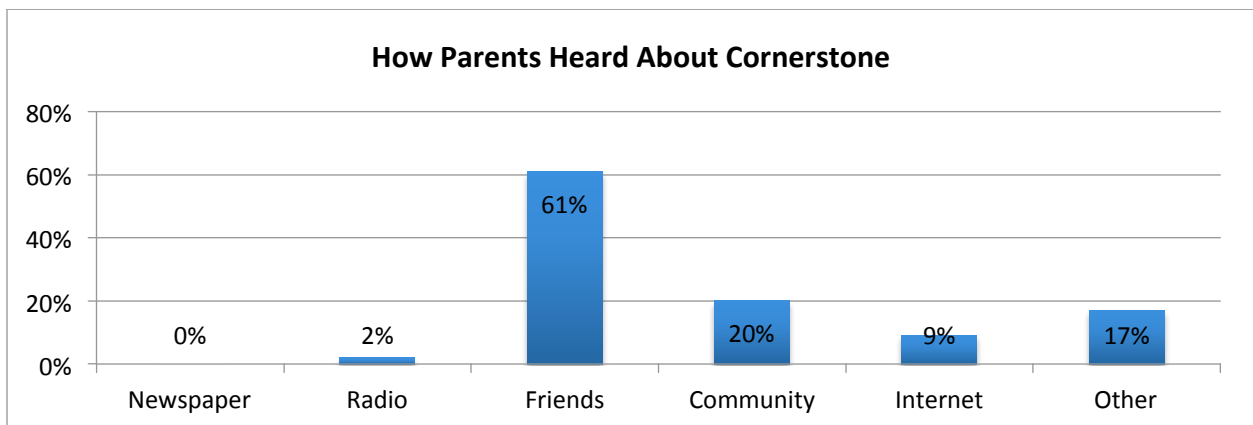
- Tagalog (7)
- Laotian (5)
- Chinese (1)
- Tamil & Telugu (1)
- Ilocano (1)
- Korean (1)
- Filipino/Cebuano/Tagalog (1)
- Hindi & Punjabi (1)
- Cambodian (1)
- Mandarin (1)



A slight majority of respondents (117 parents / 53%) said their children do not have an IEP or 504 plan; however, 101 parents (45%) did not know.



The vast majority of respondents indicated that Cornerstone is their child's first charter school (198 parents / 87%).



Most survey respondents (138 parents / 61%) indicated that they heard about Cornerstone through their friends.

Appendix II: Open-Ended Responses

Responses to open-ended questions are listed below.

Areas of Strength

Parent responses fell into three broad categories. Representative responses are listed below each category.

Academic Program (39)

The academics at Cornerstone are excellent.

The curriculum

Education

I appreciate the academics and the traffic control in the mornings.

The school has a positive learning environment.

I'm very happy to see my child improve a lot on her reading and do her own homework.

Academic program, teachers, the principal, staff visibility, parent association, and teacher effectiveness

The academic program and the homework set-up

Academic standards and lesson plans

The academic standards, the teachers' commitment, and the respect each student received

The high standards for students

I've noticed my child improve academically in a short time.

Teachers and Administration (33)

The great staff

The teachers are very knowledgeable and patient with their scholars.

Very energetic teachers who love to teach

The teachers' commitment to teaching

Communication between the school and parents

Consistency and organization

The teachers' effectiveness, the academic program, school support, and the fact that parents are very involved

The unconventional teaching process – it really seems to work the kids' brains more and in different directions

I like that the school staff meets and greets the students before they start their school day.

I like the required reading homework and the dedicated teachers and staff

The involvement and care that the teachers and staff have for my child.

The teachers taught her the necessary tools for the next grade level.

I appreciate the regular updates from teachers and the concern for children's safety.

I am most happy with the fact that the staff answers my questions with such a great attitude.

School Environment and Culture (20)

The school maintains order, discipline, and respect.

Everything

The school is clean and well maintained.

Scholars can connect classroom lessons to real life experiences.

My child has made excellent friends at Cornerstone.
The long school day
Cornerstone promotes team building and community, personal responsibility, and respect for others.
Parent involvement
My daughter tells me how she has a good time at school.
A helpful community, safe environment, and friendly people
I like how clean the school is, the school hours, the teachers, and the academic.
The way good behavior is acknowledged

Opportunities for Improvement

Parent responses fell into six broad categories. Representative responses are listed below each category.

Academic Program (15)

There needs to be more teaching hours. There are also too many minimum days and long breaks between seasons (winter break, spring break, summer break).

The school needs better reading instruction

Better writing instruction: main idea, details, sequence, inference, comprehension

Teach children to double-check their work.

Smaller classes

Because of the long school day, there should be less homework. Also, the school needs more arts.

More time dedicated to science

Instead of pairing up more advanced students with slow/behind students, let them grow further.

Sometimes my child comes home stressed about school. Sometimes he just does not understand his homework, and he can't do it.

Less homework on holidays

Teachers and Administration (19)

I wish there was more communication with the staff and teachers about how a child is doing.

More Spanish speakers

Health resources / school nurse

There needs to be a better focus on overall care and understanding for each child. Also, the school needs to work with all parents and not just the parent association.

The school needs to get the word out about events and have more fun days (like crazy hair day).

Parking and communication with parents

They should reduce the students to teachers ratio, improve teacher quality, increase faculty retention, have more PE, and more challenging curriculum.

Staffing issues: there has been quite a bit of changes through the school year.

The school should work on teachers' qualifications and teacher retention. Also, the school needs to develop a more challenging curriculum for all grade levels. More computers are needed. There need to be more physical activities. Teachers shouldn't be able to take personal gifts from parents. Finally, the Parents Association should be independent of the school administration.

The number of turnarounds for teachers is too high. Also, the school needs better communication with parents other than for fundraisers. Lastly, there needs to be more help during lunch and recess.

Teachers seem to enjoy being around colleagues more than students. We need teachers and administrations that

really care for the children.
Too much teacher turnaround
Facilities and Resources (18)
The school needs better and more permanent facilities. (5)
The school needs to expand and add more buildings. Also, its safety needs some improvement such as better gates or a security officer in the school. (2)
Cleanliness of the school (2)
The school needs more parking spaces and playgrounds. (2)
Restroom supplies (2)
The school needs more computers. (1)
The school needs computer labs, it needs to get the skunks out, and there should be more sports programs. (2)
The lunch programs should have more fruits and veggies so the kids can be healthier, and there should be less junk food at snack. (1)
There needs to be more snack because my son seems to run out of energy at 11am. (1)
Extra-Curricular Activities (12)
Sports
More after school activities
More physical education classes
There should be more sports, a playground with shade, and more field trips.
I wish there was arts & crafts, PE with specific sports (ex. soccer, basketball, volleyball, etc.), and other extra-curricular activities to use and/or enhance students' talents/gifts.
Other (14)
Pick up can be a challenge on early out days.
The school should be more aggressive about growing to 8 th grade.
Behavior/discipline
More parent participation
Some areas of improvement: online capabilities (contact info update, meal payment, and school communication), increase parent volunteer participation, after school programs, school facilities, and teacher retention
Safety
Class discipline: students should not get punished as a whole for something another student does.
Nothing or N/A (19)