

February 2, 2010

Dear members of the Lincoln Middle School community,

Attached you will find a 13 page summary of a parent survey that Lincoln Middle School's School Site Council conducted in June 2009. The purpose of the survey was to get feedback on parents' perception of the culture and climate of Lincoln.

Facts/Disclosures:

- ◇ 195 people logged on to the survey, an average of 169 people completed the survey. There is no way to track people who took the survey multiple times.
- ◇ 2008-09 Attendance was 1200 students. The number of people that logged on or attempted (not necessarily completed) the survey is about 10% of the total parent population.
- ◇ Questions that involved choosing "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" selections were prompted to give open ended feedback. "Strongly Agree, Agree or Neither Agree or Disagree" were not prompted to give open ended feedback.
- ◇ There was one question at the end of the survey that allowed the survey taker to give any comments or feedback to make Lincoln a better school.

Positive Comments:

- ◇ Wonderful school
- ◇ Good communication
- ◇ Thoughtful homework
- ◇ Teachers have endless enthusiasm and energy
- ◇ Wonderful music program

Areas of concern:

- ◇ Discipline seems to be punitive and not developmental
- ◇ Concerns about consistency in following policies
- ◇ Amount of homework
- ◇ Need for better communication

The Lincoln Middle School Site Council anticipates conducting another survey of parents in the coming months. We are hopeful that there will be a greater number of parents willing to complete the survey. There also has been interest in conducting surveys of students and staff.

If you have any questions regarding the survey and the survey results, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Suzanne Webb, Principal

**Report on June 2009 Lincoln Middle School Community Survey  
Prepared by Tom Belin for presentation to the Lincoln School Site Council  
Sept. 30, 2009**

Background

The Lincoln Middle School Community Survey was developed as part of the implementation of Lincoln's Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), which is the strategy developed by the Lincoln School Site Council to promote achievement and assess goals for the school. The 2009 SPSA included as a goal under the heading of "School Climate":

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Mission Statement includes "extraordinary achievement for all students while simultaneously closing the achievement gap." Research has shown the central importance of a sense of "school connectedness" on the part of both students and their families to long-term educational outcomes. It is our charge as a public school to go beyond the teaching of core subjects into engaging our students and family members.

A summary of the research on school connectedness is available from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/AdolescentHealth/pdf/connectedness.pdf>). Much of the evidence linking school connectedness to better educational and health outcomes was based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (sometimes called the "Add Health" study for short), which was initiated in 1994 as a nationally representative sample of children in grades 7-12, supplemented by a survey of the parents of those children. Academic researchers (e.g., C.A. McNeely, J.M. Nonnemaker, R.W. Blum, "Promoting School Connectedness: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, *Journal of School Health*, 2002, 72:138-146) have measured school connectedness using a combination of responses to questions asking how much they agree or disagree with the following statements: (1) "I feel close to people at this school"; (2) "I feel like I am part of this school"; (3) "I am happy to be at this school"; (4) "The teachers at this school treat students fairly"; and (5) "I feel safe in my school". Variations on these statements, such as "Your child is happy to be at Lincoln Middle School," were presented to parents in the Lincoln Middle School Community Survey. The Lincoln parent survey also included questions that were not part of the Add Health study, but a nationally representative reference group is available for many of the questions in the Lincoln survey.

Implementation of survey and pledge not to reveal identity

The survey was implemented using the SurveyMonkey web-based system. The Introduction to the survey opened with the following statements:

This survey asks you to provide input related to your child's experience at Lincoln Middle School. Your identity will not be revealed to any Lincoln-affiliated person. Summaries of survey responses will be reported to the Lincoln School Site Council with the aim of informing future decisions.

The survey was announced via email with a link to a SurveyMonkey web page. Initial attempts to use an email database from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District only reached a few individuals (parents who also work for the school district); subsequently, the survey was announced using the Lincoln List, the school's email listserv to which large numbers of parents subscribe.

Survey response

There were 193 individuals who started the survey; responses were collected between June 4, 2009 and June 23, 2009. Varying numbers of individuals responded to different questions, with details provided below. Most of the multiple-choice questions were answered by between 165 and 180 parents. This compares to a student population of roughly 1,200; a rough estimate is that the pool of respondents reflects roughly 8% of the parents who were active in the lives of Lincoln students in June, 2009. [Side note to School Site Council: Improved ability to contact parents using email addresses collected by SMMUSD can be expected to result in broader participation in future efforts, and we should push to improve our ability to engage in electronic communication.] Because of the active role I played in developing the survey, I decided not to be a survey respondent.

### Structure of survey

The survey asked a series of multiple choice questions, many of which asked parents the extent to which they agreed with a given statement, with five response options in a multiple-choice format:

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

The questions were worded in a way that agreeing with the statement reflected a more favorable attitude. The survey closed with a request for open-ended input that was asked of all parents: “Please share any other comments or feedback that you think would help make Lincoln Middle School a better school.”

When the survey was being developed, there was agreement at the School Site Council that it would be valuable to know more about the reasons why parents might disagree or strongly disagree with a given statement. For some of the items, such as “Your child feels close to an adult at Lincoln Middle School”, those who stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed were encouraged to contact a school administrator or counselor and were presented with relevant contact information. For most of the rest of the items, those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were presented with an opportunity to provide open-ended comments on their reasons why, while those who responded “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, or “Neither agree nor disagree” skipped past the request for open-ended input and on to the next multiple-choice question. Thus, for someone who responded “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, or “Neither agree nor disagree” to all of the questions with those response options, the only opportunity for open-ended input came in the last question of the survey (i.e., “Please share any other comments or feedback that you think would help make Lincoln Middle School a better school”), which was asked of all participants. Such an approach reduced the response burden for parents with favorable attitudes, but it is worth emphasizing that the structure of the survey selectively requested open-ended input from parents harboring negative attitudes. This report attempts to achieve balance by presenting details on the distribution of multiple-choice responses as well as summaries of key themes from the open-ended input.

### Rationale for decisions pertaining to survey implementation and summary

Web-based surveys of parents had previously been conducted at Lincoln using SurveyMonkey. But because the survey, both on account of its length and the use of skip patterns, would have taken a meaningful amount of time for a Lincoln staff member to implement, I volunteered to implement the survey on a SurveyMonkey account that I maintain for professional reasons based on my role as a Professor in the UCLA Department of Biostatistics. That is how it happened that I, in my role as one of eight parent members of the Lincoln School Site Council, became webmaster of the survey.

The nature of some of the open-ended input induced constraints on what could be reported. First, participants occasionally referred to named individuals in their responses. Second, respondents occasionally gave enough information that it was possible for me to determine their identity even for people I do not regard myself as knowing very well, so that reporting all of the open-ended responses would be inconsistent with the survey pledge not to reveal the identity of individual respondents and thus was not an option. Finally, the number of open-ended responses and the length of some of the responses called for an effort to distill the themes of the responses into shorter summaries.

In what follows, I have provided statistical summaries of multiple-choice items and narratives summarizing key themes that emerged from open-ended comments. The report begins by following the order in which survey questions were asked, presenting summaries of the grade and gender distribution of respondents’ children, of parent interactions with their children that pertain to Lincoln, and of parent interactions with the school across various domains. Next, the open-ended comments solicited at the end of the survey are presented. Subsequently, the report returns to the previous spot in the survey and follows the order in which survey items were presented.

### Characteristics of survey respondents

The following items provide information on the characteristics of survey respondents:

#### **In what grade is your child at Lincoln?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
6th	72	38.3%
7th	62	33.0%
8th	54	28.7%
Total	188	100.0%

#### **What gender is your child at Lincoln?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Male	87	47.0%
Female	98	53.0%
Total	185	100.0%

Although the numbers are not equivalent across categories, there are sizable numbers of respondents in all categories, and the departures from equality are not statistically significant, meaning that they are consistent with chance variation.

### Interactions with children regarding school

The following items provide information on parent interactions with their children:

#### **In the past week, have you and your child at Lincoln talked about (his/her) school work or grades?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Yes	168	94.4%	90.6%
No	10	5.6%	9.4%
Total	178	100.0%	100.0%

#### **In the past week, have you and your child at Lincoln talked about other things (he/she) is doing at school?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Yes	172	96.1%	89.3%
No	7	3.9%	10.7%
Total	179	100.0%	100.0%

Thus, the Lincoln parents who responded interacted more with their child at Lincoln about school than parents of secondary-school children in the national comparison sample. [Note: Commentary in the report such as the previous statement, where there is a claim that the Lincoln group had a different pattern of responses from the national sample, is based on having done a formal test and concluding that the difference is statistically significant at the 5% level. This means that the sample size is large enough that the discrepancy is not readily explained by chance variation or by the fact that we got one sample of a given size and not another.]

### Interactions with school staff and school programs

The following items provide information on parent interactions with teachers and administrators at Lincoln:

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\* Throughout the report, the national sample comparison refers to results from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Wave I, a nationally representative study of 20,000+ students in grades 7-12 conducted in 1994-1995 (see codebooks under <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth>)

**Have you talked with any of your child’s teachers about your child’s school work this school year, either informally or in a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Yes	139	78.1%	70.4%
No	39	21.9%	29.6%
Total	178	100.0%	100.0%

**Have you talked with a Lincoln counselor or a Lincoln administrator (Principal or Assistant Principal) about your child’s experience at Lincoln this school year, either informally or in a regularly scheduled meeting?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Yes	113	63.8%
No	64	36.2%
Total	177	100.0%

**During this school year, have you participated in school fundraising or done volunteer work at Lincoln Middle School, such as supervising lunch, chaperoning a field trip, etc.?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Yes	120	69.4%	31.5%
No	53	30.6%	68.5%
Total	173	100.0%	100.0%

Thus, the Lincoln parents who responded had talked more to their children’s teachers than parents of secondary-school children in the national comparison sample. There was not a question asked of the national comparison sample about interaction with counselors or administrators, but the figure of 63.8% was higher than I thought it would be. The Lincoln parents who responded have been substantially more engaged with Lincoln in terms of volunteer activity or fundraising than the parents in the national comparison sample have been with their children’s schools, the Lincoln proportion (69.4%) being more than double the national-sample proportion (31.5%).

Attitudes toward Lincoln—open-ended feedback solicited from all participants

Departing from the order in which the survey items were presented, we now turn to the open-ended comments offered by parents in response to the final survey request, **“Please share any other comments or feedback that you think would help make Lincoln Middle School a better school.”** There were 84 parents who offered comments in response to the request, representing 43.5% of the parents who started the survey. Each response was reviewed for “themes” emerging from the statement. (A single statement might have multiple themes if it addressed multiple topics.) For example, the statement

I would like to have a one-to-one meeting with each of my child’s teachers at least once a year. I feel there is no opportunity for that unless there is a problem. Since we have had no big problem, I would feel foolish scheduling a meeting.

was classified under the heading *Communication, parent engagement*. There is no unique way to identify themes in open-ended text and no unique way to group them, but by distilling longer statements down to shorter summaries and by seeking connections between similar comments, the goal was to make the findings easier to process. The following key themes were noted in the open-ended comments at the end of the survey:

Environment

A number of respondents commented favorably about the environment at Lincoln. Many respondents expressed satisfaction with Lincoln and/or gratitude for being at Lincoln; a specific comment in this spirit was that an older child who has now graduated from high school was well prepared at Lincoln. Concerns about the environment at Lincoln included that there is too much stress, an emphasis on negative reinforcement, coming up short for kids who struggle to keep up despite being excellent for high-achieving students, a concern about the climate for boys, a sense that the environment could be more accepting of all cultures/races, and that a sense of entitlement by some parents sends the wrong message to children. Suggestions included a greater focus on the whole person and year-round attention to the need for students to get rest as opposed to highlighting that need only during the testing period.

### Teachers/administrators/staff

A number of comments referred to school staff. Praise for teachers included terms such as “great”, “hardworking”, “inspired”, “eager to help”, and “have endless energy and enthusiasm”. Praise for Principal Suzanne Webb included that she “has done amazing job of calming everyone down.” Praise for support staff and office staff included that they work with the school administration for the “common good, well-being, and safety of youth.” One respondent expressed appreciation for help from teachers in patrolling the perimeter of the school for safety, and another respondent thought decisions needed to be left to the teachers. There were requests for school staff to establish a more positive tone, to exhibit more flexibility, to be more open to criticism, and to be more supportive with a focus on their power to encourage, motivate, and inspire. With specific reference to counseling, there were expressions that more could be done to assist in the transition to Lincoln if one is not from one of the feeder schools, that students should meet more frequently with counselors, that well-behaved students get less attention from counselors but sometimes need help as well, and that there is a need for more help for counselors.

### Academic program

A number of comments referred to academic themes. Praise included assessments that a high proportion of lessons at Lincoln are meaningful and rich and that the curriculum skills class in particular was helpful. Concerns included that too many students don’t take studies seriously and are disruptive, that academic material is not challenging for some advanced students, that too little is done during the last two weeks of school, that curriculum with both music and art would be preferable to forcing students to choose at this age, and that it is important to retain A.M. classes to allow students to pursue multiple electives. There was both positive and negative sentiment about the success of special education programs at Lincoln, with the most consistent recommendation being for teachers to have additional training opportunities related to different learning styles. Several respondents commented specifically on music, drama, and arts programs at Lincoln, most commonly with comments about these programs being great or a desire to expand arts programs (e.g., year-long art classes, dance or drama classes).

### Homework-related comments

Homework was a major focus of open-ended comments. Most prominent was a sense of too much homework being assigned, noted in 17 comments, although 2 respondents thought there was too little homework. Consequences of the amount of homework included having to limit extracurricular activities and having to either get up early or stay up late to complete homework; one respondent even alluded to missing morning classes as a “family remedy” to complete homework. One specific suggestion was to reduce the number of math problems assigned (e.g., 10-15 as opposed to 30). Another suggestion for reducing the amount of homework to be done after school would be to revise the use of home-base time to allow homework to be done (in addition to home-base videos being criticized by one respondent for crowding out time that could be spent doing homework, they were criticized as not being interesting to the respondent’s child). In terms of the substance of homework, there was some sentiment that homework was thoughtful and not just busy work as well as sentiment that there was too much busy work as part of homework. Guided study was the subject of several comments favoring additional revision of the policy to focus further on making it a learning experience. Additional comments included recommendations to avoid homework on weekends and limit homework during the last two weeks of school.

### Discipline system, emotional development

Lincoln’s discipline system was another major focus of open-ended comments. While a few respondents viewed existing policies favorably and disputed the notion that the Lincoln environment is punitive, a far greater number viewed the discipline system as too strict, often using the label “punitive” to describe it and questioning the use of consequences such as removing a child from a classroom, making a child ineligible for school-related activities, or holding an entire class accountable for the conduct of one student. A parent who is also a teacher judged that existing rewards and consequences work well for most students but are not enough to deter disruptive behavior by “hardened” students. Specific concerns were raised about detention for not getting signatures and for lacking school supplies. Several comments linked discipline policies to emotional concerns, such as the extent to which children worry about detention and that punishment can lead to disengagement from school. Suggestions included a greater emphasis on social/emotional learning and conflict-resolution skills, as well as providing more opportunities to “fix” behavior. From a parent whose child was injured when the child’s backpack was kicked in a stairwell, there was a recommendation of more severe consequences for kicking other kids or their backpacks.

### Safety, health, and development

Safety issues were not mentioned as frequently as either homework or discipline policies but were still noted by a number of parents. Prominent comments included traffic safety at drop-off and pick-up, concerns about bullying, and a desire to have more adult supervision on campus. There was one reference on this question to previous incidents, an apparent reference to the Beltran case. Multiple respondents expressed concern about students kicking the backpacks of other students (one of which was alluded to in the previous paragraph), with there being a recommendation to talk to students every year about the dangers of kicking backpacks. A number of parents expressed concerns about heavy backpacks, with one anecdote describing that a child was contemplating dropping out of the school band to reduce the load of the child's backpack. There was also a suggestion that healthier lunch choices should be available.

### Communication, parent engagement

There was strong sentiment favoring better channels of communication for parents to connect with teachers. One of several parents who expressed interest in having a one-on-one conference at least annually cited the perception that there must be a problem to justify meeting with a teacher as a barrier that makes it awkward to pursue meetings. Although there was some positive sentiment about student-led conferences, there was also negative sentiment. The Lincoln List received substantial praise as a communication tool; there was a suggestion that it could be used to send periodic reminders about such things as how to access tutoring or how to access the school's on-line directory. A handful of responses conveyed frustration with attempts to contact Lincoln staff and cited room for improvement in responding to requests for meetings. There was also considerable sentiment expressed that greater parent input, including constructive criticism, should be encouraged at Lincoln, although one respondent expressed concern about a risk of questioning too many decisions. The level of parent engagement at Lincoln and PTSA evening programs in particular were cited for praise, although one respondent thought that the PTSA could do more to facilitate parent input at Lincoln. Regarding PTSA events, the Halloween carnival was praised; there was also a suggestion that kids should have more input into events, and a few respondents expressed concern about the same parents taking too much control of events. There was praise for the way Back-to-School Night is run, as well as sentiment that it could focus more on the needs of struggling students.

### Other issues

Multiple respondents commented that the system for allocating students to cores is not transparent and doesn't seem random. Multiple respondents also thought sports and other after-school activities should be promoted to tie kids to school. Additional comments included that lockers do not accommodate expected materials, an assessment that the dress code should be more strictly enforced, that it is important to make sure that different cores have the same number of field trips, and that giving extra credit points for bringing supplies like Kleenex to school is not fair to families on tight budgets. Finally, multiple respondents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to give feedback through the survey.

### Characteristics of parents offering open-ended comments

To assess the extent to which parents who offered open-ended comments were similar to or different from the parents who did not offer open-ended comments, it was possible to carry out a series of statistical tests. The parents who offered open-ended comments did not differ significantly from parents who did not offer open-ended comments in the distribution of any of the following characteristics: grade of child, whether they had talked with their child about schoolwork and grades, whether they had talked with Lincoln administrators during the year, or whether they did volunteer work for the school. Those who offered open-ended comments were more likely to have spoken with teachers about their child's work (85.7% yes, 14.3% no for those offering open-ended input; 71.3% yes, 28.7% no for those who did not), with some suggestion that they were more likely to have spoken with their children about other things their child is doing at school (98.8% yes, 1.2% no for those offering open-ended input; 93.7% yes, 6.3% no for those who did not).

With reference to survey items explored in later sections of this report, there was no significant difference between those who offered open-ended comments and those who did not in the extent to which they think Lincoln places a priority on learning, whether they think Lincoln is a good school, whether they have a good understanding of their child's school day, their view of the value of PTSA fundraising, whether their child feels close to an adult or other students and feels like a part of the school, whether they think Lincoln is safe, whether their child had been ineligible, or the involvement of their child in after-school activities at Lincoln or outside Lincoln. Those who offered open-ended input were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that parent input is highly valued at Lincoln (percentages across categories: {17.9% strongly agree, 32.7% agree, 20.8% neither agree nor disagree, 22.6% disagree, 6.0% strongly disagree} for those offering open-

ended input, {17.9%, 50.6%, 20.2%, 10.1%, 1.1%} for those who did not). Among those who gave open-ended comments, more reported that their child faced trouble with homework about once a week (22.6%) and fewer reported their child never having a problem (19.0%) compared to those who did not offer open-ended comments (6.7% and 30.3%, respectively). There were also some suggestions of differences regarding whether their child is happy at Lincoln (percentages across categories: {42.9%, 31.0%, 14.3%, 7.1%, 4.8%} for those offering open-ended input, {42.7%, 42.7%, 4.5%, 3.4%, 2.2%} for those who did not) and whether they think teachers treat children fairly (percentages across categories: {15.7%, 45.8%, 14.5%, 15.7%, 8.4%} for those offering open-ended input, {24.4%, 47.7%, 18.6%, 7.0%, 2.3%} for those who did not).

#### Attitudes about Lincoln from questions about school connectedness and school environment

The survey asked a series of questions about the Lincoln Middle School environment with a common question format, asking participants to state how much they agree or disagree with a given statement, with response options of “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neither agree nor disagree”, “Disagree”, or “Strongly disagree”. The first such item was:

#### **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Lincoln Middle School? Lincoln Middle School places a high priority on learning.**

Response	Count	Response Percent	National sample comparison *
Strongly agree	82	47.1%	31.6%
Agree	75	43.1%	49.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	6.3%	10.4%
Disagree	3	1.7%	6.2%
Strongly disagree	3	1.7%	1.9%
Total	174	100.0%	100.0%

The proportion of individuals who “Strongly agree” is thus higher for Lincoln than the national sample.

For those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” in this section of the survey, follow-up questions were asked on some items, and follow-up messages were provided on others to provide contact information to administrators and counseling staff. Because of the structure of the survey, the responses to follow-up questions can be expected to be negative in this part of the survey.

Following the question about Lincoln placing a high priority on learning, those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were asked, “**In what way(s) do you think Lincoln Middle School could place a higher priority on learning?**” Key themes from the 6 responses included academic considerations (give more recognition to student achievement, implement enrichment programs, challenge and engage students who are not fulfilling their potential); homework (place less emphasis on homework, strive for meaningful homework, emphasize reading assignments); discipline (place less emphasis on discipline, balance detention with system of rewards, characterization of guided study as detention for failure to do homework); and issues related to evaluating performance (place less emphasis on grades, focus more on substance than form, align expectations with stage of development).

The next survey item was:

#### **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Lincoln Middle School? Lincoln Middle School is a good school.**

Response	Count	Response Percent	National sample comparison *
Strongly agree	79	46.2%	25.3%
Agree	67	39.2%	56.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	9.4%	11.2%
Disagree	6	3.5%	5.5%
Strongly disagree	3	1.8%	1.6%
Total	171	100.0%	100.0%

The proportion of individuals who “Strongly agree” is thus higher for Lincoln than the national sample. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were asked, **“In what way(s) do you think Lincoln Middle School could be a better school?”** Key themes from the 8 responses included cultivating a positive environment for interactions among staff, students, and families; homework considerations (less can yield better performance, concern about student burnout, avoid crowding out after-school activities, follow Board of Education guidelines); and discipline considerations (align system with children’s developmental stage, contention that discipline system interferes with learning, undertake review in line with state education code). Regarding the latter point, the response referred to a specific chapter of the California Education Code, which is copied below for convenient access as a point of departure for discussion:

35291.5. (a) On or before December 1, 1987, and at least every four years thereafter, each public school may, at its discretion, adopt rules and procedures on school discipline applicable to the school. For schools that choose to adopt rules pursuant to this article, the school discipline rules and procedures shall be consistent with any applicable policies adopted by the governing board and state statutes governing school discipline. In developing these rules and procedures, each school shall solicit the participation, views, and advice of one representative selected by each of the following groups:

- (1) Parents.
- (2) Teachers.
- (3) School administrators.
- (4) School security personnel, if any.
- (5) For junior high schools and high schools, pupils enrolled in the school.

Meetings for the development of the rules and procedures should be developed and held within the school's existing resources, during nonclassroom hours, and on normal schooldays.

The final version of the rules and procedures on school discipline with attendant regulations may be adopted by a panel comprised of the principal of the school, or his or her designee, and a representative selected by classroom teachers employed at the school.

It shall be the duty of each employee of the school to enforce the rules and procedures on school discipline adopted under this section.

(b) The governing board of each school district may prescribe procedures to provide written notice to continuing pupils at the beginning of each school year and to transfer pupils at the time of their enrollment in the school and to their parents or guardians regarding the school discipline rules and procedures adopted pursuant to subdivision (a).

(c) Each school may file a copy of its school discipline rules and procedures with the district superintendent of schools and governing board on or before January 1, 1988.

(d) The governing board may review, at an open meeting, the approved school discipline rules and procedures for consistency with governing board policy and state statutes.

The next survey item was:

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Lincoln Middle School?  
I have a good understanding of what happens in my child’s school day.**

Response	Count	Response Percent
Strongly agree	58	33.9%
Agree	90	52.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	13	7.6%
Disagree	8	4.7%
Strongly disagree	2	1.2%
Total	171	100.0%

There was not a corresponding question in the national survey. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were asked, **“What aspects of your child’s school day would you like to understand better?”** Key themes that emerged from the 6 responses included a desire for better understanding of the classroom environment; various communication considerations (making sure website information is accurate, understanding homework deadlines and grading policies better, why there is not more parent-teacher contact); and appeals for help in dealing with behavioral challenges (e.g., continuing struggle to help child be better organize).

The next survey item was:

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Lincoln Middle School?  
The school programs supported by the Lincoln PTSA's Direct Investment fundraising effort make a difference in the quality of education offered at Lincoln Middle School.**

Response	Count	Response Percent
Strongly agree	32	47.1%
Agree	22	32.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	16.2%
Disagree	3	4.4%
Strongly disagree	1	1.5%
Total	68**	100.0%

As noted in the footnote to the table, a mistaken skip pattern led to most survey participants not being asked this question. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were asked, **“In what way(s) do you think PTSA’s Direct Investment fundraising could make more of a difference in the quality of education offered at Lincoln Middle School?”** The 2 responses included maintaining an orientation that the fundraising is not an end in itself but a means to provide support to the school and requesting convenient access to PTSA annual budget information.

The next survey item was: **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Lincoln Middle School? I believe that parent input is highly valued at Lincoln Middle School.**

Response	Count	Response Percent
Strongly agree	31	17.6%
Agree	73	41.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	37	21.0%
Disagree	29	16.5%
Strongly disagree	6	3.4%
Total	176	100.0%

There was not a corresponding question in the national survey. For those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree”, there was a follow-up request, **“Please share any reasons why you do not think that parent input is valued at Lincoln Middle School.”** Key themes emerged from the 27 responses included a perception that the school lacks an accessible forum for parent input; the prospect of improvement in staff-parent interaction (e.g., suggestions not always followed up, calls to staff not always returned, negative experiences from previous contact); lack of evidence of change in homework despite continuing concerns; perception that approach to discipline is out of date; experiences related to academic concerns (e.g., 6th grade child not being allowed to take more advanced math class); input from survey not sought until the end of the year; perception that PTSA could do a better job of engaging parents and reflecting their input.

The next survey item was: **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Your child feels close to an adult at Lincoln Middle School.**

Response	Count	Response Percent	National sample comparison***
Strongly agree	37	21.5%	25.3%
Agree	67	39.0%	56.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	46	26.7%	11.2%
Disagree	15	8.7%	5.5%
Strongly disagree	7	4.1%	1.6%
Total	172	100.0%	100.0%

\*\* Mistaken skip pattern resulted in most of the first 125 respondents not being asked this question.

\*\*\* Results for statement “Your child feels close to people at [name of school]” from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Wave I, a nationally representative study of 20,000+ students in grades 7-12 conducted in 1994-1995 (see codebooks under <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth>)

As noted in the footnote to the table, the wording of the national sample question was different, asking about feeling close to “people” at the school. In developing the survey, there was consensus on the School Site Council that it would be desirable to ask separately about feeling close to an adult and feeling close to other students. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were provided contact information for counselors and school administrators and encouraged to contact one of them.

The next question was:

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Your child feels close to other students at Lincoln Middle School.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison ***</b>
Strongly agree	79	47.3%	25.3%
Agree	68	40.7%	56.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	13	7.8%	11.2%
Disagree	6	3.6%	5.5%
Strongly disagree	1	0.6%	1.6%
Total	167	100.0%	100.0%

Between these previous two questions, 60.5% agree or strongly agree that their child feels close to an adult and 88.0% agree or strongly agree that their child feels close to other students, versus 81.8% in the national sample agreeing that their child feels close to “people” at the given school. (It stands to reason that parents in the national survey frequently interpreted this question as referring to whether their children were close to other students, making it difficult to compare the findings directly and suggesting that the same question wording would have yielded agreement among somewhere between 60.5% and 88.0% of Lincoln parents.) Among Lincoln parents, 12.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their child feels close to an adult, and 4.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their child feels close to other students. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were provided contact information for counselors and encouraged to contact one of them.

The next question was: **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Your child feels like he/she is a part of Lincoln Middle School.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Strongly agree	79	46.7%	25.2%
Agree	65	38.5%	47.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	9.5%	14.9%
Disagree	4	2.4%	9.3%
Strongly disagree	5	3.0%	3.5%
Total	169	100.0%	100.0%

The profile for Lincoln is substantially more favorable than the profile of the national reference sample. The 5.4% who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were provided contact information for the school counselors and encouraged to contact one of them.

The next question was: **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Your child is happy to be at Lincoln Middle School.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison *</b>
Strongly agree	74	43.8%	26.4%
Agree	64	37.9%	41.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	9.5%	17.9%
Disagree	9	5.3%	10.3%
Strongly disagree	6	3.6%	5.4%
Total	169	100.0%	100.0%

Again, the profile for Lincoln is substantially more favorable than that of the national reference sample. For the 8.9% who responded that they “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree”, they received the request, **“Please share any reasons why you think your child is not happy to be at Lincoln Middle School.”** Key themes that emerged from the 13 responses included negative experiences in the interpersonal environment among students (e.g., not making friends, bullying, difficulty of child in special education having negative effect on sibling); academic considerations (desire for greater intellectual challenge, negative perceptions of grading policies, insufficient reward for incorporating beyond-grade-level material into projects); negative feedback about homework (amount, content); issues related to discipline (characterization of environment as punitive, fear of being punished, inconsistencies in application of policies) positive experiences with some teachers but negative interactions with others; not feeling like an important part of the school; negative environmental influences (e.g., drugs, sexual activity among students).

The next survey question was:

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The teachers at Lincoln Middle School treat students fairly.**

Response	Count	Response Percent	National sample comparison *
Strongly agree	34	20.1%	15.8%
Agree	79	46.7%	41.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	28	16.6%	22.5%
Disagree	19	11.2%	15.4%
Strongly disagree	9	5.3%	4.4%
Total	169	100.0%	100.0%

On a question that yields more “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” answers in both samples, the Lincoln profile is again more favorable than the national comparison sample. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” received the follow-up request, **“Please share any examples of how you think teachers at Lincoln Middle School do not treat students fairly.”** Key themes emerging from the 22 responses included concern that more attention to developmental considerations is needed in making and enforcing policies; frustrations related to grading; perceptions that certain groups are favored or disfavored; reference to a specific negative experience with a teacher; perception that the amount of homework is unfair; perception that there is too much emphasis on discipline; perception that standards are not consistent for students and teachers.

The next survey question was:

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? You feel that your child is safe at Lincoln Middle School.**

Response	Count	Response Percent	National sample comparison *
Strongly agree	51	30.5%	23.1%
Agree	82	49.1%	44.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	21	12.6%	17.8%
Disagree	11	6.6%	10.5%
Strongly disagree	2	1.2%	3.7%
Total	167	100.0%	100.0%

Again, the Lincoln sample has a more favorable profile than the national comparison sample. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” received the follow-up request, **“Please share any reasons why you think your child is not safe at Lincoln Middle School.”** Key themes that emerged from the 10 responses included a perception that there is not enough adult supervision on campus; concern that children might be too scared to speak freely; bullying of students; concern about child being arrested with narcotics; and reference to the Beltran case (to which there were 5 references).

### Homework, ineligibility

The next section of the Lincoln Middle School Community Survey asked about homework and experience with ineligibility.

Following the wording used in the Add Health study, the Lincoln survey asked, **“Since school started this year, how often has your child at Lincoln had trouble getting his/her homework done?”**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>National sample comparison*</b>
Never	43	25.3%	28.7%
Just a few times	82	48.2%	40.7%
About once a week	25	14.7%	16.9%
Almost every day	16	9.4%	9.2%
Every day	4	2.4%	4.4%
Total	170	100.0%	100.0%

In this respect, the Lincoln sample does not have a significantly different distribution from the national sample. Those who responded “Disagree” or “Strongly disagree” were prompted with the follow-up question, **“Have you spoken with any of your child’s teachers or with a Lincoln Middle School administrator during this school year about your child having trouble getting his/her homework done?”**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Yes	16	88.9%
No	2	11.1%
Total	18	100.0%

Thus, a large majority of parents who regard their child as having frequent trouble getting his/her homework done are communicating with school staff about it.

The next question asked about experience with ineligibility:

**Has your child been declared "ineligible" during the past school year for any reason?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Yes	17	10.1%
No	146	86.4%
Don’t know	6	3.6%
Total	169	100.0%

The pattern of having been declared ineligible was not significantly different across grade levels.

### After-school activities

Two questions considered after-school activities. The first referred to programs at Lincoln: **In a typical week this past year, how many days per week did your child participate in an after-school program at Lincoln (such as Boys and Girls Club, using the school library after school, CREST program)?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
0 or 1 day per week	131	78.9%
2 or 3 days per week	29	17.5%
4 or 5 days per week	7	4.2%
Total	169	100.0%

The second referred to programs outside Lincoln: **In a typical week this past year, how many days per week did your child participate in an after-school extracurricular activity outside of Lincoln (such as a sports program, art or music activity, drama program, other organized activity)?**

Response	Count	Response Percent
0 or 1 day per week	67	40.6%
2 or 3 days per week	79	47.9%
4 or 5 days per week	19	11.5%
Total	165	100.0%

Cross-tabulating the outside activity with the answers to the question about trouble completing homework yielded the following counts and corresponding percentages across the homework categories within a given level of outside activity:

		<u>Outside extracurricular activity</u>		
		0 or 1 day per week	2 or 3 days per week	4 or 5 days per week
Trouble completing homework	Never	13 (19.4%)	23 (29.5%)	6 (31.6%)
	Just a few times	36 (53.7%)	34 (43.6%)	9 (47.4%)
	About once a week	8 (11.9%)	12 (15.4%)	4 (21.1%)
	Almost every day	8 (11.9%)	8 (10.3%)	0 (0.0%)
	Every day	2 (3.0%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)

The association is statistically significant, but the direction of the association is negative, in that greater numbers of days of outside extracurricular activity are associated with less trouble completing homework. (Coding the homework categories {0, 1, 2, 3, 4} from “Never” to “Every Day” and coding the extracurricular activity categories {0, 1, 2} for “0 or 1 day”/“2 or 3 days”/“4 or 5 days” respectively, the correlation is -0.116, indicating a slight tendency for lower values of the response to the homework question to be associated with higher values of the response to the extracurricular activity question, and for higher homework responses to be associated with lower extracurricular-activity responses.) Presumably, the explanation for the negative correlation is not that spending more time in extracurricular activities makes it easier to find time to complete homework, but it is plausible that individuals who are not having trouble completing their homework feel comfortable pursuing more outside activity.

Summary comments

The development of the Lincoln Middle School Community Survey was a collaborative effort of the School Site Council, although this report does not necessarily reflect the views of the School Site Council. Speaking for myself, I believe that the findings from this survey can inform our Single Plan for Student Achievement in a variety of positive ways. I also believe that the best approach to supporting the success of our Single Plan for Student Achievement is by coming together around our shared goal of providing the best possible education for our children. This means honoring the commitment that each individual brings to Lincoln, listening to everyone who contributes to our school’s mission, and going forward in mutual respect. To this end, I think it would be valuable for there to be a survey of Lincoln staff, soliciting their thoughts about the educational environment at Lincoln and the challenges they face, to add that perspective into the broader discussion. Last but not least, I would like to thank the survey respondents for giving of yourselves through your participation in the Lincoln Middle School Community Survey.