



November 16, 2006

Dear Durango High School Colleagues:

Several of you have asked why the Board of Education is administering a survey, how the results will be used, and why it selected Durango High School for the pilot. Board member Mark Seiter and I hope the following will explain the board's intent.

During our many discussions this past summer and fall regarding new Ends Policies and proposed monitoring assessments, the board realized it did not have any up-to-date quantitative information about the public's perception of its schools, the district as a whole, or the board of education's performance. Although the district has conducted focus groups on discrete issues such as the high school's career and technical education programs and the minority student achievement gap, the last community-wide survey about the district was conducted in Spring 2002 prior to the bond referendum.

Since then, the only consistent interaction between the board and community members occurs during the public participation session at regular board meetings. However, the limited number of people who participate does not necessarily represent our community's diversity, and the survey is intended to give the board a broader, more realistic picture of the perceptions that families, staff, and students have about our school district.

That's why we decided to pilot the survey at the high school. Durango High School's "attendance area" encompasses the entire district, and therefore, its enrollment and families are representative of the district's economic, vocational, and ethnic diversity.

The board opted to conduct the survey now as part of its work to develop more effective monitoring assessments for its policies. The survey questions are similar to questions developed for a district-wide survey conducted in Farmington, N.M., by the same company we hired to conduct ours. In fact, we're using a similar online collection system. The password and user name are designed to ensure that each participant completes only one survey. Incite Learning, Inc., our survey contractor, has a professional and ethical commitment to ensure that all individual responses remain confidential, and at no time will the board be given access to individual surveys.

We encourage you to participate in the survey so that the results are truly representative of your community's interests and diversity. Given your dedication to our students and to continuous improvement in teaching and learning, no doubt the survey results will be gratifying to us all. And where survey results indicate areas for improvement, we commit to working collaboratively with you, your administrators, families, and students to provide the best teaching and learning environment we can for our students.

If you wish to contact me directly, please feel free to call me at 259-0540 or by e-mail at pyramid@frontier.net.

Best wishes,

Melissa Youssef,
Board member