

PEJE 2008-09 PARENT SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Overview

During 2008-09, SJCS participated in the largest survey of Jewish day school parents ever conducted. The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) and Measuring Success, LLC created and conducted the national survey which considered the opinions of 6,500 parents from 36 participating schools. Measuring Success is a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based consulting firm that uses quantitative performance tools to help non-profit managers and boards measure and enhance their organizational behavior. Boston-based PEJE is a collaborative initiative of major philanthropic partners, whose goal is to strengthen the Jewish day school movement by increasing enrollment in Jewish day schools in North America. PEJE subsidized the survey's development, and locally, the Samis Foundation generously provided funding for SJCS and other Seattle-area day schools to participate in this research.

Nationally, the rate of participation among current day school parents was 78%, and SJCS had a resoundingly high 91% parent participation rate. SJCS is grateful to its parents who participated in the survey in such overwhelming numbers. Very significant sample sizes – both nationally and at SJCS – offer an unprecedented platform of data that will be the foundation for successful, forward-thinking, strategic planning.

Each Head of School was able to choose a peer-category for comparative purposes and for access to peer best-practices. SJCS' peer group consisted of 11 schools with enrollment fewer than 200 students. Survey results were accompanied by an in-depth consultation to help Trustee and administrative leadership interpret data and agree upon an action plan with measurable goals.

Highlights

SJCS had the highest satisfaction levels of *all* schools in 13 areas surveyed. SJCS ranked number one in more categories than *any* of the 36 participating schools and was the national leader in the following areas:

- Parents who were very likely to recommend their school to other Jewish families
- Parents who strongly felt part of a social community of other parents
- Parents who strongly felt that faculty, students, and other parents displayed caring, respect, and trust toward and among one another
- Parents who possessed a clear understanding of school philosophy
- Parents who believed that their day school supports their family's desired Jewish development for their children
- Parents who strongly felt that their school is responsive to expressed concerns about children's progress
- Parents who were confident in administration's and faculty's proactive communication about children's progress in a timely manner
- Parents who felt their school provides opportunities for parental involvement
- Parents who were confident that their school develops critical thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)
- Parents who were confident that their school instills moral values

- Parents who were confident that their school understands and teaches effectively for their children's needs
- Parents who were confident that their children have strong faculty role models
- Parents who said that their schools' Torah/Bible program was excellent

Parents noted that SJCS had significant strengths in graduate academic preparedness; Language Arts/Reading; Jewish Life; T'filah/Prayer; and, facility maintenance.

A notable demographic detail that was statistically deviant from national norms revealed that 53% of SJCS parents said that before their first child was born, they did not expect to send their future children to Jewish day school. This implies that a significant percentage of families made a *specific* choice to send a child to SJCS, though they did not *generally* entertain day school as an option when beginning their families.

Action Plan

A leadership team was identified by Head of School Debbie Butler to develop an action plan responsive to input and trends that were garnered from parent participation in the survey. The team includes President Yonah Karp and Immediate Past President Howard Klein; outgoing Business Manager Philip Nurick, Coordinator of Instruction Chrys Hunstiger, Director of Admissions/Marketing Deborah Frockt, Director of Development Sheila Abrahams, and incoming Director of Operations Yael Sachs. The action plan prioritizes goals for the 2010 fiscal year, beginning on July 1, 2009 and ending June 30, 2010. The staff person responsible for leading efforts on each area of growth is identified in parenthesis at the end of each item.

Areas identified as most significant to SJCS' continued growth, and therefore, of immediate priority:

- Mobilizing new promoters and increasing current promoters' ability to talk about SJCS within their social networks; enhancing promoter conversations through increased education and recognition opportunities (Deborah Frockt)
- Raising SJCS' profile among families considering independent schools who may not yet have SJCS on their radars (Deborah Frockt)
- Reviewing and adjusting the Science curriculum to fully utilize lab space and ensure horizontal alignment within each grade level and vertical alignment between grades; increasing teacher communication about Science purposes and outcomes (Debbie Butler/Chrys Hunstiger)

Areas identified as significant to SJCS', and therefore, of priority:

- Reviewing and enhancing school's Technology curriculum; supporting increased use of technology by staff (Debbie Butler/Yael Sachs)
- Communicating existing advanced learning opportunities to current and prospective parents; reviewing advanced learning opportunities (Deborah Frockt/Chrys Hunstiger)
- Reviewing Hebrew curriculum (Judaic Studies staff)

The leadership team will meet monthly to track progress against specific, measurable goals. Regular progress reports on all actionable goals will be given throughout the coming year.