



# the voices of our community

findings from the spring 2009 surveys  
stamford public schools

august 2009

OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY



**Stamford** Public Schools

EXCELLENCE IS THE POINT.

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

### TABLES

|          |   |    |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1  | Survey Participation  | 2  |
| Table 2  | Student and Family Respondents by Race/Ethnicity                                  | 2  |
| Table 3  | FAMILIES: Adequate instruction in the basic skills and in all content areas—RACE  | 4  |
| Table 4  | FAMILIES: Adequate instruction in the basic skills and in all content areas—LEVEL | 4  |
| Table 5  | FAMILIES: Overall quality of instruction is high—LEVEL                            | 5  |
| Table 6  | FAMILIES: My child receives extra support—RACE                                    | 6  |
| Table 7  | FAMILIES: My child receives extra support—LEVEL                                   | 6  |
| Table 8  | Teachers and educational assistants involved in continuous improvement—LEVEL      | 7  |
| Table 9  | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: District PD improving instruction—LEVEL                    | 7  |
| Table 10 | Students will be prepared to go on to the next grade level—SURVEY GROUP           | 8  |
| Table 11 | STUDENTS: Prepared to go on to the next grade level—INSTRUCTIONAL GROUP, RACE     | 8  |
| Table 12 | Student and family knowledge about college processes—LEVEL, SURVEY GROUP          | 11 |
| Table 13 | FAMILIES: Grouping for instruction is appropriate—LEVEL, RACE                     | 12 |
| Table 14 | Students acquiring 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills—SURVEY GROUP, LEVEL            | 12 |
| Table 15 | Feeling safe and secure at school—SURVEY GROUP, LEVEL                             | 14 |
| Table 16 | STUDENTS: Places at school where students don't feel safe                         | 14 |
| Table 17 | STUDENTS: Certain times during the school day when students don't feel safe       | 15 |
| Table 18 | TEACHERS: Student safety concerns reported in timely manner—SCHOOL LEVEL          | 15 |
| Table 19 | STUDENTS: Experience with bullying RACE   | 16 |
| Table 20 | STUDENTS: What bullies do   | 16 |
| Table 21 | STUDENTS: How well adults handle bullying   | 16 |
| Table 22 | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: Bullying is a problem—SCHOOL LEVEL                         | 17 |
| Table 23 | Families of diverse cultures are respected and valued—SURVEY GROUP, LEVEL         | 18 |
| Table 24 | FAMILIES: Satisfaction with information—SURVEY GROUP                              | 18 |
| Table 25 | FAMILIES: Formal and informal opportunities to contribute to school—LEVEL         | 18 |
| Table 26 | TEACHERS: Regular communication to families—LEVEL                                 | 19 |
| Table 27 | STUDENTS: Parents/family members are involved in my education                     | 19 |
| Table 28 | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: Engaging in instructional goal-setting—LEVEL               | 20 |
| Table 29 | TEACHERS: Instructional goal guides our work as a team—LEVEL                      | 20 |
| Table 30 | TEACHERS: PLC work improves my classroom practice—LEVEL                           | 20 |
| Table 31 | TEACHERS: PLC focuses on high level achievement for all students—LEVEL            | 21 |
| Table 32 | TEACHERS: Leaders collaborate with teachers to improve achievement—LEVEL          | 21 |
| Table 33 | TEACHERS: Structures exist to share knowledge among PLCs—LEVEL                    | 22 |

### FIGURES

|          |   |    |
|----------|---|----|
| Figure 1 | FAMILIES: Overall quality of instruction is high—RACE     | 5  |
| Figure 2 | FAMILIES: Satisfaction with PPT process and services—RACE | 6  |
| Figure 3 | Students will be prepared to go to college—SURVEY GROUP   | 9  |
| Figure 4 | STUDENTS: Plans to attend college                         | 10 |
| Figure 5 | STUDENTS: Measures of efficacy—INSTRUCTIONAL GROUP, RACE  | 13 |
| Figure 6 | FAMILIES: Likelihood of recommending SPS school           | 17 |
| Figure 7 | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: Leading PLC work—LEVEL             | 22 |

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## introduction to the SPS spring 2009 surveys

For the first time in many years, Stamford Public Schools (SPS) administered surveys to all key stakeholder groups in our system: students; teachers, educational assistants; school administrators and families. More than ever, perceptual data is critical to understanding our system's strengths and opportunities for growth as we work towards fulfilling the SPS mission and goals. In an era of testing and assessment, hearing the voices of all stakeholders creates a richer picture of our educational environment.

The purpose of this report is to present the key themes of the survey data that were collected. Although we will revisit the data regularly in a variety of ways throughout the school year, this report contains six key questions that attempt to address the most important elements of service in our system. The survey data were analyzed to provide evidence about our progress in four major areas, which are the four strategic areas in the emerging SPS Strategic District Improvement Plan:

1. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
2. De-Tracking
3. Professional Learning Communities and Data Teams
4. School Culture

Each stakeholder group was asked questions in various domains. Some domains were common to all surveys (e.g., student academic success, school culture, safety), and some different. For example, students responded anonymously to questions about their exposure to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to develop our capacity to address risk behavior. Teachers were asked about their professional development experiences, including their participation in Professional Learning Communities. Survey data that are not reflected in this report will be used throughout the year for planning. For full results for all questions by survey group, please visit [www.stamfordpublicschools.org](http://www.stamfordpublicschools.org).

### **PARTICIPATION IN THE SPS SPRING 2009 SURVEYS**

Participation in all SPS Spring 2009 Surveys was voluntary, confidential and anonymous. All responses are reported in the aggregate, so that individuals can not be identified.

Results at the district level are reliable based upon the total size of the survey population and the participation rate. School-level results will be shared with school leaders to communicate and address with school communities. It is important to note that school-level participation varied substantially across schools; some schools achieved high participation and other schools had low participation. Nonetheless, we feel that all of the survey data are important for our collective understanding about improvement, and while the results at schools with low participation should be interpreted with caution, the SPS Spring 2009 Survey data help us to know more than we would have had the surveys not been administered. Table 1 shows the sample and population sizes, participation rates and approximate margins of error for each survey group:

**Table 1  
Survey Participation**

| Survey Group                       | N Respondents (sample) | N Total Group Size (population) | Participation Rate | Approximate Margin of Error <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Grade 7 & 10 Students <sup>2</sup> | 1,616                  | 2,211                           | 73%                | 2 points                                 |
| Teachers                           | 939                    | 1,327                           | 71%                | 2 points                                 |
| Educational Assistants             | 215                    | 323                             | 67%                | 4 points                                 |
| School Administrators              | 39                     | 52                              | 75%                | 8 points                                 |
| Families <sup>3</sup>              | 1,593                  | 10,428                          | 15%                | 3 points                                 |

Students and family members were asked to identify their race/ethnicity:<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2  
Student and Family Respondents by Race/Ethnicity**

| Race/Ethnicity       | Students                    | Families                    |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| African American     | 15%                         | 8%                          |
| Asian American/Asian | 6%                          | 7%                          |
| Hispanic origin      | 34%                         | 19%                         |
| Native American      | 1%                          | 0%                          |
| White                | 36%                         | 59%                         |
| Other                | 7%                          | 2%                          |
| Left Blank           | 2%                          | 4%                          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100%<br/>(N = 1,616)</b> | <b>100%<br/>(N = 1,593)</b> |

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Margin of error plus or minus at the 95% confidence level. *Margin of error* is a measure of precision—how well the survey sample represents the entire population. The higher the margin of error, the less likely the sample is thought to represent the whole, and the larger the sample size, the more likely the sample is to represent the entire population.
  - <sup>2</sup> Grade 7 students at Cloonan Middle School did not participate in the Spring 2009 Survey.
  - <sup>3</sup> Every SPS family was mailed one survey. Families with more than one child enrolled in SPS were asked to respond to the survey based on experience with one child.
  - <sup>4</sup> Other respondent groups were too small to ask for race/ethnicity information, which could have identified individuals within a school. Family and student results by race/ethnicity are included for African American, Asian, Hispanic and White groups.

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## curriculum, instruction & assessment

### 1. Are SPS Students receiving an excellent education?

This question addresses the overall quality of education in SPS. Students must receive a strong foundation of basic skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking and communication skills and the additional support they need to excel in order to have a world-class educational experience.

The SPS Plan for Curriculum Management, Design, and Delivery (April 2009) is guided by the following principles for teaching and learning in our district:

1. **Curriculum and instruction** must be based on **state, national, and international standards**. Curriculum must include explicit content standards that describe what students should know and be able to do in all subjects and at every grade level. Acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is a key element of these standards.
2. Curriculum content and instructional practices must be rigorous and designed to promote **active engagement** of all learners.
3. All stakeholders must hold high expectations for all students as well as a belief that **achievement is based on effort**, not on race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. Curriculum must provide strategies for differentiating instruction to ensure **equitable access** and accelerated high performance for all students.
4. **Stakeholders share responsibility to work collaboratively** in all phases of the curriculum development process and accountability for implementation of the agreed-upon **Conditions for Success**. Stakeholders also share **responsibility to implement district curriculum**.
5. The curriculum process must **include consistent, ongoing and high quality professional development** to ensure the continuous improvement of teacher knowledge and skills for effective instruction and assessment.
6. The curriculum process must include **adequate resources (including time, staff, money, and materials)** to support all phases of the work – planning, implementation, and evaluation.
7. **Data from recurring formative and summative assessments should guide curriculum development** and instructional decision-making.
8. Curriculum development should be informed by relevant research, evaluative data, and documented best practices

Families were asked to assess the instruction their student experiences in several ways: *basic skills and foundations; quality of instruction overall; and additional support and specialized services*. Overall satisfaction in these areas tends to vary

the most by school level, with more satisfaction at the elementary than secondary level.

**(a) HOW ARE WE DOING WITH BASIC SKILLS?**

Sixty-seven percent of families feel that their child receives adequate instruction in the basic skills and in all content areas:

**Table 3: FAMILIES  
My child receives adequate instruction in the basic skills  
and in all content areas**

| Race/Ethnicity   | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| African American | 70%                       |
| Asian            | 71%                       |
| Hispanic         | 74%                       |
| White            | 65%                       |

Elementary families expressed a higher rate of satisfaction with instruction in the basic skills than secondary families:

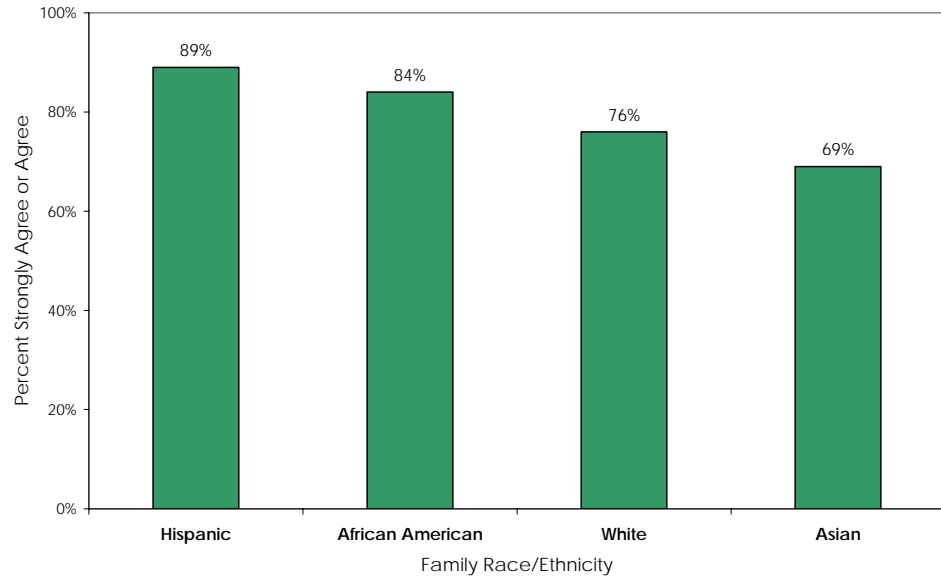
**Table 4: FAMILIES  
My child receives adequate instruction in the basic skills  
and in all content areas**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 77%                       |
| Secondary    | 57%                       |

**(b) WHAT IS THE OVERALL QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION?**

About 79% of families believe that the quality of instruction in their child's school is high, and satisfaction varies somewhat by background, and more substantially by school level:

**Figure 1: FAMILIES**  
The overall quality of instruction is high



**Table 5: FAMILIES**  
The overall quality of instruction is high

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 89%                       |
| Secondary    | 66%                       |

Families’ perceptions of the quality of instruction are important, understanding that parents/guardians are not experiencing instruction in the classroom frequently. Confidence in the instruction that is provided to our students is a useful indicator for SPS leaders in developing communication with families about instructional programs and strategies.

**(c) ARE SUPPORT SERVICES SUFFICIENT?**

Over half (56%) of families agree that their child receives the extra support he/she needs to reach his/her full potential. Rates were similar across most race/ethnicity categories, except for Hispanic families:

**Table 6: FAMILIES**  
**My child receives the extra support he/she needs to reach his/her full potential**

| Race/Ethnicity   | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| African American | 59%                       |
| Asian            | 52%                       |
| Hispanic         | 73%                       |
| White            | 50%                       |

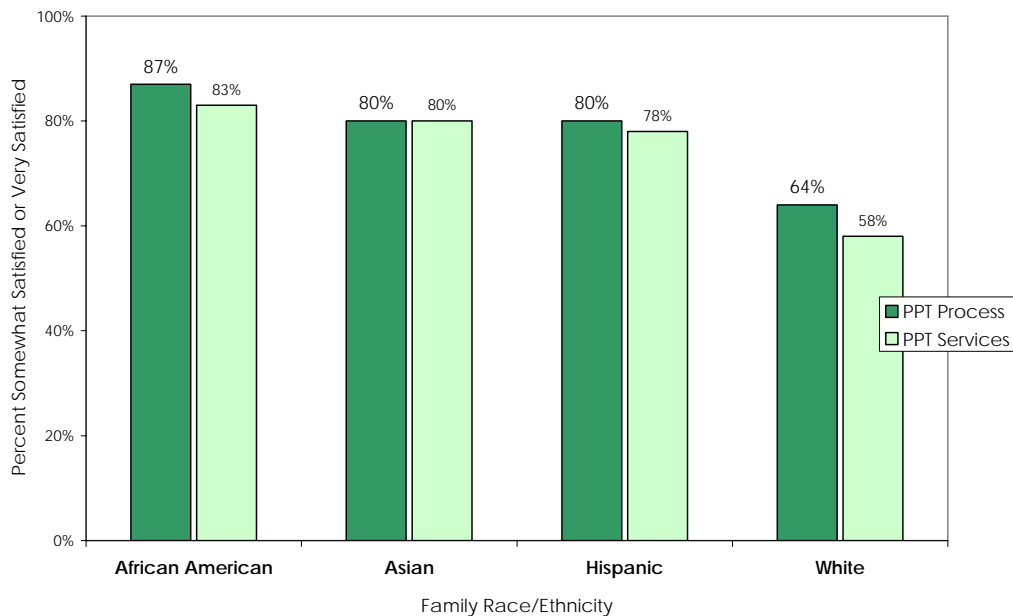
Again, results varied more substantially by school level, with less confidence expressed at the secondary level:

**Table 7: FAMILIES**  
**My child receives the extra support he/she needs to reach his/her full potential**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 63%                       |
| Secondary    | 47%                       |

Fourteen percent of responding families (N=223) indicated that their child received **Special Education** services. Of those responding family members, 73% said they are satisfied with the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process and 67% are satisfied with PPT services, with some differences across race/ethnicity:

**Figure 2: FAMILIES**  
**Satisfied with PPT Processes and Services**



Unlike for basic skills, overall instruction and other types of support, elementary and secondary families of Special Education students responded similarly.

Many of the family survey results above suggest a general level of agreement among SPS families that students are receiving a solid education, with sufficient room for improvement in some areas.

Teachers and educational assistants were asked to assess the education of SPS students in terms of their involvement in continuous improvement and preparedness to address the needs of Special Education students and English Language Learners. Across teachers and educational assistants, about 75% feel that they are highly involved in continuous improvement, with some difference across position and school level:

**Table 8:  
Teachers and educational assistants are highly involved  
in continuously improving instruction**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |                        |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
|              | Teachers                  | Educational Assistants |
| Elementary   | 85%                       | 67%                    |
| Secondary    | 71%                       | 58%                    |

Finally, school administrators weighed in on teacher preparedness to improve classroom instruction, particularly related to the recent intensive curriculum & instruction professional development that SPS has provided. Overall, 62% agreed that district PD is making an impact:

**Table 9: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS  
The PD that teachers at my school receive from the District  
is improving classroom instruction**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 71%                       |
| Secondary    | 50%                       |

Teachers, educational assistants and school administrators provided additional data below in Questions 2 and 3, which are very much connected to the issue of excellent education for all students.

## 2. Will SPS students be ready for college upon graduation?

The approach to answering the question of student readiness for college relates to many components of a student’s experiences in SPS. Clearly, college readiness is a direct result of an excellent education. We break down the question of college readiness by exploring: (a) student readiness to advance through the SPS K-12 pipeline; (b) student preparation to succeed in post-secondary education and plans to go to college; and (c) student and family knowledge about the college admissions and financing processes.

**(a) ARE STUDENTS PREPARED TO ADVANCE?**

All survey groups were asked to share their impressions of student preparedness to advance to the next grade level. Overall, About 80% of families, 66% of teachers, 79% of school administrators and 54% of educational assistants feel that students will be prepared for the next grade level. Students report a higher level of agreement; 87% feel they will be prepared to advance. By school level, most respondents expressed higher rates of agreement at elementary than secondary:

**Table 10  
Students will be prepared to go on to the next grade level\***

| Survey Group           | % Strongly Agree or Agree |           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
|                        | Elementary                | Secondary |
| Students               | NA                        | 87%       |
| Families               | 84%                       | 76%       |
| Teachers               | 70%                       | 61%       |
| School Administrators  | 76%                       | 83%       |
| Educational Assistants | 58%                       | 42%       |

Students expressed the highest level of confidence related to advancing to the next grade level, consistent across self-reported instructional groups and race/ethnicity:

**Table 11: STUDENTS  
I will be prepared to go on to the next grade level**

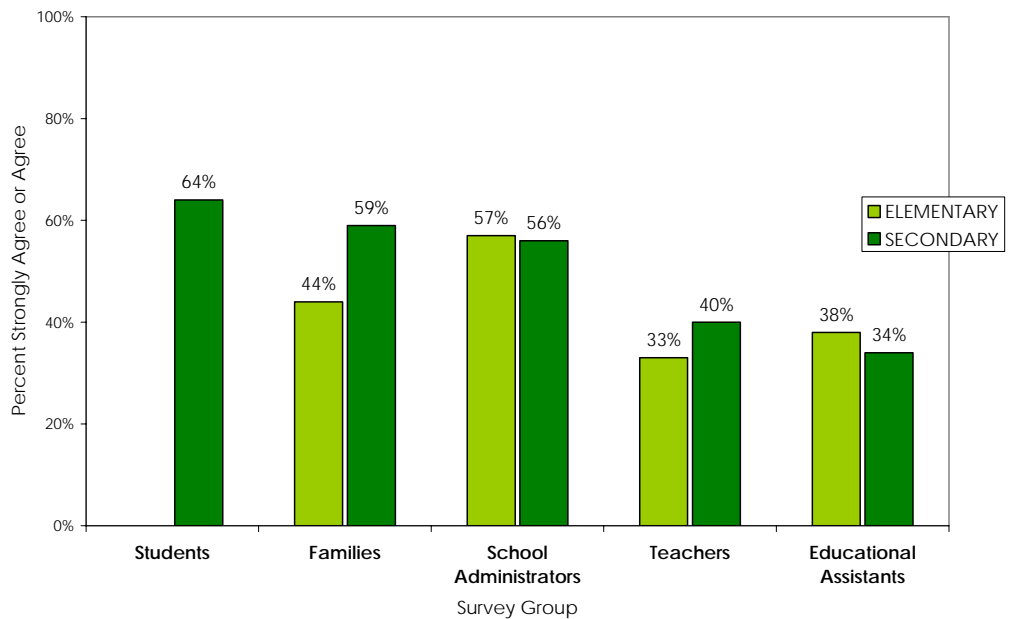
| Self-Reported Instructional Group | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Honors                            | 89%                       |
| General/Regular Ed                | 87%                       |
| Career/Vocational                 | 86%                       |
| Special Education                 | 76%                       |
| Race/Ethnicity                    | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
| African American                  | 86%                       |
| Asian                             | 90%                       |
| Hispanic                          | 84%                       |
| White                             | 91%                       |

The data from all *adult* surveys groups suggests an “expectations gap”—if adults have low or suppressed expectations for student success in future grade levels, then this attitude may influence their actions to prepare all students for college readiness upon graduation. SPS leaders must continue to work to help all adults understand their role and responsibility in preparing all of our students for success. Furthermore, the disconnect between student perceptions about their preparedness (high) and the expectations that adults around them hold (lower) represents another “gap” that SPS leaders should address and elevate among all stakeholder groups.

**(b) ARE STUDENTS READY FOR COLLEGE?**

The mission of Stamford Public Schools is to prepare each and every student for higher education and success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Overall, about half (52%) of SPS families believe their child will be prepared for college. 43% of elementary families agree that their child will be prepared to go to college, compared to 59% of secondary families.

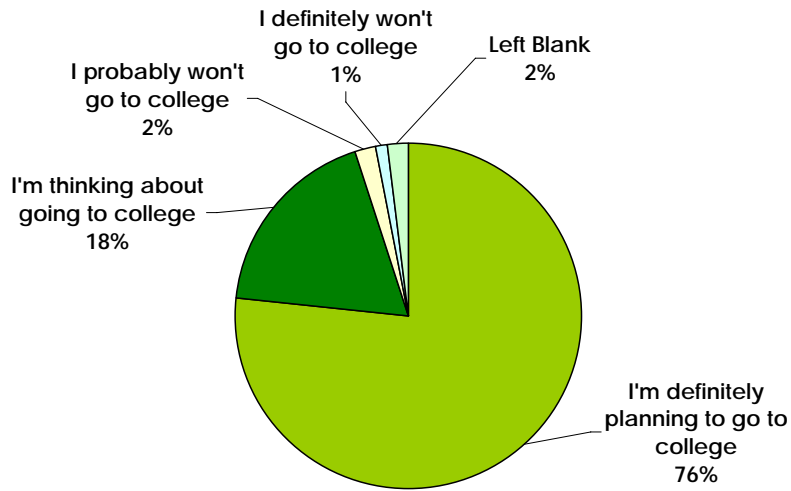
**Figure 3**  
Students will be prepared to go to college\*



\* Includes students who reported they will have the skills needed to succeed in college. Nearly one-third (30%) reported being unsure about whether they will have the skills to succeed in college. Results were similar when disaggregated by school level (middle and high).

Despite perceptions about students’ readiness for college, by and large most students have sights set on postsecondary education. Almost 95% of students felt certain or were thinking about attending college:

**Figure 4: STUDENTS  
Plans to attend college**



\* Results were similar across race/ethnicity categories

Among students who report definitely planning to go to college, nearly one-quarter also report not knowing whether they will have the skills needed to succeed in college. Over half of students who are on the fence about attending college report not knowing whether they will have the skills needed to succeed in college.

As more and more students become prepared to succeed in college after graduation, if they choose to attend, SPS leaders must analyze further whether students are actually successful in college by measuring persistence in college, levels of remediation and college graduation rates.

**(c) HOW MUCH DO SPS FAMILIES AND STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND FINANCING?**

Only 41% of families report having knowledge of the college admissions process, which, not surprisingly, varies by elementary (31%) and secondary (50%) parents. Even fewer families report an understanding of the college financing process. Only 26% of elementary and 42% of secondary families agree that they have knowledge of college financing. SPS students similarly reported generally low rates of understanding of the admissions and financing processes (although middle school and high school students reported similar rates of knowledge):

**Table 12**  
**Student and family knowledge about college processes**

| Survey Group | % Strongly Agree or Agree                       |           |                                    |           |
|--------------|---|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|
|              | Understanding of the college admissions process |           | Understanding of college financing |           |
|              | Elementary                                      | Secondary | Elementary                         | Secondary |
| Families     | 31%   | 49%       | 26%                                | 42%       |
| Students     | NA  | 47%       | NA                                 | 38%       |

These findings suggest that SPS can do more to educate students and families about getting into and funding college.

## de-tracking

### 3. Does SPS provide equal access to high-level, standards-based curriculum to all students in heterogeneous instructional groups?

SPS launched its K-12 de-tracking strategies with the **Middle School Transformation** during the 2008-09 school year. The key to success for all students truly is in providing all students with high-level, standards-based curriculum, which SPS is being developed, implemented and monitored over the past few years and will continue for the next several years.

The hallmarks of Middle School Transformation include: (a) more heterogeneous grouping through differentiated placement in English Language Arts/Social Studies and Math/Science; (b) regular Advisory periods; and (c) teachers, administrators, parents and students working on *efficacy*—the belief that students become smart through hard work and dedication, not innate ability. Continued de-tracking at the elementary and high school levels will roll out over the next several years.

Beginning in September 2009, all grade 6 students will be placed in instructional groups according to district-wide criteria for placement. All grade 6 students and teachers will be working with a standards-based, college preparatory curriculum that will prepare each and every student for higher education and success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the 2009-10 school year, grade 6 students will be placed into one of two groups, College Prep or Honors, for math/science and for English Language Arts/social studies.

#### (a) HOW DO FAMILIES FEEL ABOUT GROUPING?

SPS families were asked about their child’s instructional placement and whether their child was sufficiently challenged in school. Overall, 60% of parents agreed that the way students are grouped for instruction in school is appropriate, with general consistency across school levels and race/ethnicity:

**Table 13: FAMILIES**  
**The ways students are grouped for instruction is appropriate in my child's school**

| School Level     | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary       | 53%                       |
| Secondary        | 56%                       |
| Race/Ethnicity   | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
| African American | 57%                       |
| Asian            | 59%                       |
| Hispanic         | 69%                       |
| White            | 58%                       |

Furthermore, 23 % of families indicated they're not sure if the way students are grouped is appropriate. As SPS continues to de-track our K-12 system, data will be collected continuously to monitor the impact of changes on all stakeholders. First and foremost, student outcomes will be closely monitored to ensure that all students are accessing the district-wide standards-based curriculum, as well as the additional support and enrichment each student needs.

**(b) ARE WE DEVELOPING STUDENTS' 21st CENTURY SKILLS?**

Another way to think about equal access to high-level curriculum is by keeping in mind the end result: upon graduation, SPS students should be prepared for the demands of an increasingly complex global economy. About three-quarters of school administrators feel overall that students are acquiring skills needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Elementary school administrators are more confident that students will be prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> century demands compared to secondary school administrators (90% and 56%, respectively.) About 64% of students (approximately the same rate as teachers) feel they are acquiring skills needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, like critical thinking, working creatively with others and global awareness. Educational assistants expressed the least rate of confidence that students are acquiring the appropriate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills:

**Table 14**  
**Students are acquiring the skills needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |          |                       |                        |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|
|              | Students                  | Teachers | School Administrators | Educational Assistants |
| Elementary   | NA                        | 68%      | 90%                   | 56%                    |
| Secondary    | 64%                       | 59%      | 56%                   | 49%                    |

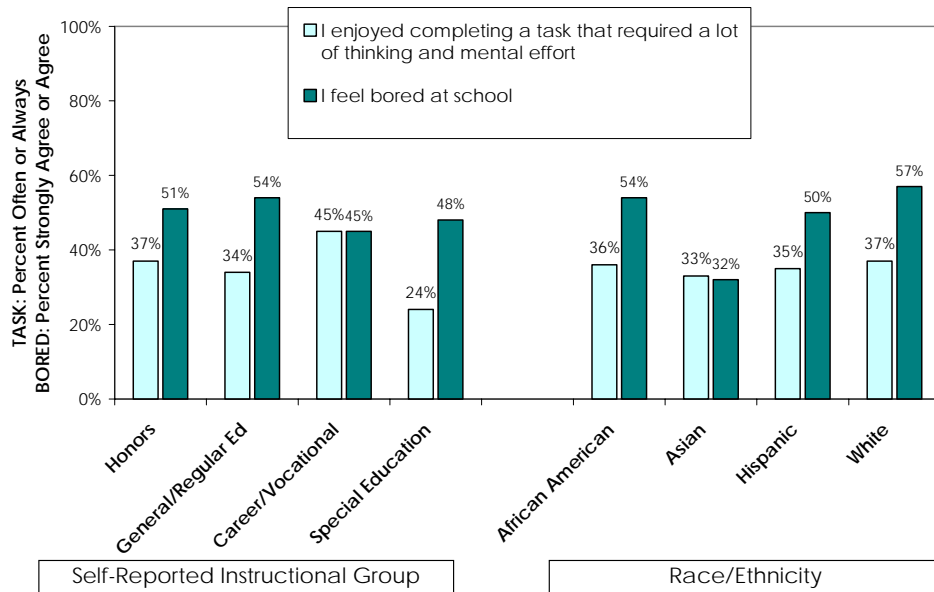
Only about 43% of students who reported that most of their classes are Special Education courses indicated that they feel prepared for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These results may represent a lack of understanding of what 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are—the complex thinking, communication, curriculum, life and career skills

needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and /or beliefs that students are lacking these skills. SPS leaders should continue to explore how such skills are incorporated into SPS curricula and instruction.

**(c) ARE STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THEIR LEARNING AND ARE THEY REPORTING HIGH EFFICACY?**

We believe that students should be invested in their own academic success by demonstrating enthusiasm for learning, as well as believing that their own hard work and effort result in high achievement. The formal student and educator training around efficacy began in middle schools during the 2008-09 school year and will continue in 2009-10. The student survey included a few measures that approximate engagement and student efficacy. Around half of students report feeling bored at school, independent of instructional group or race/ethnicity. Students consistently report relatively low frequency of enjoyment in applying a lot of thinking and mental effort, across instructional groups and race/ethnicity:

**Figure 5: STUDENTS Measures of efficacy**



These results speak to the continued need for additional work in efficacy.

**4. Are SPS schools safe?**

**(a) DO STUDENTS AND ADULTS FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL?**

Students must learn and adults must work in a safe and secure environment. In addition to preparing for emergencies—fire drills, emergency evacuations, etc.—day-to-day safe conditions are fundamental to academic and professional success. Overall, about 57% of students,<sup>5</sup> 79% of families, 74% of teachers and 82% of educational assistants reported a safe and secure school environment:

**Table 15  
Feeling Safe and Secure at School**

| % Strongly Agree or Agree |          |           |          |                        |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------------|
| School Level              | Students | Families* | Teachers | Educational Assistants |
| Elementary                | NA       | 89%       | 83%      | 87%                    |
| Secondary                 | 57%      | 68%       | 61%      | 68%                    |

\* Families were asked whether they agreed that their school is safe for their child

Students were asked to elaborate on feeling unsafe by indicating specific locations in and around school and times of the school day when they felt less safe:

**Table 16: STUDENTS  
Particular places at school where students don't feel safe**

| Location              | % reporting feeling unsafe |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Restrooms             | 21%                        |
| Outdoor areas         | 17%                        |
| Parking lot           | 15%                        |
| Cafeteria             | 12%                        |
| School bus            | 12%                        |
| Classrooms            | 7%                         |
| I feel safe at school | 55%                        |

<sup>5</sup> Students were asked in multiple questions about how safe they feel at school. Rates vary slightly by question because students who reported feeling safe may have reconsidered their original response when prompted with additional information (e.g., not feeling safe in a particular school location).

**Table 17: STUDENTS**  
**Certain times during the school day when students don't feel safe**

| Time of Day           | % reporting feeling unsafe |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| After school          | 15%                        |
| During lunch          | 8%                         |
| All day               | 7%                         |
| Before school         | 4%                         |
| During class          | 3%                         |
| I feel safe at school | 64%                        |

Teachers were asked about the timing of student safety concerns, with 58% of teachers district-wide reporting that concerns were addressed in a timely way:

**Table 18: TEACHERS**  
**Student safety concerns, when reported, are handled in a timely manner at my school**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 63%                       |
| Secondary    | 52%                       |

The District Data Team will be working on developing reporting standards for student discipline incidents, which are a key component of school safety, particularly at the secondary level.

**(b) WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY ABOUT BULLYING?**

Bullying behavior and reporting in school has become more serious in recent years. All incidents of bullying are now required to be reported to school administrators in writing. Schools are also required to designate staff to handle and investigate complaints of bullying. About 14% of students report that they have been bullied at school, and 65% of students report never being bullied.<sup>6</sup> Nearly 65% of students also report seeing other students being bullied; the apparent discrepancy in the rates could be due to students' reluctance to report bullying behavior and/or overestimating the observance of bullying incidents involving other students. Rates were consistent across race/ethnicity groups:

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<sup>6</sup> Students were asked in multiple questions about whether they are bullied in school. Rates vary somewhat by question because students who reported not being bullied may have reconsidered their original response when prompted with additional information (e.g., what do bullies do).

**Table 19: STUDENTS  
Experience with bullying**

| Race/Ethnicity   | % Sometimes, Often, Always |  |
|------------------|----------------------------|--|
|                  | I am bullied at school     | I see other students bullied at school |
| African American | 14%                        | 61%                                    |
| Asian            | 14%                        | 66%                                    |
| Hispanic         | 15%                        | 65%                                    |
| White            | 13%                        | 64%                                    |

When asked what bullies did, students reported the following types of bullying behavior:

**Table 20: STUDENTS  
What did the bully/bullies do?**

| Type of Behavior                      | % of students observing |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Teased                                | 26%                     |
| Insulted                              | 24%                     |
| Played practical jokes                | 11%                     |
| Stole or damaged belongings           | 10%                     |
| Threatened                            | 9%                      |
| Shoved, kicked or physically attacked | 8%                      |
| I have not been bullied at school     | 56%                     |

Finally, students weighed in on how bullies are handled by adults in their school. Less than 40% of students felt that adults handle bullying well or adequately:

**Table 21: STUDENTS  
How well do adults at this school handle bullying**

| How well do adults at this school handle bullying        | %   |
|--|-----|
| Well   | 19% |
| Adequately   | 19% |
| Poorly   | 19% |
| Adults at my school don't know what's going on with kids | 18% |
| Don't Know   | 23% |

School administrators also expressed concern about bullying in their schools. About one-quarter of school administrators agree that bullying is a problem in their school, consistent by school level:

**Table 22: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS  
Bullying is a problem at my school**

| School Level | % Agree* |
|--------------|----------|
| Elementary   | 24%      |
| Secondary    | 28%      |

\* No respondents indicated "Strongly Agree"

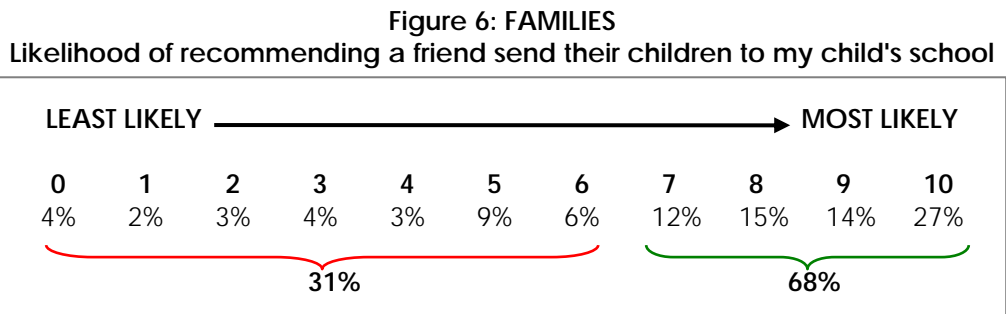
SPS leaders take bullying reports and response very seriously and are organizing to prevent incidents and intervene appropriately.

## 5. Are SPS families engaged in their child's education?

Family engagement remains a priority area for improvement in SPS. Because all stakeholders in our system—including parents and family members—contribute to the achievement of our students, communication and involvement are important indicators of success. Families were asked multiple questions about their satisfaction and engagement with schools and their child's education in order to gauge: (a) the overall satisfaction with SPS and (b) the amount and quality of communication between schools and families.

### (a) ARE FAMILIES SATISFIED WITH STAMFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

One proxy for families' overall satisfaction with the education their child receives is the likelihood that they would recommend a friend send their child to SPS. Mirroring the Net Promoter Score evaluation tool developed by General Electric,<sup>7</sup> on a scale of zero to ten, with '0' being least likely and '10' being most likely, 68% of families indicated seven or higher:



The Net Promoter Score process would result in strategies to change the mindset of "detractors" (those who indicated scores between 0 and 6), to increase the rate of respondents that would "promote" SPS to other customers.

<sup>7</sup> The GE Net Promoter Score methodology measures customer satisfaction in order to change *culture*, not individual actions. Respondents are asked to rate their satisfaction through a question like, "How likely are you to recommend a friend send their children to my child's school?" on a scale from 0 to 10. Respondents scoring 0 through 6 would be considered *detractors*, those scoring 7 or 8 would be considered *passively satisfied* and those scoring 9 or 10 would be considered *promoters*.

Family, teacher and school administrator respondents were also asked whether they agree that diversity is valued in SPS. Overall, teachers expressed the highest rate of agreement (82%), and about two-thirds of families and school administrators agreed that families of diverse cultures are respected and valued:

**Table 23**  
**Families of diverse cultures are respected and valued**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |          |                       |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------|-----------------------|
|              | Families                  | Teachers | School Administrators |
| Elementary   | 77%                       | 85%      | 67%                   |
| Secondary    | 56%                       | 77%      | 67%                   |

**(b) ARE WE COMMUNICATING WELL WITH FAMILIES?**

Families were asked to rate their satisfaction with the information they receive about particular components of their child’s educational experience. Families report the highest level of satisfaction with communication about their child’s progress (76%), and less satisfaction with information about curriculum (63%), expectations for learning (56%) and support for learning at home (55%). Results varied substantially by school level, with far less satisfaction at the secondary level:

**Table 24: FAMILIES**  
**Satisfaction with information**

| How satisfied are you with information you receive... | % Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied |           |
|---|--|-----------|
|   | ELEMENTARY                             | SECONDARY |
| ...about my child’s curriculum                        | 73%                                    | 53%       |
| ...about my child’s progress                          | 82%                                    | 70%       |
| ...what my child is expected to learn                 | 66%                                    | 46%       |
| ...to support my child’s learning at home             | 74%                                    | 36%       |

Finally, families were asked about the opportunities available for family members with limited access to or experience in schools. Again, families of secondary students expressed a lower rate of agreement that SPS provides opportunities for families that have not traditionally been involved in school life:

**Table 25: FAMILIES**  
**Opportunities for families with limited time/experience to contribute to school life/activities**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |                        |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
|              | Formal opportunities      | Informal opportunities |
| Elementary   | 76%                       | 51%                    |
| Secondary    | 72%                       | 49%                    |

Teachers report a high level of communication with families. A solid majority of teachers (79%) indicated that their colleagues provide regular communication to families on student progress:

**Table 26: TEACHERS**  
**Teachers at my school provide regular communication to parents/guardians on students' progress**

| School Level | % Strongly Agree or Agree |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary   | 85%                       |
| Secondary    | 72%                       |

Finally, students were asked about how their families were involved in their school and schoolwork:

**Table 27: STUDENTS**  
**Parents/family members are involved in my education**

| One of my parents or a family member...           | % Often or Always |
|---|-------------------|
| ...talks to me about what I am learning in school | 49%               |
| ...helps me with my school work                   | 30%               |
| ...attends meetings or events at my school        | 27%               |

**professional learning communities & data teams**

**6. Are PLCs strengthening teacher collaboration and instruction?**

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a critical component of the SPS professional learning plan to lead to continuous improvement. In PLCs, teachers collaborate together regularly to plan, implement, and analyze the instructional strategies needed for improved student achievement. SPS has invested substantial resources over the last several years to implement and strengthen PLC work, including training more than 260 teachers in the Stamford PLC process. The expectations set forth in the SDIP indicate that all SPS PLCs will be working towards mastery of the PLC process by 2012. The SPS Spring 2009 Teacher Survey provides a wealth of information and guides our next steps in the SPS PLC process and teachers' participation in PLCs.

Approximately 90% of teachers report that they participate in a PLC. Although the expectation that all teachers participate has been established, some scheduling complications may prohibit regular meetings, particularly for teachers in specialist areas. Nearly 75% of teachers report meeting with their PLC at least once per week. Almost 80% report feeling safe giving and receiving support in their PLCs.

Beginning in 2009-10, through the plans that will be laid out in the SDIP, SPS will introduce expectations for school-level Data Teams in every school. Practices of

both PLCs and Data Teams include involving teachers and administrators in setting goals to guide teachers' work toward improving student achievement, identifying student needs as a focus for improvement, prioritizing assessment of student progress based on the implementation of specific instructional strategies, and looking for evidence of student learning behaviors that have changed as a result of instruction. However, PLCs focus on the day-to-day work of instruction, while school-level Data Teams focus on school-wide efforts to improve and track achievement as tied to the School Improvement Plan.

**(a) DO PLCs IMPACT TEACHERS' DAY-TO-DAY PRACTICE?**

Many teachers report that PLCs guide their work in instructional improvement in a variety of ways. During the 2008-09 school year, all PLCs were asked to establish an instructional goal to guide their work:

**Table 28: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS  
Schools engaging in the instructional goal-setting process**

| School Level | Drafted the instructional goal(s) then shared with my staff | PLCs drafted instructional goal(s) then school administrators selected the school-wide instructional goal(s) | Leadership/Data Teams drafted the instructional goal(s) | The entire staff worked on drafting our instructional goal(s) together |
|--------------|---|--|---|--|
| Elementary   | 0%  | 35%  | 40%   | 25%  |
| Secondary    | 28%   | 28%  | 22%   | 22%  |

**Table 29: TEACHERS  
Instructional goal guides our work as a team**

| School Level | % Often or Almost Always |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Elementary   | 66%                      |
| Secondary    | 54%                      |

Perhaps the greatest expectation for well-functioning PLCs is that classroom practices changes based on the needs of students. We are beginning to see classroom practice changing as a result of PLC work:

**Table 30: TEACHERS  
My PLC work improves my own classroom practice**

| School Level | % Often or Almost Always |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Elementary   | 48%                      |
| Secondary    | 38%                      |

Similarly, we expect that PLCs share the value of prioritizing learning and achievement for every child and determine best how to meet students' needs:

**Table 31: TEACHERS**  
**My PLC focuses on supporting every student to reach a high level of achievement**

| School Level | % Often or Almost Always |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Elementary   | 78%                      |
| Secondary    | 67%                      |

**(b) HOW ARE EDUCATORS COLLABORATING IN SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN PLCs?**

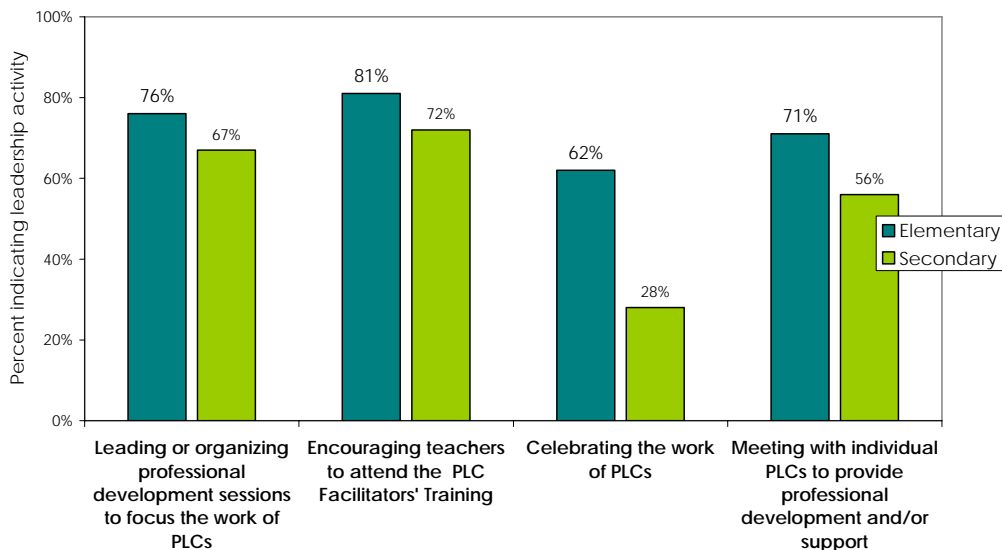
PLCs are designed to give teachers a safe environment in which to analyze and discuss information, strategize around instructional approaches and debrief with each other about success and challenges. School administrators' leadership is a critical component of PLC success. Collaboratively, administrators and teachers establish instructional goals tied to school improvement goals to guide the work of PLCs. Administrators also facilitate time for continued professional learning dedicated to PLC growth, visit PLCs periodically, and provide resources and/or materials to PLCs. Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which administrators collaborate with teachers. Overall, 58% of teachers report collaboration around student achievement:

**Table 32: TEACHERS**  
**School leaders collaborate with teachers to improve student achievement in my school**

| School Level | % Some or A Lot |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Elementary   | 68%             |
| Secondary    | 46%             |

Administrators report being involved in PLC work among their teachers in the following ways:

**Figure 7: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**  
Leading PLC work in schools



**Table 33: TEACHERS**  
Structures exist to share knowledge among PLCs in my school

| School Level | % Some or A Lot |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Elementary   | 59%             |
| Secondary    | 36%             |

**next steps to understand and address SPS spring 2009 survey data**

The data included in this report represent a fraction of the extensive information that was collected, and SPS leaders will continue to mine the information for planning and action throughout the 2009-10 school year.

An important use of the SPS Spring 2009 Survey data will be to continue to inform the goals, strategies and implementation of the SPS Strategic District Improvement Plan (SDIP). The measurable goals set in the SDIP over three school years include:

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TIER I GOALS FOR APPROVAL:**

1. On the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) (Grades 3-8) in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing, the average grade-level gain in students at or above proficiency over the three-year period of the District Improvement Plan (2009-10 through -2011-12) will be at least 12 percentage points. Science achievement targets will be added to this goal after Spring 2010 Science CMT data are released and analyzed.
2. On the Grade 10 Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in Reading, Mathematics, Writing and Science, the grade-level gain in students at or above proficiency over the three-year period of the

District Improvement Plan (2009-10 through -2011-12) will be at least 12 percentage points.

3. On the CMT and CAPT, achievement gaps in all subject areas for targeted subgroups (Black, Hispanic, Free/Reduced Lunch, Special Education, and ELL students) will be reduced by at least one-third over the three-year period of the District Improvement Plan (2009-10 through 2011-12). In addition, all student subgroups will show growth in all content areas of the CMT and CAPT in the percentage of students at or above proficiency.

#### **SCHOOL CULTURE TIER I GOALS:**

1. SPS is committed to reducing: (a) the number of students involved in disciplinary incidents; (b) the number of days of suspensions resulting from disciplinary incidents; and (c) the number of total disciplinary incidents.
2. SMART goals to reduce suspensions in the above three categories (a-c) for the overall student population and for student subgroups will be developed after standards for data collection and reporting are established and implemented district-wide.

Work within and across each of the four strategic areas of the SDIP include the following strategies:

#### **Curriculum & Instruction**

1. Develop, implement and monitor district-wide standards-based curriculum in math, literacy and science in all schools
2. Develop a Balanced Assessment System that includes four levels: (1) teacher assessments; (2) school common assessments; (3) District Benchmark Assessments; and (4) external assessments.

#### **De-Tracking**

1. Implement more heterogeneous grouping through differentiated placement in English Language Arts/Social Studies and Math/Science in all SPS middle schools
2. Eliminate/reduce traditional ability grouping and increase small, flexible grouping in grades K-5
3. Reduce number of low-level HS courses and increase participation of all students in AP and Honors courses

#### **School Culture**

1. Improve student discipline data collection and reporting
2. Develop proficiency delivering Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) in all schools
3. Increase schools' capacity to identify and work with all families

#### **PLCs/Data Teams**

1. Develop Professional Learning Community (PLC) mastery in all schools
2. Develop School Data Team proficiency in all schools
3. District Data Team implements and monitors the District Improvement Plan

The 2009 and future survey data will likely serve as important *results indicators* or measures of interim progress towards the longer-term goals of the SDIP.