



October 20, 2014

Survey Summary

CANDO's survey collected 123 unique, complete responses over the two week period. The survey included separate sections for parent and student feedback, although the comments indicate that many parents requested student input as part of their responses. The number of responses per grade ranged from 15 parents and 9 students for 3rd grade to 27 parents and 17 students for 6th grade. The other grades ranged from 18-23 parents each.

The three main topics that emerged from the survey data and written comments are presented below. CANDO is happy to provide all of the raw data or summarized information on additional topics to BPS Gifted Services if desired.

Overall comments

Parent responses clearly acknowledged that transition to a new curriculum is a challenge and that activities take time to get rolling at the start of a school year.

Both parent and student comments reflect an appreciation of and enjoyment of their teachers and gifted coaches.

Topic 1: Communication

The survey data and parent comments indicate confusion at both the elementary and middle school levels regarding (1) the process used for qualifying for or being assigned gifted services and/or (2) how services are provided under the new curriculum and delivery models.

- 40% of 3rd grade, 44% of 4th grade, and 53% of 5th grade respondents selected "No" when asked if the assignment process was clear
- 40% of third grade parents responded "Unclear" when asked if their child was accelerated

- 40% of 3rd grade, 88% of 4th grade and 100% of 5th grade respondents answered “No” or “Unclear” when asked if their child received differentiated instruction in the classroom
- 35% of 6th grade, 27% of 7th grade, and 18% of 8th grade respondents responded “No” when asked if the assignment process was clear
- 71% of 6th grade, 60% of 7th grade and 100% of 8th grade respondents answered “No” or “Unclear” when asked if their child received differentiated instruction in the classroom
- 31% of 6th grade, 22% of 7th grade and 44% of 8th grade respondents answered “Yes” or “Unclear” when asked if their child received supplemental work from a Gifted Specialist

Feedback from the written comments:

- Parents would appreciate additional and improved communication about:
 - o what topics will be covered by each class during this year,
 - o how differentiation occurs,
 - o how testing (pre-tests, mid-unit tests, and MAP testing) is used to determine differentiation,
 - o what differentiation looks like, and
 - o why acceleration for 3rd graders and additional acceleration for middle school students is no longer an option.
- Many classes are not using books or providing information on where the curriculum used is found. This makes it very difficult for students to find examples or review material at home and for parents to assist students on homework if needed. Additional communication on where the materials used are located would be helpful.
- Parents would also welcome a clear explanation of how transitions between elementary and middle school and middle and high school occur. For example, what is the process used for assigning classes and how do middle school course options map to high school math classes?

Delivery Models

CANDO recognizes that this is a transition year where teachers were able to elect as a grade level whether or not to pilot a guided math delivery model and Common Core Curriculum. However, from the survey data and comments, it appears that there are a large number of delivery models in use throughout the district at the elementary level. This raises parent concerns regarding consistency between schools and learning gaps that may become problematic for classes next year in 6th grade as students merge or even within individual schools.

- For 3rd grade, 14% of survey respondents replied that only the Gifted Coach taught their students math, while 86% said both the grade level teacher and Gifted Coach taught math.
- For 4th grade, 83% said the grade level teacher only taught math (although it might be a 5th grade teacher), 6% replied that only the Gifted Coach taught their students math, and 11% said both the grade level teacher and Gifted Coach taught math.
- For 5th grade, 77% said the grade level teacher only taught math, 5% replied that only the Gifted Coach taught their students math, and 18% said both the grade level teacher and Gifted Coach taught math.

Comments on this topic are best summarized as:

- It is important that services be equal across the district. Students who qualify for gifted services should be given the same opportunities for acceleration or enrichment at all schools.
- The number of delivery models used for 4th grade in particular is striking. Although not specifically asked, parents reported the following models in comments:
 - o 4th grade students walk up to a 5th grade classroom for math
 - o 4th grade students walk up to a 5th grade classroom but receive math assignments from both the 5th grade room and their 4th grade homeroom teacher covering 4th and 5th grade lessons
 - o 4th grade students do not walk up to a 5th grade room – they receive instruction from the gifted coach every other day and on days in between, they work independently in a 4th grade classroom while a 4th grade math lesson occurs
 - o Some 4th graders work with a gifted coach and some do not ever work directly with a gifted coach

Rigor of the Curriculum

Prior to the survey, parents reported that Curriculum Night presentations uniformly described the Common Core as requiring teachers to move more slowly and spend more time on each topic. Without a uniform delivery model in place across the district, teachers have used a variety of resources to build curriculums in their teams. The survey asked both parents and students to evaluate the difficulty of the curriculum and the pace of the curriculum on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being “Too easy”, 5 being “Just right” and 10 being “Too challenging”. While the range and distributions of responses might provide additional insights for each grade level, only the averages are presented here to conserve space.

Average Responses (Scale of 1(easy) – 10 (challenging))

Grade Level	Pace of Course		Level of Difficulty	
	Parents	Students	Parents	Students
3	3.00	3.44	2.87	3.78
4	3.47	4.00	4.21	4.17
5	3.91	4.00	4.09	4.06
6	4.24	4.14	4.28	4.27
7	4.00	4.10	4.11	4.30
8	4.44	4.67	4.74	4.11

The survey also asked whether students felt challenged most days.

- 3rd grade:
 - o Parents – 64% “No” and 21% “Unclear”
 - o Students - 67% “No” and 0% “Not Sure”
- 4th grade:
 - o Parents – 56% “No” and 0% “Unclear”,
 - o Students - 50% “No” and 8% “Not Sure”

- 5th grade:
 - o Parents – 68% “No” and 11% “Unclear”,
 - o Students - 61% “No” and 11% “Not Sure”
- 6th grade:
 - o Parents – 35% “No” and 13% “Unclear”,
 - o Students - 29% “No” and 18% “Not Sure”
- 7th grade:
 - o Parents – 44% “No” and 25% “Unclear”,
 - o Students - 60% “No” and 0% “Not Sure”
- 8th grade:
 - o Parents – 18% “No” and 12% “Unclear”,
 - o Students - 22% “No” and 0% “Unclear”

Finally, the survey asked for written responses from both parent and student perspectives on what the students liked most and whether anything about the new models of delivery or curriculum frustrated them. The most common responses on pace, level of difficulty and likes and dislikes are included in the comment summaries below:

- It seems to parents that overall expectations for children in the gifted cluster have been lowered.
- It seems a disservice to third grade cluster children to discontinue acceleration this year and for sixth graders to no longer be allowed to qualify for an additional year of acceleration if appropriate. It is unclear what major learning gaps exist which prevent them from being able to accelerate.
- The slower speed of delivery for Common Core is very challenging for children who tend to learn new things quickly and want to move at a faster pace.
- Teachers who are developing lesson plans “as they go” cannot be expected to develop differentiated materials (for all levels, not just gifted) at the same time. This raises concerns about whether true differentiation can and is occurring and whether data gathered during pre-testing and standardized testing is being used in a meaningful way.
- Some parents and students love the guided math groups as opportunities to work with peers and move around. Others find them challenging for many reasons such as the group does not actually work together or works very slowly and the group assignments are predominately to watch videos.
- Students with special needs may find group work to be overwhelming either because it is difficult for them to work in a group and/or because of sensory issues arising from the motion and noise involved in group work.
- Students in 6th grade Math II who took 6th grade math while in 5th grade are not all grouped together in a classroom. Being mixed with students who have not yet had 6th grade math is causing frustration as the class understandably has to move more slowly. Increased differentiation or grouping these students into a single classroom is suggested as a means to keep these students engaged.
- The increased focus on comprehending the process behind operations and problem solving is understood by parents. However, the increased emphasis on writing sentences rather than mathematical equations is frustrating to those students who love

math but do not love language arts. Just as the curriculum emphasizes multiple approaches to each problem type, it would be appreciated if multiple means of demonstrating understanding could be used as well.