

1999-2001

**REPORT ON
THE OTTOSON
MIDDLE SCHOOL
SURVEY**



Ottoson School Council
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In May 1999, students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff were asked to participate in a survey to obtain feedback about the school. The information was solicited from the entire school community in order to identify issues and problems that concern everyone. The results are being used to improve the Ottoson Middle School for all of its constituents. In addition, the Ottoson School Council is using the results to create a new School Improvement Plan. The overarching mission of the school is to provide a student-centered, academically-challenging environment which is supported and, further, nurtured by each family, school personnel, and the larger Arlington community. Survey results are helping to identify what currently works and what needs improvement.

Many people assisted during the course of this work. The most important individuals are those who completed the survey. Faculty and staff, students, parents and guardians who took the time to answer our questions played the most central role in helping us accomplish our goal of obtaining and providing reliable and thorough information – we thank you so much.

Members of the School Council and other school staff put in many hours of their time developing questionnaires, copying and distributing the surveys, entering the data, evaluating results, and writing reports.

This report is a comprehensive description of our findings. It is organized by categories of participants to facilitate reading. The School Council believes that the Ottoson Middle School is a first-rate facility. It is our deepest hope that the information contained within will be used to improve the Ottoson Middle School beyond our wildest dreams.



SUMMARY

In the spring of 1999, the Ottoson School Council began developing a survey of parents/guardians, staff, and students to collect data that will inform the development of a new school improvement plan.

Over a 2-year period, a subcommittee of the School Council worked closely together to develop and disseminate the surveys, code, enter, and analyze the data. Results were reported to the Council as they became available, in an ongoing process. At Council meetings, we had many spirited discussions about the meaning of the findings and what could be done about the negative issues.

We started the questionnaires with two open-ended questions:

What are the 3 best things about the Ottoson?

What are the 3 things that most need improvement?

We did this in order to find out what issues were foremost in participants' minds and to ask them to raise issues that we might not have been aware of or thought to ask.

These open response questions were followed by 82 questions for students, 81 for staff, and 93 for parents. Parents/guardians and faculty/staff responded on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so) and students responded "yes" or "no." The questions were divided roughly into "topics," such as building/maintenance and curriculum.

For the purposes of using the information to create a new School Improvement Plan, questions that showed less than 30% satisfaction with the school were considered as indicating a need for improvement; these have formed the focus for most of the report and the work of the School Council.

Parents were mailed the questionnaires; staff and students received their surveys at school. Copies of the questionnaires are in an appendix to this report. We received completed surveys from 150 parents/guardians, 105 staff, and 564 students.

The numerical data were entered into spreadsheets. The open-ended responses were typed and then formatted for analysis using text analysis software. Responses were categorized on the basis of what the respondents wrote, not according to pre-developed categories, so that we could "listen" to what was being said.

Readers may have a "pet peeve" about the Ottoson. Often this will have been identified as an area needing improvement on the survey as well. However, it is important to be objective and let the respondents speak for themselves rather than interpreting the results from an individual perspective. The results need to be considered within the entire set of data.

In short, the best thing about the Ottoson is the people!

Three best things

Students, parents/guardians, and faculty/staff all agree that the faculty and the new building were among the best aspects of the Ottoson. In addition, staff mentioned the administration and its leadership, and the students most frequently. Parents included the excellent curriculum, including out-of cluster classes, concern and caring for the students by staff, and the principals and administration. Students rated lunch food and lunchtime among their favorite parts of the Ottoson.



Most needs improvement

Building temperature was the theme all three groups of respondents agreed needed to be addressed. Overwhelmingly, students, staff, and parents wrote that it can be too hot in the building for learning to take place, especially on hot spring days.

The faculty included the curriculum, discipline, cleanliness of building, substitute

Heat, heat, heat – Too Hot! Screens, so the windows could be left open overnight.

teachers, and opportunities for and encouragement of professional development as the areas most in need of improvement. Parents and guardians cited communication in general, communication with teachers, out-of-cluster classes, and insufficiently challenging curriculum as needing attention. It is interesting to note that out-of-cluster classes make it on both the list of best things and things that needed improvement.

Building and Maintenance

Parents praised the new building, although 49% responded that there is not enough parking. Students focused on cleanliness! They mentioned that corridors, locker rooms and classrooms are generally clean, but 48% responded that the bathrooms are not clean and only 64% responded that the cafeteria is clean. Their written responses often provide examples in great detail. Faculty and staff, whose day-to-day workplace is the Ottoson, have the most negative experiences to report about building cleanliness and maintenance. Fewer than 70% indicated that the building is clean or maintained well, and over 50% think that parking is insufficient.

Materials, Supplies, and Food

The Media Center is rated very highly by parents/guardians and faculty/staff, including availability of computers for

student use. However, quality of textbooks is considered problematic by all three groups. Faculty/staff and students agree that there are not enough computers in the media center or classrooms, or enough supplies. Students answered that they have enough textbooks for each student and that the media center provides the materials they need for school. Only 46% of students answered that the cafeteria food is good, and only 56% said that there are enough food choices.

Responsibility, Good Citizenship, and Discipline

Overall, parents are satisfied with the level of good citizenship and respect for others at school. They report that the school is perceived by their children as safe and comfortable. Where problems have arisen, parents have been satisfied with the results. In two areas, however, parents are less satisfied. Fewer than 70% answered that they know the kinds of things their children are allowed to bring to school and felt that teachers and administrators do not communicate adequately.

Students answer that it is important to be a good citizen at the Ottoson, that they understand how to behave in school, are responsible and follow through on things, know what they are allowed to bring to school, and generally feel safe at school. However, students do not feel that there is much respect shown in the school between and among students and staff. Only 62% of students answered that differences among people are accepted (religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.) and only 57% answered that individuality is encouraged at school. In terms of discipline, 67% of students answered that



when rules are broken, students are held accountable in an appropriate manner.

Discipline is also a major concern for Ottoson staff. A large number of staff answered that discipline is not consistent and students are not always held accountable for breaking rules. They also feel that communication about discipline is not adequate, nor coordinated well among a student's teachers. They believe that being a good citizen is not important to students, even though they indicated that good citizenship is encouraged and students understand how to behave.

In terms of personal respect and safety, staff answer that there is mutual respect between staff and students and between staff and parents. Many feel that differences among people are not sufficiently accepted at Ottoson, in areas such as religion, physical and mental abilities, race, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and cultural origin. However, 95% of the staff feel safe at school.

Curriculum

Responses in this area were overwhelmingly positive. Parents responded that Ottoson provides high quality teaching and education in most departments. In addition, ratings for auxiliary services are very high. This includes learning disabilities, speech and language, reading, ESL, and nursing services. Four classes received less positive responses from parents/guardians: Consumer and Life Sciences, Directed Study, Follow-up, and SOAR. Students rated Technology Education, ACE, FACS, Directed Study, Follow-up, and Reading programs less favorably. Faculty and staff were not asked to evaluate the curriculum in this section of closed-ended questions.

Some of the teachers make you feel better – they can put a smile on your face.

Ottoson Staff

The non-teaching staff were rated very highly by parents who answered that the principals are good leaders, that the custodians and nurses are helpful and courteous. Parents feel respected by staff and consider staff members to be good role models for their children. In addition, most parents indicated that they admire particular staff members. There were two exceptions to this pattern: Guidance counselors and the front office staff were seen as unhelpful and sometimes rude. Students rate the cafeteria workers and nurses very highly. However, fewer than 70% of students reported that their guidance counselor, the main office staff, or the custodians are helpful, or that they feel comfortable going to the principals. School staff rate the school administration highly. In addition, they answer that communication within clusters is good, although planning and coordination among cluster teachers is considered adequate by only 58% of the respondents. Further, only 27% of the staff feel that there is enough integration of courses and materials within clusters. When asked about the communication between cluster and out-of-cluster teachers, only 28% gave it a "good" rating.

Home-School Communication

The area of communication between home and school proved to be the most problematic. Overall, parents do not feel well-informed about their children's or the school's activities. They would like to be more involved, but do not feel welcome as a visitor or volunteer. In terms of obtaining feedback about their children's progress, neither the report card nor the conference



schedule is viewed as adequate. Further, parents do not think that parents and teachers communicate enough or that teachers or administrators work effectively with parents to address concerns.

On the positive side, parents answered that school policies are clearly communicated, found the conference schedule convenient and reported that the conferences do promote better understandings among parents, children, and teachers. They also thought that teachers are open to discussing parents' concerns.

Students answered that they do not want their parents involved more at school (85%)! On the other hand, a large percentage of students do not feel that home-school communication is good enough. Fewer than 50% responded that report cards tell how they are really doing in school or that conferences help parents and teachers understand them. Only 63% answered that parents and teachers communicate enough and only 54% answered that the administration and parents communicate well with each other. However, 68% responded that it is easy to find out what assignments you are missing.

Faculty and staff generally indicate that parents/guardians are willing to discuss and address concerns raised about their child and that all of the child's teachers work together to do so. They also answered that school policies are clearly communicated and are available in writing.

At the same time, faculty and staff do not feel that parents/guardians and faculty/staff communicate enough. In addition, two avenues for communication are not highly regarded by faculty and staff. Only 67% answered that they use the homework hotline regularly. While 70% agreed that conferences help parents/guardians and faculty/staff understand each other, only 59%

responded that the conference schedule is adequate and only 66% said that it is convenient.

Attitudes, Work Habits, and Expectations

This grouping of questions also uncovered more dissatisfaction than did other sections of the surveys.

On the plus side, parents/guardians feel that class sizes are appropriate, that what their children are studying is important and that the teachers motivate children well and have high expectations. Parents did not answer that the teachers ask too much or that their children have too much homework. They also report that their children are comfortable with the workload and expectations, and work hard at school. Finally, parents answered that their children are learning good study habits at Ottoson.

For parents, the problem areas concern teaching and learning approaches and homework. Parents do not believe that critical thinking, intellectual risk-taking, or trial and error learning are encouraged at Ottoson. In addition, many parents do not believe that teachers help their children learn in the best way for their child. Homework received mixed reviews. Parents report that teachers communicate homework expectations well, give extra help after school when needed and provide appropriate consequences for missing homework. At the same time, they do not think homework is challenging or stimulating enough. While parents indicated that their children do not have too much homework, they are not comfortable with the amount that is assigned and report that children do not average ½ hour each night for each major



subject. Most (70%) do not favor homework assigned during school vacations.

Sixty-six percent of students report that they do not work as hard as they can, 66% think they do not have too much homework, and only 38% think teachers are asking them to do too much. In addition, they report that homework is not challenging (57%) nor stimulating (34%). They do not think teachers communicate expectations clearly or prepare students to do their homework (60%). When they miss homework, they report taking responsibility for finding out what was missed and use their agenda book regularly. They also understand that there are consequences when homework is missed. Only 20% report using the homework hotline.

Learning and study habits were also addressed in this section. Fewer than 70% of the students think that what they study is important. They do not feel free to learn by making mistakes, or think their teachers help them learn in the best ways for them. Fewer than 70% answered that they are learning good study habits.

For the faculty/staff questionnaire, the questions in this section asked mostly about students' attitudes toward school and their work habits. Faculty and staff are very dissatisfied in this area. Many replied that parents share teachers' goals and other teachers have high expectations for students. But they believe that students do not work as hard as they can, do not take initiative, do not follow through on projects and do not ask for help when they need it. Further, many think that students do not do all of their own work and do not respond well to discipline. Faculty/staff feel that parents do not help students with homework in appropriate ways, although they do not think parents help too much with homework.

Faculty and Staff Only Questions

A few questions were only asked of faculty and staff. The first was "Do you enjoy coming to work each day? Eighty-six percent of the teachers said "Yes." This survey was done near the end of the first year in the renovated Ottoson. With the renovation came computers and video monitors in most classrooms, with a new voice mail and e-mail system for all faculty and staff. By this time of the year, they indicated that they were using voice mail, using monitors for viewing videos, and were comfortable with the process of using voice mail and e-mail. They answered that their communication with parents had improved with the new technologies and that their administrative responsibilities were facilitated. However, communication with colleagues had not increased, and fewer than half of the faculty and staff were using e-mail or using the monitors for presentations. Sixty-five percent answered that they need more training and 37% felt that the technology support was inadequate.

The responses indicate a clear desire by school faculty and staff for more professional development. When asked about this, 54% answered that they have enough opportunities, and 46% say that they are encouraged to take workshops and courses. Only 64% of the faculty/staff indicated that they were given coverage to fulfil their commitments to professional development during the preceding year. In terms of substitute teachers, there was unanimous agreement that building substitutes are preferable. Thirty-eight percent of faculty/staff feel that there is enough substitute coverage for classes. When substitute teachers are used, 37% of faculty/staff report that lesson plans are followed and only 18% report that the



substitutes can maintain classroom discipline. Sixty-eight percent believe that there is a clear procedure for substitutes to follow.

Actions Taken and Actions in Progress

The data from the survey have been informing the actions of the Ottoson Administration, Faculty, and School Council as the results became available. To date, we have implemented/or are working on the following:

Academic Areas

- ! Changes in the schedule, main subjects meet every day, change in the number of periods from 6 to 7 to provide daily continuity of main subjects
- ! Additional time in language arts classes for 6th grade
- ! New and revised math programs (grades 6 - 8)
- ! Improved services from Guidance Department
- ! 6th and 8th grade peer mentoring
- ! AM/PM program increases the variety and number of after-school offerings
- ! Additional computers have been purchased or were donated

School Climate

- ! Increased volunteer participation
- ! Re-established the merit card system
- ! STARS program and Alternative Ed program are addressing discipline and behavioral issues
- ! School safety/additional crossing-guards
- ! Peer mediation program
- ! Community Task Force involved with events to improve school climate
- ! Improved safe schools program
- ! Emergency procedures task force

Communication

- ! Parent-Guardian Guidebook
- ! Regular & improved newsletters from OPAC
- ! More frequent newsletters from the Principal
- ! A consistent and professional looking school letterhead
- ! School website
- ! New events that provide additional opportunities for communication: Coffees, parent nights, workshops
- ! Faculty guidebook
- ! Revised student agenda book
- ! Online communication at Town website, email lists
- ! TV Monitors in use for communication within the building
- ! Working group in communications
- ! More frequent articles in Advocate
- ! Trial of notifying families of cluster placement before school starts to smooth transition



BACKGROUND

In May 1999, the School Council of the Ottoson Middle School (OMS) developed three survey questionnaires to obtain feedback about the school from parents and guardians, faculty and staff, and students. The most recent survey of the Ottoson community and an ongoing survey of the Dallin School community provided a starting point for this development. Many drafts were read and critiqued by the Council, until we were satisfied that it was comprehensive.

Each respondent was asked to read and respond to a set of items. In addition, they were encouraged to write comments to help clarify their responses or provide more in-depth information. The items included questions about the facilities, faculty and staff, curriculum, materials, communication between all constituencies, attitudes and expectations of students, and responsibility and good citizenship. The questions for teachers also included workplace issues.

Each survey began with some open-ended questions that are relevant to the group. The answers to these open-ended questions provide perhaps the best information of all about the strengths and weaknesses of the school because respondents could speak their minds based exclusively on their own thoughts without our prompting ideas. For all three surveys, we asked for the three best things about OMS and the three things that most needed improvement at OMS. The responses are lengthy and informative. Many lavish praise and some offer constructive criticism; most are honest and heartfelt.

Parents and guardians of Ottoson Middle School students were mailed a survey and asked to return it in within a couple of weeks. About 900 questionnaires were mailed; 150 were returned. Questionnaires were distributed to about 105 faculty/staff members and returned by 42. Students received their questionnaires during a school period, and were asked to fill them out and return them to their teachers before the end of the period. Of the 960 students, 564 questionnaires were returned. Some clusters did not participate.

Once the surveys were completed and returned, the numeric responses were entered into a spreadsheet program for analysis. The written comments were typed using a word processor and converted for use with a qualitative data analysis program; this allowed coding and sorting of comments into categories for further analysis.

Over the course of 16 months, several people helped enter the data into a computer-readable form. Two Arlington High School students, Nora Phelps McElroy and Jenny Blodgett, teachers Karin Montini, Pippi Guiliani, Bethany Shull, and Jane Ruddock, and Erin Phelps completed the data entry in the fall of 2000. This was a mammoth task for a group of volunteers because of the number of questionnaires that were returned and the amount of written information provided by the participants. Most respondents took the request to provide comments very seriously and wrote many many comments -- far more than expected. The information provided helps in the interpretation of the quantitative responses and greatly enriches the scope of the overall findings.

Since the purpose of this report from the Ottoson survey is to provide information for the School Improvement Plan, the focus will be primarily on the problem areas identified by



parents and guardians. The School Council chose a cutoff of 70% to identify aspects to focus on. This means that if an item was rated “good” or “excellent” less than 70% of the time, it should be identified as an area that needs improvement. Because there are many aspects of the school which parents and guardians, faculty and staff, and students are extremely positive about and these will be identified as well. Each section of the questionnaire will be discussed, with comments used to illuminate the responses. In addition, relevant comments from the more general questions will also be included.

Most readers of this report will likely have a “pet peeve” about the Ottoson. Often, this will be identified a potential area for improvement by the survey results as well. However, it is important to be objective and let the respondents speak for themselves rather than interpreting the results through an individual perspective. The results should be considered as a whole to be understood properly. Within the context of the entire set of results, the School Council will prioritize issues to work on. In addition, some of the issues that are raised will not be able to be resolved by the Ottoson community alone; in some cases, improvement will require a collaboration with the committees, organizations, and faculty/staff from the school system as a whole and with town organizations.



STUDENT SURVEY*

While we wished to get as detailed information from the students as we did from faculty/staff and parents/guardians, we also wanted the survey to be age-appropriate for 6th graders and not too long. Because of this, we simplified the answers to Yes or No, used larger print than for adults, and included 82 closed-ended questions and five open-ended questions. At the end, there was also an opportunity for students to write any additional comments they had. The purpose was to find out how students feel about Ottoson and going to school there each day. Although it's a law that children must attend school, we are interested in ensuring that Ottoson is a place where students want to go, that invites them in and stimulates them intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

Teachers were provided with questionnaires and asked to distribute them to their classes, with time to fill them out. Of the 960 students, 564 questionnaires were returned. This is because some clusters did not participate (620, 640, 650, 760, 820). Given that clusters vary quite a bit, it is important to remember which clusters participated as the results are evaluated.

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions were used at the beginning of the survey to try to get respondents' own views, uncontaminated by our questions. They were also used to get information that we might have failed to ask about. The first two questions, "What are the three best things about Ottoson?" and "What are the three things that most need improvement?" were analyzed in a qualitative way. Answers to open-ended questions were coded into 94 categories developed to capture the information in the questions (listed in Appendix 1). Table 1 shows a tabulation of the number of respondents who mentioned each category. The most common responses will be discussed – those that were mentioned by at least 9% (50 or more) of the respondents. Quotations from the questionnaires will be used to illustrate what the students meant by their responses. All written responses are contained in a supplement to this report.

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT THE OTTOSON? * p. 19

"The teachers" was by far the most frequent response for one of the three best things about Ottoson, given by 41% of the students. "The building" followed and responses were divided into four categories (building, new building, clean building, and big building).

Thirty-three percent of the students mentioned at least one of these building categories.

"Lunchtime" and the "lunch food" were next most often cited (10% and 12%, respectively).

Friends (9%) and other students (9%) were also mentioned frequently.

Teachers are good. The students, too.

Most teachers. The building. Lockers.

*The tables follow each major * p. 20 section of the report. Page numbers for related tables are indicated in the text by a .



The new building. Art courses (after school as well). Awareness assemblies (such as facing history).

One of the things I like about the Ottoson is that the building is new. The building is very clean. Some of the teachers make you feel better, they can put a smile on your face.

Nice teachers. Big classroom. Nice gyms.

Cafeteria food--snacks like Cheetos--not the stuff that is cooked; classrooms; teachers.

The attitude of the teachers. The pulling together of the other schools. The amount of new friends.

WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS THAT MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT? * p. 20

Air-conditioning ranks number one here, with 41% of the students mentioning that it is needed. Negative comments about teachers were also made by 19% of the students. Dress code (13%) and rules (9%) are felt to be unfair by many students. The lunch food was mentioned for the "best things" question, but is also mentioned by 13% of students as in need of improvement. The schedule is considered in need of improvement by 12% of the students. Finally, predictably, homework is mentioned by 9% of students as a problem.

Some teachers, not moving and having different teachers in 6th grade, not being able to chew gum.

Few air conditioners, lots of people in one class and too hot in class.

No recess, no food out of the corridor, no tank tops, want longer lunches.

No ac, starts too early.

The large amount of work, some of the teachers, getting detention for only being late 3 times.

Clothes rule, no gum chewing, air condition more.

Not all of it is air conditioned, the waters not cold enough, lunch time too short.

Some school lunches. My Spanish teacher did not teach us enough this year.

There is no AC. It gets to hot in here.

It looks like your being watched all the time. It doesn't have air conditioning.

The lunch room doesn't need T.V.'s

The short lunches, no recess, the early school starts.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE COMING TO OTTOSON FROM YOUR OLD SCHOOL? WAS IT EASY OR HARD? TELL US WHAT WOULD HAVE MADE IT BETTER FOR YOU? * p. 21

We asked these questions in order to understand better what the transition to the Ottoson was like for students. Of those students who answered the question, 61% said that it was easy, 35% said it was hard and 4% gave a mixed response. The suggestions varied quite a bit and were not provided by everyone. The top five recommendations were (again) air conditioning, less homework, signs and maps, change in the schedule, and more friends in clusters. If the



building categories are combined, building issues also rank in the top 5. Table 3 shows the percentages for all categories mentioned.

Having my old school friends in cluster. Keeping the 8th grade away from 6th graders at the beginning of the year.

If there was ac in the summer because it is hot.

Maps around the school for the first 3 weeks.

An easier schedule to understand. Less homework.

We should have school later in morning.

Have more of an introduction to the teachers before we go to the classrooms on the first day to make us less intimidated by them.

More AC, less homework, longer lunch.

Not having school.

During first month, allow 10 minutes to find classes.

More time with my friends.

Recess.

Closed-ended Questions

Table 4 shows the percentages of respondents who answered “Yes” to the closed-ended questions. Questions with less than 70% “yes” responses indicate areas that need improvement and are highlighted in the table. Responses for each major section of the questionnaire will be reviewed. If comments were provided to augment the ratings, some of them are included to help explain the findings.

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE * p. 22

Students answered that the building is generally clean, specifically mentioning corridors, locker rooms, and classrooms. However, only 52% responded that the bathrooms are clean and only 64% responded that the cafeteria is clean.

Everything is pretty clean.

I think they should get rid of the stench in the bathroom.

The cafeteria is clean when you have first lunch but if you have second and third lunch most of the food is on the ground.

A lot of people trash the bathrooms, I think we should have more privacy in the locker room because the curtains don't work.

Don't make us pick up the food on the floor if it's not ours. It's nasty.

The maintenance staff are friendly and helpful.



ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS

* p. 22

A large part of this section is about homework. Fewer than 70% of students report that they do not work as hard as they can (66%), nor do they think they have too much homework (66%) or think teachers are asking them to do too much (38%). At the same time, they believe that both their parents/guardians and teachers expect them to work as hard as they can. In addition, they report that homework is not challenging (57%) nor stimulating (34%). They do not think teachers communicate expectations clearly or prepare students to do their homework (60%). When they miss homework, they do take responsibility for finding out what was missed and use their agenda book regularly. They also understand that there are consequences when homework is missed. Only 20% report using the homework hotline.

Learning and study habits were also addressed in this section. Fewer than 70% of the students think that what they study is important (68%). They do not feel free to learn by making mistakes (68%), or think their teachers help them learn in the best ways for them (64%). Fewer than 70% answered that they are learning good study habits. They do not think there are too many students in their classrooms.

There were two questions about after school activities. Thirty-seven percent answered that they participate in after-school activities and 47% answered that they play intramural sports.

Though I think homework helps people learn, my homework seems to get in the way of other things. I don't know the homework hotline number.

I am learning good study habits in my agenda book. In World History, I don't think studying is important. They just give homework and don't tell you about it. When I miss school, I stay after to find out the homework. Bring back the HOCKEY TEAM!

Teachers should communicate about how much homework they're giving so a child won't have too much homework.

We don't really learn good study habits except to go over your notes and books.

I think we need to learn better study habits to do better on tests.

Some teachers think that everyone learns at the same pace, but we all learn differently.

I love the Ottoson, I think it is the best school in Massachusetts. I am learning a lot in every subject. I hope 7th grade will be as fun.

This is a really good school. They should put back 9th grade, because I would love to attend 2 more years.

The homework hotline is not always updated.

It [homework] takes more than a ½ hour. It takes about 3.

There is one teacher who is very unclear about what she wants us to do. And I do not feel good about asking her because she acts as though I am wasting her time.

The expectations of my teachers are unreasonable most times, difficult to meet, and create a lot of stress in my life.

The building is too hot to work your hardest.

Ottoson should have sports teams available to their students.



I do after school activities that are not organized by the school.

Ottoson spends millions of dollars on this school and we can't get air conditioning, but the office can. We're obviously not good enough or something. Cheap, cheap, cheap.

It's a ton of pressure on us students (Finals, MCAS, TESTS, Report Cards). We need a little while to breathe.

One teacher told us how to get a C but not any higher and that puts people down. It's not clear what she expects. Sometimes homework is challenging and it usually takes ½ hour or more.

I don't NOT work, but I could try harder.

OTTOSON STAFF *_{p. 22}

The cafeteria workers and school nurses get good reviews. Over 75% of students responded that these staff were helpful and courteous to students. Other staff do not fare so well. Fewer than 70% of the students answered that: a) their guidance counselor is helpful; b) they feel comfortable going to the principals; c) main office staff are helpful and courteous; d) the custodians are helpful and courteous, or e) that there is a staff member that they admire.

The principal should come in more often to watch the teachers because some can be mean to us and we can't do anything, some don't even let us use the bathroom.

Some of the custodians do not talk to the kids or smile.

The office staff, principals, and nurses are all courteous and easy to talk to.

I think that children are scared to go to the principal or guidance counselor because they fear that they will appear to be unpopular.

The main office staff is sometimes helpful, but sometimes they are rude to the students.

I was very upset because I found out that what I told the counselor, she had told other teachers when I told her not to. Now I have teachers asking me if I'm okay. I'm never going to the guidance office again.

Cafeteria staff is awesome.



MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES * p. 23

Students answered that there are enough textbooks for each student and that the media center provides excellent and up-to-date materials that they need for school. However, fewer than 70% responded that a) the food is good (46%); b) there are enough food choices (56%); c) there are enough supplies (65%); d) the textbooks and materials are up-to-date and of good quality (39%); e) there are enough computers in the media center (58%) or the classrooms (45%).

What do you expect? It's cafeteria food.

I think the textbooks are not up to date and are very beaten up.

We need more glue, scissors, and three hole punches.

Research materials are excellent.

We have enough food choices, but we should be able to bring soda because that is what kids like.

It depends on the kind of food, the cafeteria needs more food because sometimes, I don't eat the lunch because I am a vegetarian.

More computers in the classrooms.

We never use the computer.

Old math books.

My math book is ripped all over, but other than that, the books are super.

Ran out of paper at end of year.

You just spent lots of money rebuilding the school and now we don't even use the computers. I'd rather have air conditioning than fancy TVs.

We should use the T.V. monitors for something other than movies.

I think we should have air conditioning in the rooms, not so much in the cafeteria. It is hard to do work when it's so hot outside. We don't even use the computers or TV's a lot and you bought too many.

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS * p. 23

Students answer that it is important to be a good citizen at the Ottoson (77%), that they understand how they are expected to behave in school (91%), are responsible and follow through on things (83%). They know what kinds of things they are not allowed to bring to school (83%) and feel safe at school in general (72%).

However, students do not feel that there is much respect shown in the school. Only 43% answered that students respect the faculty/staff, 39% indicated that students respect each other, and only 61% feel that faculty/staff respect the students. Sixty-two percent indicated that differences among people are accepted at Ottoson (religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.) and 57% answered that individuality is encouraged at school. Only 67% of students answered that when rules are broken, students are held accountable in an appropriate manner.



Overall, students feel safe at school (72%), although 66% answered that there are some classes where they do not feel comfortable. When asked whether they would go to a faculty/staff member for help, only 53% said that they would. Forty-eight percent of students said that they had not been satisfied with the response when they had gone to ask for help.

Some teachers give out detention for no reason. Some kids do nothing but fool around all day and talk, and all the teacher does is tell them to stop, when they don't the teacher doesn't know what to do, but this is rare.

Some students and teachers scare me. I am afraid to even walk down the same hallway as them.

The teachers don't give as much respect as students.

I know some kids who don't feel comfortable at school because other people make fun of them and I don't think that's good.

I have seen teachers getting yelled at by kids, I think those kids should be punished.

I think they should have hidden cameras around the school because the behavior is poor. Safe, but not comfortable, especially after school on the public buses.

The locker rooms have no individual places to change. This is the boys room.

I think kids should be suspended if they make fun of someone's race, lifestyle, etc.

Never went to staff member for help. The woods behind the school are sometimes unsafe because people think they won't get caught fighting or smoking.

After school a certain group, the cool, in fashion people, get out of hand, throwing, kissing, etc.

The way rules are broken and not attended to is atrocious. I don't know one teacher who has dealt with problems fairly. I often see people being picked on while the teachers watch. I've seen victims, crying and with bruises, being taken to the office, blamed for being beat up. Sometimes I think the staff is in with the "popular" kids because whenever a "nerd," geek, or ? gets beat up, he is blamed and punished. I myself have been in this situation.

Yes, the drafting room I don't feel comfortable, because I'm not good with measuring etc. and when you're surrounded by a whole bunch of other students knowing what they're doing, you feel sort of left out.

I reported harassment and she yelled at him, but he kept doing it and it became even worse.

Mr. XXX is rude and picks on black people and people of another religion.

They make fun of Jews.

I do not feel comfortable in history when they talk about (slaves) and call them negros because I'm the only black kid in my class. Students call each other offensive names pertaining to their race. Individuality is not encouraged at Ottoson because students who dress weird aren't allowed to express themselves and our dress code is limited so our



individuality is limited. I don't feel safe at Ottoson because teachers call the police for stupid reasons when what happened was their fault.

Sexual orientation can be a problem. Some people don't accept gay or lesbian or bisexual students/people.

Sexual orientation is NOT accepted at this school. The school limits the individuality by telling us what we can't wear to school.

I don't feel safe when homosexual men teachers are around. They should be fired and never work here again.

While teachers are gone, students beat up certain students. In the locker rooms, there is not very good supervision because kids beat on other kids behind the lockers.

CURRICULUM * p. 23

For the curriculum items only, students rated their classes from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent). Categories 3 and 4 were combined and a cutoff criterion of 70% was used to highlight areas that deserve more attention. Math, music, social studies, drama, and physical education rated an 80% good or excellent. These classes were followed by health, English, science, world languages, art, and SOAR, receiving between 70% and 80% good or excellent ratings. The areas with lower ratings are technology education, ACE, FACS, directed study, follow-up, reading, and AM/PM.

In French, people fool around too much in class.

I don't think we should have follow-up. We don't really do anything. What's the point of it? I mean the teacher is nice.

I have some classes that I look forward to and some that I dread.

Most of the classes are great like Tech. Ed, Spanish, and SOAR.

I don't think you need to learn some of this for every day life.

Some classes we are not learning and having fun, some classes are too hard and some are too boring.

I think we should do more fun things in SOAR.

Have Italian for a language.

You have to change you clothes for gym, they don't have Italian for a language, you have language arts every day.

Fabrics and design is okay and I don't like keyboarding with covers on.

World History is a wonderful class and is the most we can get in learning.

I like the gym classes.

In Spanish, there is too much fooling around.

I only like part of ACE.

I would really like to be in SOAR, but I go to band instead.

In soar we usually don't do anything.



I think there should be separation in the classes because if the teachers teach at average level only, I'm not learning much, and other kids can't keep up.

In Spanish, Mr. XXXX reviews the same things too much, partially because some kids don't pay attention, therefore, they don't understand.

I think cooking class isn't very good. The teacher isn't very nice and we don't learn anything. Sewing class was very good.

World language could be much easier if we started at a younger age like first grade.

Some teachers grade people poorly because they don't seem to like them as well as others.

In computers all we really did was type a few essays and practice with typing games.

I have had no math education at all. English we did not learn what was necessary for life. Stupid things is what we learned. We should have learned how to spell.

In some subjects, I feel that I am not learning anything at all. It is frustrating for me because I am so far ahead of the rest of the class.

In cooking, someone set off a microwave and we couldn't cook until anyone owned up and no one did and we cooked only twice and it wasn't fair.

SOAR is boring.

There is no point to the skills classes and they are boring.

What is SOAR for? We don't really do anything that has to do with school. It is really a good program, people get along better than before.

We should be graded for ACE, SOAR and skills.

I like SOAR a lot, cause you can talk about stuff that you would not talk about in class.

SOAR should be better organized than it is. It's a good idea gone bad.

Not enough people in the AM/PM program.

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION * p. 24

Students answer that parents and faculty/staff respect each other and that they do not want their parents involved more at school (85%). However, fewer than 70% feel that other aspects of home-school communication are good enough. Fewer than 50% responded that report cards tell how they are really doing in school or that conferences help parents and teachers understand them. Only 63% answered that parents and teachers communicate enough and only 54% answered that the administration and parents communicate well with each other. Sixty-eight percent responded that it is easy to find out what assignments you are missing.

You only get 8 minutes [for conferences], how is that supposed to help? I mean come on. Do you really think the parents and teachers get enough time?

At the beginning of a new year, there should be teacher student conferences to get to know each other.

One class is very hard to ask my teacher for missing work.

Everything is cool with my parents and teachers.



Not all teachers put it on the homework hotline and when you ask, they say "see me after school", and they keep putting it off until it's convenient for them.

My parents have no idea about the people here. The parents and teachers talk one time the whole year. No way is that enough.

My mom thinks that the school doesn't care about the children's problems or if they have a learning disability that they really don't understand how the student feel.

Report cards only tell parents how good (or bad) you're doing compared with someone else. Not how you yourself is doing.

Report cards do not actually tell how we do in school. It is a grade which tells how high we score and how well we do, not how hard we try.

Usually it's good if your parent is involved in something with you, but it would be embarrassing if someone like your mother was in the classroom with you.

My parents may not like the teacher, but they still respect him or her.

The Homework Hotline isn't always accurate, and the teachers just get mad at you if you tell them that.

Three out of my four teachers yelled at me for missing school one [week] in March, but my S.S. teacher cuts school for golf!

I think that some of the teachers here at the Ottoson don't grade fairly. It seems that they grade on how much they like you as a person, not on your work.



Table 1
 Open-ended Questions
 Ottoson Survey: Students (n=564)
Percentages highlighted if > 9% (50 or more responses)

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT OTTOSON?

Activities	7%	Lockers	4%
Air conditioning	2%	Lunch, food	12%
Band, orchestra, chorus	1%	Lunchtime	10%
Building	5%	Meet new people	3%
Building, big	8%	Out of cluster classes..	4%
Building, clean	10%	Overall, negative	1%
Building, new	10%	Overall, positive	2%
Building, water fountains	1%	People	3%
Cafeteria	8%	Principal, admin, leadership	2%
Classes, variety & choice..	1%	Recess, time to relax	1%
Classrooms	6%	Report cards	1%
Cluster system	1%	Safety	1%
Computers	4%	Schedule	3%
Concern, caring for students	2%	Staff	2%
Curriculum	8%	Stairs	1%
Enthusiasm, atmosphere	2%	Students	9%
Freedom	1%	Switching classes	4%
French	1%	Teachers, by name	6%
Friends	9%	Teachers, good	41%
Fun	1%	Technology	6%
Gym	7%	TVs	5%
HW Hotline	1%		
Location	2%		



Table 2
 Open-ended Questions
 Ottoson Survey: Students (n=564)
Percentages highlighted if > 9% (50 or more responses)

WHAT THREE THINGS MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT?

6th graders	2%	Homework, too much	6%
8th graders	1%	Hot, too hot	6%
Activities	2%	Location	1%
Air conditioning	41%	Lockers	3%
Band, orchestra, chorus	1%	Lunch, food	13%
Bathrooms	4%	Lunchtime	2%
Books, so many	2%	Materials	1%
Building	4%	Media center	1%
Building, big	1%	Out of cluster classes	1%
Building, clean	3%	Overall, negative	1%
Building, water fountains	1%	People	0%
Building, windows	1%	Principal, admin, leadership	2%
Cafeteria	5%	Recess, time to relax	7%
Classes, variety&choice	0%	Report cards	1%
Classrooms	3%	Rules	9%
Cluster system	1%	Schedule	12%
Communication	1%	Spanish	1%
Computers	1%	Staff	1%
Curriculum	3%	Stairs	4%
Detention	3%	Students	3%
Discipline	2%	Subs	1%
Dress code	13%	Teachers, bad	19%
Get lost	1%	Tests, exams	3%
Gym	2%	TVs	3%
Harassment	3%		
Homework	9%		



Table 3
Open-ended Questions
OttoSON Survey: Students (n=564)

WHAT WAS IT LIKE COMING TO OTTOSON FROM YOUR OLD SCHOOL? WAS IT EASY OR HARD?

Twenty-one did not answer. Of those that did, the percentages were:

Easy	61%
Hard	35%
Easy and hard	4%

TELL US WHAT THINGS THAT WOULD HAVE MADE IT BETTER FOR YOU?

Percentages highlighted if > 9% (50 or more responses)

Activities	2%	Lunch, food	2%
Air conditioning	10%	Meet new people	1%
Building	2%	Orientation	1%
Building, big	1%	Principal, admin, leadership	1%
Building, clean	1%	Recess, time to relax	3%
Cafeteria	1%	Rules	2%
Cluster system	1%	Schedule	4%
Cluster, choice, know before	2%	Signs, maps	5%
Concern, caring for students	2%	Sports	1%
Curriculum	1%	Stairs	1%
Detention	1%	Students	2%
Dress code	1%	Teachers, bad	4%
Friends	1%	Teachers, good	1%
Friends in cluster	4%	Tests, exams	1%
Harassment	1%	Tour	2%
Homework	1%	Transportation	1%
Homework, too much	5%		



Table 4
Closed-ended questions
Ottoson Survey: Students (n= 564)
Percentage of Respondents Answering "Yes"
Percentages highlighted if < 70%

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE

B1	Is the building clean?	84%
B2	Are the corridors clean?	72%
B3	Are the school grounds clean?	70%
B4	Are the bathrooms clean?	52%
B5	Are the locker rooms clean?	78%
B6	Are the classrooms clean?	87%
B7	Is the cafeteria clean?	64%

ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS

A1	Do you feel free to learn by making mistakes?	68%
A2	<i>Are there too many students in your classrooms? *</i>	24%
A3	Do you participate in after-school activities?	37%
A4	Do you think that what you study is important?	68%
A5	Do your teachers expect you to work as hard as you can?	88%
A6	Are your teachers asking you to do more than you feel you can?	38%
A7	Do you think your teachers help you learn in the best way they can?	64%
A8	Do your parents expect you to work as hard as you can?	95%
A9	Do you work as hard as you can at school?	66%
A10	Do you think you have too much homework?	62%
A11	Is your homework challenging?	57%
A12	Is your homework stimulating?	34%
A13	Do you average one-half (½) hour per night on each main subject?	37%
A14	Do your teachers clearly communicate homework expectations and prepare you well to do the homework?	60%
A15	Do you take responsibility to find out what you missed after an absence?	78%
A16	Do you use the agenda book regularly?	80%
A17	Do you rely on the homework hotline?	20%
A18	Is there a consequence in school when you don't do your homework?	70%
A19	Are you learning good study habits at Ottoson?	66%
A20	Do you have an opportunity to participate in intramural sports at Ottoson?	47%

OTTOSON STAFF

S1	Have you met your guidance counselor?	77%
S2	Is your guidance counselor helpful to you when you need help?	62%
S3	Do you feel comfortable going to the principals?	54%
S4	Are the main office staff helpful and courteous to you?	61%
S5	Are the cafeteria workers helpful and courteous to you?	76%
S6	Are the custodians helpful and courteous to you?	69%
S7	Is the school nurse helpful and courteous to you?	88%
S8	Are there staff members that you admire or who you think are special?	52%



MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

M1	Is the cafeteria food good?	46%
M2	Do you have enough food choices?	56%
M3	Does the school have enough supplies for you to do what you need to do?	65%
M4	Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	74%
M5	Are the textbooks and materials up-to-date and of good quality?	39%
M6	Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that you need for school work and projects?	74%
M7	Are there enough computers in the media center for you to use?	58%
M8	Are there enough computers in the classrooms for you to use?	45%

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

R1	Is being a good citizen important at the Ottoson?	77%
R2	If you have a problem or question at school, would you go to a staff member for help?	53%
R3	When you have gone to a staff member with a problem or question, were you satisfied with how this person reacted?	48%
R4	Do you understand how you are expected to behave in school?	91%
R5	Has someone explained the kinds of things you are not allowed to bring to school (or have you seen a list)?	83%
R6	Are you responsible and do you follow through on the things you volunteer to do?	83%
R7	If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	67%
R8	Do the students respect the staff?	43%
R9	Do students respect each other?	39%
R10	Do the staff respect the students?	61%
R11	Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.)	62%
R12	Is individuality encouraged at Ottoson?	57%
R13	Do you feel safe and comfortable in the school?	72%
R14	Are there classes in which you do not feel comfortable?	44%
R15	Are there other places at school that you do not feel safe and comfortable?	21%

CURRICULUM**

ACE	67%
AM/PM	57%
Art	73%
Consumer&Life	67%
Directed Study	66%
Drama	82%
English	74%
Follow Up	65%
Health	75%
Math	83%
Music	83%
Science	74%
SOAR	72%
Social Studies	83%
PE	81%
Reading	62%
Technology Education	68%
World Languages	74%



HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

H1	<i>Would you like your parents to be involved at your school?*</i>	15%
H2	Do you think your report card tells how you are really doing in school?	48%
H3	Do you think the conferences help parents and teachers understand you?	49%
H4	Do you think your parents and teachers communicate enough?	63%
H5	Do you think your parents and the administration communicate well with one another?	54%
H6	Do your parents respect the staff?	78%
H7	Do the staff members respect your parents?	76%
H8	Is it easy for you to find out what assignments you are missing?	68%

* For questions printed in italics, a "no" answer is positive.

** These questions about classes were answered on a 4 point scale: 1 = Poor to 4 = Excellent.



PARENT AND GUARDIAN SURVEY*

One hundred-fifty surveys were received from parents and guardians. About 900 were mailed to Ottoson families. It is difficult to determine the percentage response rate, however, for three reasons. The first is because the exact number mailed is not known. Secondly, occasionally a family would return one questionnaire for each of their currently enrolled students, primarily because their experiences were sufficiently different for their children that they did not feel that a single questionnaire fairly represented their opinions about the school. Finally, in a few cases, two parents/guardians would return questionnaires to express their individual opinions.

The survey began with four open-ended questions. We asked for the three best things about the Ottoson Middle School (OMS) and the three things that most needed improvement at OMS. These will be presented in detail and combined with the responses to the final question that asks for any other comments and suggestions. Answers to two other questions about the transition from elementary school to middle school are generally in agreement that the transition is managed very well in most cases; this will not be discussed further.

Each of the 93 closed-ended questions could be answered on a 4-point scale from 1 = "Not at all" to 4 = "Very much so." For the purposes of this report, categories 3 and 4 were combined. The percentage of respondents answering 3 and 4 for each question is shown in Table 2. The percentage is highlighted if it shows that 70% or fewer parents/guardians responded with a 3 or 4. This cutoff shows that fewer than 70% of parents/guardians are satisfied with a particular situation or quality of the school.

Since the purpose of this first report from the Ottoson survey is to provide information for the School Improvement Plan, the focus will be primarily on the problem areas identified by parents and guardians. However, there are many aspects of the school which parents and guardians are extremely positive about and these will be described as well. Each section of the questionnaire will be discussed, with comments used to illuminate the responses. In addition, related comments from the more general questions will also be included.

Open-ended Questions * p. 38

Open-ended questions were used at the beginning of the survey to try to get respondents' own views, uncontaminated by our questions. They were also used to obtain information that we might have failed to ask about. The first two questions, "What are the three best things about Ottoson?" and "What are the three things that most need improvement?" were analyzed in a qualitative way. Answers to open-ended questions were coded into 44 categories developed to capture all of the information in the answers. In general, the findings mirror those obtained with the closed-ended questions. The most common responses will be discussed – those that were mentioned by at least 5% of the respondents. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of parents/guardians that mentioned each of the factors. All verbatim responses are available in the report supplement.

*The tables follow each major section of the report. Page numbers for related tables are indicated in the text by a * p. 20 .



WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT THE OTTOSON?

The teachers were most often mentioned as one of the best things about the Ottoson, 21% of the time. Often, teachers were mentioned by name; this information has been provided to the Principal for the purposes of staff review. Predictably, the building and facilities were mentioned second most often, 19% of the time.

The next four factors were mentioned much less often: Out-of-cluster classes (7%), the excellent curriculum (8%), concern and caring for the children by staff (6%), and the principal and administration (6%). These are the characteristics rated as the best things about the Ottoson.

Beautiful job on the renovations; you should be proud.

The teachers and staff - the people, including students and families. Creative teaching techniques (Mrs. XXX's' approach) as opposed to teaching for high test scores!!! Good overall balance/richness in offerings: academic, music, drama, arts.

Overall knowledge of adolescent behavior. Very supportive teachers when communicating with parents one on one. Everyone at Ottoson (teachers, staff) seem genuinely happy to be there working with kids!

Teachers. Renovated building. Rotation of special courses (music, art, drafting, etc.).

Homework hotline. New building with up to date equipment/technology for students and teachers to work with. The principal keeping in touch with the students and being "on top" of the problem situations that have arisen.

A sense of unity within the staff. A sense of genuine concern for the children as individuals. Nice modern facility.

Mr..., Ms...[specific teachers mentioned] -- Everything should be done to keep these teachers and they should be the standard for all new hires.

WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS AT OTTOSON THAT MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT?

The pattern of factors that most need improvement is less strong than for the three best things. Communication in general and communication with teachers were mentioned the most, 10% and 9%, respectively. Taken together, communication is viewed as something that needs to be improved. Out-of-cluster classes (6%), lack of air conditioning (6%), and an insufficiently challenging curriculum (5%) were the other factors mentioned spontaneously by respondents.

Communication with main office; people don't ask questions unless they need an answer; they should not be treated rudely or made to feel stupid. Signs posting directions.

Teacher/parent communication. Guidance department responsiveness. Special ed services.

Rigid structure of the school curriculum. Use more innovative teaching programs.

Guidance council needs to be more involved, parking for visitors, lunch should be free for all children.



Phone calls to be returned from voice mail. Communication needs to improve between parents and teachers. What is appropriate amount of homework - don't overload.

World languages should be on HW hotline. Improved communication between cluster teachers when assigning long term projects and tests. Improved quality of substitute teachers, esp. permanent subs.

Transfer of information from school to home. Knowing what is available in the way of activities, after-school clubs (time commitment) in a timely manner (we received a newsletter with a calendar that was half over before we received it).

Guidelines for behavior exist but more consistent enforcement needed - clear guidelines for teachers re what classroom behaviors are NOT to be accepted. Uneven curriculum expectations - if teacher is uninspired, child gets the "bare bones" of minimal expectations. Dept head could have "best teachers" share their class plans to encourage more creativity. When tests or projects are due - have master calendar for such tests to reduce conflicts.

Better teachers - attracted with higher salaries and better benefits. The arts - should be fully integrated into the curriculum.

Parents to feel connected - possible via a monthly newsletter. Need textbooks for Spanish. Connection with special subjects teachers - perhaps a page description of the class at the beginning of the term.

Using air conditioning when it's 90 degrees out!

Lack of communication; the parents don't know what is going on! Big switch from grade school and unhealthy. A monthly newsletter should go out. A voice mail for parents to call with general questions.

All students participating in SOAR - revamp scheduling. Too much emphasis on Technology, not enough on the Arts - more Art and music all year. More help with students who are transitioning from 5th grade.

Both out-of-cluster classes and the overall curriculum are rated as both one of the best things and at the same time, one of the weakest aspects of Ottoson. This may indicate that parents are having different experiences at the Ottoson with their children and that parents have different expectations for the school and their children.



Closed-ended Questions

Table 2 shows the percentages of respondents who answered 3 or 4 on a scale of 1 = "Not at all" to 4 = "Very much so." Questions with less than 70% favorable responses indicate areas that need improvement and are highlighted in the table. The data were also analyzed statistically to determine if there were systematic differences in responses from parents and guardians of boys and girls and for parents of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

* p. 39

Parents show concern over the quality of textbooks and whether or not they are up-to-date. In addition, satisfaction with computer access is just over the 70% cutoff, at 70.1%. On the other hand, the media center is rated very highly (92.9%), including its provision of computers for students use.

I spent \$40 on one child to provide for back to school supplies at Walgreen's. This list was sent to me by Mr. Lamoureaux.

Good quality and up-to-date are not mutually exclusive! The math text is old but much superior to many new ones. The history text is mediocre. There are not enough paperback trade books to go around. I don't know about the computers.

Use of computers should be encouraged by staff for use by students during school day.

I was asked to purchase a Greek mythology book which I did not mind doing. The computer issues are emphasized too much. A good education - being able to write, analyze and problem-solve - will enable anyone to learn to work a computer if necessary.

The media center should be available for research and reading during the hour before school starts.

I'm less concerned about things in the class than about class size and quality of teaching - if there's a trade-off between adding computers or making classrooms smaller, I would opt for the latter.

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE

* p. 40

Not surprisingly, parents praise the new building. However, forty-nine percent respond that they are not satisfied with the availability of parking. In their comments, morning drop-off and lack of air conditioning are frequently mentioned.

The Benjamin Rd/Quincy St drop off is very dangerous in the morning, particularly during the winter when cars and children are sliding on the icy hill.

Drop-off is a nightmare in the mornings.

There should be more consistent staff supervision outside during dismissal. I am very concerned by the danger to students at dismissal when the dumpster is being emptied!

Children should be encouraged to walk. Cars near the school are dangerous.

Suggest busses for "2 mile" kids to alleviate traffic problems. Bus through 8th grade like so many other communities.



Parents need to PULL OVER when dropping kids off.

There should be alternate plans for days over 80 degrees other than teachers bringing fans from home.

Too hot in June! Let the kids wear tank tops! (6th, 8th)

Why don't you have air conditioning?

The 3rd floor (6th grade) was too hot in May/June - AC?

Cigarette butts all over the stairs are repulsive.

Litter is a problem outside. Kids should feel responsible for keeping it under control (I know it's difficult, but where better to train them??)

It's great to finally see the slope in front of the school being landscaped! Also, I volunteered to help with a school project and was impressed by the teachers' efforts to be sure the work areas were left clean. The kids as a group were easy to work with.

Could you please put up a sign indicating the name of the building as well as directional signs indicating where the main door is? It is a very unwelcoming sign if there is no sign to the school.

My son takes the bus - I see the school only on event nights and it has always been clean and cheerful.

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE * p. 40

Overall, parents are satisfied with the level of good citizenship and respect for others found at school. They report that the school is perceived by their child(ren) as safe and comfortable. Where problems have arisen, parents have been satisfied with the results. There were two questions that showed less than 70% satisfaction: "Has someone listed for you the kinds of things your child is not allowed to bring to school?" and "Do you think that your child's teachers and the administrators communicate adequately?" However, there were no comments that clarified the dissatisfaction.

Although more than 70% of parents were generally positive in response to questions in this section, there were many comments and some helpful suggestions, which are listed below. They are grouped into some general categories. This survey was given about 6 weeks after the Columbine CO school shootings.

Do students feel safe?

Not when teachers do not maintain good control of class, or display unpredictable outbursts of temper.

*He doesn't feel comfortable at lunch or going through the building to get to ACE.
He feels comfortable in each class.*

Hallway crowds.



Harassment:

There have been harassment problems - name-calling etc. on the way home. My child was once threatened. There is a jock vs geek tension. I have heard reports of on-campus smoking and drinking - is this being addressed? Kids who disrupt classes continually are a problem. My child complains that some classes are a complete waste of time because of discipline problems. This really bothers me.

When my daughter has been harassed by other students, I have not known how to get help. I'm disturbed about the harassment very much (e.g., receiving anonymous obscene notes, being accosted rudely outside and told that other kids hate my daughter).

Lack of respect:

I am uncomfortable with many behaviors at Ottoson. While I realize that middle school is a difficult age, I can't help but think that there is lots of room for improvement. I hear of little respect between students at Ottoson.

Some staff need to listen to students. They are sometimes too quick to make a judgement in a situation and don't listen enough when a student has a concern or complaint. They need to be heard.

Discipline problems:

It is hard to judge whether staff respect the students without being on-site. I was offended by the ... letter in the student newspaper saying that it was appropriate for a city bus driver to deny service to all students because some students misbehaved. Try substituting any ethnic/religious/racial group for "students" in that letter, and you will see how inappropriate the comment was.

There has been a lot of stealing in the 620 cluster. My friend rides the Mass Ave. bus to work and says Ottoson students are ruining the ride with swearing, intimidation, and throwing rocks at the bus!

My son says teachers threaten disciplinary action but rarely follow through with action. The other kids are watching and taking notice when teachers fail to discipline kids getting out of line.

Responsiveness to concerns about problem behavior:

Again, there seems to be such a wide range of experiences at Ottoson with teachers and staff, as well as students, that it is difficult to generalize. Perhaps that is the issue. I cannot say "in general, most staff are responsive, or most policies are effective," etc. Perhaps there needs to be better defined standards and the principal needs to see that they are followed. Many of the teachers I've dealt with over the years are respectful and responsive and seem dedicated. On the other hand, too many seem barely tolerant of parental inquiries, and disrespectful to students and the school environment. (I've heard that one teacher offers "piss and shit" passes to his students who need to use the lavatory.) I realize that many students (and parents) are equally disrespectful and that this is probably one of the greatest challenges teachers face, but personal courtesy and respect should be expected on all sides, without exception.



When gone to school staff with a concern, or called, it takes a long time to get a return phone call back.

The ADMINISTRATION proved to be the WORST at communicating in several extremely significant events, both specific to our child and with the student body as a whole. Such unprofessionalism should not be tolerated and sets a very poor example for staff. In the future, we will be much more aggressive and public when we fail to receive timely responses from administration on issues that have a specific impact on our child.

Solutions - Better communication:

Why was the destruction of a language teacher's classroom not communicated to the entire Ottoson community? If the principal wants the support of parents he needs to communicate with us. The attitude of "everything's great" wears thin quickly once the child comes home with a few stories.

I did not know there was a dress code until it came up in conversation a couple of weeks ago. Shouldn't parents know this? I did not know there was a bomb threat or a group of suspensions for drinking except through conversations with my child and her friends. Shouldn't parents know these things? What the children tell us may be hearsay or exaggerated. Rumors fly - from fighting incidents in the fall to teachers picking on certain children in the classroom. There needs to be a better way for parents to hear about issues which affect their children deeply.

Solutions - Programs to encourage respect, including tolerance of differences:

My hat's off to you! This is such a difficult age group - I feel that good discipline and hard and fast rules should be expected of each child. We need to really encourage children to be good, caring people because they get such mixed messages from movies, media, and superstars. Strict school rules need to be enforced (and from home also), so as to produce a responsible adolescent.

Use programs on prevention of violence and abuse, so kids can recognize the symptoms and patterns that are warning signs.

Solutions - More discipline/punishment:

Problem students need to be dealt with. I heard that a pregnant Ms. XXX was brought to tears by unruly kids. This is unacceptable. Those kids should be seriously punished.

The teachers and staff model acceptance and good citizenship. No one can ask for more - it isn't their fault that many kids seem intolerant of differences. My child has commented several times over the year on feeling very safe at OMS. Mr L. makes it clear he won't tolerate bullying. Guidance counselor is also very helpful in resolving conflict.



CURRICULUM * p. 41

The responses in this area were overwhelmingly positive. Parents responded that Ottoson provides high quality teaching and education in most departments. In addition, ratings for auxiliary services are very high. This includes learning disabilities, speech and language, reading, and ESL (English as a Second Language) support services and nursing services.

There were four classes with less enthusiastic responses: Consumer and Life Science, Directed Study, Follow-Up, and SOAR, although even here, the positive responses were in the 60-70% range.

Teachers:

There are some absolutely WONDERFUL teachers and a few that need careful evaluation and mentoring. (6th, 8th)

6th grade experience has been 100 plus plus!

You have some outstanding teachers and some poor ones. Poor ones go through the motions or are disorganized. Good ones are superb - clear challenging, going beyond their own subjects. (8th)

Curriculum:

More instruction in the writing process is needed.

Sometimes I have a problem with the way information is presented. Ex: repetitive, boring.

All teachers should REQUIRE after-school work if a student isn't working to potential.

My child is a good student, but she is not challenged enough.

Would like to see more innovative projects in science and social studies - not just textbook work.

English is VERY poor. Teacher has very antagonistic attitude towards students. Did not learn much in that class. Rules and demands change during the week.

Non-challenging curriculum. Learned more in 6th grade (creative writing, grammar, writing styles.)

I circled Poor and Excellent on Art and Music. The classes were excellent, but 1/4 of the year is not enough. I would rather have these than tech ed and keyboarding. I hope he will be able to take SOAR and Band next year.

Curriculum has been great!

Class-specific:

Math: had excellent 8th grade math experience; poor 7th grade experience. (8th)

So many things could be done in SOAR time to build community and some SOAR teachers have little/no training in group dynamics. My daughter does homework and plays on computer - what's the point of that?



The orchestra program is one of the best things my child is in. It is the only sense of school spirit she's had. She's had to look outside of the school for participation in basketball, etc., etc. Newspaper was a bit disappointing. Students should do more on it. I would like to see band, chorus and orchestra on the report cards. The students spend a lot of time and effort on these classes and that should be recognized on their permanent record. Also it would provide some feedback on the students' behavior and participation in the band, chorus, or orchestra. Also ACE, communication skills, study skills, etc should be on the report cards - as pass/fail or excellent, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, etc.

OTTOSON STAFF * p. 41

The staff were generally rated very highly. Parents feel that the principals are good leaders, that the custodians and nurses are helpful and courteous. Parents feel respected by staff and consider staff members as good role models for their children. In addition, most parents admire particular staff members.

Two exceptions to this favorable evaluation are guidance and the front office staff. Parents do not evaluate these staff as being helpful and the front office staff are often described as rude to parents and children.

I think that the administration and main office need to realize that 6th graders are not junior high students and need more monitoring for after-school safety issues. The teachers do think of these 6th graders as still children, which I appreciate.

Over the years, with this child and with siblings, I've had occasion to contact the principals and guidance counselor by phone or in writing. The lack of response to some fairly serious issues has been consistent and striking. My overall sense, echoed by other parents with whom I've spoken, is that the principal "talks a good game" at open house, etc., but there is little actual accountability for teachers, and little response to parental concerns.

It would be nice to be greeted at Ottoson with a warm friendly welcome. They seem reluctant to want to help at times.

The front office staff have always been very helpful and friendly to me.

It is possible that I don't really know how to get more involved with the school, to ask what is possible to ask, to know what is possible in the USA! (6th, 8th)

I have found it difficult to get engaged with the school.

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION * p. 40

In this section of the questionnaire almost 3/4 of the questions received less than 70% positive responses. Overall, parents do not feel well-informed about their children's or the school's activities. They would like to be more involved, but do not feel welcome as a visitor or volunteer. In terms of obtaining feedback about their children's progress, neither the report card nor the conference schedule is adequate. Further, parents do not think that parents and teachers communicate enough or that teachers or administrators work effectively with parents to address concerns.



On the positive side, parents answered that school policies are clearly communicated, find the conference schedule to be convenient and report that the conferences do promote better understandings between parents, children, and teachers. They also think that teachers are open to discussing parents' concerns.

More communication with teachers:

Again, it very much depends. My son had difficulty with one teacher and I spoke to the teacher and to guidance, but never felt it was resolved. The other teachers were very helpful and receptive. Conferences after Nov. would be very useful.

I have been pleased with meetings with my child's cluster team. I have volunteered to help with student newspaper and was rebuffed by advisor. More chances to talk with teachers.

As a form of support to a rather busy faculty I have not pursued a great deal of exchange. But would like it. Too few conferences, too few opportunities that are not forced for exchange between teachers and parents.

Would like improved communication, i.e., all teachers doing progress reports for each student 1x/marking period (min) and longer conference times. (8th)

Our child's teachers were always available and returned calls.

Conferences:

Inadequate time for regular conferences - not accessible on an ordinary basis - most were responsive if contacted directly.

Conferences are too short for me and this is the only chance that I got to communicate with the teachers. My son never had any concerns that need to be addressed, but I still wish teachers and parents would communicate more.

I felt very rushed at the conferences, not enough time to talk. I think conferences are scheduled too early in year, maybe schedule another one or have teachers have option to call parents if another conference is needed.

I think the conferences are handled the best way possible. It must be very hard to please everyone.

Because my son does well and keeps up with his work, there is little need for communication with teachers. As a result, I'd like a conference in both fall and spring so that I could get more personal feedback than report cards.

Ridiculously inadequate!!

**Homework hotline:**

My pet peeve is that teachers (many) DO NOT update the homework hotline daily. What is the point if it is not used. It would make the teachers job easier as well as the students and parents.

We don't use the hotline because the agenda book system has worked very well. It was a truly helpful organizational tool.

OPAC and volunteering:

I signed up for several committees last spring through the PAC group. I only got called for one all year. Are these groups not working or not including all interested people?

"Being involved" not does NOT mean getting to know teachers or seeing how decisions are made; it means stapling, mailing, etc.

Feel welcome at school as a visitor or volunteer?

I feel welcome with the cluster teachers and at parent information night but the school in general does not feel warm to me.

In office not at all. My cluster teachers absolutely yes!

Feel welcome as a visitor but not as a volunteer.

Suggestions:

There should be a regular newsletter. We would have appreciated a letter following the middle school incident that followed the Columbine shooting re: how the administration dealt with it. We heard 4 or 5 different versions from children and other parents but nothing official. It is difficult to reassure a nervous child without information from the school.

It is often difficult to know what is going on after school or for special activities because written notices are not provided and children are expected to remember many details.

We have been somewhat disappointed in the communication from school. The cluster newsletter is nice (630), but we do not get sufficient notice of concerts, performances, PAC meetings, etc. Calendars and OPAC letters are often weeks or months late (when mailed).

We got a notice saying all year end class trips permission slips should be turned in and he didn't even get the permission slip until the next day.

I think teachers should call parents at work if they notice a child's performance is slipping before the end of a marking period.

ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS

* p. 39

In this section, close to one-half of the questions were answered with less than 70% positive responses. Parents feel that class sizes are appropriate, that what their children are studying is important and that the teachers motivate children well and have high expectations. At the same time, parents do not think the teachers ask too much or that their children have too much homework. They also report that their children are comfortable with the workload and expectations, and work hard at school. Finally, parents answered that their children are learning good study habits at Ottoson.



The problem areas concern teaching and learning approaches and homework. Parents do not believe that critical thinking, intellectual risk-taking, or trial and error learning are encouraged at Ottoson. In addition, many parents do not believe that teachers help their children learn in the best way for their child.

Homework receives mixed reviews. Parents report that teachers communicate homework expectations well, give extra help after school when needed and provide appropriate consequences for missing homework. At the same time, they do not think homework is challenging or stimulating enough. While parents indicate that their child does not have too much homework, they are not comfortable with the amount that is assigned and report that children do not average ½ hour each for every major subject. Most (70%) do not favor homework assigned during school vacations.

Finally, fewer than one-half of children participate in after-school activities.

Homework expectations:

Some teachers did not communicate what they wanted for assignments; others were fantastic.

The homework varies in quality from rote math problems to research reports. The amount can be excessive at times.

I am ok with the homework - my concern is more for my son who struggles with it. He will not let me help as he states that is cheating. It is more of a problem that he needs help with rather than an overall school problem. My 2nd child has no homework problems.

I feel there are too many group projects that involved students getting together. It is too difficult on families. Have no problem with in-school group projects. Group projects should be limited in number of students assigned. Having 4 students in a group is ridiculous - you have a hard enough time getting 2 students together.

I believe homework is very important. However, vacations are for relaxing and family activities and don't think assignments should be given.

Even if homework really were ½ hour/subject, with 5 subjects, that's 2-1/2 hours a night. Something always takes longer. My child averages 2-3 hours a night and 5 on Sunday. The homework over winter break was intolerable - 3 tests to study for! My child loves to learn and would like to spend more time on fewer subjects. Also, when are kids supposed to do leisure reading?

Homework appears to be assigned unevenly. Too much emphasis on art/presentation rather than quality projects.

Challenge for students:

These questions are hard to answer because they are very teacher-dependent. Some classes were wonderful, challenging and stimulating. Some were overly difficult and made my son feel badly about learning.

My son is not being challenged in his school work. He's taking Latin and ACE, does a minimal amount of homework and is still making honor roll. I'm afraid if this continues he'll be in for a huge shock in high school.



It was very disconcerting to come from an elementary school that had high expectations to a cluster that didn't ask or challenge my child.

There is a fair amount of homework which can be challenging. The English curriculum was not challenging enough. Perhaps there is a need for Honors English. The wide scope of students' abilities may limit how much a teacher can motivate or challenge individual students.

Students are not encouraged to work to their full potential. It would be good to introduce a class with discussion groups on real life issues that are happening in the children's lives and communities. Example, divorce, alcohol addiction, blended families, weight issues, death - encourage children to think, prioritize, and have courage to speak about problems.

Extremely little has been asked of my child. He averages five minutes of homework a night. There has been very little challenging work all year. I would favor more homework most of the time and little homework over vacations. By the way I have been happy with the ACE program; it is the basic subjects that are too easy.

I believe my child would benefit from more writing assignments and fewer "visual" projects. Even in the 6th grade, constant reinforcement of style/mechanics/spelling should be accomplished by writing across the curriculum.



Table 1
 Open-ended Questions
 Ottoson Survey: Parents and Guardians (n=148)
 Percentages highlighted if > 5%

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT OTTOSON?

	#	%
ACE	3	1
Band, orchestra, chorus	3	1
Cluster system	9	3
Communication with teachers	5	2
Community school	5	2
Concern/caring for children	19	6
Curriculum, excellent	23	8
Different kinds of kids	2	1
Dining Service	5	2
Discipline	4	1
Diverse student body	3	1
Enthusiasm, school spirit	11	4
Extra activities	10	3
Facility	58	19
Guidance counselors	3	1
HW Hotline	5	2
Media center	7	2
Nurses	3	1
Out-of-cluster classes	22	7
Principal, administration	18	6
SOAR	2	1
Some teachers	63	21
Special Education	2	1
Technology	4	1

WHAT THREE THINGS MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT?

	#	%
Ability to deal with different kinds of kids	6	3
Air conditioning	11	6
Band, orchestra, chorus	3	2
Books & Supplies	6	3
Communication with front office	9	4
Communication with teachers	18	9
Communication, general	20	10
Communication, suggestions	2	1
Conferences	4	2
Current issues	2	1
Curriculum general	5	3
Curriculum, more reading & writing	4	2
Curriculum, not challenging	11	6
Discipline	7	4
Extra activities	7	4
Facility	6	3
Guidance counselors	5	3
Homework, too much	3	2
HW Hotline	5	3
Inconsistency between clusters	5	3
More time to relax	5	3
Newsletter	9	5
Out-of-cluster	12	6
Parking	3	2
Principal, administration	2	1
Problem behaviors	2	1
SOAR	2	1
Some teachers	8	4
Special Education	2	1
Subs	4	2
Volunteering	3	2



Table 2
 Closed-ended Questions
 Ottoson Survey: Parents and Guardians (n=150)
 Percentage of Respondents Answering 3 or 4 on a Scale of 1 (Not at all) to 4 (Very much so)
Percentages highlighted if < 70%

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

M1	Does the school have enough supplies for your child?	79%
M2	Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	74%
M3	Are the textbooks and materials up-to-date and of good quality?	67%
M4	Are there enough computers in the classrooms for your child to use?	70%
M5	Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that your child needs for school work and projects?	93%
M6	Are there enough computers in the media center for your child to use?	87%

ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS

A1	Does Ottoson School support critical thinking and intellectual risk-taking?	70%
A2	Do you think students are encourage to learn by trial and error?	68%
A3	Do you think teachers help your child learn in the best way he or she can?	61%
A4	Is the number of students in your child's classrooms appropriate?	78%
A5	Does your child work as hard as he or she can at school?	71%
A6	Do you think that what your child is studying is important?	90%
A7	Do your child's teachers motivate your child well?	73%
A8	Do teachers have high expectations for your child?	79%
A9	<i>Are your child's teachers asking him/her to do more than you feel is reasonable?*</i>	22%
A10	Is your child comfortable with the expectations of his or her program?	82%
A11	<i>Do you think your child has too much homework?*</i>	30%
A12	Are you comfortable with the amount of homework your child is assigned?	58%
A13	Does your child average ½ hour per night on each main subject?	46%
A14	Do your child's teachers clearly communicate homework expectations and prepare your child well to do the homework?	70%
A15	Is your child's homework challenging?	62%
A16	Is your child's homework stimulating?	54%
A17	Is the extra help provided after school adequate for your child?	78%
A18	Are there any consequences at school for assignments not done?	84%
A19	Are you in favor of homework during vacations?	30%
A20	Is your child learning good study habits at Ottoson?	71%
A21	Does your child participate in after-school activities?	44%



HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

H1	Does the school keep you well-informed of your child's activities?	48%
H2	Does the school keep you well-informed of school activities?	56%
H3	Are school policies clearly communicated?	70%
H4	Would you like to be more involved at Ottoson?	60%
H5	Do you feel welcome at school as a visitor or volunteer?	69%
H6	Do you think your child's report card tells how your child is really doing in school?	69%
H7	Is the conference schedule adequate?	48%
H8	Is the conference schedule convenient?	72%
H9	Do conferences help you and your child's teachers understand each other and your child?	70%
H10	Do you think parents and teachers communicate enough?	37%
H11	Are your child's teachers open to discussing your concerns about your child?	75%
H12	Do your child's teachers work effectively with you to address concerns?	69%
H13	Do you think parents and the administration communicate well with one another?	49%
H14	Do you use the homework hotline?	50%

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE

B1	Is the building clean and maintained well?	99.3
B2	Are the school grounds clean and maintained well?	85.0
B3	Is there sufficient parking?	49.3
B4	How well is drop off/pick up routine working?	73.3

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

R1	Is being a good citizen important to your child?	94.4
R2	Is good citizenship encouraged at Ottoson?	82.8
R3	If your child had a problem or question at school, would you go to a staff member for help?	92.1
R4	If you have gone to a staff member with a problem or question, were you satisfied with the result?	70.4
R5	Does your child understand how he or she is expected to behave in school?	99.3
R6	Has someone listed for you the kinds of things your child is not allowed to bring to school?	49.6
R7	If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	82.3
R8	Are school staff respectful of parents?	86.0
R9	Are school staff respectful of students?	82.9
R10	Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, cultural origin, etc.)	72.9
R11	Does your child feel safe and comfortable in the school?	86.7
R12	Are there classes in which your child does not feel comfortable?*	41.0
R13	Are there other places at school that your child does not feel safe and comfortable?*	20.3
R14	Do you think that your child's teachers and the administrators communicate adequately with each other?	67.8



CURRICULUM

C1	Ottoson consistently provides high quality teaching.	71.3
C2	Ottoson provides high-quality learning disabilities services.	75.4
C3	Ottoson provides high-quality speech and language support.	82.8
C4	Ottoson provides high-quality reading support.	83.1
C5	Ottoson provides high-quality ESL support.	91.4
C6	Ottoson provides high-quality health care services.	91.3
	ACE	91.6
	AM/PM	82.5
	Art	88.9
	Consumer and Life Science	69.4
	Directed Study	61.0
	Drama	85.0
	English	77.3
	Follow Up	62.2
	Health	85.8
	Music	76.1
	Math	73.9
	Physical Education	85.6
	Reading	70.3
	Science	80.9
	SOAR	68.5
	Social Studies	78.9
	Technology Education	74.8
	World Language	78.0

OTTOSON STAFF

S1	Has your child's guidance counselor met with your child?	43.1
S2	Is your child's guidance counselor helpful to you when you need help?	61.1
S3	Are the principals good school leaders?	89.8
S4	Are the principals responsive to your child's needs?	82.3
S5	Are the main office staff helpful and courteous to you?	64.2
S6	Are the custodians helpful and courteous to you?	91.9
S7	Is the school nurse helpful and courteous to you?	95.9
S8	Are there staff members that you admire or think are special?	88.8
S9	Are the staff good role models for your child?	87.4
S10	Are staff members respectful of you?	88.5

* Questions in italics are scale in a negative direction, so that an answer of 1 or 2 is positive.
 If the proportion shown is greater than .30, it is highlighted.



FACULTY AND STAFF SURVEY*

The faculty/staff questionnaire was developed to assess how Ottoson faculty/staff evaluate the school as a workplace. This is an important aspect of the school improvement plan. Hopefully, the information we obtained will be useful for the school administration, particularly as they evaluate their performance as employers. About 105 questionnaires were distributed to faculty and staff at Ottoson; 42 were returned. Because of the small size of this group as a whole, less detail is provided to ensure confidentiality of the responses.

Open-ended Questions ^{*} p. 49

Open-ended questions were used at the beginning of the survey to try to get respondents' own views, uncontaminated by our questions. They were also used to get information that we might have failed to ask about. The first two questions, "What are the three best things about Ottoson?" and "What are the three things that most need improvement?," were analyzed in a qualitative way. Answers to open-ended questions for school faculty/staff were coded into 31 categories developed to capture the information in the questions (listed in Appendix 1). Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of respondents who mentioned each category. The most common responses will be discussed – those that were mentioned by at least 15% (5 or more) of the respondents.

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT THE OTTOSON?

Open-ended responses for the three best things about Ottoson fell into only 10 of the 31 categories. This demonstrates considerable agreement by faculty/staff on what the best aspects of the Ottoson are. The administration and the facilities were most often mentioned, by 44% of faculty/staff each.

Nice new principal.

Principal is a wonderful and caring leader.

The new facility which gives teachers, students and community a reason to be proud.

A principal who is available and listens.

Very good support from administration. Comfortable working environment (physical facilities).

The faculty (36%), the staff (36%), and the students (25%) were mentioned next most often.

Many wonderful co-workers.

Colleagues who share ideas. Students -- largely a terrific group.

The tables follow each major section of the report. Page numbers for related tables are indicated in the text by a ^{} p. 49 .



The staff has many dedicated individuals who care about students and how to help them learn.

Atmosphere is positive and filled with so many wonderfully dedicated staff.

Friendly faculty and administration, new building, students.

The remaining two categories mentioned were the technology (19%) and the enthusiasm and atmosphere (17%).

Sense of community, peer support, staff prompt response to problems.

The environment.

New technology, power point.

WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS AT OTTOSON THAT MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT?

Discipline (25%), need for air conditioning (22%), the curriculum (22%), and building issues (17%) were mentioned as the things that most need improvement at Ottoson. For example,

Discipline: Especially a place for disruptive students that is not fun. Work ethic: make it a privilege to be in class--those who won't work need an alternative setting.

Discipline -- need a stronger code with deliberate consequences that increase if discipline doesn't improve.

Discipline of students doesn't work well or smoothly, some problems with the same students all the time, I'd like to see more effort with the guidance department and these students.

Discipline: administrators should support their staff and follow through on their own rules.

Group students more appropriately for follow-up; put students with similar needs together. Increase honesty.

Air Conditioning: purchase the needed compressors or put window units in particularly hot rooms. Writing Lab: A writing lab with computers is needed so that students may work on writing assignments in class and during after school hours. The lab could also be used to network CD ROMS and to allow for other kinds of technology to be integrated into the curriculum and class activities. In-house suspension: the current suspension system is less effective than an in-house system would be.

Heat, heat, heat, - Too Hot! Screens, so the windows could be left open over night.

More interdisciplinary work within the cluster.

Cleaning and maintenance.

The clock is the hit in my room. I need a bookcase.

Longer class times, double classes for art, smaller class size, integrate arts, music, theater classes in all clusters as part of regular classes.



DO YOU ENJOY COMING TO WORK EACH DAY?

The answer to this questions is a resounding “YES.”
Eighty-six percent of the teachers agree.

Yes, I love to teach and I enjoy the students. I like my coworkers. No, I feel pressure from the DOE constantly. I feel my creativity is being sacrificed for teaching to the tests.

I simply enjoy teaching. I enjoy the Ottoson. The technology is amazing. This year I feel well supported and appreciated which I believe is due to Ms. Bouris.

I love coming to work with my colleagues and students. Professional and personal relationships are very good.

Absolutely, being in the classroom is engaging and satisfying. I don't enjoy the lack of planning time and excessive out-of-class demands on my time.

I enjoy going to work every day because I like what I do and I am constantly finding new ways to do it better. I feel that I am accomplishing important things.

Yes. In public education, it doesn't get any better than Ottoson. The colleagues I work with most closely are excellent as is most of the faculty. The ultimate difference in our school is the administration which is terrific.

Closed-ended Questions

Table 2 shows the percentages of respondents who answered 3 or 4 on a scale of 1 = “Not at all” to 4 = “Very much so.” Questions with less than 70% favorable responses indicate areas that need improvement and are highlighted in the table. Overall, the faculty/staff responses show significant dissatisfaction in several areas. Responses for each major section of the questionnaire will be reviewed. If comments were provided to augment the ratings, some of them are included to help explain the findings.

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE * p. 50

Fewer than 70% of faculty/staff indicate that the building is cleaned or maintained well. Over 50% of faculty/staff think that parking is insufficient.

I must ask to have floors cleaned. Repairs are never done. Halls and stairs are rarely cleaned. Wastebaskets are not emptied regularly.

This brand new building needs constant maintenance. Rug cleaning should be budgeted to occur regularly. Dust and dirt affect human breathing.

Classroom is very often not swept; floors never washed. Teacher's room is often dirty; bathroom too. As a taxpayer, I feel that this building should sparkle!

Could there be reserved parking for the most senior staff members and those who have some physical difficulty walking/carrying things to/from the building? Perhaps this could apply to winter months only.



OTTOSON STAFF * p. 50

As in the open-ended questions, school faculty/staff rate the school administration highly. In addition, communication within cluster is good, although planning and coordination among cluster teachers is considered adequate by only 58% of the respondents. Further, only 27% of the faculty/staff feel that there is enough integration of courses and materials within clusters. When asked about the communication between cluster and out-of-cluster teachers, only 28% gave it a good rating.

There could be many opportunities, but we need to correct papers, make up open response questions and rubrics, use technology, communicate with parents, etc. To really integrate materials and course work would probably require several years of planning and trial and error implementation. But, would it then align with the frameworks?

Staff meetings are felt to be convenient and frequent enough, but only 45% answered that they are helpful and informative.

The responses indicate a clear desire by school faculty/staff for more professional development. When asked about this, 54% answered that they have enough opportunities, and 46% say that they are encouraged to take workshops and courses. Only 64% of the faculty/staff indicated that they were given coverage to fulfil their commitments to professional development during the preceding year.

Would have liked to have been able to go to more professional days for conferences.

Coverage was a town-wide issue not a school issue.

There were NO professional days.

Professional development is a necessity for recertification and encouraged by the administration, but often teachers are denied leave because of no substitute coverage.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS * p. 51

There was an additional section of the questionnaire specifically focused on substitute teachers. There was unanimous agreement that building subs are preferable. Thirty-eight percent of faculty/staff feel that there is enough substitute coverage for classes. When substitute teachers are used, 37% of faculty/staff report that lesson plans are followed and only 18% report that the subs can maintain classroom discipline. Sixty-eight percent believe that there is a clear procedure for substitutes to follow.

Permanent building subs are an excellent idea- but only if they are GOOD subs- teacher input is necessary.

I have left very specific plans that aren't always followed, some subs seem to make deals with the students – the result is the students don't do any work.

*With a different sub every period, it is unclear what if anything was taught.
It was erratic.*



MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES * p. 50

Faculty/staff very clearly feel that there are not enough supplies, textbooks, or computers for themselves or for students. In addition, more than half answered that the textbooks and materials are not up-to-date nor of good quality. Although this has already changed a great deal, this is an area that merits attention.

The other questions in this section were about the Media Center. Eighty-eight percent of the faculty/staff agreed that the Media Center provides excellent and up-to-date materials for students. They also indicated that there are enough computers in the Media Center for students to use (84%) and that the Media Center is available often enough to students before and after school.

Most classroom supplies I purchase out-of-pocket. The school provides the bare essential paper, writing utensils, glue, staples, etc. but I'm on my 4th 3-hole punch of the year because of the cheap quality supplied. Next year I'll buy a heavy-duty punch for the room. Why is this left to me? Also, the school should supply facial tissues. I could use more bookshelves!

Materials are of good quality because I obtain them myself, often at my own expense. 8th grade history book is terrible.

I love the Media Center and Jane and Ellyn. They are two of the dedicated staff that I treasure. Smiling, helpful, and generous with their time and expertise.

Library is great resource of support; very enthusiastic to gather books/info and help with units.

TECHNOLOGY * p. 51

This survey was done near the end of the first year in the renovated Ottoson. With the renovation came computers, video monitors in most classrooms, a new voice mail system, and e-mail for all faculty/staff. By the spring of the first year in the new building, when the survey was given, many faculty/staff indicated that they were using and comfortable with voice mail, e-mail, and monitors for viewing videos. They answered that their communication with parents had improved with the new technologies and that their administrative responsibilities were facilitated. However, communication with colleagues had not increased, and only about half of the faculty/staff were using email or using the monitors for presentations. Sixty-five percent answered that they need more training and 37% felt that the technology support was inadequate.

I need to take more responsibility in this area!

Phone has allowed me to communicate with parents very often and without delay.

I don't have e-mail yet.

More training using the monitors for presentations would help me. More computer courses!



ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS * p. 51

The questions in this section asked mostly about students' attitudes toward school and their work habits. Faculty/staff are very dissatisfied in this area. Many faculty/staff replied that parents share teachers' goals and other teachers have high expectations for students. But they believe that students do not work as hard as they can, do not take initiative, do not follow through on projects, and do not ask for help when they need it. Further, many think that students do not do all of their own work and do not respond well to discipline. Faculty/staff feel that parents do not help students with homework in appropriate ways, although they do not think parents help too much with homework.

About 10% of the students seem motivated this year.

Mine are the best and the brightest and if they worked they could be better than best and positively luminous! However they lack a real work ethic.

If parents are writing children's reports, something is seriously wrong in the communication of students' ability and needs.

Some parents need to be more involved with their child's education.

Peer pressure and hormones will always be a problem at this level. Parents appear to feel shut out by their children.

I feel that expectations in general for students are high.

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION * p. 52

Faculty/staff generally indicate that parents/guardians are willing to discuss and address concerns raised about their child and that all of the child's teachers work together to do so. They also answered that school policies are clearly communicated and are available in writing. At the same time, faculty/staff do not feel that parents/guardians and faculty/staff communicate enough.

Two avenues for communication are not highly regarded by faculty/staff. Only 67% answered that they use the homework hotline regularly. While 70% of the faculty/staff agreed that conferences help parents/guardians and faculty/staff understand each other, only 59% responded that the conference schedule is adequate and only 66% said that it is convenient.

About 10-15% of parents do not seem involved at all; do not respond to calls or written messages home or seem unconcerned by failing grades etc.

Conference times are too brief to discuss anything substantive.

Conferences that work best have all of the cluster teachers in attendance.

Having a telephone in my classroom has been a wonderful step toward open communication. Conferences should be longer, over more days and nights.



The parent conference schedule (evening schedule) is very inconvenient and unnecessary, in my opinion. There could be a 3-5 pm sign up time, more than one day if necessary. If it were a doctor's or dentist's appointment, the parent would get there. The evening conferences add to my work day and make me exhausted for the following day of teaching.

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE * p. 52

As noted before, discipline is a major concern for Ottoson faculty and staff. A large number of faculty/staff answered that discipline is not consistent and students are not always held accountable for breaking rules. They also feel that communication about discipline is not adequate, nor coordinated well among a student's teachers. They also believe that being a good citizen is not important to students, even though they indicated that good citizenship is encouraged and students understand how to behave.

In terms of personal respect and safety, faculty and staff agree that there is mutual respect between faculty/staff and students and between faculty/staff and parents. Many feel that differences among people are not sufficiently accepted at Ottoson, in areas such as religion, physical and mental abilities, race, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and cultural origin. However, 95% of the faculty/staff feel safe at school.

Different physical and mental abilities are not well accepted at Ottoson, whereas it seems that race differences are fairly well accepted.

Students need to be held accountable for their behavior to and from school. I am glad to see this happening.

I think that the staff, for the most part, are accepting and understanding of life style differences (all those listed) However, the students openly display intolerance and bias towards differences. Part of this is the age it is not "cool" to be different, but at other times it runs much deeper. This comes from what they learn outside of school.

I feel that there needs to be stronger consequences and more consistency I worry very much about how disruptive children distract the others in the class. Disruptive children ROB other children of the gift of education. We need to address these children more seriously with stronger follow through at the office level.

Parents really support their elementary faculty. If we aren't more welcoming, communicate with them, and respond to their issues, they will remain suspicious and unsupportive.



Table 1
 Open-ended Questions
 Ottoson Survey: Faculty and Staff (N=36)

All Percentages Are > 5%

WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST THINGS ABOUT OTTOSON?

	#	%
Students	9	25
Building	16	44
Curriculum	3	8
Enthusiasm, atmosphere	6	17
Faculty	13	36
Media center	3	8
Principal, administration, leadership	16	44
Resources & materials	4	11
Staff	13	36
Technology	7	19

WHAT THREE THINGS MOST NEED IMPROVEMENT?

Activities	2	6
Air conditioning	8	22
Building	6	17
Commit to learning	2	6
Communication	4	11
Communication among staff	5	14
Curriculum	8	22
Discipline	9	25
Enthusiasm, atmosphere	3	8
Meetings	2	6
Out of class time	3	8
Parking	2	6
Principal, administration, leadership	5	14
Resources & materials	2	6
Substitute teachers	2	6
Technology	3	8



Table 2: Closed-ended questions
 Ottoson Survey: Faculty and Staff (n= 42)
 Percentage of Respondents Answering 3 or 4 on a Scale of 1 (Not at all) to 4 (Very much so)
Percentages highlighted if < 70%

BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE

B1	Are your classrooms and offices clean?	57%
B2	Are the staff areas clean?	62%
B3	Is the building clean and maintained well?	68%
B4	Are the school grounds clean and maintained well?	73%
B5	Is there sufficient parking?	29%
B6	Is there enough space for staff?	49%

OTTOSON STAFF

S1	Are the principals good school leaders?	80%
S2	Are the principals available and helpful?	80%
S3	Does the school administration communicate well with you?	71%
S4	Does the superintendent's office communicate well with you?	39%
S5	When you need administrative help, is it available to you?	90%
S6	Are there other staff members that you admire or think are special?	98%
S7	Are new staff oriented well?	53%
S8	Is the communication between teachers within your cluster good?	85%
S9	Is the communication between cluster teachers and non-academic teachers good?	28%
S10	Is academic planning and coordination among cluster teachers adequate?	58%
S11	Do you have enough opportunities to integrate materials and course work within clusters?	27%
S12	Are staff meetings convenient?	74%
S13	Are staff meetings helpful and informative?	45%
S14	Are staff meetings held often enough?	97%
S15	Is there enough opportunity for professional development?	54%
S16	Are you encouraged to attend workshops and training courses?	46%
S17	Have you been given coverage to be able to make your commitments to professional development this year?	64%

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

M1	Does the school have enough supplies for you to do your work?	1%
M2	Are there enough computers in the classrooms for students to use?	0%
M3	Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	0%
M4	Are the textbooks up-to-date and of good quality?	0%
M5	Are the materials up-to-date and of good quality?	0%
M6	Do your students use computers in class?	0%
M7	Do you have appropriate software for your students?	24%
M8	Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that your students need for school work and projects?	1%
M9	Is the Media Center available often enough to students before and after school?	80%
M10	Are there enough computers in the media center for students to use?	84%

* Questions in italics are scale in a negative direction, so that an answer of 1 or 2 is positive. If the proportion shown is greater than .30, it is highlighted.



SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

ST1	Is there enough substitute coverage for your classes when needed?	38%
ST2	Would you prefer to have building permanent subs?	100%
ST3	How well do subs follow your lesson plans?	37%
ST4	How well do subs maintain discipline?	18%
ST5	Is there a clear procedure for subs to follow?	68%

TECHNOLOGY

T1	Do you use voice mail?	83%
T2	Do you use email?	48%
T3	Do you use the monitors for presentations?	49%
T4	Do you use the monitors for viewing videos?	71%
T5	Are you comfortable with the process in using voice mail and email?	78%
T6	Do you need more training?	0%
T7	Is the technology support staff available to answer your questions?	1%
T8	Has your communication with parents improved as a result of these technologies?	1%
T9	Do the new systems help you with your administrative responsibilities?	70%
T10	Do you keep in contact with colleagues more easily using these communication systems?	49%

ATTITUDES, WORK HABITS, AND EXPECTATIONS

A1	Do parents share your goals for their child?	79%
A2	Do most of your students work as hard as they can at school?	33%
A3	Is the number of students in your classrooms appropriate?	1%
A4	Do other teachers have high enough expectations for students?	1%
A5	Do students take initiative?	0%
A6	Do students follow through on their projects?	1%
A7	Do students ask for help when they need it?	0%
A8	Do students respond appropriately when disciplined?	1%
A9	Do your students do their own work?	1%
A10	Do parents help students with homework in appropriate ways?	56%
A11	<i>Do parents help too much with homework? *</i>	0%



HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

H1	Are school policies clearly communicated and available in writing?	74%
H2	Do you think parents and teachers communicate enough?	8%
H3	Do you use the homework hotline regularly?	67%
H4	Are parents open to discussing your concerns about their child?	90%
H5	Do parents work effectively with you to address your concerns about their child?	73%
H6	Is there a coordinated effort between a child's teachers when dealing with his or her parents?	86%
H7	Is the conference schedule adequate?	59%
H8	Is the conference schedule convenient?	66%
H9	Do conferences help you and your students' parents understand each other and the students?	70%
	Telephone **	5%
	Note	43%
	Email	10%
	Progress Report	43%
	Agenda Book	53%

*** Faculty/staff were asked to rank order these five methods of communicating with parents. The average rank is shown. A lower number indicates a higher rank.*

RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AND DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

R1	Is being a good citizen important to students?	48%
R2	Is good citizenship encouraged at Ottoson?	80%
R3	Do students understand how to behave in school?	80%
R4	If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	60%
R5	Is there a consistent approach to discipline?	41%
R6	Is discipline coordinated well among cluster and non-cluster teachers?	27%
R7	Are you made aware of disciplinary actions for your students?	49%
R8	Is there mutual respect between staff and students?	76%
R9	Is there mutual respect between staff and parents?	83%
R10	Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.)	63%
R11	Do you feel safe and comfortable in the school?	95%



APPENDIX: SURVEYS



Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999 Student Survey

Dear Students,

The Ottoson School Council has developed surveys for students, parents/guardians, and school staff in order to obtain feedback about the school. The information that we get will be used to evaluate all aspects of the school community. The data collected will be used to identify issues and problems that concern us all. Your ideas and input will assist in the further implementation of the Ottoson School Improvement Plan. The Ottoson School Council supports the Ottoson mission to provide a student-centered, academically-challenging environment which is nurtured by each family and the community.

You can help us most by responding to the questions in an honest and thoughtful way. Most of the questions ask whether you agree (“yes”) or disagree (“no”) with a statement. Please read each question carefully and circle the answer that best reflects your personal thoughts and opinions. Then, if you have additional feedback, please write your ideas in the comment box at the end of each section or at the end of the survey. The survey is confidential, but if you would like to include your name, please do so.

We will analyze the surveys over the summer and report the results in the fall. On behalf of the Ottoson School Council, we thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erin Phelps and Pippy Giuliano, co-chairs of the survey subcommittee

Brud Faulkner

Jess Fuoco

Peggy Gavin

Penny Goldmuntz

Paul Lamoureaux

Maryanne Sullivan

Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999
Student Survey

List the three things you like the best about the Ottoson.

List the three things you dislike most about the Ottoson.

Please give us suggestions to correct the things you dislike.

What was it like coming to Ottoson from your old school? Was it easy or hard?

Tell us what things that would have made it better for you?

<u>Building and maintenance</u> (Please circle your answer)		
B1. Is the building clean?	No	Yes
B2. Are the corridors clean?	No	Yes
B3. Are the school grounds clean?	No	Yes
B4. Are the bathrooms clean?	No	Yes
B5. Are the locker rooms clean?	No	Yes
B6. Are the classrooms clean?	No	Yes
B7. Is the cafeteria clean?	No	Yes
COMMENTS:		

<u>Attitudes, work habits, and expectations</u> (Please circle your answer)		
A1. Do you feel free to learn by making mistakes?	No	Yes
A2. Are there too many students in your classrooms?	No	Yes
A3. Do you participate in after-school activities?	No	Yes
A4. Do you think that what you study is important?	No	Yes
A5. Do your teachers expect you to work as hard as you can?	No	Yes
A6. Are your teachers asking you to do more than you feel you can?	No	Yes
A7. Do you think your teachers help you learn in the best way they can?	No	Yes
A8. Do your parents expect you to work as hard as you can?	No	Yes
A9. Do you work as hard as you can at school?	No	Yes
A10. Do you think you have too much homework?	No	Yes
A11. Is your homework challenging?	No	Yes
A12. Is your homework stimulating?	No	Yes
A13. Do you average one-half (½) hour per night on each main subject?	No	Yes
A14. Do your teachers clearly communicate homework expectations and prepare you well to do the homework?	No	Yes
A15. Do you take responsibility to find out what you missed after an absence?	No	Yes
A16. Do you use the agenda book regularly?	No	Yes
A17. Do you rely on the homework hotline?	No	Yes
A18. Is there a consequence in school when you don't do your homework?	No	Yes
A19. Are you learning good study habits at Ottoson?	No	Yes
A20. Do you have an opportunity to participate in intramural sports at Ottoson?	No	Yes
COMMENTS:		

<u>Ottoson staff</u> (Please circle your answer)		
S1. Have you met your guidance counselor?	No	Yes
S2. Is your guidance counselor helpful to you when you need help?	No	Yes
S3. Do you feel comfortable going to the principals?	No	Yes
S4. Are the main office staff helpful and courteous to you?	No	Yes
S5. Are the cafeteria workers helpful and courteous to you?	No	Yes
S6. Are the custodians helpful and courteous to you?	No	Yes
S7. Is the school nurse helpful and courteous to you?	No	Yes
S8. Are there staff members that you admire or who you think are special?	No	Yes
COMMENTS:		

<u>Materials and Supplies</u> (Please circle your answer)		
M1. Is the cafeteria food good?	No	Yes
M2. Do you have enough food choices?	No	Yes
M3. Does the school have enough supplies for you to do what you need to do?	No	Yes
M4. Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	No	Yes
M5. Are the textbooks and materials up-to-date and of good quality?	No	Yes
M6. Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that you need for school work and projects?	No	Yes
M7. Are there enough computers in the media center for you to use?	No	Yes
M8. Are there enough computers in the classrooms for you to use?	No	Yes
COMMENTS:		

Responsibility, good citizenship, and discipline problems (Please circle your answer)

R1. Is being a good citizen important at the Ottoson?	No	Yes
R2. If you have a problem or question at school, would you go to a staff member for help?	No	Yes
R3. When you have gone to a staff member with a problem or question, were you satisfied with how this person reacted?	No	Yes
R4. Do you understand how you are expected to behave in school?	No	Yes
R5. Has someone explained the kinds of things you are not allowed to bring to school (or have you seen a list)?	No	Yes
R6. Are you responsible and do you follow through on the things you volunteer to do?	No	Yes
R7. If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	No	Yes
R8. Do the students respect the staff?	No	Yes
R9. Do students respect each other?	No	Yes
R10. Do the staff respect the students?	No	Yes
R11. Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.)	No	Yes
R12. Is individuality encouraged at Ottoson?	No	Yes
R13. Do you feel safe and comfortable in the school?	No	Yes
R14. Are there classes in which you do not feel comfortable?	No	Yes
R15. Are there other places at school that you do not feel safe and comfortable? (Please comment if you would like to expand on this.)	No	Yes

COMMENTS:

Curriculum -- Please rate the education you are receiving in each subject below, by circling the letter of your choice. Don't circle anything for a subject you don't have.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
English	P	F	G	E
World Language	P	F	G	E
Science	P	F	G	E
Math	P	F	G	E
Social Studies	P	F	G	E
Music	P	F	G	E
Drama	P	F	G	E
Art	P	F	G	E
Technology Education	P	F	G	E
Consumer and Life Science	P	F	G	E
Physical Education	P	F	G	E
Health	P	F	G	E
A.C.E.	P	F	G	E
Reading	P	F	G	E
Follow Up	P	F	G	E
Directed Study	P	F	G	E
AM/PM	P	F	G	E
S.O.A.R	P	F	G	E

COMMENTS:

<u>Home-school communication</u> (Please circle your answer)		
H1. Would you like your parents to be involved at your school?	No	Yes
H2. Do you think your report card tells how you are really doing in school?	No	Yes
H3. Do you think the conferences help parents and teachers understand you?	No	Yes
H4. Do you think your parents and teachers communicate enough?	No	Yes
H5. Do you think your parents and the administration communicate well with one other?	No	Yes
H6. Do your parents respect the staff?	No	Yes
H7. Do the staff members respect your parents?	No	Yes
H8. Is it easy for you to find out what assignments you are missing?	No	Yes
COMMENTS:		

We have attempted to provide you with the opportunity to share your feelings with us. Are there any other comments and / or suggestions you would like to add? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

Are there questions you think we should ask that we didn't? What? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

What grade are you in?

Are you male or female?



Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999 Parents/Guardians Survey

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Ottoson School Council has developed surveys for students, parents/guardians, and school staff in order to obtain feedback about the school. The information that we get will be used to evaluate all aspects of the school community. The data collected will be used to identify issues and problems that concern us all. Your ideas and input will assist in the further implementation of the Ottoson School Improvement Plan. The Ottoson School Council supports the Ottoson mission to provide a student-centered, academically-challenging environment which is nurtured by each family and the community.

You can help us most by responding to the questions in an honest and thoughtful way. Most of the questions ask you rate from 1 (“not at all”) to 4 (“very much so”) how much you agree with a statement. Please read each question carefully and circle the answer that best reflects your personal thoughts and opinions. Then, if you have additional feedback, please write your ideas in the comment box at the end of each section or at the end of the survey. The survey is confidential, but if you would like to include your name, please do so.

Please return the completed questionnaires to main office by Tuesday, June 15, 1999. We will analyze the surveys over the summer and report the results in the fall. On behalf of the Ottoson School Council, we thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erin Phelps and Pippy Giuliano, co-chairs of the survey subcommittee
Brud Faulkner
Jess Fuoco
Peggy Gavin
Penny Goldmuntz
Paul Lamoureux
Maryanne Sullivan

Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999 Parents/Guardians Survey

List the three best things about the Ottoson.

List the three things that most need improvement and, if possible, ways that would accomplish this.

How was the adjustment when your child first came to Ottoson from his/her old school? Was it easy or hard?

Are there things that would have made it better for your child and your family?

Materials and Supplies (Please circle your answer)

Not at all

Very much so

M1. Does the school have enough supplies for your child?	1	2	3	4
M2. Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	1	2	3	4
M3. Are the textbooks and materials up-to-date and of good quality?	1	2	3	4
M4. Are there enough computers in the classrooms for your child to use?	1	2	3	4
M5. Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that your child needs for school work and projects?	1	2	3	4
M6. Are there enough computers in the media center for your child to use?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Attitudes, work habits, and expectations (Please circle your answer) Not at all Very much so

A1. Does Ottoson School supports critical thinking and intellectual risk-taking?	1	2	3	4
A2. Do you think students are encourage to learn by trial and error?	1	2	3	4
A3. Do you think teachers help your child learn in the best way he or she can?	1	2	3	4
A4. Is the number of students in your child's classrooms appropriate?	1	2	3	4
A5. Does your child work as hard as he or she can at school?	1	2	3	4
A6. Do you think that what your child is studying is important?	1	2	3	4
A7. Do your child's teachers motivate your child well?	1	2	3	4
A8. Do teachers have high expectations for your child?	1	2	3	4
A9. Are your child's teachers asking him/her to do more than you feel is reasonable?	1	2	3	4
A10. Is your child comfortable with the expectations of his or her program?	1	2	3	4
A11. Do you think your child has too much homework?	1	2	3	4
A12. Are you comfortable with the amount of homework your child is assigned?	1	2	3	4
A13. Does your child average ½ hour per night on each main subject?	1	2	3	4
A14. Do your child's teachers clearly communicate homework expectations and prepare your child well to do the homework?	1	2	3	4
A15. Is your child's homework challenging?	1	2	3	4
A16. Is your child's homework stimulating?	1	2	3	4
A17. Is the extra help provided after school adequate for your child?	1	2	3	4
A18. Are there any consequences at school for assignments not done?	1	2	3	4
A19. Are you in favor of homework during vacations?	1	2	3	4
A20. Is your child learning good study habits at Ottoson?	1	2	3	4
A21. Does your child participate in after-school activities?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Home-school communication (Please circle your answer) Not at all Very much so

H1. Does the school keep you well-informed of your child's activities?	1	2	3	4
H2. Does the school keep you well-informed of school activities?	1	2	3	4
H3. Are school policies clearly communicated?	1	2	3	4
H4. Would you like to be more involved at Ottoson?	1	2	3	4
H5. Do you feel welcome at school as a visitor or volunteer?	1	2	3	4
H6. Do you think your child's report card tells how your child is really doing in school?	1	2	3	4
H7. Is the conference schedule adequate?	1	2	3	4
H8. Is the conference schedule convenient?	1	2	3	4
H9. Do conferences help you and your child's teachers understand each other and your child?	1	2	3	4
H10. Do you think parents and teachers communicate enough?	1	2	3	4
H11. Are your child's teachers open to discussing your concerns about your child?	1	2	3	4
H12. Do your child's teachers work effectively with you to address concerns?	1	2	3	4
H13. Do you think parents and the administration communicate well with one another?	1	2	3	4
H14. Do you use the homework hotline?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Building and maintenance (Please circle your answer) Not at all Very much so

B1. Is the building clean and maintained well?	1	2	3	4
B2. Are the school grounds clean and maintained well?	1	2	3	4
B3. Is there sufficient parking?	1	2	3	4
B4. How well is drop off/pick up routine working?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Responsibility, good citizenship, and discipline problems

Not at all

Very much so

(Please circle your answer)

R1. Is being a good citizen important to your child?	1	2	3	4
R2. Is good citizenship encouraged at Ottoson?	1	2	3	4
R3. If your child had a problem or question at school, would you go to a staff member for help?	1	2	3	4
R4. If you have gone to a staff member with a problem or question, were you satisfied with the result?	1	2	3	4
R5. Does your child understand how he or she is expected to behave in school?	1	2	3	4
R6. Has someone listed for you the kinds of things your child is not allowed to bring to school?	1	2	3	4
R7. If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	1	2	3	4
R8. Are school staff respectful of parents?	1	2	3	4
R9. Are school staff respectful of students?	1	2	3	4
R10. Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.)	1	2	3	4
R11. Does your child feel safe and comfortable in the school?	1	2	3	4
R12. Are there classes in which your child does not feel comfortable?	1	2	3	4
R13. Are there other places at school that your child does not feel safe and comfortable?	1	2	3	4
R14. Do you think that your child's teachers and the administrators communicate adequately with each other?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Curriculum (Please circle your answer)

Not at all

Very much so

C1. Ottoson consistently provides high quality teaching.	1	2	3	4
C2. Ottoson provides high-quality learning disabilities services.	1	2	3	4
C3. Ottoson provides high-quality speech and language support.	1	2	3	4
C4. Ottoson provides high-quality reading support.	1	2	3	4
C5. Ottoson provides high-quality ESL support.	1	2	3	4
C6. Ottoson provides high-quality health care services.	1	2	3	4

Curriculum -- Please rate the education your child is receiving in each subject below

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
English	P	F	G	E
World Language	P	F	G	E
Science	P	F	G	E
Math	P	F	G	E
Social Studies	P	F	G	E
Music	P	F	G	E
Drama	P	F	G	E
Art	P	F	G	E
Technology Education	P	F	G	E
Consumer and Life Science	P	F	G	E
Physical Education	P	F	G	E
Health	P	F	G	E
A.C.E.	P	F	G	E
Reading	P	F	G	E
Follow Up	P	F	G	E
Directed Study	P	F	G	E
AM/PM	P	F	G	E
S.O.A.R	P	F	G	E
COMMENTS:				

Ottoson staff (Please circle your answer)

Not at all Very much so

S1. Has your child's guidance counselor met with your child?	1	2	3	4
S2. Is your child's guidance counselor helpful to you when you need help?	1	2	3	4
S3. Are the principals good school leaders?	1	2	3	4
S4. Are the principals responsive to your child's needs?	1	2	3	4
S5. Are the main office staff helpful and courteous to you?	1	2	3	4
S6. Are the custodians helpful and courteous to you?	1	2	3	4
S7. Is the school nurse helpful and courteous to you?	1	2	3	4
S8. Are there staff members that you admire or think are special?	1	2	3	4
S9. Are the staff good role models for your child?	1	2	3	4
S10. Are staff members respectful of you?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Are there any other comments and / or suggestions you would like to add? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

Are there questions you think we should ask that we didn't? What? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

What grade is your child in?

Is your child male or female?

Additional comments (please feel free to use the back as well.)



Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999
Staff Survey

Dear Faculty and Staff,

The Ottoson School Council has developed surveys for students, parents/guardians, and school staff in order to obtain feedback about the school. The information that we get will be used to evaluate all aspects of the school community. The data collected will be used to identify issues and problems that concern us all. Your ideas and input will assist in the further implementation of the Ottoson School Improvement Plan. The Ottoson School Council supports the Ottoson mission to provide a student-centered, academically-challenging environment which is nurtured by each family and the community.

You can help us most by responding to the questions in an honest and thoughtful way. Most of the questions ask you rate from 1 ("not at all") to 4 ("very much so") how much you agree with a statement. Please read each question carefully and circle the answer that best reflects your personal thoughts and opinions. Then, if you have additional feedback, please write your ideas in the comment box at the end of each section or at the end of the survey. The survey is confidential, but if you would like to include your name, please do so.

Please return the completed questionnaires to main office by Friday, June 11, 1999. We will analyze the surveys over the summer and report the results in the fall. On behalf of the Ottoson School Council, we thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erin Phelps and Pippy Giuliano, co-chairs of the survey subcommittee
Brud Faulkner
Jess Fuoco
Peggy Gavin
Penny Goldmuntz
Paul Lamoureaux
Maryanne Sullivan

Ottoson School Needs Assessment, May 1999 Staff Survey

List the three best things about the Ottoson.

List the three things that most need improvement and, if possible, ways that would accomplish this.

Do you enjoy going to work each day? Why or why not?

Building and maintenance (Please circle your answer.)

Not at all

Very much
so

B1. Are your classrooms and offices clean?	1	2	3	4
B2. Are the staff areas clean?	1	2	3	4
B3. Is the building clean and maintained well?	1	2	3	4
B4. Are the school grounds clean and maintained well?	1	2	3	4
B5. Is there sufficient parking?	1	2	3	4
B6. Is there enough space for staff?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Ottoson staff (Please circle your answer.)

Not at all

Very much
so

S1. Are the principals good school leaders?	1	2	3	4
S2. Are the principals available and helpful?	1	2	3	4
S3. Does the school administration communicate well with you?	1	2	3	4
S4. Does the superintendent's office communicate well with you?	1	2	3	4
S5. When you need administrative help, is it available to you?	1	2	3	4
S6. Are there other staff members that you admire or think are special?	1	2	3	4
S7. Are new staff oriented well?	1	2	3	4
S8. Is the communication between teachers within your cluster good?	1	2	3	4
S9. Is the communication between cluster teachers and non-academic teachers good?	1	2	3	4
S10. Is academic planning and coordination among cluster teachers adequate?	1	2	3	4
S11. Do you have enough opportunities to integrate materials and course work within clusters?	1	2	3	4
S12. Are staff meetings convenient?	1	2	3	4
S13. Are staff meetings helpful and informative?	1	2	3	4
S14. Are staff meetings held often enough?	1	2	3	4
S15. Is there enough opportunity for professional development?	1	2	3	4
S16. Are you encouraged to attend workshops and training courses?	1	2	3	4
S17. Have you been given coverage to be able to make your commitments to professional development this year?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Substitute Teachers (Please circle your answer.)

Not at all

Very much so

ST1. Is there enough substitute coverage for your classes when needed?	1	2	3	4
ST2. Would you prefer to have building permanent subs?	1	2	3	4
ST3. How well do subs follow your lesson plans?	1	2	3	4
ST4. How well do subs maintain discipline?	1	2	3	4
ST5. Is there a clear procedure for subs to follow?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Materials and Supplies (Please circle your answer.)

Not at all

Very much so

M1. Does the school have enough supplies for you to do your work?	1	2	3	4
M2. Are there enough computers in the classrooms for students to use?	1	2	3	4
M3. Are there enough textbooks and other materials for each student?	1	2	3	4
M4. Are the textbooks up-to-date and of good quality?	1	2	3	4
M5. Are the materials up-to-date and of good quality?	1	2	3	4
M6. Do your students use computers in class?	1	2	3	4
M7. Do you have appropriate software for your students?	1	2	3	4
M8. Does the media center provide the excellent and up-to-date materials that your students need for school work and projects?	1	2	3	4
M9. Is the Media Center available often enough to students before and after school?	1	2	3	4
M10. Are there enough computers in the media center for students to use?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Technology (Please circle your answer.)

Not at all

Very much so

T1. Do you use voice mail?	1	2	3	4
T2. Do you use email?	1	2	3	4
T3. Do you use the monitors for presentation?	1	2	3	4
T4. Do you use the monitors for viewing videos?	1	2	3	4
T5. Are you comfortable with the process in using voice mail and email?	1	2	3	4
T6. Do you need more training?	1	2	3	4
T7. Is the technology support staff available to answer your questions?	1	2	3	4
T8. Has your communication with parents improved as a result of these technologies?	1	2	3	4
T9. Do the new systems help you with your administrative responsibilities?	1	2	3	4
T10. Do you keep in contact with colleagues more easily using these communication systems?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Attitudes, work habits, and expectations

Not at all

Very much so

(Please circle your answer.)

A1. Do parents share your goals for their child?	1	2	3	4
A2. Do most of your students work as hard as they can at school?	1	2	3	4
A3. Is the number of students in your classrooms appropriate?	1	2	3	4
A4. Do other teachers have high enough expectations for students?	1	2	3	4
A5. Do students take initiative?	1	2	3	4
A6. Do students follow through on their projects?	1	2	3	4
A7. Do students ask for help when they need it?	1	2	3	4
A8. Do students respond appropriately when disciplined?	1	2	3	4
A9. Do your students do their own work?	1	2	3	4
A10. Do parents help students with homework in appropriate ways?	1	2	3	4
A11. Do parents help too much with homework?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Home-school communication (Please circle your answer.) Not at all Very much so

H1. Are school policies clearly communicated and available in writing?	1	2	3	4
H2. Do you think parents and teachers communicate enough?	1	2	3	4
H3. Do you use the homework hotline regularly?	1	2	3	4
H4. Are parents open to discussing your concerns about their child?	1	2	3	4
H5. Do parents work effectively with you to address your concerns about their child?	1	2	3	4
H6. Is there a coordinated effort between a child's teachers when dealing with his or her parents?	1	2	3	4
H7. Is the conference schedule adequate?	1	2	3	4
H8. Is the conference schedule convenient?	1	2	3	4
H9. Do conferences help you and your students' parents understand each other and the students?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

H11. How do you communicate with parents about problems with students when there is a need?
 (Rank order the following to show which you use most often (1), second most often (2), etc.)

_____ Telephone _____ Informal note _____ Email _____ Progress report _____ Agenda book

Responsibility, good citizenship, and discipline problems

Not at all

Very much so

(Please circle your answer.)

R1. Is being a good citizen important to students?	1	2	3	4
R2. Is good citizenship encouraged at Ottoson?	1	2	3	4
R3. Do students understand how to behave in school?	1	2	3	4
R4. If rules are broken are students held responsible in an appropriate manner?	1	2	3	4
R5. Is there a consistent approach to discipline?	1	2	3	4
R6. Is discipline coordinated well among cluster and non-cluster teachers?	1	2	3	4
R7. Are you made aware of disciplinary actions for your students?	1	2	3	4
R8. Is there mutual respect between staff and students?	1	2	3	4
R9. Is there mutual respect between staff and parents?	1	2	3	4
R10. Are differences among people accepted at Ottoson? (Religion, physical and mental abilities, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, and cultural origin, etc.)	1	2	3	4
R11. Do you feel safe and comfortable in the school?	1	2	3	4
COMMENTS:				

Are there any other comments and / or suggestions you would like to add? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

Are there questions you think we should ask that we didn't? What? (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.)

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