

Background

Employee engagement has been defined as the level of an employee's psychological investment in his or her organization. Data from **Modern Survey** <http://www.modernsurvey.com/> suggests that 67 percent of the total United States workforce are under engaged or disengaged, and 22 percent of total U.S. workforce are currently looking for another job.

According to the 28th annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher http://www.metlife.com/about/corporate-profile/citizenship/metlife-foundation/metlife-survey-of-the-american-teacher.html?WT.mc_id=vu1101, released in March, the percentage of teachers who are "very satisfied" with their jobs has dropped from 59 percent in 2009 to 44 percent, bringing teacher job satisfaction to its lowest point in more than two decades. And in another indication of declining morale, 29 percent of teachers say they are likely to leave the teaching profession within the next five years—up from 17 percent in 2009.

This is in contrast to at least one indicator on our own ACPS survey, where over 90 percent of our employees responding indicated that they are enthusiastic about their work.

These data points reinforce the value of measuring and responding to levels of employee engagement. Our school system is fortunate to have highly skilled and caring personnel. It is imperative that we foster a climate where our teachers, administrators, and support staff feel the will to do their best and feel valued for doing so. Research proposes five common drivers of employee engagement:

1. Timely recognition and appreciation
2. Sense of personal accomplishment
3. Opportunities for career development
4. Belief in the future of the organization
5. Compensation

The majority of these factors are within the control of all of us as employees. Further, the more we do to support engagement and to stay engaged greatly influences the commitment of the students and families we serve. Psychological or willful investment of one's energy toward working to support children is understandably critical to Albemarle County Public Schools' success with our mission:

The core purpose of Albemarle County Public Schools is to establish a community of learners and learning through relationships, rigor, and relevance, one student at a time.

To give students the very best learning experience we can offer, our employees must be the best they can be, whether the employee is the teacher in the classroom, a principal, or a member of the cafeteria staff. Attracting and retaining high quality personnel and a commitment to building the quality of our own workforce is essential.

Competitive compensation packages, comprehensive staff development opportunities for all employees, and effective strategies for increasing the diversity of the workforce play important roles in bringing and keeping the best people in our classrooms and schools to support students.

In this vein, our School Board has prioritized establishing baseline levels of workforce engagement and satisfaction through the use of an employee climate survey under our third strategic goal: Recruit, retain and develop a diverse cadre of the highest quality teaching personnel, staff, and administrators.

To accomplish this strategy, a team of central office staff devoted to studying employee engagement researched and selected items for an “Engagement Survey” from the **K12 Insight** item bank. A thirty-three (33) item tool was developed to assess employee engagement factors, self-perceptions of proficiency with **Teacher Performance Appraisal** standards and external standards, and perceptions of professional development needs.

This survey was administered to all school division employees via an e-mail link from February 20th through March 2, 2012. One thousand, one hundred, and seven (1,107) of our 1780 plus employees responded for a 62% response rate.

Responses and Analysis

Responses to the engagement items on the survey are provided here. This is a basic frequency report. For each item, we are reporting the percentage of respondents who indicated their level of agreement with the statement provided. As you examine the tables, please consider the following key questions.

To what extent, do the employees who responded...

1. Take pride in their school or department?
2. Go above and beyond?
3. See a promising future with their school or department?
4. Commend their school or department to others?
5. Intend to stay with their school or department?

Please also consider how employees' responses indicate their level of engagement on the following continuum. We can be...

- Fully Engaged
- Moderately Engaged
- Disengaged

1. Respondents' Job Classifications

Q1. My job is primarily:					
	Instructional: I work with students in an educational setting		Operational: I help the Division run smoothly		Total
Responses Received	839	75.79%	268	24.21%	1107

2. Respondents' Roles

Q2. I am a(n):											
	Administrator		Classroom Teacher		Instructional Assistant		Instructional Coach		School-based specialist (Special education, ESOL, Title I)		Total
Responses Received	50	5.96%	457	54.47%	89	10.61%	25	2.98%	218	25.98%	839

Q21. I work in:															
	Building Services		Child Nutrition Services		Central Office (HR, Fiscal Services, ARC, support staff)		DART		Instruction (EDEP, Migrant education, Club Yancey, etc.)		School-Based Support Staff (Nurse, front office, support staff)		Transportation		Total
Responses Received	27	10.07%	26	9.70%	40	14.93%	23	8.58%	12	4.48%	66	24.63%	74	27.61%	268

3. All Respondents' Responses on Engagement Items

Please select the answer that best describes your beliefs or feelings using the scale to the right.												
Q25. I feel:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	like I belong at this school/in this department.	26	2.35%	45	4.07%	113	10.21%	401	36.22%	522	47.15%	1107
(b)	that the staff cares about me.	28	2.53%	48	4.34%	175	15.81%	472	42.64%	384	34.69%	1107
(c)	enthusiastic about my work.	13	1.17%	19	1.72%	73	6.59%	435	39.30%	567	51.22%	1107
(d)	recognized for good work.	57	5.15%	128	11.56%	216	19.51%	428	38.66%	278	25.11%	1107
(e)	satisfied when I do my job well.	7	0.63%	9	0.81%	31	2.80%	408	36.86%	652	58.90%	1107
(f)	clear about what my job is at this school/in this department.	19	1.72%	43	3.88%	78	7.05%	444	40.11%	523	47.24%	1107
(g)	that others are clear about what my job is at this school//in this department.	48	4.34%	129	11.65%	193	17.43%	405	36.59%	332	29.99%	1107

Q26. I work with people who:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	treat me with respect.	18	1.63%	44	3.97%	132	11.92%	487	43.99%	426	38.48%	1107
(b)	listen if I have ideas about doing things better.	34	3.07%	72	6.50%	163	14.72%	485	43.81%	353	31.89%	1107

Please select the answer that best describes your beliefs or feelings using the scale to the right.												
Q27. My supervisor(s):												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	treats me with respect.	17	1.54%	52	4.70%	98	8.85%	419	37.85%	521	47.06%	1107
(b)	is an effective leader.	57	5.15%	111	10.03%	160	14.45%	407	36.77%	372	33.60%	1107
(c)	enables effective communication.	75	6.78%	114	10.30%	165	14.91%	411	37.13%	342	30.89%	1107
(d)	supports me in my work.	32	2.89%	71	6.41%	131	11.83%	420	37.94%	453	40.92%	1107
(e)	is effective in helping us reach our vision.	61	5.51%	73	6.59%	182	16.44%	401	36.22%	390	35.23%	1107

Q28. I have the opportunity to:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	develop my skills.	26	2.35%	62	5.60%	149	13.46%	512	46.25%	358	32.34%	1107
(b)	think for myself, not just carry out instructions.	19	1.72%	59	5.33%	104	9.39%	470	42.46%	455	41.10%	1107

Please select the answer that best describes your beliefs or feelings using the scale to the right.												
Q29. I love:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	working at this school/department.	27	2.44%	45	4.07%	160	14.45%	413	37.31%	462	41.73%	1107
(b)	seeing the results of my work.	3	0.27%	5	0.45%	38	3.43%	402	36.31%	659	59.53%	1107

4. School-based Respondents' Responses on Engagement Items.

If you work in a school, in any capacity, please answer the questions below. If you do not work in a school, please click next to continue.												
Q30. I believe:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	this instructional program at this school is challenging.	12	1.27%	51	5.41%	438	46.45%	359	38.07%	83	8.80%	943
(b)	this school provides an atmosphere where every student can succeed.	13	1.38%	96	10.22%	413	43.98%	352	37.49%	65	6.92%	939
(c)	quality work is expected of all students at this school.	19	2.03%	111	11.86%	429	45.83%	319	34.08%	58	6.20%	936
(d)	quality work is expected of me.	5	0.53%	20	2.13%	378	40.26%	497	52.93%	39	4.15%	939
(e)	quality work is expected of all the adults working at this school.	29	3.08%	127	13.50%	403	42.83%	320	34.01%	62	6.59%	941
(f)	the vision for this school is clear.	46	4.89%	102	10.85%	397	42.23%	315	33.51%	80	8.51%	940
(g)	the vision for this school is shared.	51	5.44%	133	14.19%	398	42.48%	265	28.28%	90	9.61%	937
(h)	we have an action plan in place which can get us to our vision.	43	4.57%	122	12.98%	394	41.91%	255	27.13%	126	13.40%	940
(i)	the school has a good public image.	25	2.66%	92	9.79%	383	40.74%	356	37.87%	84	8.94%	940

5. School-based Respondents' Responses on Efficacy Items.

If you work with students in any capacity please select the answer that best describes your beliefs or feelings using the scale to the right. If you do not work with students, please click next. Q31. I work effectively with:												
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
(a)	special education students.	9	0.97%	32	3.46%	418	45.24%	400	43.29%	65	7.03%	924
(b)	English learners.	5	0.54%	32	3.47%	435	47.23%	350	38.00%	99	10.75%	921
(c)	ethnically/racially diverse students.	3	0.32%	7	0.76%	389	41.96%	493	53.18%	35	3.78%	927
(d)	students who live in poverty.	3	0.32%	13	1.39%	393	42.12%	484	51.88%	40	4.29%	933
(e)	low-achieving students.	6	0.64%	29	3.11%	401	42.98%	451	48.34%	46	4.93%	933

Next Steps

While it is the responsibility of all of us to be engaged with our work, it is vital that senior leadership take actions to set the stage for a positive school and department climate. There are several steps that we can take to improve employee engagement, including but not limited to...

1. Measuring customer satisfaction levels and sharing the results with employees
2. Measuring the quality of our work and sharing results with employees
3. Holding annual performance evaluations
4. Providing worthwhile training
5. Having shared values that are known and understood by all employees by talking about values in performance appraisals, and addressing ACPS values, specifically in the hiring process
6. Providing timely recognition and appreciation
7. Encouraging a sense of personal accomplishment
8. Providing opportunities for career development
9. Fostering a belief in the future of ACPS and our students



Rather than simply jumping to conclusions and using a blanket approach to boosting engagement, we will be unpacking the results of the survey to seek employee input on how to best plan for changes. We will follow the continuous improvement pattern of planning before doing, studying results from changes and acting on what we find. For example, while 90% of employees appear to be enthusiastic about their work, only 63% feel recognized for doing good work.

How do we improve employees' sense of recognition for good work? We will begin by asking principals and department heads to find out from their staff what they prefer in terms of recognition and make plans to address this need. After taking strategic steps

toward better and more appropriate recognition efforts, we will look for improvements on this metric in future years. Based on future results, we will continue to make adjustments.

Those of us who work in schools do so out of a strong desire to support young people. We take great pride in their learning and must be life-long learners to be successful with our students. As a result, we are likely to be engaged with what we do, and to feel good about making a difference for students, their families, and our communities. It is important that we come to work every day with a commitment to do the best we can. It is also important that Albemarle County Public Schools nurtures an atmosphere where teachers, administrators, and support staff feel valued for their contributions to our mission.