



SUMMARY OF THE 2009-2010 AISD CENTRAL OFFICE WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

A growing body of research in the occupational health field suggests that characteristics of the work environment can influence employee productivity and retention as well as the physical and psychological health of employees. Work-place stressors, such as work overload and workload variability are related to lower levels of job performance and higher levels of frustration and depression among employees (Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000; Dormann & Zapf, 2002; Wang, 2005). In contrast, high amounts of social support from co-workers and supervisors are associated with increased productivity and can buffer some of the negative effects of work environment stressors on employees (Beehr et al., 2000; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Moyle, 1998). A working environment characterized by effective and efficient communication practices and strong support networks should be fostered (Eisenberg, 2004; Lowe, Schellenberg, & Shannon, 2003; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996).

Changes in organizational leadership, such as a change in superintendent, can bring exciting new challenges and opportunities and feelings of enthusiasm and optimism, but at the same time can cause uncertainty. Disruption to typical patterns of behavior can cause employees to feel a sense of instability and insecurity. The feelings of uncertainty elicited by the change in leadership can make it more difficult for employees to feel confident and enthusiastic about the future. Thus, work environment ratings and employee morale may decline after a leadership change. Because low morale may lead to subsequent turnover, it is critical to monitor employee reactions to leadership succession (Ballinger & Schoorman, 2007). However, such disruption may be a “necessary step along the path toward adaptive organizational change” (Friedman & Saul, 1991, p.622).

The 2009—2010 school year marked a time of transition for the Austin Independent School District (AISD). After ten years of leadership under the same superintendent, the district began a new era under different leadership. The district began the school year with a new superintendent and several vacancies in key leadership positions including that of the Chief Academic Officer. In addition, the district faced a looming budget shortfall, and already had begun to discuss and implement operational changes, leadership changes, and fiscal cuts.

The AISD Central Office Work Environment Survey was developed in response to the district’s ongoing efforts to monitor Executive Limitation Policy 4 (EL-4), Staff Treatment¹. The

¹ The text of EL-4 is available on the AISD website at <http://www.austinisd.org/inside/policy/policy.phtml?type=el>

items on the survey either were adapted from existing instruments (such as the Organizational Health Inventory or the Employee Opinion Survey) or developed specifically to address portions of EL-4. In total, the survey included items measuring nine areas of the work environment: *Collegial Leadership, Employee Affiliation, District Administration, Training and Development, Policies and Procedures, Facility Satisfaction, Benefits Satisfaction, Behavioral Environment, and Reasonable Expectations* (new to the 2009—2010 survey). In addition, six new items were added to the *District Administration* scale to address employees’ attitudes towards the superintendent and senior cabinet members. Fourteen items also were dropped from the 2009—2010 survey.

All non-campus employees ($n = 948$) were invited to participate in the Central Office Work Environment survey via email in January 2010, and 348 employees completed the survey, for a response rate of 37%. Participants were classified according to their job category (Table 1).

Table 1. Approximately one third to one half of employees from each job category responded to the survey in 2009-2010.

	Administrator		Classified		Professional	
	n	response rate	n	response rate	n	response rate
Total	89	39.9%	178	31.0%	81	54.0%

The number of respondents is not sufficient for reporting responses by job category within each AISD division or office. However, the data can be reported in aggregate for each of the job categories. This report contains the results of the survey by job category.

SUBSCALE RESPONSES BY EMPLOYEE JOB CATEGORY

For each of the subscales, scores may range from 1 (least favorable) to 4 (most favorable); it is desirable to have an average score of 3.0 or higher, as indicated in bold type. Scores greater than 3.0 are considered to be “positive,” scores between 2.5 and 3.0 are “fair,” and scores below 2.5 are “not positive.” Results for each subscale are presented in Table 2. Key findings are described as follows:

- Overall Climate ratings were in the fair range, and did not differ significantly across employee job category²; however, Professional employees rated their knowledge of policies and procedures less favorably than did Administrators and Classified employees, and reported significantly less satisfaction with benefits than did Administrators.
- Administrators provided significantly lower ratings of Reasonable Expectations than did the other two employee job categories.
- Ratings across all job categories were most favorable for Behavioral Environment, Collegial Leadership, and Employee Affiliation.
- Ratings were least favorable for Facility Satisfaction and District Administration.

² ANOVAs were conducted to test the significance of differences among ratings by job category.

Table 2. With the exception of Facility Satisfaction, staff provided fair to positive ratings for all other climate areas measured on the survey in 2009-2010.

	Overall Climate	Collegial Leadership	Employee Affiliation	District Administration	Training and Development	Policies and Procedures	Facility Satisfaction	Benefits Satisfaction	Behavioral Environment	Reasonable Expectations
Administrator	2.92	3.11	3.14	2.57	2.79	3.23	2.45	3.00	3.45	2.75
Classified	2.93	3.08	3.04	2.67	2.70	3.10	2.48	2.90	3.48	2.94
Professional	2.92	3.22	3.13	2.53	2.90	2.91	2.40	2.80	3.41	3.01

Note. The means for the Behavioral Environment items were converted to a four-point scale for consistent comparison with other subscales.

Results for the items in each subscale are presented in Tables 3 through 11. Survey item numbers are indicated in each table. Items for all subscales except Behavioral Environment were rated on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Behavioral Environment items were rated on a scale from 1 (Never Happens) to 5 (Happens Daily). Respondents also had the option to select “Don’t know/NA” for any item that either did not apply to them or for which they did not have enough information to provide a response. In the data tables that follow, ↑ indicates a meaningful increase and ↓ indicates a meaningful decrease from the prior year.³ In 2009–2010, several items were added and removed from the Collegial Leadership, District Administration, and Behavioral Environment scales; thus, overall subscale averages are not available for these subscales in prior years.

COLLEGIAL LEADERSHIP

Collegial Leadership refers to the ways in which supervisors manage their work groups. Central office staff responded to 15 items designed to gauge the extent to which supervisors treat staff with openness, egalitarianism, and friendliness; set clear expectations and standards for performance; and offer useful feedback. Employees in each job category rated *Collegial Leadership* positively, on average, with subscale scores greater than 3.0 (Table 3). However, feelings of trust and confidence among the work group were rated less favorably by Administrators and Professional staff in 2009–2010 than in the prior year, and Administrators’ ratings of the feedback and information provided by their supervisors also decreased. Alternatively, Classified and Professional staff were more likely in 2009–2010 than in the prior year to agree their supervisor puts their suggestions into operation.

³ Effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*) are a measure of the magnitude of the difference between two means. Mean differences were noted as meaningful where $d \geq .30$ (this is the minimum value for a medium effect size).

Table 3. Despite some fluctuation from the prior year for some items, staff across all job categories rated Collegial Leadership positively in 2009—2010.

Collegial Leadership	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
1. The workload is divided fairly among the people in work group.	-	2.93	2.79	-	2.96	2.84	-	2.99	2.92
3. My work group operates without clear personnel policies.*	3.01	2.91	2.91	2.90	2.66	2.85	3.01	2.84	2.85
6. I know the goals of my work group.	3.42	3.50	3.42	3.22	3.20	3.29	3.43	3.38	3.47
10. There is a feeling of trust and confidence among the staff in my work group.	3.18 ↓	3.18	2.86↓	3.05	2.96	2.85	3.31	3.15	2.84↓
13. Complaints are handled effectively in my work group.	3.10	3.06	2.96	2.85	2.84	2.80	3.05	2.90	2.80
18. My supervisor keeps me informed of upcoming changes that affect my job.	3.30	3.35	3.07 ↓	3.20	3.14	3.06	3.36	3.33	3.42
19. My supervisor gives me useful feedback.	3.20	3.33	3.04 ↓	3.16	3.25	3.08	3.37	3.45	3.33
20. I am satisfied with the way my supervisor treats me when I make a mistake	-	-	3.22	-	-	3.18			3.39
21. I am satisfied with the technical competence of my supervisor	-	-	3.13	-	-	3.18			3.42
22. My supervisor is fair toward me.	3.45	3.51	3.43	3.27	3.25	3.30	3.50	3.47	3.58
23. My supervisor puts suggestions made by staff into operation	-	3.14	3.09	-	2.67	3.03 ↑	-	2.97	3.28 ↑
24. My supervisor lets staff know what is expected of them.	3.34 ↑	3.29	3.11	3.27	3.14	3.17	3.32	3.23	3.15
25. My supervisor maintains definite standards of performance.	3.39 ↑	3.34	3.08	3.23	3.14	3.15	3.32	3.33	3.05 ↓
26. My supervisor is friendly and approachable.	3.45 ↑	3.53	3.37	3.37	3.39	3.35	3.56 ↑	3.51	3.55
27. My supervisor conducts meaningful evaluations.	3.27	3.21	3.19	3.16	3.11	3.11	3.38 ↑	3.25	3.23
Collegial Leadership subscale	n/a	n/a	3.11	n/a	n/a	3.08	n/a	n/a	3.22

Note. In 2009—2010, items were added and removed from this scale; thus, overall subscale averages are not available for prior years. *This item was reverse-scored such that a high score is favorable.

EMPLOYEE AFFILIATION

Employee Affiliation refers to the extent to which employees in a work area communicate effectively, interact positively, and approach their work with optimism. Work areas with high levels of *Employee Affiliation* encourage respect, social support, and an overall positive rapport among staff. As in 2008—2009, staff in each job category rated *Employee Affiliation* positively in 2009—2010 (Table 4). In addition, Professional staff were more likely in 2009—2010 to agree that cultural diversity is respected in their work group. However, Professional staff ratings for three of the eight items measuring *Employee Affiliation* declined from the prior year, and the overall *Employee Affiliation* subscale average for Administrators declined significantly.

Table 4. Staff in each job category rated Employee Affiliation favorably, though Professional staff ratings declined for three of the eight items in 2009—2010.

Employee Affiliation	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
2. Morale is high in my work group.	2.89	2.98	2.60↓	2.86	2.91	2.73	3.15↑	2.92	2.69
4. Cultural diversity is respected in my work group.	3.37	3.30	3.43	3.20	3.29	3.28	3.42↑	3.28	3.53^C↑
8. The opinions of employees in my work group are respected by employees in other areas.	-	2.93	2.73	-	2.85	2.96	-	2.97	3.04
11. Employees in my work group accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.	3.19	3.15	3.08	2.99	2.94	2.94	3.24	3.07	3.18
12. The interactions among employees in my work group are cooperative.	3.52	3.54	3.42^C	3.38	3.41	3.09↓	3.55	3.55	3.20↓
14. The employees in my work group communicate with each other in an open and honest way.	3.13	3.19	3.08	2.99	2.99	2.97	3.23	3.19	2.89↓
15. Employees in my workgroup 'go the extra mile.'	3.60	3.56	3.62^C	3.36	3.37	3.22	3.54	3.58	3.44^C
16. Employees in my workgroup provide strong social support for each other.	3.36	3.35	3.15	3.13	3.23	3.10	3.32	3.34	3.10↓
Employee affiliation subscale	n/a	3.25	3.14↓	n/a	3.12	3.04	n/a	3.24	3.13

Note. ^C indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Classified employee category.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Staff indicated their level of satisfaction with the types and amount of professional development opportunities offered to and required of them. In general, reports of satisfaction with *Training and Development* by staff in each category are in the fair range (Table 5).

Table 5. Staff across all job categories rated Training and Development in the fair range in 2009–2010, and Administrators reported significantly less satisfaction with the types of professional development offered to them.

Training and Development	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
24. I am satisfied with the types of professional development (learning/training) offered to me.	-	2.97	2.68↓	-	2.79	2.59	-	2.85	2.76
25. I am satisfied with the amount of professional development (learning/training) required of me.	-	3.05	2.89	-	2.88	2.80	-	3.01	3.04
Training and Development subscale	-	3.01	2.79↓	-	2.84	2.70	-	2.93	2.90

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Staff also reported their knowledge of the procedures for reporting sexual harassment and filing a complaint. On average, Administrative and Classified employees agreed that they know how to report sexual harassment and how to file a complaint (Table 6). Professional staff were significantly less likely to agree with these items.

Table 6. Administrators and Classified employees agreed they know how to report sexual harassment and how to file a complaint, while Professional employees were significantly less likely to agree.

Policies and Procedures	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
16. I know the procedure for reporting sexual harassment.	3.30	3.13	3.21^P	3.04	3.00	3.13^P	3.03	3.00	2.91
20. I know the procedures for filing a complaint.	3.22	3.12	3.24^{CP}	2.92	2.92	3.06	2.85	2.82	2.90
Policies and Procedures subscale	3.26	3.12	3.23^P	2.98	2.95	3.10^P	2.94	2.91	2.91

Note. ^C indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Classified employee category;
^P indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Professional employee category.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

District Administration indicates the level of staff satisfaction with leadership, opportunities for professional advancement, and the transfer of information between work areas and district administration. Subscale scores from staff across all employee job categories were in the fair range. Of all items on this subscale, staff were most favorable toward the computers and technology available for their work (item 30) and with the technical competence of the superintendent (item 41). Classified employees were significantly more likely than Administrators or Professional employees to report having clear guidance from senior cabinet and the superintendent about the expectations for their work (items 36 and 39, respectively), and were significantly more favorable toward the organizational culture and the district’s common goals (items 46 and 49, respectively) than Administrators or Professional employees. In 2009—2010, Administrator and Professional employee ratings for many items on this subscale declined.

Table 7. Ratings of District Administration were fair across all employee categories; however, Administrator and Professional staff ratings for several items declined in 2009—2010.

District Administration	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
5. District administration is knowledgeable about the contributions of my working group.	-	2.78	2.46↓	-	2.74	2.56	-	2.48	2.30
7. District administration is responsive to the concerns of my working group.	-	2.78	2.53↓	-	2.68	2.61	-	2.57	2.42
17. My work group is informed by district administration of upcoming changes that affect our jobs.	-	3.06	2.46↓	-	2.86	2.71	-	2.67	2.51
28. I am satisfied with my ability to influence the district's policies and practices.	-	2.72	2.43↓	-	2.61	2.33↓	-	2.51	2.31
29. I am satisfied with the opportunities for professional advancement (promotion) available to me.	-	2.77	2.35↓	-	2.50	2.29	-	2.66	2.29↓

Note. Table 7 is continued on the following page.

Table 7 (continued). Classified employees were more favorable regarding their guidance from district leadership and the overall organizational culture of the district than were Administrators or Professional employees, and ratings of fairness of personnel policies declined in 2009—2010.

District Administration	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
30. I am satisfied with the computers and other technology available for my work.	-	3.25	3.16	-	3.16	3.02	-	3.01	3.11
36. There is clear guidance from senior cabinet level staff about the expectations for my work.	-	-	2.22	-	-	2.58 ^{AP}	-	-	2.23
37. I am satisfied with the way senior cabinet level staff treat me when I make a mistake.	-	-	2.73	-	-	2.70	-	-	2.80
38. I am satisfied with the technical competence of senior cabinet level staff.	-	-	2.41	-	-	2.56	-	-	2.69
39. There is clear guidance from the superintendent about the expectations for my work.	-	-	2.43	-	-	2.80 ^{AP}	-	-	2.18
40. I am satisfied with the way the superintendent treats me when I make a mistake.	-	-	2.50	-	-	2.73	-	-	2.38
41. I am satisfied with the technical competence of the superintendent.	-	-	3.22	-	-	2.89	-	-	3.26
46. The organizational culture at AISD promotes a positive image of the district.	2.81	2.83	2.42↓	2.86	2.88	2.83 ^{AP}	2.94	2.73↓	2.46↓
47. I am satisfied with the district's system for rewarding and recognizing outstanding employees.	-	2.37	2.24	-	2.46	2.45	-	2.27	2.25
48. The district operates with unfair personnel policies.*	-	3.28	2.79↓	-	3.22	2.92↓	-	3.24	2.77↓
49. I believe AISD works toward common goals.	2.86	2.93	2.64↓	2.87	2.95	2.93 ^{AP}	2.95	2.86	2.57↓
50. I am satisfied with my salary.	-	2.59	2.67	-	2.48	2.45	-	2.56	2.53
District Administration subscale	-	-	2.57	-	-	2.67	-	-	2.53

Note. ^A indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Administrator employee category; ^P indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Professional employee category.

*This item was reverse-scored such that a high score is favorable.

FACILITY AND BENEFITS SATISFACTION

Staff reports of their satisfaction with the conditions of their work facility and the quality of their work space were generally in the fair range, while reports of satisfaction with available parking were in the not positive range (Table 8).

As for *Benefits Satisfaction*, Administrators and Classified staff reported high levels of satisfaction with the amount of leave they receive; satisfaction of Professional staff with leave time was significantly lower (Table 9). Reports of satisfaction with health benefits were in the fair range for staff in all job categories, while satisfaction with retirement plan options was slightly more favorable.

Table 8. All employee categories continued to rate the Facility Satisfaction subscale less favorably than all other subscales in 2009—2010, primarily due to dissatisfaction with parking.

Facility Satisfaction	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
63. I am satisfied with the parking at my work facility.	-	1.88	1.89	-	2.05	1.94	-	2.27	2.08
64. I am satisfied with the condition of my work facility.	-	2.61	2.63	-	2.70	2.68	-	2.49	2.53
65. I am satisfied with the quality of my personal work space.	-	2.83	2.82	-	2.89	2.81	-	2.69	2.59
Facility Satisfaction subscale	-	2.45	2.45	-	2.55	2.48	-	2.50	2.40

Table 9. Ratings of Benefits Satisfaction were in the fair to positive range across employee job categories in 2009—2010.

Benefits Satisfaction	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
60. I am satisfied with my health benefits.	-	2.85	2.83	-	2.76	2.63	-	2.71	2.65
61. I am satisfied with the amount of leave time I receive.	-	2.99	3.13^P	-	3.18	3.18^P	-	3.06	2.91
62. I am satisfied with my retirement plan options.	-	2.90	3.03	-	2.84	2.88	-	2.80	2.83
Benefits Satisfaction subscale	-	2.90	3.00^P	-	2.93	2.90	-	2.87	2.80

Note. ^P indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Professional employee category.

BEHAVIORAL ENVIRONMENT

Central office staff responded to items regarding the prevalence of certain negative behavior in their work areas (Table 10). Unlike the items on the previous subscales, a *low* average response score (less than 2.0) is desirable for these items; thus, decreases from year to year are desirable.⁴ Overall, responses were in the desired range below 2.0, indicating a positive behavioral environment for all employee categories. However, Administrators reported significantly greater occurrence of bullying and disrespect for supervisors and co-workers, and Professional staff reported significantly greater occurrence of discrimination and bullying in 2009—2010 compared to 2008—2009.

Table 10. Professional staff experienced more discrimination and bullying in 2009—2010 than in prior years, though Behavioral Environment was generally positive for all employee categories.

Behavioral Environment	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
45. I have experienced discrimination while employed at AISD	1.65	1.68	2.13	1.87	1.82	2.03	1.66	1.86	2.08↑
57. Racial Tension	1.37	1.27	1.39	1.29	1.19	1.30	1.20	1.44 ↑	1.52
58. Bullying	1.26	1.25	1.49 ↑	1.32	1.33	1.43	1.20 ↓	1.27	1.56 ↑
59. Disrespect for supervisors	1.53	1.41	1.69 ↑	1.57	1.46	1.53	1.37 ↓	1.54 ↑	1.68
60. Disrespect for co-workers	1.68	1.56	1.78 ↑	1.67	1.66	1.76	1.44	1.64	1.63
61. Unsafe practices	1.19	1.13	1.75	1.38	1.29	1.35	1.20	1.24	1.33
63. Discrimination	-	-	1.37	-	-	1.36	-	-	1.55
62. Sexual Harassment	-	-	2.50	-	-	1.09	-	-	1.19
Behavioral Environment subscale	-	-	1.76	-	-	1.48	-	-	1.57

Note. Item 45 was rated by staff using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree); an average response of less than 2.0 for this item is favorable. Items 57-63 were rated using a scale of 1 (*Never Happens*) to 5 (*Happens Daily*). These items were recoded to a four-point scale to be consistent with item 45.

⁴ In Table 2 on page 3, this subscale score was reported in a reverse-scored manner for ease of comparison with other subscales.

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Central office staff responded to three items regarding expectations of them in their work environment, comprising a subscale called Reasonable Expectations⁵ (Table 11). Administrators were significantly less likely than Classified or Professional employees to agree that their department/work group is given deadlines that are reasonable, and their overall subscale ratings were significantly less favorable than those of Classified or Professional employees. Additionally, their ratings for two of these three items declined in 2009—2010 from the prior year. Compared with 2008—2009, both Administrators and Professional staff reported significantly less satisfaction with the autonomy and control they have over their work.

Table 11. Ratings of Reasonable Expectations were in the fair to positive range across all employee groups, though Administrators provided significantly lower ratings for this subscale than did Classified or Professional employees.

Reasonable Expectations	Administrator			Classified			Professional		
	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
14. I am given deadlines that are unreasonable.*	2.71	2.85	2.60	2.88	2.97	2.82 ^A	2.90	2.96	2.86 ^A
21. My department/work group is given deadlines that are reasonable.	-	2.98	2.66↓	-	3.03	2.88	-	3.01	2.97
32. I am satisfied with the amount of autonomy and control I have over my work group.	-	3.36	3.00 ↓	-	3.15	3.13	-	3.48	3.21 ↓
Reasonable Expectations subscale	-	3.06	2.75↓	-	3.05	2.94 ^A	-	3.15	3.01 ^A

Note. ^A indicates a mean that is significantly higher than that for the Administrator employee category.
 *This item was reverse-scored such that a high score is favorable.

A single item was added to the survey this year to assess the level of stress employees feel in their work environment (Table 12). Administrators reported significantly greater stress than did Classified or Professional employees, with ratings in the not positive range.

Table 12. Classified and Professional employees rated the stress of their work environment in the fair range, while Administrators rated the stress of their work environments in the not positive range.

	Administrator 09-10	Classified 09-10	Professional 09-10
31. My work environment is too stressful.*	2.38	2.78 ^A	2.80 ^A

Note. * This item was reverse-scored such that a high score is favorable. ^A indicates a mean that is significantly more favorable than that for the Administrator employee category.

⁵ Two of these items (14 and 32) were originally on the Collegial Leadership subscale and the third item (21) was originally on the District Administration subscale. Factor analyses revealed that these items formed their own subscale, resulting in the creation of Reasonable Expectations.

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