

# SO, HOW ARE WE DOING? (Spring 2008)

In our effort to continue the improvement process, we sent out parent surveys to our 51 families. We are thankful to the 26 families that completed and returned these to us.

Parents were able to respond to the following range of scores:

- Rating score of 1 - strongly disagree with the statement
- Rating score of 2 - disagree with the statement
- Rating score of 3 - agree with the statement
- Rating score of 4 - strongly agree with the statement
- DK - don't know or don't have an opinion

Similar responses were summarized. Sometimes it was best to leave the statements as written. These are shown in italics. Sometimes I wrote responses to improve parent understandings. These results will be used in a variety of ways as we continue to improve learning – thanks again to all who responded. Please feel free to contact the school with any further questions or comments.  
Rosemary FitzSimons

## Communication

1. The principal makes consistent efforts to communicate, listen and respond to me.

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	0 1 at 2/3	11	11	3

2. My child/children's teacher/s make consistent effort to communicate, listen and respond to me.

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	1	10 1 at 3/4	17	

3. Staff other than classroom teachers listen and respond to me.

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	1	8	10	7

## About School Communications

Sources of information that are helpful in keeping me up to date on school activities:

4. Weekly Newsletter

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	0	6	20	0

Summary of comments and suggestions: It was suggested that we send home 1 copy per family. It was requested that Girl Scout /Brownie /Cub Scout schedules, sports schedules (games/practices) and Library/town sponsored events be added to the weekly newsletter. Several people also commented on the need for more consistent and/or more detailed newsletter articles from some

teachers/areas.

Response: Next year each family will receive one copy of the newsletter. This will be sent with the youngest child in each family. Per board policy and upon approval, we are happy to include any community event in our newsletter and often do. Email or mail information to Laura Smith and we can include it in our newsletter. We will strive to improve the consistency and depth of news articles submitted.

#### 5. School Website

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	1	6	5 1 at 3/4	2	12

Comments: Several parents indicated that this could be a good source of information but needs updating to keep it current.

Response: We had several issues preventing updating that have now been solved. We are once again able to upload our weekly newsletter and our community newsletter to our website for viewing online. Please note that the online newsletter will not include individual flyers that are sometimes added to the paper copy of the newsletter for printing.

#### 6. Community Newsletter (printed twice yearly)

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	1	8	11	6

Comments: Very informative – especially for community members without children.

Response: Community members, we welcome your input. Feel free to contact us.

### **About Student Learning**

Please rate the following in terms of how helpful they are to you in knowing about your child's learning and academic progress.

#### 7. Report cards

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	2	3	10 1 at 3/4	9

Comments: One comment that their child's report card is confusing.

Response: Parents, always feel free to ask questions about any parts of the report card that need clarification.

#### 8. Parent Conferences

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	0	11 1 at 3/4	14

#### 9. I prefer a fall parent night that allows me to learn about school life with my child/children.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	5	3	13	9

10. I prefer a fall parent night with the classroom teacher providing an overview of grade level expectations.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	3	1	11	13

11. Student planners/assignment notebooks (Parents of students in grades 3-6 only)

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	2	3	13

12. Teacher letters found in weekly school newsletter from my child/children's teacher

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	1	11	15

Comments: People indicated this is informative. Several people commented on the need for all teachers to write in the newsletter each week.

### **Meeting Student Learning Needs**

13. I have an understanding of my child's day and what is going on in his/her class.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	2 1 at 2/3	14	9

14. Instructional methods used at WES meet my child's/children's needs.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	3 2 at 2/3	14	8

15. The amount and content of my child's homework is appropriate and supportive of her/his learning.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	1	5	12	8

Comments:

- too much homework
- not enough homework
- not enough to prepare for middle school
- more challenging homework needed at times

Response: Homework is an important opportunity for students to reinforce school work and develop personal responsibility for learning.. Homework needs and expectations vary with grade levels and levels of student learning. Parents should discuss with their child's teacher individual concerns they may have. We will continue to review/improve homework expectations.

16. I value the Pre-K program which provides for 15 hrs per week of quality preschool education

for 4 year olds in Wardsboro.

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	2	0	2	14	7

Comments: Great program, glad WES has it

17. I value the availability of student laptops as learning tools for my child/children.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	3	7	16

Comments: not always working or printing

Response: Our laptops are used almost constantly by all grade levels throughout the day. Because of this we do periodically need to send one or more out for service.

18. I value music, art and physical education

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	0	2	24

19. I value the Tuesday afternoon winter sports program .

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses	0	0	4	21	1

Response: This program is obviously important to parents. It takes the work of many to make this happen. We will continue to seek out community members that can chaperone the ski or Stratton Rec activities next winter. Let us know if you are willing to lend a hand.

## **School Climate/Environment**

20. WES provides a safe environment for my child.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	0	2	7	17

Comments:

- *Hard question as my child is bullied often by another child, teachers /staff should be more observant & stop it before it gets out of hand – to me, not safe. “Safe” as in security is ok.*
- One parent feels bullying is still a huge challenge at WES.

Response: The TIGER program was valuable (see below) but has not filled all of our needs. We are investigating additional school-wide options focused on positive intervention strategies.

21. Discipline is fair and consistent with a focus on learning from the experience.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	1	2 2 at 2/3	11	12

Comment: *Discipline – enacting TIGER program*

Response: This year the School Club helped provide funding so that we could have an anti-bullying theater group come to our school. This was followed-up by staff and parent workshops. The events were well received by all. TIGER is an acronym – The **T** reminds us to **Tell an adult**, **I** stands for **I say no**, **G** reminds us not to **Gossip about others**, **E** reminds us to **Exit when necessary** and the **R** reminds us to **Respond with respect**. We have implemented the TIGER strategies. Staff use this in

varying degrees. As principal, I refer to TIGERS whenever individuals or groups of students are having challenges that need my attention. As part of my interaction with students I always discuss which of the strategies were used and which could have been used to avoid conflict.

22. A positive relationship exists between the staff and students.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses		1 1 at 2/3	11	14

23. WES is successful at involving parents and community members in our school.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses		3 1 at 2/3	9	13

Comments: *Parents need to be more involved in decisions affecting their child/ren & classroom. More communication between teachers /parents. This is very limited.*

Response: Parents are an important part of the educational team. Always feel free to contact us with concerns. We seek to involve parents in a variety of ways and will continue to improve upon this.

24. The Breakfast/Snack program is a positive addition to the WES program.

Rating score	1	2	3	4
# of responses	1	2	9	12

Comments:

- *We do not use the program. We miss the milk, however, I do feel bad for the kids who do not get fed and feel bad saying I am against the program because I feel that maybe some kids will not have food if the program goes away. There is no answer.*
- *Wish it had more nutritious food – fruit especially*
- *The milk/snack/breakfast issue (not involving education)*

Response: Our breakfast/snack program serves a variety of student needs. We regularly serve a breakfast snack to about 35 students daily. Food served meets government standards. We seek to balance nutrition, cost, shelf life and student preferences. We count on volunteers to organize snack items by class. Please contact us if you could donate an hour weekly to organize snacks next year.

## **Overall Rating**

25. WES strives to provide the best possible education in a fiscally responsible manner.

Rating score	1	2	3	4	dk
# of responses		2	9	12	

Comments: There was a feeling we are getting better and one parent commented that we should not be worried about cost.

**Areas in which you feel WES is strongest.**

- Several positive comments regarding teachers
- Several positive comments about reading, writing, math and literacy
- *Letterland is phenomenal – My child recites what’s been learned, his reading comprehension is much better than most children his age.*
- Several positive comments about Four Winds, our environmental science program. Parents felt this was a strong curricular area stating “Kids find it enjoyable and so they are grasping & retaining much information about nature”.
- *Pre K is focused to get kids ready for 3/4*
- *Finally teacher retention is here so there is more consistency in the school and we have a focused leader. Teachers are committed to our school and its students.*
- *The 3 r’s - all that really matters*
- *Writing process, response to literature*
- *Language Arts, although more work on the writing process would be helpful*
- *I feel math is very strong. My son’s teacher has given him such wonderful tools to aid with learning to read. He enjoys reading and is always so excited about school. I give his teacher much credit for that.*

**Please list curricular areas in which you feel WES needs to improve.**

- *Since Letterland is such a hit – Why not introduce punctuation at the same time?*
- *Summer Programs (Day Camp)*
- *Hot Lunch Program*
- History, Geography and Science as formal areas of study
- More parent /volunteer/family/teacher participation on School club hosted activities/events – which benefit the children in WES
- Missing social studies /science
- Math, sciences, social studies /history
- I’m not a teacher & don’t pretend to be. With more “teacher to community” support, the curriculum would no doubt be supported by parents & community
- World history, arts, enrichment programs

**What else would you like us to know?**

- *Good job, great school – very happy. Also - The teachers are doing a great job!*
- *I feel grateful my kids are at WES. Although it is a small school, I feel that the staff really work so kids have an experience that is enriching, interesting and exciting.*
- *My child has expressed substantial frustration in the loss of classwork time due to “unfocused” children*
- *More attention to those at the top end of the scales. Seems all energies are to those at the end or middle*
- *Would like to see after school programs (possibly a grant?) ie. Math club, homework club, school newspaper with student work in the newsletter – something besides sports*
- *I wonder why there are not more actual textbooks used in the upper grades, and why some workbooks are hardly used at all in lower grades after purchase and hand out.*
- *New principal is making the school a much happier place to be*
- *New buzzer at front door much better than knocking on door*

- I am coming this year from a very competitive environment at my child's prior school. I respect WES for allowing children to be individuals and it is also a very warm inviting atmosphere.

### **What further information would you like to have?**

- *We are well informed. I do, feel those children who are focused and excited about learning are held back by those children who are less focused. Perhaps these classes should be split into groups. This would allow those who are able to comprehend to move ahead and create a challenge for those not – to move ahead. "Education is a privilege – not a birth right."*
- Thanks to all the teachers, paras, special ed and instructional support for all they do for the children of Wardsboro. Thanks also for the readers and program volunteers. Thanks to the School Club for enrichment programs and sports coaches. Without these people and their involvement these programs wouldn't happen.
- Parent would like - *My child's yearly curriculum given to me at the start of each year mailed along with all of the papers that need to be signed so I know all the expectations for the year and where my children are headed at approx. times of the year.*
- The information from teacher about the one on one with child, also more one on one
- Why so many trainings? (This question is answered below)
- What the expectations will be when they go to L&G. Making sure they will be prepared.

Parents and community members,

The quote at the beginning of the newsletter says it all. If we are to provide the best educational opportunities for children, each one of us in the educational setting needs to be a learner. We do this individually, in small groups, as a school and as a district. Trainings, in a variety of forms, are critical as they provide opportunities for improved teaching and learning strategies. As reported in our winter newsletter, we had two major initiatives to improve learning – literacy and numeracy. We met most of our goals for this year. Both will be ongoing next year. Vermont, like all states in the US, developed an assessment system to monitor learning across the state. You may have read in the local newspapers that Wardsboro Elementary School is one of the schools in the state that did not make annual yearly progress (AYP) expected in math. The trainings, workshops, professional development, math series adoption, the addition of textbooks as learning tools – and even the survey, are all strategies designed to improve our skills and student learning.

We are currently in the process of developing our school's Action Plan according to state guidelines. Members of our action planning team include all of our teachers, a board member – Haunani Wallace, a community representative – Carol Backus, Janine Manninen – district math and science curriculum coordinator and last but not least, Dineen Bills – our parent representative. After reviewing data, we have developed a plan based on student learning needs, we've set goals and put in place the action steps needed to meet these goals. This plan was approved by the Board of Directors. We will be meeting periodically during the year to assess progress towards our goals. This will also be posted on our website.

Thank you for your continued support of our work as we strive to become the best kept secret in Vermont!

Sincerely,

Rosemary FitzSimons, Wardsboro Elementary School Principal

