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Preliminary findings on issues affecting students at Shea Middle School

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*Preliminary Findings On
Issues Affecting Students At
Shea Middle School*



Spring 2002

Community Benchmarks Program
The Maxwell School of Syracuse University

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Executive Summary
Shea Middle School Student Achievement
Community Benchmarks Program
Spring 2002

Introduction

This report presents data collected from the Syracuse City School District of student achievement at Shea Middle School. To assist readers in gaining an understanding of some of the issues that may impact student test scores, a history of the school is provided along with corrective actions planned.

Methods

The data for the study were obtained electronically from Syracuse City School District records for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001. Shea school administrators and staff provided background information.

Findings

1. 92% of Shea students did not meet state standards on the 2001 ELA test.
2. 97% of Shea students did not meet state standards on the 2001 Math test.
3. 73% of schools (8 out of 11) in the Syracuse City School District had a higher percentage of eighth grade students meet the state standards on the 2001 Math test than Shea.
4. 82% of schools (9 out of 11) in the Syracuse City School District had a higher percentage of eighth grade students meet the state standards on the 2001 ELA test than Shea.
5. Every K-8 and middle school in the Syracuse City School District surpassed Shea in average percent attendance during the 2000-2001 school year.
6. Shea's average percent attendance rate decreased faster from the 1999-00 to 2000-01 school year than the district's average.

Executive Summary
Study of Family Involvement at Shea Middle School
Community Benchmark Program
Spring 2002

Introduction

This study is intended to provide information about the level of family involvement at Shea Middle School. Researches collected data from family members and Shea school faculty, staff and administrators. This report is part of the ongoing research activities of the Community Benchmarks Program (CBP) at The Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

Methods

Data were obtained by conducting a mail survey of the family members of the 535 students at Shea Middle School. A second survey was distributed to the faculty, staff and administrators at Shea. Entry into a drawing for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate donated by Wegmans Grocery Store was offered to family members who returned a fully completed survey. In addition, Syracuse 20/20 hosted a pizza party for students in the homeroom which had the highest number of surveys returned. Eight percent of the family surveys were returned and 49 percent of the faculty, staff and administrator surveys were returned.

Combined Findings for Family Members and Faculty and Staff

1. Family members rated their involvement an average of 4 (involved), while faculty and staff members rated family involvement an average of 2 (rarely involved).

Findings for Family Members Survey

2. 40% of family members perceive themselves to be *very involved* at Shea.
3. 91% of family members have talked to their child *many times* about school during this school year.
4. 50% of family members have visited Shea *1-3 times* during this school year.
5. 48% of family members report that they have read with their child *many times* during the school year.
6. 66% of family members report that they helped their child with homework *many times* during the school year.

7. 59% of family members have helped their child plan for homework time *many times* during the school year.
8. 50% of family members communicated with their child's teacher by telephone *1-3 times* during the school year.
9. 79% of family members have discussed grades with their child *many times* during the school year.
10. 50% of members have taken their child to the library *1-3 times* during the school year.
11. 80% of respondents have checked on their child's homework *many times* during the school year.
12. 75% of family members have met with their child's teacher during the school year.
13. 27% of family members have met with their child's teacher *2 times* during the school year.
14. 46% of family members did not indicate whether they had attended any school-sponsored events during the school year.
15. 29% of family members attended the Open House.
16. 64% of family members answered that there were barriers preventing family involvement at Shea.
17. 85% of family members responded that *work conflicts* were barriers preventing their involvement at Shea.
18. 42% of the 12 family members identified further *work related issues* as barriers in the *other* category.
19. 30% of family members gave suggestions for improvement concerning staff.

Findings for Faculty/Staff Perceptions Survey

20. 69% of faculty and staff identified themselves as teachers.
21. 44% of faculty and staff say family members are rarely involved in their child's activities and education

22. 83% of faculty and staff said that *transportation* was a barrier preventing family involvement.
23. 45% of faculty and staff say that family members who have *never been involved* is a barrier.
24. 36% of faculty and staff felt that to *improve communication* would improve family involvement at Shea.

Executive Summary
Communication Between Shea Middle School and Community Agencies
Community Benchmarks Program
Spring 2002

Introduction

This study provides information about communication of student needs among the faculty, staff and administration at Shea Middle School and local community agencies. The study was conducted by the Community Benchmarks Program at The Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

Methods

Two surveys were designed and disseminated: 1) to employees at Shea Middle School, and 2) to local community agencies. Principal David Cecile circulated the first survey to all employees of Shea Middle School (including administrators, teachers and staff) on March 4, 2002. Upon completion, the respondents anonymously deposited the survey in a receptacle in the Shea Middle School main office. A total of 84 surveys were distributed; 41 were completed and subsequently collected by a member of the research team on March 8 and March 18, 2002, yielding a 49% response rate.

The second survey was faxed to 28 community agencies in the City of Syracuse March 6, 2002. The agencies were identified through a list provided by Syracuse 20/20. Agency representatives were asked to return the survey via fax or provide the information in a follow up telephone interview scheduled for the week of March 7, 2002. Completed surveys were returned by eight agencies, yielding a 29% response rate. Eight additional agencies responded, indicating the survey was not applicable because they are funders and not direct service providers. Twelve agencies did not respond.

Findings

1. Administrators are the most familiar with community agencies providing youth and family programming.
2. Southwest Community Center is the community agency most familiar to the largest percent of employees (50%).
3. 39% of employees think community agencies have made their services known and available to the employees of Shea.
4. Employees who have worked at Shea for less than one year express the highest level of satisfaction with communication among teachers about the specific needs of students.

5. Employees who have worked at Shea for less than one year and for three to four years express the highest level of satisfaction with communication between faculty and administration about the specific needs of students.
6. 60% of employees estimate that they have communicated 1-3 times with a community agency since the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year.
7. 46% of employees have contacted a community agency in response to specific student problems.
8. 33% of employees have contacted a community agency to further a student's talents or interests.
9. "Social behavior" is the greatest need of students cited most often by employees.

Executive Summary
Shea Middle School Community Program Review
Community Benchmarks Program
Spring 2002

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to conduct a review of community programs available to Shea Middle School students and their families.

Methods

The data for this survey were generated through a mail survey of nonprofit and government agencies in the Syracuse area. Respondents were selected from an existing database created by the Community Benchmarks Program and from a list provided by Syracuse 20/20. The survey was mailed to 145 nonprofit and grant agencies. The response rate was 37% (53 agencies).

Findings

1. 47% of the agencies reported having a program available at or with Shea Middle School.
2. 77% of the agencies that offer a program at or with Shea Middle School do not provide transportation for program participants.
3. 77% of the agencies that offer a program at or with Shea Middle School keep attendance records for their program.
4. 66% of the agencies that offer a program at or with Shea Middle School have requirements for program participation.