



**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
MEETING AGENDA ITEM**

TITLE: Building a Great Place to Work and Learn:
2014 Gallup Survey Results **DATE:** December 15, 2014

PRESENTER(S):

Dr. Tim Hodges Director of Research, Gallup, Inc.	Claire Hafets Principal, Centennial High School
Frank Eastham, Executive Director School Improvement and Administration	Joann Hutchens Principal, Mayfield Woods Middle School
Lisa Boarman Coordinator Student Services	Nancy Thompson Principal, Talbott Springs Elementary School

VISION 2018 GOAL: Students Staff Families and Community Organization

- 1.4: Students are engaged in the learning process.
 1.7: Schools support the social and emotional safety and well-being of all students.
 1.8: Schools support student well-being and the development of balanced lifestyles.
 2.2: Staff members have access to learning experiences that support their professional growth.
 3.3: HCPSS engages families and the community through relevant, timely, accessible, and audience-focused communications.
 4.6: Decisions are informed by relevant data in all operational areas.

OVERVIEW:

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) strategic plan, Vision 2018, Fulfilling the Promise of Preparation, established a mission to cultivate a vibrant learning community that prepares students to thrive in a dynamic world. Achieving this mission requires that HCPSS continuously monitor the perceptions of employees and students, and that each employee and student sees the school system as a great place to work and learn. Research indicates that student engagement is a critical component of student achievement. Research also indicates that the talents and engagement of school leaders, teachers, and other staff members help to shape student engagement. Therefore, HCPSS has continued its partnership with Gallup in 2014 in order to measure and improve levels of engagement among employees and students. The purpose of this report is to present HCPSS results of the 2014 Gallup Staff and Student Engagement Surveys that were conducted in Fall 2014.

RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE DIRECTION:

The results from these surveys will inform continuous improvement efforts within each school, team, office, and/or department.

SUBMITTED

BY:

Rebecca Amani-Dove
Director Communication

Kathryn S. McKinley
Director Secondary
Curriculum

APPROVAL/CONCURRENCE:

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Linda T. Wise
Deputy Superintendent

E. Grace Chesney
Chief Accountability Officer

Background

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Strategic Plan, Vision 2018, Fulfilling the Promise of Preparation, has established a mission to cultivate a vibrant learning community that prepares students to thrive in a dynamic world. College and career-readiness standards, rigorous instructional practice, accountability measures, and teacher and principal evaluation have helped HCPSS focus on what students learn and do. As HCPSS strives to be a world-leading school system, continuous improvement efforts must be multi-faceted. The development of highly talented leaders and teachers who explicitly emphasize engagement to support student growth and performance is an effective leverage strategy. The strategic plan emphasizes student and staff engagement and well-being as critical to student achievement. It is because of this priority that HCPSS continues its partnership with Gallup to measure and improve levels of engagement among staff and students.

Gallup research demonstrates a positive correlation between principal leadership and student achievement, teacher engagement and student achievement, and student engagement and student achievement. Students achieve when school leaders set high expectations, provide ongoing support and professional learning for teachers, focus on student growth within the school, and recognize successes. Students achieve when teachers are fully engaged and foster a positive classroom culture with relationships that build hope for a future that can be better than the present. Finally, students achieve when they believe they have the power to use their talents to be successful and they persist with rigorous and challenging instructional tasks.

Because hope, well-being, and engagement are positively correlated with increased student achievement, HCPSS is working with Gallup to monitor these factors. The initial step in the fall of 2013 involved baseline surveys of engagement levels among students in grades 5-12 as well as all employees. In 2014, HCPSS administered the second year of engagement surveys to strengthen efforts to close achievement gaps and ensure that all students are college and career-ready.

Strengths Specialists

District and school leaders build the critical supports that lead to high student achievement results. The relationship between leadership strengths and engagement is an important connection. Effective leaders develop collaborative teams, nurture safe and caring school environments, recognize success, encourage innovation, ensure equitable resource allocation, and create systems to promote partnerships with parents.

In August 2014 HCPSS identified a group of system leaders to be trained as Strengths Specialists. The participants consisted of directors, coordinators, a principal, and managers from various district divisions and offices; additionally, six school counselors from the Elementary School Model (ESM) Initiative were included in the workshop. The intensive three-day training focused on coaching, professional learning, and action planning. The group divided into three sub-groups, each with a specific target audience: ESM Initiative staff and students, school leadership, and district leadership.

The Strengths Specialists have been required to complete a course for certification. Expectations included ten coaching calls, three strengths professional learning presentations, and online discussion boards to address various topics, research findings, and readings. Through the work of the Strengths Specialists, HCPSS is establishing a strengths-based school system, which is invested in the belief that the more leaders understand strengths and talents, the more leaders can support how staff members use talents and strengths to improve performance and engagement.

Strengths Action Steps for Leaders

Strengths development has been a component of every principal and assistant principal leadership meeting throughout the school year, in addition to division and department meetings. The activities are designed to facilitate personal learning and professional reflection about how strengths are evident in leadership actions and how leaders can maximize their own potential and the potential of their teams. Sample activities help guide leaders to understand natural tendencies, barrier labels, contrasts, and metaphors. Another key learning has focused on what strengths development *is* and what it *is not*.

A valuable exercise is the analysis of a team grid which displays the top five strength themes of each team member and the distribution among four domains: Executing, Influencing, Building Relationships, and Thinking Strategically.

Professional Learning to Support Strengths Development

The Office of Professional and Organization Development supports the capacity-building for our leaders, our emerging leaders and our teachers as they begin to explore the themes identified through the Clifton StrengthsFinder Assessment. Leadership fellows, instructional team leaders, and new leaders have the opportunity to participate in a facilitated and collaborative environment to deepen their understanding of the full 34 strengths themes and the role these talents play in leadership and group dynamics.

Strengths Action Steps for Students

In the Elementary School Model several actions support increasing student engagement through talent and strengths development for students. The first guiding principle is that students begin with a goal in mind. In order to accomplish this task, students participated in goal-setting activities, counseling sessions, and brain lessons. Additionally, students in grades 4 and 5 will take the StrengthsExplorer assessment after they learn about the ten youth themes; they will also reflect on their personal talents and strengths in order to revise their goals and aim their strengths towards achievement. The StrengthsExplorer Student Playbook will guide students through a roadmap from where they are currently to where they see themselves in their brightest possible future. The goal is that students will be able to verbalize their strengths and use their strengths every day.

The StrengthsExplorer tool is also available through Naviance and will be administered to middle school students throughout HCPSS. Initially, staff members at Thomas Viaduct Middle School are being trained to use the staff and student strengths lens to promote higher levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. The conversation shifts the focus from what is wrong to what is strong. Suggestions in the StrengthsExplorer Educator Playbook and the StrengthsExplorer Parent Playbook include action items for adults and students that outline practical applications of talents and strengths.

School Improvement Planning for Staff Engagement

In schools where leaders have effectively fostered a culture of learning and a climate of engagement, there is high value on expectations, professional practice, and relationships. School improvement plans for the 2014-15 school year include a specific goal to improve staff engagement. School improvement teams analyzed their baseline data from 2013 and began to look deeply into the twelve survey questions (Q12) and concepts to determine best practice action steps. The Q12 items are comprehensive, predictive, and actionable. Talking points include focus areas such as clarity of expectations, standards for performance, essential materials and resources, recognition, voice, and the opportunity to learn and grow. Action steps have been implemented based on the unique needs of a school community. Performance expectations are carefully aligned with Vision 2018 and with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Learning. Recognition and praise can be both formal and informal, but should be tailored to the individual. Active listening, awareness of change dynamics, collaborative problem-solving and a culture of continuous learning promote staff engagement. Through school improvement planning, these critical leverage actions become intentional and valued.

Gallup Employee Survey

The Gallup employee engagement survey, which includes 12 questions, was administered in October 2014 and 6,712 HCPSS employees (84%) responded, compared to 6,620 HCPSS employees (84%) in 2013. The staff engagement results indicate that 40% of our staff is engaged which was greater than the national average (30%) and 6% greater than our 2013 results (34%). The HCPSS grand mean in staff engagement was 3.87, compared to 3.79 in 2013. The engagement items are based on a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The grand mean on an additional item on staff engagement, "How satisfied are you with your organization as a place to work?" was 3.78, consistent with 3.78 in 2013.

School Improvement Planning for Student Engagement

In a classroom with high student engagement, everyone is busy and everyone is contributing; in other words, an engaging classroom hosts a community of active learners. Students who are engaged ask questions, contribute ideas, and share excitement for their learning. Talent and strengths development for students is a natural fit with building strong relationships and establishing a culture for learning.

Student engagement is observable. Engaged students participate in classroom and school activities that contribute to student achievement. Engaged students are committed to their own learning; they accept challenge and rigor and understand the importance of what they are learning. Research supports the idea that hope (ideas and energy for the future), engagement (involvement with and enthusiasm for school), and well-being (how we think about and experience our lives) are positively correlated to student achievement.

School improvement plans for the 2014-15 school year include a specific target to improve student engagement. School improvement teams analyzed their baseline data from 2013 Student Poll results and collaborated to determine best practice action steps. Many schools have formed engagement teams to approach next steps. Efforts support student perceptions of belonging to the school community and positive student-teacher relationships, both of which are significant factors in emotional engagement. Student recognition is another area that can be personalized with increased frequency, genuine praise, and specific acknowledgement of hard work and effort. Through school improvement planning, these critical leverage actions become a part of a school's belief and value system and are implemented with intention and attention.

Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll includes 20 questions that measure hope, engagement, and well-being. The Student Poll was conducted online during the school day from September 30 through October 31, 2014, and 30,905 HCPSS students in grades 5-12 participated, compared to 29,600 students in 2013. Results indicate that 55% of student respondents are hopeful, compared to 55% in 2013. This means that their ideas and energy for the future drive effort, academic achievement, credits earned, and retention. The grand mean for results in the area of hope was 4.40, compared to 4.40 in 2013, which is slightly above the 2014 grand mean of 4.39 for the U.S. overall.

The results indicate that 54% of HCPSS students are engaged, compared to 54% in 2013. Among these students, the involvement in and enthusiasm for school reflects how well students are known and how often they get to do what they do best. The HCPSS grand mean in the area of engagement was 4.03, compared to 4.04 in 2013, which is slightly above the 2014 grand mean of 4.00 for the U.S. overall. The hope and engagement items were on a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

The survey results for student well-being show that 65% of our students are identified as thriving, compared to 65% in 2013. Respondents were asked to imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for oneself and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for oneself. When asked which step of the ladder respondents feel they stand on at this time, our grand mean was 7.40, compared to 7.35 in 2013, slightly greater than the U.S. overall, which was at 7.38 in 2014. When asked which step our respondents think they will stand on in about five years, the grand mean was 8.37, compared to 8.38 in 2013 and was slightly less than the U.S. overall (8.49).

Individual school results for the staff and student surveys are provided in Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix.

Next Steps

Both surveys have yielded valuable data designed to inform HCPSS improvement efforts. Gallup has provided presentations for executive staff, district leaders, principals, and school teams. Gallup consultants, strengths specialists and school leaders continue to facilitate collaborative conversations to develop strengths and engagement. In the upcoming weeks, principals will be sharing results with leadership teams, school staff, and PTA/school communities. School Improvement Teams will identify actions that have demonstrated impact and additional actions to improve future survey results.

An inherent shift in school improvement efforts moves the focus from what is wrong to what is strong. Data conversations take a deep approach to understanding why engagement matters, how strengths can be developed and maximized, and what actions need to be taken to help students and staff achieve Vision 2018. An investment in strengths and engagement provides support, motivation, and energy for achievement.

Appendix I

Table 1. Grand Mean Score for HCPSS Student Hope, Wellbeing, and Engagement and Staff Engagement for Students and Staff Who Participated in the Gallup Survey by Elementary School

Elementary Schools	Student Grand Mean Score						Staff Grand Mean Score	
	Hope 2013 ^a	Hope 2014 ^a	Wellbeing 2013 ^b	Wellbeing 2014 ^b	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a
Atholton	4.31	4.41	8.20	8.27	4.21	4.25	4.07	4.33
Bellows Spring	4.43	4.47	8.61	8.28	4.37	4.35	3.76	4.05
Bollman Bridge	4.37	4.34	8.16	8.07	4.28	4.13	3.96	4.11
Bryant Woods	4.43	4.50	8.37	7.46	4.32	4.27	3.80	3.85
Bushy Park	4.47	4.40	8.39	8.47	4.37	4.45	3.73	3.79
Centennial Lane	4.50	4.45	8.49	8.23	4.55	4.47	3.42	3.65
Clarksville	4.43	4.48	8.06	7.71	4.27	4.22	3.63	3.86
Clemens Crossing	4.43	4.44	8.27	8.01	4.41	4.39	3.59	3.89
Cradlerock	4.50	4.52	9.00	8.48	4.51	4.39	4.05	3.83
Dayton Oaks	4.52	4.40	8.32	8.15	4.40	4.40	4.07	4.06
Deep Run	4.43	4.42	8.30	8.03	4.39	4.30	3.86	3.67
Ducketts Lane	4.41	4.29	8.22	8.72	4.41	4.47	4.19	4.23
Elkridge	4.37	4.40	8.23	8.12	4.40	4.30	3.54	3.27
Forest Ridge	4.50	4.40	8.15	8.26	4.37	4.15	4.03	4.19
Fulton	4.44	4.41	8.18	8.25	4.32	4.41	3.79	3.85
Gorman Crossing	4.44	4.33	8.59	8.15	4.45	4.19	3.65	3.92
Guilford	4.30	4.31	8.65	8.26	4.25	4.27	3.99	4.14
Hammond	4.37	4.44	8.38	8.79	4.24	4.43	4.21	4.16
Hollifield Station	4.55	4.41	8.82	8.69	4.58	4.49	3.99	4.07
Ilchester	4.46	4.38	7.97	8.44	4.50	4.39	3.73	3.77
Jeffers Hill	4.42	4.45	8.55	8.75	4.35	4.34	3.88	3.93
Laurel Woods	4.48	4.39	8.44	8.29	4.41	4.30	4.05	3.98
Lisbon	4.55	4.42	8.70	8.50	4.48	4.48	4.02	4.01
Longfellow	4.53	4.40	8.61	8.53	4.33	4.35	3.82	3.65
Manor Woods	4.39	4.38	8.28	8.44	4.20	4.43	3.88	4.09
Northfield	4.57	4.51	8.70	7.90	4.64	4.49	4.14	3.75
Phelps Luck	4.36	4.32	8.45	8.28	4.32	4.30	4.11	4.11
Pointers Run	4.45	4.42	8.29	8.33	4.43	4.41	3.90	3.92
Rockburn	4.51	4.58	8.73	8.58	4.43	4.47	3.66	3.81
Running Brook	4.47	4.47	8.64	8.65	4.67	4.38	4.20	4.25
St. Johns Lane	4.49	4.36	8.74	8.68	4.50	4.42	3.72	3.83
Stevens Forest	4.58	4.31	8.29	8.24	4.41	4.34	3.84	3.75
Swansfield	4.40	4.42	8.35	8.40	4.38	4.36	3.69	3.78
Talbott Springs	4.31	4.48	8.24	8.47	4.35	4.20	3.82	3.98
Thunder Hill	4.33	4.37	8.26	8.15	4.27	4.45	3.81	4.00
Triadelphia Ridge	4.58	4.47	8.62	8.56	4.39	4.49	4.06	4.06
Veterans	4.37	4.37	8.26	8.30	4.44	4.41	3.83	3.89
Waterloo	4.35	4.33	8.27	8.06	4.20	4.20	3.82	3.96
Waverly	4.32	4.45	7.61	8.00	4.35	4.46	3.61	3.93
West Friendship	4.77	4.43	9.15	8.08	4.83	4.38	4.41	3.77
Worthington	4.40	4.50	8.09	8.57	4.31	4.62	4.02	4.02

Note. Schools are sorted alphabetically. Hope^a and engagement items are on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; Wellbeing^b was presented with a ladder graphic on a 0-10 point scale ranging from 0=worst possible life to 10=best possible life.

Table 2. Grand Mean Score for HCPSS Student Hope, Wellbeing, and Engagement and Staff Engagement for Students and Staff Who Participated in the Gallup Survey by Middle School

Middle Schools	Student Grand Mean Score						Staff Grand Mean Score	
	Hope 2013 ^a	Hope 2014 ^a	Wellbeing 2013 ^b	Wellbeing 2014 ^b	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a
Bonnie Branch	4.46	4.42	8.67	8.68	4.14	4.15	3.90	3.92
Burleigh Manor	4.47	4.48	8.43	8.52	4.20	4.20	3.83	4.10
Clarksville	4.46	4.46	8.34	8.40	4.19	4.29	3.48	3.72
Dunloggin	4.46	4.44	8.69	8.53	4.21	4.15	3.83	3.88
Elkridge Landing	4.47	4.45	8.57	8.38	4.22	4.15	3.83	4.08
Ellicott Mills	4.45	4.47	8.44	8.39	4.13	4.15	3.47	3.79
Folly Quarter	4.43	4.49	8.52	8.53	4.26	4.31	3.83	4.10
Glenwood	4.51	4.49	8.48	8.64	4.16	4.23	3.39	2.96
Hammond	4.44	4.40	8.49	8.52	4.20	4.05	3.78	3.83
Harpers Choice	4.37	4.43	8.30	8.63	4.00	4.02	3.70	3.50
Lake Elkhorn	4.40	4.43	8.64	8.43	3.95	3.93	3.55	3.69
Lime Kiln	4.49	4.44	8.50	8.39	4.17	4.18	3.76	3.87
Mayfield Woods	4.39	4.44	8.51	8.55	4.07	4.18	3.79	4.30
Mount View	4.48	4.48	8.52	8.52	4.28	4.29	3.84	4.25
Murray Hill	4.45	4.42	8.76	8.77	4.10	4.07	3.88	3.99
Oakland Mills	4.38	4.41	8.52	8.53	4.03	3.95	3.99	3.94
Patapsco	4.42	4.42	8.37	8.31	4.13	4.08	4.03	3.96
Patuxent Valley	4.39	4.44	8.37	8.62	4.01	4.05	3.60	3.82
Thomas Viaduct		4.42		8.42		3.85		3.99
Wilde Lake	4.45	4.36	8.48	8.55	3.99	4.08	3.61	3.45

Note. Schools are sorted alphabetically. Hope^a and engagement items are on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; Wellbeing^b was presented with a ladder graphic on a 0-10 point scale ranging from 0=worst possible life to 10=best possible life.

Table 3. Grand Mean Score for HCPSS Student Hope, Wellbeing, and Engagement and Staff Engagement for Students and Staff Who Participated in the Gallup Survey by High School

High Schools	Student Grand Mean Score						Staff Grand Mean Score	
	Hope 2013 ^a	Hope 2014 ^a	Wellbeing 2013 ^b	Wellbeing 2014 ^b	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a	Engagement 2013 ^a	Engagement 2014 ^a
Atholton	4.36	4.36	8.26	8.23	3.80	3.82	3.56	3.52
Centennial	4.34	4.40	8.04	8.18	3.91	4.03	3.84	4.40
Glenelg	4.39	4.39	8.19	8.26	3.94	3.90	3.59	3.70
Hammond	4.34	4.37	8.47	8.39	3.75	3.81	3.95	3.94
Homewood	4.12	4.18	8.09	8.34	3.61	3.53	4.01	4.06
Howard	4.34	4.37	8.21	8.24	3.84	3.80	3.67	3.78
Long Reach	4.35	4.39	8.42	8.44	3.78	3.82	3.25	3.56
Marriotts Ridge	4.39	4.36	8.26	8.29	4.02	3.92	3.73	3.89
Mount Hebron	4.37	4.36	8.27	8.25	4.03	3.99	3.89	4.02
Oakland Mills	4.33	4.28	8.36	8.34	3.80	3.66	3.49	3.57
Reservoir	4.37	4.34	8.38	8.28	3.89	3.84	3.86	3.89
River Hill	4.41	4.41	8.20	8.22	3.94	3.97	3.57	3.69
Wilde Lake	4.36	4.32	8.35	8.34	3.76	3.74	3.64	3.69

Note. Schools are sorted alphabetically. Hope^a and engagement items are on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; Wellbeing^b was presented with a ladder graphic on a 0-10 point scale ranging from 0=worst possible life to 10=best possible life.