



S.O.A.R. II Community Research Focus Groups Key Findings

January 10th, 2014

1. The **“caring teachers” and other staff are the greatest asset of Hudsonville Public Schools. Students and parents applaud them for their commitment and personal attention** ... *“they’re good at what they do, they love what they do, and they love their kids.”*
2. Staff and parents both welcome the **high level of parent involvement** with their children’s education, as well the **support from the larger Hudsonville community** ... *“when you talk with parents about their children, they’re going to do something about it, it’s not going to fall on deaf ears.”*
3. Many **families choose to live in Hudsonville because of the quality of its schools**, especially parents who have moved to the west Michigan area from another ... *“I’m impressed with the things my kids come home knowing, I didn’t know as much when I was their age”* and *“the numbers are consistently high on the State exams, from elementary school through high school.”*
4. Many Hudsonville **students are confident they’ll be prepared for college, but also worry that they may be too protected and supported by their teachers and parents** ... *“we’re spoon-fed here, but in college that won’t be happening.”*
5. Students are **uncertain if their writing skills, especially to write persuasively, are adequate** ... *“I can write a good structure, but need help in putting it all together.”*
Their teachers agree ... **“we’re not giving them enough writing experience.”**
Moreover, their **parents are not surprised given what they observe with writing skills lacking in their workplaces** ... *“writing skills are a big thing, many students do not have good writing skills.”*
6. Some **parents ask for more programs for their academically advanced students, especially in elementary schools** ... *“there’s some kids who are ahead and need to be pushed.”*
7. While Hudsonville students say they feel safe at school because **“our community is safe,”** parents and staff also feel their **Hudsonville schools are safe but this is tempered by their acknowledgement that no place is completely safe any more** ... *“it’s as safe as the world we live in.”*

8. **Parents feel that the district is taking actions proactively to prevent bullying as well as enforcing policies against it** ... *“you cannot prevent every act of bullying, but I’m glad the school has it eyes out and shuts it down.”*

Students, staff and parents feel that **bullying is probably worse at the middle schools where friendships are evolving and tested** ... *“you’re getting kids at middle school filtering in from all the elementaries, and they’re trying to find their place.”*

The **high school students add that most students are nice to each other and support each other, with most of them belonging to multiple social circles** ... *“there’s drama everywhere, but less here”* and *“we all have different groups of friends.”*

Parents agree there should be a required class in Digital Citizenship to further prevent and discourage cyber bullying ... *“it needs to start younger, kids are more advanced today, and then reinforced.”*

9. While staff and parents **expect the new Performing Arts Center will encourage interest in and support for performing arts activities**, staff and students feel that **performing arts activities are not as appreciated to the extent as are athletics** ... *“you don’t hear about the music performance like you do the big game.”*

10. Many **parents believe the size of schools such as Hudsonville permit only a few students to compete on high school teams, with opportunities limited to those who extensively play on a travel team** ... *“if you’re child is not on a travel team, there’s the feeling that your kid has no chance, that’s kind of sad.”*