

Dear Citizens,

I hope you do not mind this general response to a number of questions raised by parents about the NPS survey, which is part of our strategic planning effort. Although we have received several hundred responses to the survey, some parents expressed concern about the instrument, describing it as "too light," "ego-feeding," or not focused enough on what needs to be improved in the school system. I understand your concerns about this approach, but I want to assure you that we are not ignoring the areas for improvement that might be identified by parents or staff members.

The survey is based on an approach called "appreciative inquiry," in which we focus on being able to describe the core strengths of NPS so that we have a strong foundation on which to build. For more information on this methodology, which we have adapted for our purposes, see this website: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

Many of the areas staff and parents might name as being in need of improvement are short-term issues that require budgetary fixes (i.e., building maintenance, supplies and materials, etc.). In each budget cycle, we are conscious of these and take steps to do the best we can to improve things with whatever limited funding we are able to achieve. In strategic planning, we are less focused on fixing what is broken and more focused on building on our core strengths to point a direction for the future. This is not to say that we will forget about those short-term issues; in fact, we are extremely mindful of them and will continue our annual efforts to make things better.

Short- and long-term planning are not mutually exclusive. Many people have rightly called for NPS to take a more long-range strategic view of our organization and of education in general. That is our goal in this process. At the same time, we commit to taking care of daily business so that today's students and staff are not disadvantaged while we plan for the more distant future.

Your frustration and concern are understandable, but I hope you will be able to join with NPS as we work toward designing a school system that truly meets the needs of our students in view of the future they will face. Thank you for taking the time to write, and if you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jeff Young